

Will not allow anyone to touch Aravallis, rules SC

NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

THE Supreme Court on Thursday said it will not allow "anyone to touch the Aravallis", refusing to permit the Haryana Government to submit a detailed plan on jungle safari till a definition of "Aravalli range" is clarified by experts.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi said that the issue of jungle safari will be dealt with when it considers the main matter on the Aravalli range. Counsel for Haryana said that they have revised the detailed project report (DPR) of the safari project from 10,000 acres to over 3,300 acres. He said all they want is to be allowed to furnish the DPR to the central empowered committee (CEC) for

their examination.

The bench said, "We are not experts. The experts will decide the definition of Aravalli. Till the definition of the Aravalli range is finalised, we will not allow anyone to touch the Aravallis."

CJI Kant said that the Aravalli is not only of Haryana or Rajasthan but it is a range which traverses many states.

"We will deal with this issue of safari with the main matter," he told the counsel for the Haryana Government, who said that the main matter is altogether different and the issue of safari is different.

"Sometimes, the CEC is also very selective in giving its permission. If we permit this, they will give a very rosy picture that these are the trees, wildlife and forests," the bench observed.



CJI Kant said that once the expert committee's opinion comes, it will deal with the safari project.

In October last year, the top court stalled the proposed mega 'Aravali Zoo Safari project', tout-

ed to be the world's biggest zoo-safari by the Haryana government.

The Zoo Safari project aims to set up big cat zones and house hundreds of species of birds, reptiles and butterflies in an area of

10,000 acres in the eco-fragile Aravalli range in Gurgaon and Nuh districts.

The top court was dealing with a petition jointly filed by five retired Indian Forest Service officers (IFS) and NGO 'People for Aravallis' alleging the project would spell doom for the already damaged Aravalli range.

On December 29, amid the outcry over the new definition of Aravallis, the top court kept in abeyance its directions of November 20 last year which accepted a uniform definition of these hills and ranges, saying there is a need to resolve "critical ambiguities" including whether the 100-metre elevation and the 500-metre gap between hills criteria will strip significant portion of the range of environment protection.

IAF to train UK's Royal Air Force pilots

NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

FOR the first time, the Indian Air Force is set to train pilots of the UK's Royal Air Force under a new initiative.

The decision was taken at the 19th UK-India Air Staff Talks held on Thursday in New Delhi.

"Under the latest agreement, the Indian Air Force will deploy three Qualified Flight Instructors (QFI) to Royal Air Force (RAF) Valley in the UK -- the training base for British fast jet pilots," a British readout said.

"This marks the first time that Indian QFIs will impart fast jet training to British pilots at RAF Valley. The deployment will be

initially for a period of two years," it said.

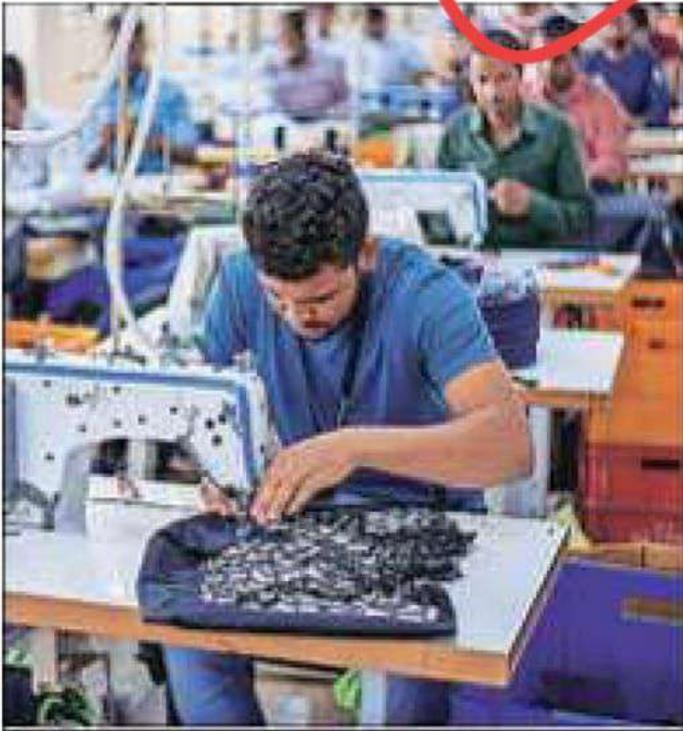
The development closely follows the first-time deployment in January this year of an Indian Air Force officer as an instructor to the Royal Air Force College Cranwell -- the air academy that trains the next generation of RAF officers. The new initiative marked all three British military academies now hosting Indian officers as instructors from respective services, the readout noted. "The signing of this Letter of Agreement is a significant step in strengthening the long-standing relationship between the Royal Air Force and the Indian Air Force," Air Vice Marshal Ian

Townsend, Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, said.

