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Assam-origin American features in *TIME* list of innovative teachers

STAFF REPORTER



GUWAHATI, June 12: Rachna Nath from Chandler Arizona in the USA, who teaches at ACP High School, has been featured in the *TIME* magazine's one of the most innovative teachers of the year for her innovative programme DRIPBL (Dream Research Innovate Problem/Project Based Learning).

The *TIME* revealed its first-ever list of innovative teachers on Wednesday, highlighting US teachers who are making a difference for their students in a unique way.

Rachna's programme promotes critical thinking, problem-solving and research skills to students from 9th to 12th graders. She also pushes the kids to do patent searches and apply for their first dream companies as early as 9th graders.

"Science teacher Rachna Nath helps students pitch their inventions to potential investors," the *TIME* said about her accomplishment.

Rachna, who is originally from Assam, is a honey bee scientist, innovator and entrepreneur who works as an educator for Chandler Public School District and brings a unique and fresh perspective to high school teaching.

To compile this list, the *TIME* reviewed hundreds of nominations from across the country for teachers at public schools, public charters, private, and parochial schools, and selected the teachers who stood out to improve the learning experience for kids who need it, or solve a problem.

After her Presidential Innovation Award in 2019 for environmental educators, Rachna continued to persevere in her belief that high school students are a pool of talent that is unexplored.

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCES IS NOW MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

FOR SCHOOLS

From 10+2 to 5+3+3+4: Current 10+2 structure in which policy covered schooling from Class 1 to 10 (age 6-16) and then Class 11-12 (age 16-18) gives way to 5 years of foundational education, 3 of preparatory, 3 of middle & 4 years of secondary schooling

Multi-Stream: Flexibility to choose subjects across streams; all subjects to be offered at two levels of proficiency

Diluted Board: Board exams to test only core competencies; could become modular (object and subjective) and will be offered twice a year

Multilingual: 3-language policy to continue with preference for local language medium of instruction till class 8

Bag-Less Days: School students to have 10 bag-less days in a year during which they are exposed to a vocation of choice (i.e. informal internship)

FOR COLLEGES

SAT-Like College Test: National Testing Agency to conduct common college entrance exam twice a year

4-Year Bachelor: 4-year multi-disciplinary bachelor's programme to be preferred; mid-term dropouts to be given credit with option to complete degree after a break

No Affiliation: Over next 15 years colleges will be given graded autonomy to give degrees, affiliation with universities to end, so would deemed university status

Fee Cap: Proposal to cap fee charged by private institutions of higher learning

Going Global: Top-rated global universities to be facilitated to come to India, top Indian institutions to be encouraged to go global



The National Curriculum Framework of 2005 affirms the importance of embracing the emotional, social, physical and intellectual growth of children within a framework of human values.

NEP promote critical and innovative thinking by this through:

- 3 language formula developing multi-lingual skills in child.
- Lesser burden of curriculum through its reorganisation.
- Focusing on research in higher education.
- Restructuring of board exams providing options to students to choose from subjects.
- Liberal training that will develop a broader perspective in a child.
- Teacher training with a focus on their holistic development.
- Improved learning through a desirable student-teacher ratio of not more than 30:1.

BJP wins all 26 seats in Karbi Anglong Council polls



KAMAL KUMAR BRAHMA

DIPHU, June 12: The BJP registered a landslide victory in Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council elections by winning all 26 seats on Sunday.

The Congress, which had been in power from 2001 to 2015, failed to win even a single seat in the council elections. The BJP and the Congress were the main contestants in the fray.

Around 78 per cent of voting was recorded in the elections to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council on Wednesday.

The BJP bagged all the 10 seats in the Diphu election district – Diphu and Howraghat. As per results declared by the district election returning officer, Bili-mohan Khakhlyar won from the Langhin seat, Ritesh Enghi from the Namati seat, Kangbura Kiling from the Phuloni seat, Lusing Teron from Mahamaya seat, Raju Tisso from Kharkanthi seat, Ajit Kr Dey from Howraghat, Madhuram Lekthe from Langpher seat, Johny Timung from Lumbajong seat, Masarsing Tisso from Singhasan seat and Tilotto-



BJP supporters celebrate the party's win in the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council elections at Diphu on Sunday. – UB Photos

ma Hasnu won from the Dhansiri seat.

In the Bokajan subdivision, the BJP emerged victorious in all seven seats. As per the results declared, Madhurja Dhekiyal Phukan won from Bokajan seat, Richard Tokbi from Duar Baguri seat, Kadam Terangpi from Sarupathar seat, Suriya Rongphar from Borjan seat, Kache Rongpi from Socheng-Denta seat, Sarban Telenga from Deopani seat

and Pabitra Rongpi won from the Nilip seat.

In Hamren subdivision of West Karbi Anglong district, the BJP continued with its winning spree by emerging victorious in all the nine seats. According to results declared by the returning officer, the winning BJP candidates are D Uphing Maslai from Amri seat, Avijit Kro from Chingthong seat, Tuliram Ronghang from Bithung Rengthengma

seat, Prabhat Rongphar from Duar seat, Amla Headsing Rongphar from Socheng seat, Longbison Bey from Rongkhang seat, Mangalsing Timung from Hamren seat, Rina Terangpi from Amreng seat and Pawan Kumar from Kapili MAC seat.

The All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) gave a tough contest to the BJP in the polls in most of the seats.

The various Autonomous Councils constituted by the Government are under the following heads:

- Territorial Councils under Sixth Schedule of Constitution of India
- Statutory Autonomous Councils constituted under State Act
- Territorial Councils under Sixth Schedule of Constitution of India

The Autonomous Councils are given varying degrees of autonomy within the State Legislature. In Assam there are 3 Autonomous Councils under Sixth-Schedule of the Indian Constitution. The 3 Autonomous Councils are:

- Bodoland Territorial Council
- Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council
- Karbi Anglong Autonomous District Council

10 pygmy hogs released in Manas National Park



Protection Status: Pygmy hog

- IUCN Red List: Endangered
- CITES: Appendix I
- Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I

GUWAHATI, June 11: Ten captive-bred pygmy hogs, the world's smallest and rarest wild pigs, have been released in Manas National Park of Assam.

