

10 newly-elected RS members take oath

NEW DELHI, June 25 (PTI)

RAJYA Sabha Chairman C P Radhakrishnan on Thursday administered oath of office to ten newly-elected members of the Upper House.

Among the new members sworn in were four members from Andhra Pradesh, two from Jharkhand, one each from Arunachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, and Tamil Nadu.

The newly-inducted members were Sana Sathish Babu (TDP), Vijay Chintakayala (TDP), Bhashyam Rama Krishna (TDP) and Lingamaneni Ramesh (JSP) (all from Andhra Pradesh), Tai Tagak (BJP) from Arunachal Pradesh, Rajesh Parmanad Shukla (BJP) from Gujarat, Parimal Nathwani (IND) and Baidyanath Ram (JMM), both from Jharkhand, Debashish Samantaray (BJP) from Odisha and Praveen Chakravarty (INC) from Tamil Nadu.

India's indigenous Netra (AEW&C) System gets clearance certificate

BENGALURU, June 25 (PTI)

INDIA'S Indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) System was on Thursday accorded Final Operational Clearance, marking a major milestone by paving the way for operational exploitation by the Indian Air Force.

Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, formally declared the Final Operational Clearance (FOC) of the Netra AEW&C system in a ceremony held at the Centre for Airborne Systems here.

At the event here, the indigenous Netra (AEW&C) System and the FOC certificate were also unveiled.

Speaking on the occasion, Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti said, "It is indeed a proud moment to declare the AEW&C's Final Operational Clearance. This



DRDO's indigenously-developed NETRA Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) system receives its Final Operational Clearance (FOC) during a ceremony, at Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS) in Bengaluru on Thursday. (PTI)

is not merely the culmination of an indigenous technology programme, but a celebration of the unique partnership between the Indian Air Force and the scientific community in fulfilling India's quest for Atmanirbharta."

Noting that the journey of the AEW&C has been extraordinary, he also said that it came with challenges, as is the norm for any new system.

"We had to do a lot of innovation, it had to see a lot of perse-

verance, and above all, collaboration. From every individual, every entity that was involved, he said.

Bharti said that right from the very inception of the programme, the Indian Air Force was not just a customer waiting for delivery of the product, but it was an active partner in design, development, integration, testing, and operationalisation.

"DRDO, CABS (Centre for Airborne Systems) in particular, and I have worked hand in hand in defining the operational requirements, participating in developmental and user trials, conducting continuous evaluation and providing timely and constructive feedback," he said.

According to him, every mission flown, every operational exercise undertaken, and every lesson learned was shared and analysed tightly and then trans-

lated into improvements, making the system progressively more capable and operationally important.

"Perhaps the greatest testimony to the faith that the Indian Air Force had in this indigenous programme was our decision to induct the platform operationally even before the final operational clearance. And this was not mere act of optimism. This was an expression of confidence in the capabilities of our scientists, and in the immense potential of our indigenous industry," he added on Thursday.

Later, speaking to reporters, K Rajalakshmi Menon, Director General (AERO) at DRDO said the indigenous system is equipped with a comprehensive suite: radar, electronic warfare systems, secure communication, self-protection and it provides excellent situational awareness.

India remains global growth engine: IMF

WASHINGTON, June 25, (IANS)

INDIA continues to be a major driver of global economic growth despite the economic impact of the Iran conflict and higher energy prices, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Thursday, while cautioning that the country has not been immune to disruptions in global energy markets.

Addressing a regular IMF press briefing, Julie Kozack, Director of the IMF's Communications Department, said India's economy had remained resilient despite external headwinds, supported by robust domestic demand.

"What I can say is that despite the impact of the war and global headwinds from the global economy, or externally, India's economy has been growing robustly, and it has been supported, particularly by very strong domestic demand within India," Kozack said.

The IMF said it continues to project India's economy to grow by 6.5 per cent in fiscal year 2026-27, maintaining the upward revision made in April.

"We had projected growth at 6.5 per cent in fiscal year 26-27, and that was a slight upgrade compared to what we had had in January. So, 6.5 per cent is still quite strong growth," Kozack said.

She said the forecast reflected strong momentum carried over from last year and the reduction in US tariff rates, which helped cushion the impact of the global energy shock.

India among world's leading countries in solar, wind energy: Khattar

GURUGRAM, June 25 (ANI)

UNION Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Thursday highlighted India's growing role in the global energy transition, stating that the country is rapidly scaling up renewable energy, smart grid systems and energy storage capacity to build a future-ready power sector.

Speaking at the 11th meeting of the BRICS Energy Ministers in Gurugram, Khattar said the launch of a new centre under BRICS energy cooperation marks



Union Minister for Housing and Urban Affairs and Power Manohar Lal Khattar addresses the 11th BRICS Energy Ministers' Meeting, in Gurugram, Haryana. (@mlkhattar/X via PTI)

an important milestone in strengthening collaboration among member nations in the sector. "The launch of this centre marks an important step in the BRICS Energy cooperation. It reflects our shared commitment to strengthen collaborations, promote innovation and build reliable and future-ready energy systems," he said.

Pointing to mounting challenges faced by power systems globally, he said the nature of grids was shifting with renewable energy moving to the centre of

the transition.

"Power systems across the world have faced growing challenges... Today with renewable energy becoming a central part of the energy transition, this approach is changing... The grid of the future will manage real-time demand, integrate large amounts of renewable energy, support energy storage and empower consumers through digital technologies," Khattar added.

Khattar said India was now among the world's leading coun-

tries in solar and wind energy deployment.

"Today, India is among the world's leading countries in solar, and wind energy deployment. Recognizing this imperative, India is implementing one of the world's largest smart metering programs to accelerate power sector digitalisation and improve grid efficiency," he added.

