

Tributes pour in for MANMOHAN SINGH

NEW DELHI, Dec 27 (PTI)

PRESIDENT Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Singh and Prime Minister Narendra Modi were among the top dignitaries who paid homage to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his residence here on Friday.

Several leaders cutting across party lines, including Union Ministers and Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, also paid their tributes to the former two-term Prime Minister who died on Thursday night.

President Murmu and Vice President Dhankhar visited the residence of Singh and paid their last respects to him and met his wife and other family members.

Prime Minister Modi, who also laid a wreath, described his predecessor's death as a big loss to the nation, asserting that his commitment to the people and for the country's development would always be respected.

Singh, the architect of India's economic reforms and a consensus builder in the rough world of politics, died at AIIMS, Delhi, late on Thursday. He was 92.



(Top) Prime Minister Narendra Modi lays a wreath to pay his last respects to the mortal remains of former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh at his residence in New Delhi on Friday. Union Home Minister Amit Shah and others are also present. (Above) Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge pays his last respects to Manmohan Singh. Party MP and LoP Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi and Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi are also seen. (ANI)

He is survived by his wife and three daughters. The Union Cabinet at its meeting held under PM Modi also condoled Singh's passing and hailed him as an eminent statesman and a distinguished leader who left an imprint on national life.

During a meeting chaired by Modi, the Cabinet observed a two-minute silence in honour of the departed soul and adopted a Condolence Resolution in the memory of Singh.

"Dr Manmohan Singh has left

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his imprint on our national life. In his passing away, the Nation has lost an eminent statesman, renowned economist and a distinguished leader," the resolution read. The Government has announced a seven-day State mourning as a mark of respect to the former Prime Minister.

Draped in the Tricolour, Singh's body was brought to his 3, Motilal Nehru Road, residence -- the sprawling bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi that served as his retire-



ment abode for the last over 10 years ever since he relinquished charge as Prime Minister.

Singh would be cremated on Saturday and his final journey will commence from the AICC headquarters at 9.30 am on Saturday, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said.

Union Home Ministry said in a communication that the last rites of the former Prime Minister will be conducted at 11:45 am Saturday at the Nigambodh Ghat crematorium here with State honours. It said the Ministry of Defence has been requested to make arrangements.

Meanwhile, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to Prime Minister Modi, urging him to conduct the last rites of Singh at a place where a memorial can be built.



National flag flies at half-mast at the Parliament House during the seven-day State mourning following the demise of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi. (PTI)

Several top leaders cutting across party lines paid tributes to the former two-term PM Manmohan Singh

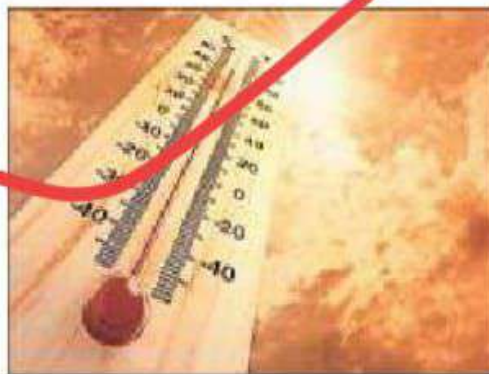
Manmohan Singh would be cremated today and his final journey will commence from the AICC headquarters at 9.30 am

41 extra days of dangerous heat in 2024 due to climate change

NEW DELHI, Dec 27 (ANI)

CLIMATE change-induced extreme weather events have claimed over 3,700 lives, displaced millions and added 41 days of dangerous heat globally in 2024, according to two climate research organisations.

The analysis, *When Risks Become Reality: Extreme Weather in 2024* by World Weather Attribution (WWA) and Climate Central, underscores the urgent need for countries to transition away from fossil fuels and bolster preparations for extreme weather events in 2025 and beyond. "This year has been the clearest and most devastating demonstration of the impacts of fossil fuel warming," said Dr Friederike Otto, lead of WWA and Senior Lecturer in Climate Science at Imperial College London. "Extreme weather killed thousands, displaced millions, and caused unrelenting suffering."



According to the report, Human-induced climate change has added an average of 41 days of dangerous heat worldwide in 2024.

The report revealed that human-caused climate change intensified 26 of the 29 weather events studied, including record-breaking floods, hurricanes, and droughts. These events killed at least 3,700 people and displaced millions.

Extreme rain in Kerala and surrounding areas was one of the 219 extreme weather events studied for

the report.

In Africa, floods in countries like Sudan, Nigeria, and Cameroon were the deadliest event, claiming over 2,000 lives and displacing millions. The study noted that similar rainfall events could become annual occurrences if warming reaches 2 degrees celsius, a threshold that may be crossed as early as the 2040's.

Hurricane Helene, which struck six US states, was intensified by climate change, with sea temperatures fuelling it made 200 to 500 times more likely.

The hurricane left 230 people dead, becoming the second-deadliest mainland US hurricane after Katrina in 2005.

Meanwhile, a historic drought in the Amazon--made 30 times more likely by global warming--threatened to push the forest towards a drier state, jeopardising its role as a carbon sink and its biodiversity.

'Russia's air defence fire likely caused Azerbaijan plane crash'

Russia's aviation chief said that a Ukrainian drone attack was underway in the region of Chechnya at the time when Azerbaijani airliner attempted to land before diverting to Kazakhstan



BAKU, Dec 27 (AP)

AVIATION experts said that Russian air defence fire was likely responsible for the Azerbaijani plane crash the day before that killed 38 people and left all 29

survivors injured.