Found only in tall dense alluvial grasslands, pygmy hogs are incredibly shy.

This is the third instance that pygmy hogs have successfully been introduced in the national park, a release issued by biodiversity conservation group Aaranyak, a key partner of the programme, said on Friday.

Fourteen pygmy hogs were released in Manas National Park in 2020 and 12 in 2021.

The pygmy hog's coat is brown with a few dark hair. Its head is tapered with a slight crest of hair on the forehead and the back of its neck.

The animals were released by the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP), taking the total number of such mammals released in the park so far to 36.

The pygmy hogs were released on Friday and Wednesday in Rupahi grassland in the Bhuyanpara range of the park.

The PHCP plans to release 60 pygmy hogs in Manas National Park by 2025.

With this, the number of

pygmy hogs reintroduced into the wild by the PHCP has reached 152 since 1996.

Six pygmy hogs were captured from the Bansbari range of Manas National Park in 1996 to start the breeding programme. The reintroduction of captive hogs in the wild began in 2008.

Initially, three protected areas in Assam were selected for better protection and restoration of alluvial grasslands, and over the next decade, 35 hogs were released in Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, 59 in Orang National Park and 22 in Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary.

Manas Field Director Dr Vaibhav Chandra Mathur said the pygmy hog (*Porcula salvania*) has been recovered from the verge of extinction in the wild.

"Manas Tiger Reserve serves as the source stock of hogs for the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme, and this tranche of supplementation with a captive-bred population is going to strengthen conservation efforts, especially for tall wet grasslands, for which the pygmy hog serves as an indicator species," Mathur said.

In 1995, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of the

UK partnered with the State government's Forest department, the Wild Pig Specialist Group of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Changes to form the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP).

Currently, the project is being implemented by NGOs Aaranyak and EcoSystems Ind.

Aaranyak's chief executive officer Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar said conservation of lesser-known species such as Pygmy Hog, Bengal Florican, and Hispid Hare and other grassland obligatory species is equally important as protecting animals such as tiger and one-horned rhinoceros.

Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust's CEO Dr Lesley Dickie, who came to Assam to take part in the programme this year, said, "Durrell has been committed to conserving the tiny but precious pygmy hog, and their grassland home, for decades. With our partners, including the government, we strive to create a functioning habitat that also allows local communities to thrive." – PTI

Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP):

- The PHCP is a collaboration among Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust of UK, Assam Forest Department, Wild Pig Specialist Group of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It is currently being implemented by NGOs - Aaranyak and EcoSystems India.
- Conservation of pygmy hog was initiated by noted naturalist Gerald Durrell and his trust in 1971.
- The pygmy hog was brought back from near-extinction by the partnership effort, and now moving towards the establishment of a population across the entire range.
- Six hogs were captured from the Bansbari range of the Manas National Park in 1996 for starting the breeding programme.
- The reintroduction programme began in 2008 with the Sonai-Rupai Wildlife Sanctuary, Orang National Park and Bornadi Wildlife Sanctuary, all of them are in Assam.
- By 2025, the PHCP plans to release 60 pygmy hogs in Manas.

75 years of robust partnership

Russia and India are exploring new areas of cooperation, with growth in bilateral trade on top of the agenda

THE 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Russia and India, shines the light on a partnership characterised by warmth, mutual respect and long-standing decades of trusted cooperation. Bilateral ties with Russia remain a key pillar of India's foreign policy, despite many fundamental changes at the global level over the past few decades. Indo-Russian ties acquired a new dimension in the year 2000, with the signing of the "Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership" during a visit to India by President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin. The strategic partnership between both nations dramatically enhanced levels of cooperation taking place in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship including political, security, trade and economy, defence, science and technology and culture. The Indo-Russia strategic partnership was further elevated to the level of a "special and privileged strategic partnership" during the 2010 visit of then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

The highest institutionalised dialogue mechanism in the strategic partnership between India and Russia takes place under the auspices of the Annual Summit meeting between the Prime Minister of India and the President of the Russian Federation. So far, 21 Annual Summit meetings have taken place alternatively in India and Russia. The latest of these took place in December 2021 during President Putin's working visit to New Delhi, during which happened the first meeting of the 2+2 Dialogue of Foreign and Defence Ministers. Discussions also



took place on the proposed Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor.

Both nations have set a target of increasing bilateral trade to \$30 billion and bilateral investment to \$50 billion by 2025. India continues to view Russia as a longstanding and time-tested friend that has played a significant role in its economic development and security. Trade and defence ties are at the top of the agenda of two Inter-Governmental Commissions – one on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC), co-chaired by

EAM and the Russian DPM, and another on Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-MTC) co-chaired by Russian and Indian Defence Ministers.

Bilateral trade in services between both nations has been stable over the last five years and stood at \$973.6 million for the year 2020, as compared to \$999 million in 2018. Bilateral trade from April 2020-March 2021 amounted to \$9.31 billion, with Indian exports amounting to \$3.48 billion and imports from Russia totalling \$5.83 billion. In comparison, bilateral trade from January-September, 2019 was lower at \$7.55 billion. Prior to the pandemic, in 2017-18, India's main imports from Russia were related to mineral fuels, mineral oils and products of their distillation; natural or cultured pearls, precious or semi-precious stones, precious metals; nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery; electrical machinery and equipment and fertilisers. In the

same period, India's main exports to Russia were related to pharmaceutical products; electrical machinery and equipment; nuclear reactors, boilers, machinery and organic chemicals.