On storage, the Minister laid out an "ambitious roadmap" with a target of nearly 100 gigawatt of pumped storage capacity against an identified potential of 260 GW.

Two powerful quakes rock Venezuela

At least 164 killed; 1,000 injured



A man jumps on a collapsed building after an earthquake in Caracas on Wednesday. (AP/PTI)

CARACAS, June 25 (AP)

AT LEAST 164 people have died, and nearly 1,000 were injured after a pair of powerful quakes rocked Venezuela, Acting President Delcy Rodríguez said on Thursday as rescue teams raced to the areas hardest hit by the quakes where many people were trapped beneath collapsed buildings.

Wednesday evening's 7.2- and

7.5-magnitude earthquakes were among the strongest to strike Venezuela in more than a century and could be felt throughout the region. The country's main airport was damaged and closed, while buildings were evacuated in places as far away as Brazil's Amazon, about 1,700 kilometers (1,050 miles) from Venezuela's capital, Caracas.

Television broadcasts on

Thursday showed rescue workers using power tools to work their way into piles of rubble where buildings once stood. Panicked residents of the capital were sent pouring into the streets, and after the quakes many people walked among the debris searching for the missing among collapsed buildings and toppled electric poles.

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India stands ready to extend all help: Modi

NEW DELHI, June 25 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed sadness over the devastation caused by the earthquakes in Venezuela, and said India stands ready to extend all possible assistance to the Latin American country.

"Deeply saddened by the devastation caused by the severe earthquakes in Venezuela. On behalf of the people of India, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the Government and people of Venezuela, especially to the families who have lost their loved ones," Modi said on X.

Responding to PM Modi's message, Rodríguez said Venezuela welcomed India's support and solidarity during the ongoing humanitarian crisis. "We warmly welcome the remarks by Prime Minister Modi, who expressed his condolences and India's willingness to support relief efforts.



A collapsed building after an earthquake in Caracas. (AP/PTI)

7.2 quake strikes off Japan

TOKYO, June 25 (AP)

A POWERFUL earthquake struck off Japan's northern coast on Thursday, but country's meteorological agency said, no danger of tsunami.

The quake had a magnitude of 7.2 and occurred off the eastern coast of Iwate, upgraded

from an initial reading of 6.9, Japan Meteorological Agency said. The quake had a depth of about 50 kilometers, it said.

The rattling occurred in an area where strong earthquakes have repeatedly been reported in recent months, including one that triggered a weeklong

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'Russia is shifting air defences to Moscow after drone strikes'

■ By Illia Novikov
KYIV, June 25 (AP)

RUSSIA is moving a significant part of its air defences to protect a handful of prime targets, including Moscow, as Ukraine's long-range drones continue to hammer sites deep inside the country, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy says.

Ukraine has in recent months stepped up its aerial campaign against Russian military installations and energy facilities. Its success has caused fuel shortages and disrupted army supply lines, stalling Moscow's invasion of its neighbour after more than four years of fighting and rattling

Russian officials.

Zelenskyy said in his daily video address late Wednesday that Russia is moving more air defences to the capital as well as to Valdai, a town some 500 kilometres northwest of Moscow where Russian President Vladimir Putin has a residence, and to protect the Kerch Bridge, which is a vital supply route connecting the Crimean Peninsula with the Russian mainland.

"In the Moscow region alone, they have amassed hundreds of launchers" for air defence missiles, Zelenskyy said. "Nearly 90 launchers have been redeployed to Valdai from other regions of Russia."

Ukrainian drones have recently hit Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia's second-largest city and Putin's hometown. Ukraine is also trying to cut off Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula that Russia invaded and illegally annexed in 2014.

The changes, Zelenskyy suggested, would leave other parts of Russia vulnerable to Ukraine's increasingly sophisticated long-range drones, which can now fly more than 1,500 kilometres.

"There are many difficulties (for Russia), all because Putin refuses to end his war and to hear our proposals for a meeting, genuine negotiations, and a dignified peace," Zelenskyy said.

Zelenskyy has accepted an unconditional ceasefire demanded by US President Donald Trump but Putin has refused, and a year of US-led peace efforts made no significant headway.

Ukraine's prospects have brightened after more than four years of a gruelling war of attrition as its domestic development and production of cutting-edge drones pin down the bigger Russian army.

Trump, who has previously been critical of Zelenskyy, said at the White House on Wednesday that the Ukrainian leader is "courageous" and "doing pretty well" in the war.

Passport is not proof of citizenship, clarifies MEA after controversy

NEW DELHI, June 25 (IANS)

THE Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Thursday clarified that the passport has never been proof of citizenship, after a controversy erupted on the issue a day before. It said, this position has been there since the Passport Act came into force. It is not that it was decided in the last 12 years.

The Ministry said, a passport is mainly a travel document, and its legal status has remained unchanged for many years.

The issue gained attention after an MEA official said at a Passport Seva Divas event on Wednesday that a passport should primarily be understood as a document for travel.

That comment drew criticism from Opposition leaders, lawyers, and commentators, who questioned how a document issued by the Government after checks and verification could fail to establish citizenship on its own, in response to the backlash, the MEA issued a clarification.

Passport among valid documents for SIR identification: EC officials

NEW DELHI, June 25 (PTI)

ELECTION Commission officials on Thursday said that Indian passports continue to be among the 12 valid supporting documents required by voters to prove their eligibility to be on the voters' list under the

ongoing special intensive revision of electoral rolls.

They were responding to a query following a controversy that arose after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that a passport is not proof of citizenship, referencing the Passport Act of 1967.