"Bringing Indian QFIs into UK Military Flying Training Systems deepens our cooperation, enhances interoperability and reinforces our shared commitment to excellence in aircrew training," he said.

Commodore Chris Saunders, who is Defence Adviser to the British High Commission, said: "The forthcoming deployment of Indian Qualified Flying Instructors to the UK represents another significant milestone in our expanding defence relationship, positively building on the mandate of UK-India Vision 2035."

'India to receive same garment duty benefits as B'desh under US trade pact'



NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

INDIA will get concessional duty access for garments made by using American yarn and cotton under its trade agreement with the US, similar to the benefits currently provided to Bangladesh, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday.

The US will reduce reciprocal tariffs on Bangladeshi goods to 19 per cent, but garments attract zero duty

only if made with US cotton and man-made fibres. A Bangladeshi garment now faces a 31 per cent levy (12 per cent for most-favoured nation plus 19 per cent reciprocal), and if it uses US fibres, then duty falls to 12 per cent.

“Bangladesh ko jo Mila hai, wo Bharat ko bhi milne wala hai final agreement me (Whatever Bangladesh has got, India will also get the same in the final agreement,” Goyal told reporters here.

It will be there in the fine prints of the India-US pact, he said. If an Indian company procures yarn forward and cotton forward from the US, manufactures garments, and re-exports to the US, those garments will also receive duty-free access in America, just like Bangladeshi firms, he pointed out. That is there in that US-Bangladesh agreement, and “it will be in our agreement also”, he said, adding that it will not have any impact on Indian cotton farmers.

The US has limited cotton production, its exports are only USD 5 million, and for India, the target is USD 50 billion, the Minister said.

CBSE to introduce On-Screen Marking for Class 12 exam

OSM is a digital system in which scanned answer sheets are evaluated by teachers on computers, with marks calculated automatically by software.

■ **By Vishu Adhana**
NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (ANI)

IN A significant shift in evaluation methodology, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has decided to reintroduce On-Screen Marking (OSM) for Class 12 Board examinations beginning 2026, aiming to enhance efficiency, transparency and accuracy in the assessment process.

OSM is a digital system in which scanned answer sheets are evaluated by teachers on computers, with marks calculated automatically by software.

In a circular dated February 9 addressed to principals and heads of all CBSE-affiliated schools, the Board said that while Class 12 answer books will be evaluated through the digital system from 2026, Class 10 answer books will continue to be evaluated in physical mode for now.

CBSE is conducting the Secondary and Senior Secondary Board Examinations 2026 for the students of more than 31,000 schools affiliated to it in India and 26 countries abroad from February 17 to April 10.

About 46 lakh students will appear for these examinations at more than 8074 centres across



the country and abroad.

“In its continuous effort to enhance efficiency and transparency, the Board has decided to introduce On-Screen Marking (OSM) for the evaluation of Class XII answer books beginning with the 2026 examinations. Evaluation of Class X answer books will continue in physical mode as before in 2026,” the circular stated.

On-Screen Marking is a digital system under which scanned copies of students’ answer sheets are evaluated by teachers on computers, with marks calculated automatically through software, thereby eliminating manual totalling errors. CBSE said, the system is expected to bring multiple advantages, including “elimination of totalling errors,” “automated coordination reducing manual intervention,” and “faster evaluation with wider teacher participation.”

The Board further noted that under the OSM system, teachers would be able to evaluate answer sheets while remaining in their respective schools and continuing regular duties, leading to savings in transportation time and costs. It also stated that “post-result verification of marks will no longer be required” and that the digital evaluation process would reduce manpower requirements and promote environmental sustainability.

Indian Navy assumes command of key training task force

NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

THE Indian Navy has assumed the command of a key multinational training task force under the Combined Maritime Forces, underscoring the country's commitment to collaborative maritime security and capacity-building in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond, the Defence Ministry said on Thursday.

The Combined Task Force 154, or CTF 154, is specifically oriented towards training and capacity-building of member nations of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF), it said.

This reflects the region's growing trust in India's professional expertise, operational experience, and its role as a "preferred security partner" among the 47 member nations, a Navy



Military personnel during change of command ceremony as Indian Navy assumes command of Combined Task Force 154, marking a significant milestone in its growing role within CMF's multinational maritime security architecture. (@indiannavy/X via PTI)

spokesperson said.