India has been particularly active with investments in Russia's hydrocarbons sector in its search for energy security. Both nations are working towards realisation of an 'Energy Bridge' between them, which will be based on robust civil nuclear cooperation, LNG sourcing, partnership in the Oil and Gas sector, and engagement in renewable energy sources. Cumulative Indian investments into Russia between 2000 and 2014 amounted to \$8 billion, the bulk of which was in the hydrocarbon sector. Some of the major investments by Indian companies in Russia include ONGC Videsh Ltd. in Sakhalin-I Project (\$2.2 bn); Imperial Energy (\$2.1 bn); Commercial Bank of India Ltd. (JV of SBI and Canara Bank); ICICI Bank in its subsidiary ICICI Bank Eurasia; KGC Group (\$50 mn); Advance Pharma (1.5 bn Ru). In 2017, Russia's Rosneft acquired ES-SAR's Vadinar refinery in India in a deal worth \$12.9 billion, which remains one of the biggest Russian investments in India in recent times. There yet remains much more headroom for trade between both nations.

Efforts to increase India's engagement with the Russia Far East Region have also increased since 2019, in continuation of the 'Act-Far East focus' and NITI Aayog and the Ministry for Development of Russian Far East and Arctic of the Russian Federation are in the process of finalising a five-year programme (2021-2025) of cooperation in the region.

India-Russia deal on radio equipment

RTS signs contract with AAI to supply 34 sets of instrument landing system

DINAKAR PERI
NEW DELHI

Radio technical Systems (RTS) of Russia has signed a large-scale contract with the Airports Authority of India (AAI) for the supply of radio equipment.

The Russian company will manufacture 34 sets of instrument landing system (ILS) 734 for the modernisation of 24 airports in India, the Russian Embassy in India said. The contract comes amid the war in Ukraine and pressure from the West on India to diversify its dependence for defence needs.

"The domestic manufacturer received the right to conclude a contract based on the results of a global tender, in which, in addition to



Officials of Radio Technical Systems signing deals with Airport Authority of India officials on Friday. •TWITTER/@RUSEMBINDIA

RTS, the world's largest suppliers of radio equipment took part," the Embassy said in a statement, which was put up on its website, on Friday.

"The increased interest of leading manufacturers in the

competition is due to the scale of the project: this lot for the purchase of landing systems has become the largest in the world over the past few years."

According to the contract, the first part of landing sys-

tems ILS-734 must be shipped before November. Payments within the transaction will be carried out in national currencies, the statement said, without specifying the contract value.

"The contract between RTS and AAI has become a breakthrough for Russian business in the highly competitive market of ground-based radio equipment in India. There is no doubt that the successful execution of the contract will open up new opportunities for the implementation of joint projects to modernise Indian airport infrastructure," Russian Ambassador in India Denis Alipov was quoted as saying in the statement.

Buddha relics to be taken to Mongolia, Rijiju to lead team

DIVYAA

NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

IN A unique gesture, four Holy Relics of Lord Buddha are being taken to Mongolia for an exposition as part of Mongolian Buddha Purnima celebrations on June 14.

A 25-member delegation, led by Union Law Minister Kiren Rijiju, will accompany the relics on their journey, starting Monday.

The relics will be displayed at Batsagaan Temple, within the premises of Gandan Monastery, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited in 2015.

The four relics come from among 22 Buddha relics, currently housed at the National Museum in Delhi, and known as the 'Kapilvastu Relics' since they are from a site in Bihar believed to be the ancient city of Kapilvastu. They were discovered in 1898.

During the 11-day visit, Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy said, the relics will be accorded the status of a State Guest in Mongolia and will be taken in the same climate-controlled



Ceremonial casket in which the sacred relics are being carried from India. *Express*

case as it has been kept presently at the National Museum.

The Indian Air Force has made available a special airplane — C-17 GlobeMaster — to carry the holy relics, which will be received in Mongolia by the country's Culture Minister, the adviser to the country's President, and a group of monks. The Buddha Relics available in Mongolia would also be displayed along with the relics

from India, it was informed.

Two bullet-proof casings as well as two ceremonial caskets are being carried by the Indian delegation for both relics.

The last time these relics were taken out of the country was in 2012, when their exposition was held in Sri Lanka. In 2015, the Holy Relics were placed under 'AA' category of antiquities and art treasures that should not be ordinarily taken out of the country for exhibition, considering their delicate nature.

Reddy said New Delhi made an exception and permitted the exposition of Holy Relics in Mongolia on request of Ulaanbaatar.

Calling it a milestone in India-Mongolia relations, Rijiju said this will further boost cultural and spiritual relations between the countries.

The relics were discovered from Piprahwa, in UP's Siddharthnagar district, believed to be a part of the ancient city of Kapilavastu. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had conducted excavations at Piprahwa between 1971 and 1977, wherein

they discovered two inscribed steatite stone caskets containing 12 sacred relics from the bigger casket and 10 sacred relics from the smaller casket. The inscription on the lid of the casket refers to the relics of the Buddha and the Shakyas clan. These are believed to be the sacred relics of the Buddha and are now on long-term loan from ASI to the National Museum, New Delhi.

In October last year, during the inauguration of the international airport at Kushinagar (the final resting place of the Buddha), sacred relics from Sri Lanka were also part of the delegation that had landed at Kushinagar on the inaugural flight from Colombo. Exposition of Buddha's relics in each other's countries is an important component of Buddhist ties.

The Kapilvastu relics have been taken out of India only six times in the past. Rijiju said Mongolia and India look upon each other as spiritual and cultural neighbours and "Mongolia can also be said to be our 'Third Neighbour', even though we don't enjoy any common physical boundaries".

