

● POLITY

● ECONOMICS

● TECHNOLOGY

● ECOLOGY

ISRO'S REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLE LANDING TEST SUCCESSFUL



Sunday's landing experiment is the second in the series of experimental flights of the programme. Special Arrangement

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Sunday successfully carried out the landing experiment of the Reusable Launch Vehicle-Technology Demonstration (RLV-TD) programme at the Aeronautical Test Range in Challakere, Chitradurga.

An Indian Air Force (IAF) Chinook helicopter was used to drop the RLV-TD from an altitude of 4.5 km and the ISRO executed the landing experiment of the RLV-TD as planned.

"The RLV took off at 7.10 a.m. by a Chinook helicopter of the IAF as an underslung load and flew at a height of 4.5 km. Once the predetermined pillbox parameters were attained, based on the RLV's Mission Management and Computer command, the RLV was released mid-air, at a down range of 4.6 km," the ISRO said. Release conditions included 10 parameters covering "position, velocity, altitude and body rates".

It added that the release of the RLV was autonomous as it performed approach and landing manoeuvres using Integrated Navigation, Guidance and Control System and completed the landing on the airstrip at 7.40 a.m. The ISRO also said that for the first time in the world, a winged body has been carried to an altitude of 4.5 km by a helicopter and released for carrying out autonomous landing on a runway.

The Indian Air Force said that its trial team, which participated in the mission, was headed by a woman officer from the Bengaluru-based Aircraft Systems and Testing Establishment.

According to ISRO, the configuration of RLV-TD is similar to that of an aircraft and combines the complexity of both launch vehicles and aircraft.

"The experiment is successful and it meets almost all the objectives of the landing experiment that we had defined long back. We will have a few more landing experiments with different conditions to prove the ruggedness of the algorithm and the hardware that we have put in. These are steps which takes us closer to having India's own reusable launch vehicles," ISRO Chairman S. Somanath said.

He added that the ideation of this project started almost 20 years ago and that it has taken many years to grow from the initial stage to this.

During this mission the vehicle landed on a hypothetical runway over the Bay of Bengal.

ALL EYES ON BORDER TALKS BETWEEN BHUTAN, CHINA AS KING BEGINS INDIA VISIT



Chink in the armour: India is watchful of the possibility of a 'swap agreement' between Bhutan and China in border resolution. AFP

He will meet Modi tomorrow; Bhutan PM had caused a storm with his comments on discussing the Doklam trijunction dispute 'trilaterally', with Bhutan, India and China as 'equal' interlocutors

As Bhutan's fifth King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck arrives in Delhi on Monday afternoon at the invitation of President Droupadi Murmu, all eyes will be on his talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday, and any possible discussions on the progress in Bhutan-China border talks.

While the Bhutanese King met Mr. Modi in September last year, when he stopped over in Delhi on his way to attend British Queen Elizabeth II's funeral, this is the first such high-level meeting between the two leaders since Bhutan and China's talks on their boundary made rapid progress. Mr. Modi and Bhutan's PM Lotay Tshering have spoken often on the phone, but last met for bilateral talks in Thimphu in August 2020.

India wary

In October 2021, Bhutan and China signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a "three-step roadmap" to expedite border resolution talks. The discussion centres on two valleys to Bhutan's north and the Doklam area to the west of Bhutan, close to the trijunction with India, which was the site of a stand-off between Indian and Chinese forces in 2017. India has been particularly watchful of any possibility of a "swap agreement" between the two countries that could affect its security at the trijunction.

In January 2023, Bhutan and China held talks in Kunming, and reached a "positive consensus" on how to move forward with the talks. Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra arrived in Thimphu three days after the Kunming talks for bilateral discussions, where he also called on the King's father, the fourth King Jigme Singye Wangchuck.

Row over comments

While on a visit to Europe last week, Dr. Tshering told a Belgian newspaper that

he hoped to complete boundary demarcation talks on disputed areas in the next "one or two more meetings" and that a visit by a Chinese "technical team" was expected shortly in Bhutan. The Bhutanese PM's comments on discussing the Doklam trijunction dispute "trilaterally", with Bhutan, India and China as "equal" interlocutors, set off a storm in Delhi, including with the Opposition Congress, which said that "Bhutan and India's so-far unshakeable relationship is facing a challenge from an aggressive China".