However, Russia's aviation chief said on Friday that a Ukrainian drone attack was underway in the region of Chechnya at the time an Azerbaijani airliner attempted to land before diverting to

Kazakhstan and crashing there earlier this week.

Dmitry Yarov, head of Russia's civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia, didn't comment on statements by an Azerbaijani lawmaker and many aviation experts

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CHINA LAUNCHES AMPHIBIOUS ASSAULT SHIP

BANGKOK, Dec 27 (AP)

CHINA launched a new amphibious assault ship Friday, capable of launching fighter jets and designed to strengthen the navy's combat ability in distant seas.

The Sichuan, the first ship of the 076 type, is China's largest such ship yet, displacing 40,000 tons and equipped with an electromagnetic catapult which will allow fighter jets to launch directly off its deck, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

The ship is designed to launch ground troops in landing crafts and provide them with air support. Developed by Chinese researchers, it's also equipped with an "arrestor technology" which allows fighter jets to land on its deck. China's first amphibious

The Sichuan is capable of launching fighter jets



assault ships, the type 075, launched in 2019.

China's People's Liberation Army Navy, or PLAN, has been working on modernizing its

forces for more than a decade, with the aim of being able to operate globally rather than being restricted to waters near the Chinese mainland.

China defends plan to build world's largest dam in Tibet

BEIJING, Dec 27 (PTI)

CHINA on Friday defended its plan to build the world's largest dam on the Brahmaputra River in Tibet saying that the project will not affect riparian states and safety issues have been addressed through decades of studies.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Mao Ning played down apprehensions over the massive project estimated to cost around USD 137 billion being built in the ecologically fragile Himalayan region located along a tectonic plate boundary where earthquakes occur frequently.

She said China has carried out

in-depth studies for decades.

China has always been responsible for the development of cross-border rivers, Mao said. She said the hydropower development in Tibet has been studied safeguard measures have been taken for the security of the project and ecological and environmental protection.

BOOST FOR E-CHALLAN MECHANISM

RTOs to get interceptor vehicles mounted with radar system

MUMBAI, Dec 27 (PTI)

THE Maharashtra motor vehicles department (MMVD) will procure interceptor vehicles equipped with radar systems capable of detecting multiple traffic violations simultaneously, officials said on Friday.

The deployment of such radar-mounted interceptor vehicles, which will be the first for any State in the country, is expected to significantly increase the number of e-challans issued by flying squads of Regional Transport Offices (RTO), in turn improving enforcement efficiency, they said.

The radar-based system will be installed on 96 interceptor vehicles, the majority of which arrived about a month ago and are awaiting fitment, and will then be handed over to RTO flying squads, the officials said.

While 69 Mahindra-made interceptor vehicles have been

delivered and are awaiting installation of the new system, procurement of 27 more is in process.

This procurement comes after MMVD introduced 187 AI-powered laser speed gun mounted interceptor vehicles earlier this year using road safety fund.

"While the current speed gun system allows flying squads to issue 10-12 e-challans per hour, the radar-based system will take this to 800-900 e-challans per hour. The radar system will capture vehicle speed and photographs, allowing for detection of multiple offences without stopping vehicles," said Transport Commissioner Vivek Bhimanwar.

"The system will target violations such as speeding, lane cutting, triple-seat riding, helmetless two-wheeler riding, over-dimensional vehicles, and driving without seat belts. Interceptor vehicles will be strategically parked in high-vio-

lation areas for effective enforcement," he added.

The MMVD has placed an order with Ashoka Buildcon's IT wing for installation of the radar system, which is expected to arrive in 2025, other officials added.

Each interceptor vehicle procured through GM (government marketplace) portal costs 12-13 lakh, and after installation of the radar system, the cost will rise to around 16 lakh, a senior official said, adding the agreement includes five years of comprehensive maintenance of the system.

The radar-based system will also come up with Intelligent Traffic Management System (ITMS), which includes PCs, laptops and other equipment, enabling RTO inspectors to generate e-challans immediately using the images and details received through the system, the official said.

Jaishankar, Blinken review advancement of ties



WASHINGTON, Dec 27 (ANI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held a meeting with his US counterpart Antony Blinken in Washington, DC on Thursday. The two leaders reviewed the advancement of India-US partnership over the past four years and agreed that cooperation has strengthened in many sectors.

Jaishankar expressed confidence that ties between India and US will serve mutual interests and global good.

In a post on X, Jaishankar stated, "Delighted to meet @SecBlinken yesterday evening in Washington DC. Reviewed the

advancement of India - US partnership over the last four years. Agreed that our cooperation has strengthened in many domains, just as our comfort levels have grown correspondingly. Confident that India-US relationship will serve our mutual interests as well as global good."

Jaishankar is currently on an official visit to the US. During his visit, he met India's Ambassador to US, Vinay Kwatra and Consul Generals based in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Houston and Atlanta.

The officials discussed opportunities for deepening India-US partnership, focusing on technology, trade and investments.

"A productive day with team @IndianEmbassyUS and our Consul Generals based in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Seattle, Houston and Atlanta. Discussed opportunities for deepening India-US partnership, focusing on technology, trade and investments. Also shared views on better serving the Indian community in the USA," Jaishankar wrote on X.