- After Gautama Buddha died or attained Mahaparinirvana in the 5th century BCE, eight ruling families shared the relics from his body. Among them were the Sakyas, the clan to which the Buddha belonged. They built a stupa over their share in Kapilavastu, the capital city.
- In 1898, **William Peppé**, a planter, while clearing his estate near Piprahwa, a village in eastern Uttar Pradesh near the India-Nepal border, found a brick dome that contained a sand stone box with five caskets, relics said to be that of the Buddha.
 - Piprahwa has been identified as the ancient city of Kapilavastu.



Tonga eruption

Researchers are starting to piece together why the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai eruption in the South Pacific on January 15 was so explosive. Evidence gathered by two groups suggests that when the Tongan volcano's centre collapsed, it spewed an enormous amount of magma that reacted violently with water.

- Volcanic eruptions in recent times (2021-22):
 - Etna volcano - Italy
 - Fagradalsfjall - Iceland
 - Kilauea - Hawaii
 - Soufrière - St Vincent
 - Nyiragongo - Democratic Republic of Kongo
 - Taal - Philippines
 - Fukutoku-Oka-no-Ba - Japan
 - Mount Sinabung volcano - Indonesia
 - Pacaya - Guatemala



What are SEBI's concerns around crypto assets?



Why has the market watchdog said it is difficult to regulate such currencies? What is the status of the bill?

SHIRAM SRINIVASAN

The story so far: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the watchdog which regulates the securities and commodities market, has reportedly told the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Finance led by Jayant Sinha that regulation of crypto assets would be difficult given the nature of technology that sustains them. It was reported last month that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had also shared its worries about cryptocurrencies with the committee.

What exactly did the SEBI tell the committee?

■ SEBI has essentially flagged the problems with regulating crypto assets because they "are maintained in decentralised distributed ledgers, which are nested in computer nodes spread all across the globe." Crypto assets is usually used as an umbrella term to encompass cryptocurrencies (e.g., Bitcoin, Ether) as also non-currency tokens such as utility tokens (which provide a certain utility within an ecosystem) and non-fungible tokens (which help establish ownership of unique items), among others. The underlying technology for crypto assets is the same – distributed ledgers that aren't controlled by any one entity.

What else did SEBI say?

■ As per media reports, SEBI has elaborated upon the possible need for different regulators to deal with different aspects of a crypto asset market. Crypto exchanges, for instance, represent one such aspect. These exchanges, in case of a cross-border transaction, in effect enable the use of a cryptocurrency as a bridge to convert one nation's official currency to another. These exchanges, SEBI has suggested, could be brought under the regulatory purview of the RBI. The idea is to implement what are called KYC/AML/CFT (Know Your Customer/Anti-Money Laundering/Combating of Financing of Terrorism) norms. For some years now, the RBI has implemented a set of these guidelines in regulating banks so as to prevent them from being used by criminal elements.

The subscribers or customers of crypto assets form another important part of the market. SEBI has suggested that the Consumer Protection Act of 2019 be invoked to make sure their interests are safeguarded. It has also sought clarity on whether cryptocurrencies can be legally classified as securities. Right now, they aren't. According to media reports, SEBI has said that crypto assets are not part of the definition of what constitutes as securities under the Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act of 1956,



REUTERS

also known as SCRA. It is to be noted that what constitutes as securities under the SCRA is what is used under the SEBI Act.

Why is this important?

■ In December 2021, it was widely reported that the government was looking to get SEBI to regulate crypto assets by bringing in legislation around that time. Though such a legislation – the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021 – did not materialise at that time, the talk that the government wants to treat cryptocurrencies as digital assets, rather than as currencies, has not ebbed. Ajay Tyagi, former chairman of SEBI, had in March said that the regulator has made several representations to the government regarding cryptocurrency regulation since November last year.

Has SEBI also flagged issues about celebrity endorsements?

■ Yes. It has proposed to the committee that celebrities should not be allowed to endorse cryptocurrencies. A *Hindu Business Line* report quoted a source who spelt out SEBI's stance thus: "Given that crypto products are unregulated, prominent public figures including celebrities, sportsmen, etc., or their voice shall not be used for endorsement/advertisement of crypto products." It was also mentioned that they must be held responsible for making any endorsement of crypto products.

What did the RBI tell the committee?

■ According to a report by *PTI*, top RBI officials told the committee that cryptocurrencies can lead to "dollarisation" of a part of the economy. This, they said, was against India's sovereign interest. "Almost all

cryptocurrencies are dollar-denominated and issued by foreign private entities, it may eventually lead to dollarisation of a part of our economy which will be against the country's sovereign interest," the officials were reported as saying. They linked this to a possible undermining of RBI's ability to regulate money supply in the economy.

What has been the stance of the government?

■ Over the last few years, the government's stance has definitely changed. But there is still ambiguity around what it really wants to do. A Bill that was sought to be introduced last year signalled its intention to ban cryptocurrencies outright. It, however, didn't see the light of day.

The idea that the administration doesn't consider cryptocurrencies desirable has been made clear from time to time for some years now. It started as statements in the Budget but then an inter-ministerial report recommended an outright ban. Such currencies were and are considered problematic as they can easily evade official scrutiny, bypass and weaken the monetary system, and fuel illegal trade.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India has essentially flagged the problems with regulating crypto assets because they 'are maintained in decentralised distributed ledgers, which are nested in computer nodes spread all across the globe'

legitimacy.

Legislative clarity is still awaited. Meanwhile, the Sinha-led committee has in recent months been holding extensive conversations with the financial regulators, who being statutory bodies, report to Parliament. The committee last November also met with representatives of the crypto industry. The Bill aims to set up a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the RBI.

Around this time, an RBI circular sought to bar banks from dealing in such currencies, only for the Supreme Court to strike it down.