However, Dr. Tshering subsequently clarified his comments on Saturday, telling The Bhutanese newspaper that he had said "nothing new and there is no change in position".

Both Indian and Bhutanese officials declined to comment on whether King Jigme Khesar Wangchuck would speak to Mr. Modi about the latest developments in talks.

Meeting PM, EAM

In a statement that was timed with the Bhutan government's announcement of the King's visit, the External Affairs Ministry said the visit was part of the "long-standing tradition" of high-level exchanges between the two countries, and that the leaders would "review the entire gamut of bilateral cooperation and to further advance the close bilateral partnership, including economic and development cooperation". However, neither Thimphu nor New Delhi referred to any specific agreements expected to be announced during the visit.

The Bhutanese King will receive External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Monday evening. He is expected to hold talks with Mr. Modi on Tuesday morning, meet with Ms. Murmu on Tuesday evening, and then leave on Wednesday. Sources said that the leaders were expected to discuss India's support to Bhutan for its five year plans. At present, the Indian government's assistance towards Bhutan's 12th five year plan (2018-23) amounts to ₹4,500 crore.

Premiers' visit

While Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, accompanied by Bhutanese Foreign and External Trade Minister Tandi Dorji, begins a three-day visit to India on Monday, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda is also expected to embark on a bilateral trip to New Delhi soon.

Trade economist Biswajit Dhar said the implications of using the provisions of Section 2.23 must be weighed in light of India's commitments at the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

"Freedom of transit to landlocked countries are guaranteed under Article V of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. Further, the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation of which India is a party to says that 'regulations... in connection with traffic in transit imposed by Member shall not be applied in a manner that would constitute a disguised restriction' on traffic in transit," he told The Hindu.

FOREIGN TRADE POLICY BRINGS 'STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC INTERESTS' INTO TRADE TRANSIT TIES

Marking a significant shift in the country's stance on allowing transit of goods in and out of neighbouring countries, the new Foreign Trade Policy (FTP) has introduced an additional consideration in providing such trade transit facilities for adjacent countries — India's strategic and economic interests.

The changed language in provisions pertaining to transit facilities, as well as a subtle shift in the stance on trade with neighbouring countries in the new policy, released by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on March 31, could unnerve some land-locked countries around India such as Nepal and Bhutan that rely on goods transit through India.

The Foreign Trade Policy 2015-20 that was applicable till last Friday stated: "Transit of goods through India from/or to countries adjacent to India shall be regulated in accordance with bilateral treaties between India and those coun-

tries and will be subject to such restrictions as may be specified by DGFT [Directorate General of Foreign Trade] in accordance with international conventions."

This has been revised in Section 2.23 of the new FTP document to state that such transit of goods "shall be enabled and regulated in accordance with strategic and economic interests of India as well as the bilateral treaties between India and those countries."

While the previous policy empowered the DGFT to frame schemes or issue necessary instructions "to promote trade and strengthen economic ties with neighbouring countries", the new policy rephrases the first objective as "promote and regulate trade..."

NO 'SAYONARA' FOR JAPAN IN INDO-PACIFIC GEOPOLITICS

Harsh V. Pant is Vice-President for Studies and Foreign Policy at the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi and Professor at King's College London

The visit by the Japanese Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, to India, in March 2023, during which he engaged with his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, on global and bilateral issues, focused on cooperation between the G-7 and the G-20 (Japan and India hold their presidencies, respectively). Besides this, Mr. Kishida also unveiled "Japan's New Plan for a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) and exchanged views about deepening the "Japan-India Special Strategic and Global Partnership".

Japan's FOIP clearly shows that Japan wants to reinforce the idea that it has been the main champion of the FOIP concept, and Mr. Kishida's speech underlined that given the current geopolitical landscape with the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, growing Chinese assertiveness in the South China Sea, East China Sea, the Indian Line of Actual Control and the Taiwan Straits, there is a need to give a fresh push and momentum to this concept. The New Plan for the FOIP lays stress on the need to uphold the rules-based order and respect each other's territorial sovereignty, with Mr. Kishida warning that "at a time when the international community is at a historical turning point, I would like to clarify the concept of FOIP once again to propose a guiding perspective to be shared by the international community which, if left unchecked, could drift towards division and confrontation".