The cryptocurrency industry saw a window of hope earlier this year when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman imposed a tax for the first time on crypto assets. The tax, at 30%, was seen at first to settle the question of legality of such currencies. But, Ms. Sitharaman, in a TV interview indicated that taxability was an issue that is not to be linked to

- A cryptocurrency is a digital or virtual currency that is secured by cryptography, which makes it **nearly impossible to counterfeit or double-spend**.
- Crypto" refers to the various encryption algorithms and cryptographic techniques that safeguard these entries, such as elliptical curve encryption, public-private key pairs, and hashing functions.
- El Salvador and Central African Republic have adopted bitcoin as legal tender.
- In India crypto assets are **not** legally recognised though they are taxed.

Understanding the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

Why was the OIC established? What has been its role in the international arena?

SAPTARINIO GHOSH

The story so far: On June 5, the General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) "condemned and denounced" the comments on Prophet Muhammad made by two erstwhile national spokespersons of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). Referring to it as part of "growing state of hatred and defamation of Islam in India", it sought that the perpetrators are brought to justice and held accountable. In response, Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson at the Ministry of External Affairs, stated that India rejected the OIC Secretariat's "unwarranted and "narrow-minded" comments. He said that the views expressed by the two individuals did not reflect the views of the Indian government and that relevant authorities had already initiated strong actions against them.

What is the OIC?
The OIC claims to be the "collective voice of the Muslim world". It was established at a 1969 summit in Rabat (Morocco) after what it describes as the 'criminal arson' of Al-Aqsa Mosque in the disputed city of Jerusalem. The OIC endeavours to establish solidarity among member states, support restoration of complete sovereignty and territorial integrity of any member state under occupation; protect, defend and combat defamation of Islam, prevent growing dissension in Muslim societies and work to ensure that member states take a united stand at the UN General Assembly, Human Rights Council and other international fora.

The OIC has consultative and cooperative relations with the UN and other inter-governmental organisations to protect the interest of Muslims, and settle conflicts and disputes involving member states, among them being the territorial conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the status of Jammu & Kashmir. Presently based in Jeddah, the organisation plans to permanently move its headquarters to East Jerusalem once the disputed city is 'liberated'. Moreover, it aspires to hold Israel accountable for 'war crimes' and violations of international law.

The organisation adheres to a charter that lays out its objectives, principles and operating mechanism. First adopted in 1972,

the charter has been revised multiple times in line with emerging conditions in the developing world. The present charter was adopted in March 2008 at Dakar in Senegal. It enshrines that all members be guided and inspired by the noble Islamic teachings and values alongside committing themselves to the purposes and principles of the UN charter. Member states are expected to uphold and promote good governance, democracy, human rights, fundamental freedom and the rule of law - settling disputes through peaceful means and refraining from the use of threat or force.

In addition, the OIC carves out a 10-year Programme of Action (PoA). Last instituted for the decade ending 2025, the PoA calls for measures to combat all aspects of terrorism globally. It also talks of implementing social schemes to eliminate two-thirds of extreme poverty and spurring industrialisation, investment, trade and overall economic and social growth among member states.

How does the OIC function?
The Islamic Summit, composed of Kings and heads of state, is the supreme authority of the organisation. Convening every two years, it deliberates, takes policy decisions, provides guidance on issues relevant to the organisation and considers issues of concern to the member states. The Council of Foreign Ministers is the chief decision-making body and meets annually to decide on how to implement the OIC's general policies. In addition, this council also appoints, for a period of five years, the Secretary General, who is the chief administrative officer of the grouping. The Secretary General follows up on implementation of the decisions, directs attention to competent organs' specific issues of concern, creates a channel for coordination among the varied organs and submits annual reports on the work undertaken. Former Foreign Affairs Minister of Chad, Houssein Ibrahim Taha, is the current Secretary General, taking up the role in November 2021.

UN members with a Muslim majority can join the organisation. The membership is to be ratified with full consensus at the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers. The same provisions apply for acquiring an observer status. All decision-making in the forum

requires a quorum defined by the presence of two-thirds of the member states and complete consensus. In case a consensus cannot be reached, decisions shall be made by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

The OIC is financed by the member states proportionate to their national incomes. Should a member fail to meet their obligations such that the amount of arrears equals or exceeds the amount of contributions due from it for the preceding two years, their voting rights are suspended. The member is only allowed to vote if the Council of Foreign Ministers is satisfied that the failure is due to conditions beyond the member's control. The OIC also has standing committees for cooperation on information and cultural affairs, economic and commercial matters, scientific and technological initiatives and for Jerusalem.

What has been the nature of India's relationship with the OIC?

India's association with the 57-nation grouping has not been easy. Even though the country has good relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia, its membership and engagement has been constantly challenged by Pakistan. In 1969, Islamabad's opposition to Indian participation at the first OIC Plenary resulted in the Indian delegation being turned back from the venue at the last minute.

About 50 years later, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addressed the OIC Plenary of Foreign Ministers in Abu Dhabi as a guest of honour. The invitation was extended by the UAE's Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. In 2018, Bangladesh had proposed India be given the observer status at the OIC considering its sizeable Muslim population - a move which received support from Turkey but was opposed by Pakistan. Political analyst Ketan Mehta of the Observer Research Foundation wrote in 2019 that Islamabad's apprehension stems from the fear that India's involvement in the grouping could influence the opinion of other Muslim states - not boding well for its influence.

What have been the criticisms against the OIC grouping?

Brookings Institution analyst Turan Kayaoglu



wrote in 2020 that the OIC had become a "premise for 'window dressing', more interested in the rights of Muslim minorities in places such as Palestine or Myanmar than the human rights violations of its member states. The author noted that the body lacks power and resources to investigate human rights violations or enforce its decisions through signed treaties and declarations.

Experts have also pointed to the fact that the organisation is largely restricted to arbitrating in conflicts where both parties are Muslims. This is because the organisation is centred around Quranic values, which, it believes, makes it a qualified arbitrator. The according of observer status at the UN to the Palestine Liberation Organisation is considered among its major successes.