Challenges before the Indo-Pacific

Japan's new policy focuses on the numerous challenges facing the Indo-Pacific such as the Ukraine war, food security, and cyber space in addition to issues such as ensuring the freedom of the seas, and connectivity among others.

Another challenge which has been highlighted is the lack of a united stand on "what the international order should be" — the differing position of countries on the Russia-Ukraine war has brought this issue to the fore. But there is a

firm belief that the FOIP will be able to work with and embrace diverse voices and create an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration rather than division and confrontation. For attaining this atmosphere of cooperation, 'rule-making through dialogue' should be encouraged. The fact that Japan under the FOIP should work alongside other like-minded countries in the region has been mentioned, with India being billed as an 'indispensable' partner.

The foundation

There is a realisation that Japan needs to do much more in the region, and towards this, 'four pillars of cooperation' under the new FOIP have been outlined: principles for peace and rules for prosperity; addressing challenges in an Indo-Pacific way; multi-layered connectivity; and extending efforts for security and safe use of the "sea" to the "air".

In the first pillar, it has been pointed out that vulnerable countries usually suffer the most if there is an erosion in the rule of law. Therefore, Japan wants to engage in economic development programmes such as promoting the implementation of the G-20 Principles for "Quality Infrastructure Investment". Under the second pillar, Mr. Kishida talked about "expansion of cooperation for the FOIP by incorporating realistic and practical projects in a wide range of areas, such as climate change, food security, global health and cybersecurity". Japan has been working for long on connectivity projects bilaterally with many countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

Under the third pillar, the three areas identified for introducing more such projects are Southeast Asia, South Asia and the South Pacific/Pacific Island countries. Japan has made a new commitment of \$100 million towards the Japan-ASEAN Integration Fund; it will promote the Bay of Bengal-Northeast India industrial value chain concept in cooperation with India and Bangladesh, and the new Palau International Airport Terminal project (an archipelago in the

western Pacific Ocean) supported by Japan has also taken off.

Under the fourth pillar, Japan will help in strengthening the capabilities of maritime law enforcement agencies in other countries. Towards these objectives, Japan will implement the “strategic use of Official Development Assistance (ODAs)”, revise the Development Cooperation Charter and set forth guidelines for ODA for the next 10 years, and introduce an “offer-type” cooperation and a new framework for “private capital mobilization-type” grant aid. Mr. Kishida also announced that Japan would “mobilize” a total of more than \$75 billion in public and private funds in the Indo-Pacific region by 2030 in infrastructure development.

Tokyo's role

WHY WAS THE MONTH OF MARCH IN MUMBAI RELATIVELY COOLER?

How did the warming of the northern Arabian sea lead to cooler and drier air in Mumbai? Will it affect the upcoming heatwave and monsoon seasons?

The month of March in Mumbai was relatively cooler and drier than normal. Winds in March usually tend to flow from West Asia to Mumbai, signalling the beginning of a sweltering heat and humidity build-up through May, before the rains arrive in June.

Why was this March cooler and drier?

A study, which this writer was part of, recently reported that West Asia has been warming more rapidly than other tropical land regions. The northern Arabian Sea has also been warming. The combination of this land and ocean warming has enhanced the duration, frequency, and intensity of heat waves over India in the pre-monsoon season. Meteorologists have also blamed the northern Arabian-Sea warming for the increase in heavy rainfall events over northwest India in the monsoon season. Rapid warming over West Asia produces low sea-level pressure locally, which sets up a northward pressure gradient over the Arabian Sea — from the equator to its northern waters. This gradient pulls winds northward, disrupting those that should actually be flowing east, from West Asia towards Mumbai. So the winds came to Mumbai from the north-northwest, bringing cooler and drier air instead of the usual hot and humid air from the desert.

Will this affect monsoons?

These wind changes created an unusual anticyclone over the Arabian Sea in March. An anticyclone has clockwise ocean circulation in which warm waters converge. As a result, sea surface temperatures warmed by over 1° C just during March. A warmer Arabian Sea in the pre-monsoon season tends to

The primary goal of Mr. Kishida's visit was to reinforce the centrality of Japan in the emerging geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific. In the past, he had stated that “Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow”, which shows Japan's concern about growing Chinese belligerence in the region. Mr. Kishida's emphasis on the need to uphold a peaceful and a rules-based international order, and his putting forward policies and mechanisms under the new FOIP to help stabilise the regional order amidst the Ukraine war and the differing positions of countries on this conflict goes on to show that Japan is preparing itself for any unforeseen threat to its own as well as regional security. A Japan deeply invested in Indo-Pacific stability and prosperity is good news indeed for India and the wider region.

favour a good monsoon. On the other hand, 2023 is expected to be an El Niño year, and an El Niño tends to suppress the monsoon, especially when it follows a La Niña winter, which was the case in 2022.

But before the monsoon, we still need to get through the summer heatwave season. As seasonal land-heating continues into April and May, the southwesterly winds will set out from the equator into the central Arabian Sea. The normal eastward winds from West Asia towards Mumbai should also get stronger. These westerly winds bring heat from West Asia, over the warm Arabian Sea, into India. Winds also sweep in from the northwest over the mountains of Afghanistan and Pakistan, setting up heat waves. The evolution of winds and sea surface temperatures clearly show a rapid warming of the North Indian Ocean, especially the Arabian Sea, which augurs even more heat events.

What will be the consequences?

Reports of unseasonal rain and hail leading to devastating crop damages in the northwest are a preview of what may be in store in terms of heat waves and heavy rain over these parts. Since only about 50% of El Niño years have so far produced a drought over India, we may end up with a ‘normal’ monsoon. But it is quite likely that warming over West Asia plus the Arabian Sea is going to once again produce heavy rainfall events over northwest India and Pakistan. While Mumbaiers are basking in the unseasonably cool and dry weather, they can also expect heavy rains and flooding this monsoon. Climate models seem confident that there will be an El Niño starting during the monsoon season. The caveat is that an El Niño forecast this early in the year tends to be inhibited by the ‘spring predictability barrier’: that is, tropical weather tends to be noisy in the spring months, making the prediction noisy as well. As usual, we must hope for the best and prepare for the upcoming rough heatwave and monsoon seasons.

BEYOND CUSTOMS

Govt. must find innovative solutions to help people with rare diseases

For the state, there can be no rest; vigil should be constant, and the endeavour should be to address issues relating to the public's welfare continually. A classic exposition of this principle is the Centre's announcement providing full exemption from basic customs duty for all drugs and food imported for treatment of rare diseases listed under the National Policy for Rare Diseases (and anti-cancer drug Pembrolizumab). This adds benefits, beyond those already incorporated in the policy (originally formulated in 2017) finalised just under a year ago. In order to avail this exemption, the individual importer must produce a certificate from specified authorities. Medicines generally attract basic customs duty of 10%, while some categories of lifesaving drugs/vaccines get concessions or exemptions. Exemptions have already been provided to specified drugs for the treatment of Spinal Muscular Atrophy or Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy. Rare diseases are a group of diseases that occur infrequently in the community and as such patients are disadvantaged by the lack of volumes that usually spur pharmacological companies into producing life-saving medicines. While some of these diseases do not have any described treatment methodologies, wherever treatment exists, the drugs have to be imported and costs are prohibitive, putting it out of the reach of most

people. The NPRD estimates that for a child weighing 10 kg, the annual cost of treatment for some rare diseases may vary from ₹10 lakh to more than ₹1 crore per year, with treatment being lifelong and drug dose and costs increasing with age and weight. The duty exemption will lead to substantial savings for patients. Organisations lobbying for support for patients with rare diseases have welcomed the move which will grant much needed relief to patients and their families; a ray of hope in an otherwise bleak treatment scenario.

While rare diseases are defined by their infrequent occurrence in the population, the sheer number of diseases (estimated between 7,000-8,000 conditions; 450 of them have been reported from hospitals in India), and the number of people with some form of rare diseases in India (an estimated 100 million) make it a problem that cannot be ignored. When the NPRD was released, it underlined the magnitude, and specified that demands could only be considered in the context of the available scarce resources that would have to be used judiciously. While striking a note for the goal of affordable health care, the government must ensure that its directions are followed in full, besides staying the course to innovate solutions for this category of patients.