Al Sharq Forum analyst Abdullah al-Ahsan, in an article in 2019 - the 50th anniversary of the organisation - noted that the OIC has failed to establish a cooperative venture among its members, who were either capital-rich and labour-scarce countries or manpower-rich and capital scarce. "...the organization has not evolved to become a significant player either in international politics or in the area of economic cooperation," Mr. Al-Ahsan wrote.

Former External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj addresses as 'Guest of Honour' at the 46th Foreign Ministers' meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Abu Dhabi in 2019.



India is neither a member nor an observer at OIC. In 2019, India made its maiden appearance at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting, as a "guest of honour". While the **supreme authority** of the Organisation is called the **Islamic Summit**, the chief decision-making authority is the **Council of Foreign Ministers**.

The FATF and Pakistan's position on its 'grey list'

How is Pakistan aiming to get itself removed from the Financial Action Task Force's grey list?

DIKSHA MUNJAL

The story so far: Ahead of the plenary session of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global financial crime watchdog, from June 14 to 17 in Berlin, Pakistan which continues to face an economic crunch, is hoping for some respite in the form of its removal from the FATF's 'grey list' or the list of countries presenting a risk to the global financial system.

In its last plenary meeting in March, the FATF had retained Pakistan's listing, asking it to expeditiously address the remaining deficiencies in its financial system.

What is the FATF?

The Financial Action Task Force is an international watchdog for financial crimes such as money laundering and terror financing. It was established at the G7 Summit of 1989 in Paris to address loopholes in the global financial system after member countries raised concerns about growing money laundering activities. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terror attack on the U.S., FATF also added terror financing as a main focus area. This was later broadened to include restricting the funding of weapons of mass destruction.

The FATF currently has 39 members.



• REUTERS

The decision-making body of the FATF, known as its plenary, meets thrice a year. Its meetings are attended by 206 countries of the global network, including members, and observer organisations, such as the World Bank, some offices of the United Nations, and regional development banks.

The FATF sets standards or recommendations for countries to achieve in order to plug the holes in their financial systems and make them less vulnerable to illegal financial activities. It conducts regular peer-reviewed evaluations called Mutual Evaluations (ME) of countries to check their performance on standards prescribed by it. The reviews are carried out by FATF and FATF-Style Regional Bodies (FSRBs), which then release Mutual Evaluation Reports (MERs). For the countries that don't perform well on certain standards, time-bound action plans are drawn up.

Recommendations for countries range from assessing risks of crimes to setting up legislative, investigative and judicial mechanisms to pursue cases of money laundering and terror funding.

What are FATF's 'grey' and 'black' lists?

While the words 'grey' and 'black' list do not exist in the official FATF lexicon, they designate countries that need to work on complying with FATF directives and those who are non-compliant, respectively.

At the end of every plenary meeting, FATF comes out with two lists of countries. The grey countries are designated as "jurisdictions under increased monitoring", working with the FATF to counter criminal financial activities. For such countries, the watchdog does not tell other members to carry out due-diligence measures vis-a-vis the listed country but does tell them to consider the risks such countries possess. Currently, 23 countries including Pakistan are on the grey list.

As for the black list, it means countries designated as 'high-risk jurisdictions subject to call for action'. In this case, the countries have considerable deficiencies in their AML/CFT (anti-money laundering and counter terrorist financing) regimes and the body calls on members and

non-members to apply enhanced due diligence. In the most serious cases, members are told to apply counter-measures such as sanctions on the listed countries. Currently, North Korea and Iran are on the black list.

Being listed under the FATF's lists makes it hard for countries to get aid from organisations like the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the European Union. It may also affect capital inflows, foreign direct investments, and portfolio flows.

Why is Pakistan on the grey list?

Pakistan was retained on the grey list in March as it was yet to address concerns on the front of terror financing investigations and prosecutions targeting senior leaders and commanders of UN designated terrorist groups. Diplomatic sources in Pakistan told *The Hindu* that steps had been taken in this direction such as the sentencing of terror outfit chief Hafiz Saeed, prosecution of Masood Azhar, arrest of about 300 other designated terrorists, and the seizure of more than 1,100 properties owned by terror groups. India meanwhile, a member of FATF, suspects the efficacy and permanence of Pakistani actions.

Pakistan is currently banking on its potential exclusion from the grey list to

- Headquartered at Paris.
- The FATF has developed the FATF Recommendations, or FATF Standards, which ensure a co-ordinated global response to prevent organised crime, corruption and terrorism.
- The FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations (European Commission and Gulf Cooperation Council).
- India is the only South Asian member in FATF.
- FATF monitoring expands beyond these 37 members and regional organisations.
- OECD, World Bank, and United Nations have observer status.

New advisory on Type-1 diabetes

India has highest number of patients

BINDU SHAJAN PERAPPADAN
NEW DELHI

From never wearing brand new shoes for a trip, to travelling with flash cards to navigate language barrier, managing meals when crossing time zones, storage of insulin and how to minimise glucose fluctuation – all of these are part of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) pre-travel advice for children and adolescents living with Type-1 diabetes. This is the country's first-ever list of basic dos and don'ts to ensure the safety of Type-1 patients during travel.

India has the highest number of incident and prevalent cases of Type-1 diabetes in the world as per recent estimates from the International Diabetes Federation, and the Council has now published a comprehensive document providing advice on care of diabetes in children, adolescents and adults with Type-1 diabetes.

Type-1 diabetes is a chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin. It typically appears in adolescence and symptoms include increased thirst, frequent urination, hunger, fatigue and blurred vision.

nation, hunger, fatigue and blurred vision.

The new 173-page ICMR guideline document states that individuals with Type-1 diabetes need support to survive, using insulin and other therapies, and to live their entire life without stigma, restrictions, or disabling complications due to their illness.

The Council has suggested that patients should inform the physician in advance, preferably four to six weeks before the planned travel, and should have medications and blood testing materials for the whole trip plus reserve supplies for at least two to four weeks if unforeseen circumstances extend the travel.