WE AIM TO INSPIRE YOU

LONG ON INTENT

The aspiration of the new foreign trade policy seems ambitious

India's long-delayed, refreshed Foreign Trade Policy has finally been unveiled. The new policy, announced on Friday by the Union Minister for Commerce, Industry and Textiles Piyush Goyal, has made bold to set an ambitious target of reaching \$2 trillion in total exports (goods and services combined) by 2030. With the government currently estimating exports to have crossed \$760 billion in the fiscal year just ended on March 31, the policy projects a near tripling in outbound shipments of goods and services over the course of seven years. And when one compares this growth goal with the 75% expansion achieved over the last seven years since 2016, the magnitude of the aspiration suggests vaulting ambition. To be sure, the last three years have been unprecedented, with first the COVID-19 pandemic and then Russia's invasion of Ukraine disrupting global trade momentum. Still, the last three years, when India put its trade policy reset on hold, also provided policymakers a unique opportunity to take a fresh approach to delineating the contours of its trade policy goals. The end result is long on statements of intent. The National Trade Facilitation Action Plan, for instance, lists aims to achieve that are essential and laudable but in no way novel: an improvement in the ease of doing business through reduction in transaction cost and time, a reduction in cargo release time, and a paperless regulatory environment.

In a nod to India's WTO obligations, the shift from incentives to an enabling regime of duty remission and exemption schemes to facilitate duty-free imports of inputs required for boosting exports has been near complete. Most of these schemes including the RoDTEP (Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products), RoSCTL (Rebate on State and Central Taxes and Levies), AA (Advance Authorisation) and EPCG (Export Promotion Capital Goods) have been around for a while and the policy has just tweaked some of the terms of implementation to improve adoption. In the key sector of apparel and clothing, for instance, the facility of self-declaration has now been offered across the board to all exporters. A one-time amnesty has also been offered, giving exporters more time to avail of both the AA and EPCG schemes. And acknowledging the substantial surge in online trade, the policy devotes a whole chapter to 'Promoting Cross Border Trade in Digital Economy' including moves to facilitate the establishment of dedicated e-commerce export hubs. Still, with global trade largely becalmed and the services sector facing headwinds of uncertainty in the key western markets, the FTP falls short in offering more substantive and sectorally targeted measures as well as a well-defined road map to meet the 2030 export target.

INDIA NEEDS A NATIONAL PROGRAMME ON AUTISM

Bhismadev Chakrabarti is Professor of Neuroscience and Mental Health at the University of Reading, U.K. He is a Visiting Professor of Psychology at Ashoka University, India, and is Principal Research Adviser to the India Autism Center, Kolkata

One of the most frequent questions I faced at academic conferences as soon as people realised that I was an Indian researcher working on autism was this: 'How many children in India have autism?' At this point, India did not have any systematic estimates of autism prevalence. My collaborators and I set out to answer this question, and found ourselves telephoning a number of government hospitals in India. We were looking for available records of the children who came to them, and were eventually given a diagnosis of autism. In the absence of a central medical registry, this method seemed reasonable to estimate the prevalence of autism — and had been successfully used in some other countries.

Unfortunately, it did not work. None of the hospitals kept any records of how many children got a diagnosis of autism. It made us change our strategy from focusing on hospitals to schools. Instead of relying on existing medical records from hospitals, we translated and validated widely used autism assessment tools — and used these to estimate the prevalence of autism in nearly 12,000 schoolchildren. Interestingly, none of the children who met the diagnostic criteria for autism spectrum in our study had a prior clinical diagnosis. All of these children were in mainstream schools, and reported facing more challenges than their counterparts. There have been a few other prevalence estimates since our initial study, and a conservative estimate based on pooling the results from different studies suggests that well over one crore Indians are on the autism spectrum.

Cultural differences and diagnosis

While biochemical pathways involved in core autism symptoms are unlikely to be different between cultures, there are notable cultural differences in who gets a clinical diagnosis of autism. The majority of children with an autism spectrum diagnosis within the United States and the United Kingdom are likely to be verbal, with average or higher than average IQ, and attending mainstream schools. In contrast, a significant majority of children in India who get a clinical diagnosis of autism often also have intellectual disability, and limited verbal ability.