They also advise carrying comfortable shoes and socks to avoid straining the feet while on travel. "Alternating between two pairs of shoes can decrease the risk of blisters and calluses. New shoes, if purchased, should be used for at least two to three weeks before travel. Patients with a medical identification bracelet should have information on the disease, use of insulin, and disclose any allergies," the council said.

- Diabetes is a chronic, metabolic disease characterized by elevated levels of blood glucose (or blood sugar), which leads over time to serious damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys and nerves.
- *Two types*
 - Type 1 diabetes, once known as **juvenile diabetes or insulin-dependent** diabetes, is a chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin by itself.
 - Symptoms: The need to urinate often, thirst, constant hunger, weight loss, vision changes and fatigue.
 - Type 2 diabetes, usually in adults, which occurs when the body becomes resistant to insulin or doesn't make enough insulin. It is the most common one.
 - Symptoms: Generally similar to those of type 1 diabetes, but are often less marked. As a result, the disease may be diagnosed several years after onset.
- *Treatment :*
 - Type 1 diabetes cannot currently be prevented.
 - Effective approaches are available to prevent type 2 diabetes and to prevent the complications and premature death that can result from all types of diabetes.
- The Government of India is implementing National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases and Stroke (NPCDCS) for interventions up to District level under the National Health Mission(NHM).
 - Focus :awareness generation for behaviour and life-style changes, screening and early diagnosis of persons with high level of risk factors and their treatment and referral (if required) to higher facilities for appropriate management for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) including Diabetes.
- Other initiatives:
 - Jan Aushadhi Scheme : Insulin at affordable prices
 - Ayushman Bharat - Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY) : Free of cost treatment for eligible families.



Food safety index: how it is worked out, how the states have performed

HARIKISHAN SHARMA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

LAST WEEK, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) released the State Food Safety Index (SFSI) 2021-22. A look at how the index assesses and ranks states, and their performances.

What is the SFSI?

Developed by the FSSAI, the index aims to measure the performance of states and Union Territories on selected "parameters" of food safety. According to the FSSAI, the index is aimed at encouraging states and UTs to "improve their performance and work towards establishing a proper food safety ecosystem in their jurisdiction".

The SFSI is released annually for a **financial year**. For instance, the latest SFSI, released on World Food Safety Day, June 7, is for the fiscal 2021-22. This is the fourth edition of the SFSI since its inception in 2018-19.

Which are these food safety parameters?

The SFSI takes into account the perform-

ance of the states on five key parameters, each of which is assigned a different weightage in the assessment.

HUMAN RESOURCES & INSTITUTIONAL DATA: This carries a weightage of 20% and measures the "availability of human resources like number of Food Safety Officers, Designated Officers facility of adjudications and appellate tribunals, functioning of State/ District level Steering Committees, pendency of cases and their monitoring and participation in Central Advisory Committee meetings of the Food Authority".

COMPLIANCE: This carries the highest weightage, 30%. "This is the most important parameter and measures overall coverage of food businesses in licensing & registration commensurate with size and population of the State/UTs, special drives and camps organised, yearly increase, promptness and effectiveness in issue of state licenses/ registrations," the FSSAI says. "Promptness" in attending to consumer grievances, and availability of a help desk and web portals, too, come under this parameter.

FOOD TESTING—INFRASTRUCTURE AND SURVEILLANCE: Weighted at 20%, this

measures the "availability of adequate testing infrastructure with trained manpower in the States/UTs for testing food samples". The FSSAI says, "The States/UTs with NABL accredited labs and adequate manpower in the labs score more in this parameter". It takes into account the "availability and effective utilization" of Mobile Food Testing Labs and registration and utilization of InfoNet (Indian Food Laboratories Network).

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING: This parameter carries the lowest weightage, at 10%. It measures states' performance on training and capacity building of regulatory staff.

CONSUMER EMPOWERMENT: This carries a weightage of 20%. It evaluates the states and UTs on their performance on various consumer empowering initiatives of FSSAI, such as participation in Food Fortification, Eat Right Campus, BHOG (Blessful Hygienic Offering to God), Hygiene Rating of Restaurants, Clean Street Food Hubs, etc.

Besides, the states' initiatives for creating consumer awareness are also considered under this parameter.

TOP & BOTTOM IN EACH GROUP

RANK STATE/UT SCORE

LARGE STATES

1	Tamil Nadu	82
2	Gujarat	77.5
3	Maharashtra	70
15	Telangana	34.5
16	Bihar	30
17	Andhra	26

SMALL STATES

1	Goa	56
2	Manipur	44
7	Mizoram	22.5
8	Arunachal	21

UNION TERRITORIES

1	J&K	68.5
2	Delhi	66
7	Dadra & NH & Daman & Diu	27.5
8	Lakshadweep	16

How is the states and UTs assessed?

The states and Union Territories are not assessed and ranked together. They are segregated into three categories—large states, small states and UTs—and assessed separately within their respective categories, based on their performance on the selected food safety parameters.

"The assessment and evaluation of each category are done by separate teams comprising of outside experts for food testing and food & nutrition professionals in addition to FSSAI officials," the FSSAI says.

These expert teams examine details received from the states and UTs. They also interact with the states/UTs through video-conferencing for verification and confirmation of data.

How have the states and UTs performed this year?

In the category of the 20 large states, Tamil Nadu with an overall score of 82 out of 100 has performed the best and been ranked 1st on SFSI 2021-22, while Andhra Pradesh with an overall score of 26 has been ranked at the bottom—17th place (some states share a common rank).

Following Tamil Nadu in the rankings of the larger states are Gujarat (rank 2nd with a score 77.5), Maharashtra (3rd with 70), Himachal Pradesh (4th with 65.5) and West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh (sharing 5th with a score of 58.5).