This difference is likely to be driven by a range of sociological factors, such as access to appropriate clinical expertise, the allowance of provisions for inclusion in mainstream schools, as well as availability of medical insurance coverage for autism interventions. It raises the question of why one chooses to get an autism diagnosis in the first place. If a clinical diagnosis is unlikely to open doors to appropriate services and support provisions, and is instead going to add to societal stigma, then rolling out a nationwide screening and diagnostic programme for autism across all schools is not likely to be useful. Even if it were theoretically possible to do so, how we assess autism presents its own set of challenges.

Autism is assessed behaviourally, and behavioural assessment tools (i.e. questionnaires or interviews with professionals) are the starting point for all

research and clinical work on autism. Yet, most of the widely used autism assessment tools have limited availability in Indian languages. While some of the more widely used tools have been translated and validated locally, recent years have seen a rise in the development of indigenous autism assessment tools.

The plethora of these tools can create challenges in comparing across them. Beyond questionnaires and interviews, observational measures (e.g. where individuals are asked to perform a task) can contribute meaningfully to assessing autism-related features. Observational measures rely less on verbal information, and more on task performance, and are thus more easily translatable across cultures and settings. A combination of questionnaire/ interview measures alongside observational measures is ideal for assessing autism. Crucially, assessment must not remain limited to measures of behaviour alone; autism is increasingly viewed as a systemic condition. Greater focus on areas that have historically been under-researched in autism, such as sleep, diet, sensory symptoms, and immune function need to be included within routine assessments.

Demand and supply in India

While considering the components of assessments we also need to consider the assessors. Most available autism assessment tools need to be administered by a specialist mental health professional. According to the latest estimates, India has less than 10,000 psychiatrists, a majority of whom are concentrated in big cities. While the number of mental health professionals continues to grow, the current gap between demand and supply cannot be met directly by the specialists alone. This gap is not relevant for behavioural assessments alone but also for providing psychological interventions. Parallel efforts to widen the reach of diagnostic and intervention services through involving non-specialists, similar to a stepped-care model for psychological therapies, is required in order to bridge this chasm. To this end, emerging lines of evidence suggest the feasibility of such an approach for both autism identification and intervention in an Indian context. Two pillars for such an approach to succeed are the availability of a suitable non-specialist workforce (e.g. Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA)/Anganwadi workers, parents/caregivers) and the appropriate digital technology (e.g. apps, smartphones) that can capture both self/caregiver report as well as observational data.

A causal chain typically links diagnostic assessments and interventions. Very often, a clinical diagnosis serves as a gateway for interventions and services, with some parents having to wait for years, or travelling across the country, to get a confirmed diagnosis. Delays in interventions can be costly for neurodevelopmental conditions such as autism, given the importance of critical periods in brain development. Early interventions are associated with the best outcomes. As such, it is vital to develop a pipeline of routine assessments for key domains of neurodevelopment (example, social, motor, sensory, cognitive)

that can then lead to parent/non-specialist assisted behavioural interventions, irrespective of the final formal diagnosis.

Within such a framework, if a child presents with social behavioural difficulties s/he could be referred to a parent/non-specialist assisted programme on evidence-based actionable strategies in social skills development. This child might eventually get a clinical diagnosis of Autism or Social Communication Disorder but would have already benefited from an early intervention. There is a growing evidence base for simple behavioural interventions that parents/caregivers can be trained on, that can have a positive impact. The risks for administering these interventions to a child who may not necessarily need them are significantly lower than those of not administering them to someone who could benefit. Sustainable public health pathways need to be developed such that they do not depend critically on a confirmed diagnosis from a specialist.

ON SAME-SEX UNION, FAITH LEADERS SHOW RARE UNITY

Religious leaders across different faiths have joined hands to oppose the plea for recognition of same-sex marriages in the Supreme Court.

Some have filed an application in the Supreme Court opposing petitions in favour of same-sex marriages, while others have written to the President seeking her intervention.

The Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, the Communion of Churches, and the Akal Takht, along with representatives of the Ajmer dargah and Jain gurus, have raised concerns about a legal sanction for same-sex marriages, claiming that it is against the natural family order apart from being in contravention of their differing scriptures. Several leaders reiterated the sentiment that marriage is an institution for procreation, not recreation. The RSS also opposes same-sex marriage, though it has accepted same-sex relationships, holding a position in line with the Centre. The Supreme Court Bench has said that the hearing of the case will be livestreamed from April 18 in public interest.


'Diluting the concept'

Taking the lead is the Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind, which filed an application in the top court. "The concept of marriage between two opposite sexes is like the basic feature of marriage itself which leads to the creation of a bundle of rights (maintenance, inheritance, guardianship, custody). By these petitions, the petitioners are seeking to dilute the concept of marriage by introducing a free-floating system through the concept of same-sex marriage," the application read.


In a media statement, the Jamaat-e-Islami's vice-president Salim

Need for an all-India programme

The overarching need of the hour is to develop a national programme on autism, to link researchers, clinicians, service providers to the end-users in the autism community in India. A programme of this scale needs three essential components that are joined up: assessment, intervention, and awareness. Research needs to focus on developing and refining appropriate assessments, as well as designing efficient implementation pathways. Simultaneously, the clinical and support service workforce needs to be expanded by training non-specialists such that a stepped-care model can be rolled out effectively across the nation. Finally, large-scale initiatives to build public awareness can serve to reduce stigma associated with autism and related conditions. Crucially, a national programme needs to be informed by consultation with different stakeholders, with a primary focus on the end-users within the Indian autism community.

 The concept of marriage between two opposite sexes is like the basic feature of marriage itself which leads to the creation of a bundle of rights (maintenance, inheritance, guardianship, custody). By these petitions, the petitioners are seeking to dilute the concept of marriage by introducing a free-floating system

JAMIAT ULAMA-I-HIND



Muslim, Jain, Sikh and Christian leaders, along with the RSS, are opposing same-sex marriage as the SC takes up the case, arguing that it contravenes scriptures, societal values and natural order

Engineer referred to a marriage between a man and a woman as "the correct form" of marriage.

VICE-ADMIRAL SANJAY JASJIT SINGH IS NEW VICE-CHIEF OF NAVY



Vice-Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh

Vice-Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh assumed charge as the Vice-Chief of the Naval Staff (VCNS) on Sunday in a series of top-level changes in the Navy. In other appointments, Vice-Adm. Suraj Berry assumed charge as the Chief of Personnel (COP) while Vice-Admiral Atul Anand took over as the Director-General Naval Operations (DGNO).

In other changes, Air Marshal B.R. Krishna, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee and Air Marshal J. Chalapathi, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief of Southern Air Command based at Thiruvananthapuram, relinquished offices upon superannuation on March 31. New appointments for both the positions are still awaited.

V. Adm. Singh took over after the incumbent V. Adm. S.N. Ghormade stepped down on March 31 upon superannuation. V. Adm. Singh was commissioned in 1986 in the Executive Branch of the Navy. He has served as the Deputy Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (Operations).

**CIVIL SERVICES
CLASS ROOM COACHING
ST. TERESA'S COLLEGE
@ ERNAKULAM**

**ADMISSION
STARTED**

+91 7356 444 999, 0484 452 77 77



VEDHIK

IAS ACADEMY

The New Learning Mantra

START YOUR JOURNEY WITH THE BEST

**INDIA'S
TOP MOST
CIVIL SERVANTS
FOR COACHING**

www.vedhikiasacademy.org

Head Office:
Vedhik IAS Academy
Mercy Estate,
MG Road, Ravipuram,
Ernakulam-682 015,

Corporate office:
Vedhik IAS Academy
Samkalp Bhawan, Plot No.15,
Sector 4, Rama Krishna Puram,
New Delhi, Delhi-110022

Regional office
Vedhik IAS Academy
202, Raheja Chambers, 12,
Museum Road. Bangalore -
560001. Karnataka, India.

GCC Office:
Bobscoedu,
Bobsco Trading & Contracting Co. W. L . L
Office 22, Dream Tower 1,
Road: 2701, Adliya, Kingdom of Bahrain
www.bobscoedu.com