Bihar (rank 16th, score 30), Telangana (rank 15th, score 34.5), Assam (rank 14th, score 35) and Chhattisgarh and Haryana (rank 13th, score 38) join Andhra Pradesh in the bottom 5 among the large states on the SFSI for the large states.

Among the remaining 8 large states, Kerala with a score of 57 has been ranked at 6th, Uttarakhand (score 55) at 7th, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh (both 54.5) at 8th, Karnataka (score 52.5) at 9th, Rajasthan (score 50.5) at 10th, Punjab (score 45) at 11th and Jharkhand (41.5) at 12th.

Among the eight small states, Goa with a score of 56 has been ranked at the top, while Arunachal Pradesh (rank 8th and score 21) is at the bottom.

Among the eight Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir with a score of 68.5 has been ranked 1st and Lakshadweep (score 16) as the bottom. Delhi with a score of 66 has been ranked at 2nd place.

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India is a statutory body constituted under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.
- It is attached to Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It operates under Food Safety and Standards Rule, 2011.
- **Functions**
 - Framing of regulations to lay down the standards and guidelines of food safety.
 - Granting FSSAI food safety license and certification for food businesses.
 - Laying down procedure and guidelines for laboratories in food businesses.
 - To provide suggestions to the government in framing the policies.
 - To collect data regarding contaminants in foods products, identification of emerging risks and introduction of rapid alert system.
 - Creating an information network across the country about food safety.
 - Promote general awareness about food safety and food standards.
- FSSAI is the National Codex Contact Point of India (NCCP), which maintains Codex Alimentarius Commission's (CAC) standard in India.

Important initiatives for food safety in India:

- Eat Right India Movement
- Eat Right Station Certification
- Eat Right Research Awards and Grants



Question mark on Russia inputs, India evaluates French push at Jaitapur

**MIHIR MISHRA
& ANIL SASI**

NEW DELHI, JUNE 12

AMID MOUNTING uncertainties over the civil nuclear partnership with Russia in the wake of the Ukraine war, there are indications of fresh progress on the much-delayed deal with French power utility EDF for the supply of six EPR (European Pressurised Water Reactors) nuclear reactors.

The Department of Atomic Energy is actively examining a binding techno-commercial offer submitted by the French state-owned power company to help build six third-generation EPR reactors at Jaitapur in Maharashtra.

A high-level team from EDF was here late last month.

New Delhi had accorded an "in-principle" approval of the site at Jaitapur in Maharashtra for setting up of six reactors of 1650 MWe (megawatt electric) each as part of an umbrella nuclear deal signed with France in September 2008.

However, that proposal has been hanging fire on account of multiple factors, including the slowdown in nuclear projects globally post the Fukushima incident and internal reorganisation at French nuclear utility

EXPLAINED **E** A bigger n-power basket

IF JAITAPUR takes off, it will be the largest n-power site in the country with a capacity of 9000 MWe. Given the war in Europe, there is also a need to diversify the nuclear cooperation basket. Also, New Delhi is factoring in the patchy French record on deadline management on EPR projects across the world.

Areva (which was subsequently taken over by EDF).

If the Jaitapur deal takes off, it would be the largest nuclear power generating site in the country with a total capacity of 9,900 MWe and one of the biggest-ever export deals for the French side.

Sources said the issue of the techno-commercial offer came up during delegation level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron in May.

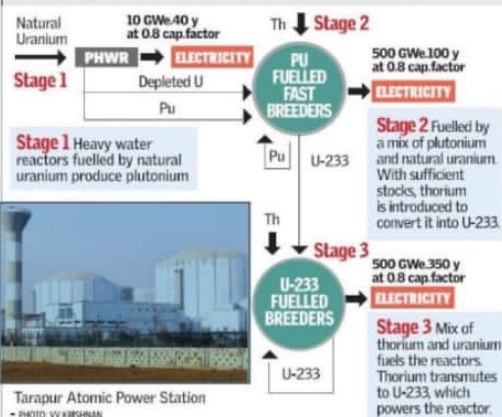
At present, Russia is the only country setting up imported

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

- Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (TN) - Russia
 - 6 Plants total capacity = $6 \times 1000 = 6000$ MWe
- Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (Maharashtra) - France
 - Total capacity = 9000 MWe
- Kovvada Nuclear Power Project (Andhra Pradesh) + ChhayaMithiVirdi (Gujarat) - US
 - Total capacity = $6 \times 1208 = 7248$ MWe
- Natural Uranium Ore Concentrate for nuclear fuel are procured from **Russia, Canada, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.**
- Nuclear fuel for 10 indigenous 700 MW Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) are met by indigenously mined and produced uranium.
- The third unit of the Kakrapar Atomic Power Project (KAPP-3) in Gujarat achieved its 'first criticality' in July, 2020.
 - Significance : It is the country's first 700 MWe (megawatt electric) unit, and the **biggest indigenously developed** variant of the Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR).
 - It's a significant scale-up in technology, both in terms of optimisation of its PHWR design and an improvement in the economies of scale.
- Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors use natural uranium as fuel and heavy water as moderator.

INDIA'S THREE-STAGE NUCLEAR PROGRAMME

Homi Bhabha envisioned India's nuclear power programme in three stages to suit the country's low uranium resource profile



Daily MCQ for APSC CCE

Recently, Which of the following NGO published the State of India's Environment Report 2021

- A. Global Footprint Network
- B. Centre for Science and Environment
- C. Bombay Natural History Society
- D. Centre for Environment Education

Correct Answer is: **B. Centre for Science and Environment**

The **Centre for Science and Environment (CSE)** recently released the State of India's Environment Report 2022. The report provides an insight on various priority issues for India related to the current status of environment and natural resources, the pressures behind environmental changes and the impacts associated with these changes. The report also assesses the Government's current and proposed policy initiatives or programmes as a response to check and monitor further degradation of environment and also suggests policy options.

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