The Change of Command cer-

emony was conducted on February 11 at CMF headquar-

ters in Bahrain's Manama and was presided over by Vice Admiral Curt A Renshaw, Commander of CMF and US Naval Forces Central Command, the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Vice Admiral Tarun Sobti, Deputy Chief of Naval Staff, Indian Navy, and senior military leaders from other member nations were in attendance. Commodore Milind M Mokashi of Indian Navy, a Shaurya Chakra awardee, formally took over as Commander of CTF 154 from the outgoing commander of the Italian Navy, it said.

"In a landmark development underscoring India's commitment to collaborative maritime security and capacity building in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond, the Indian Navy has assumed command of

Combined Task Force 154, a key multinational training task force under the Combined Maritime Forces," the ministry said.

CTF 154, established in May 2023, is dedicated to enhancing maritime security through multinational training programmes across the Middle-East and the wider region, the Navy spokesperson said. "The training focuses on five core pillars: maritime domain awareness, law of the sea, maritime interdiction operations, maritime rescue and assistance, and leadership development," the statement said.

CTF 154 operates alongside CMF's other task forces: CTF 150 (maritime security), CTF 151 (counter-piracy), CTF 152 (maritime security in Arabian Gulf) and CTF 153 (maritime security in Red Sea).

HISTORY MADE ON MORAN HIGHWAY: IAF's emergency runway trial landing successful

DIBRUGARH (Assam), Feb 12 (ANI)

THE State of Assam is going to witness a historic event, the inauguration of an Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on the Moran bypass in Dibrugarh district on February 14.

According to an official release, this ELF is the first of its kind in the North East region. The Prime Minister of India will be inaugurating and dedicating this facility to the nation.

Meanwhile, as part of the initiative, an Indian Air Force fighter jet successfully conducted a test landing at the Emergency Landing Facility (ELF) on the Moran highway on Thursday.

The aircraft's roar reverberated throughout the area, sparking immense excitement. Prior to this successful trial, all technical and safety aspects were verified. Tight security arrangements were in place. A strict secu-



rity cordon was established by the police and the Air Force for the entire event.

While the public was not allowed to approach, a large number of locals and visitors from various locations witnessed this historic moment from afar. The 4.2-kilometre-long highway will now be a runway as well. This 4.2-kilometre-long highway in Moran will no longer be just a road, but will also serve as a robust runway when needed.

The facility opens an identified stretch on the highway as an alternative runway during con-

tingencies, which would be capable of handling emergency landing and take off operations of fighters, transport aircraft and helicopters. This will also prove instrumental during Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations in far-flung areas.

The occasion holds profound significance towards National Security and would be witnessed by the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Governor and Chief Minister of Assam, as well as senior civil and military dignitaries, a release stated.

B'DESH POLLS

48 pc voter turnout; counting on

DHAKA, Feb 12 (PTI)

BANGLADESH people on Thursday voted in the crucial general elections, marred by sporadic incidents of violence, to elect a new Government to replace the interim administration which took charge after the fall of the Awami League regime in August 2024.

The voting for the 13th parliamentary elections was held along with a referendum on a complex 84-point reform package. The voting began in 299 out of 300 parliamentary constituencies across the country from 7:30 am (local time) amid tight security and continued until 4:30 pm. However, in places where voters were inside the polling station, the voting continued until they vote.

The counting of votes has already begun in many places.

The election in one constituency has been cancelled due to the death of a candidate.

The election is seen as a direct contest between the Bangladesh



(Left) Bangladeshi women stand in queue to cast their votes in a polling station. (Below) Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus casts his ballot during voting in the country's 13th parliamentary elections, in Dhaka, Bangladesh. (AP/PTI)

Nationalist Party (BNP) and its once ally Jamaat-e-Islami, in the absence of ousted premier Sheikh Hasina's now disbanded Awami League. Chief Advisor Muhammad Yunus' interim Government last year disbanded the Awami League and barred it from contesting the polls.

Election Commission Senior Secretary Akhtar Ahmed said around 48 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 2 pm nationwide, State-run BSS news



agency reported.

Nearly 127 million voters were registered to cast their ballots across 42,779 polling centres in 299 constituencies nationwide.

The top leaders of Bangladesh's two major contending parties, as well as chief adviser Yunus, cast their ballots early in the day.

BNP chairman Tarique Rahman, who cast his vote at the Gulshan Model School and College centre in Dhaka's upscale Gulshan area, said the poll results will be accepted if the election is held in a free, fair and neutral manner.

"If the election is held in a free, fair, impartial manner and without controversy, then why shouldn't we accept it? We will accept it. However, of course, there is one condition that the election must be impartial and peaceful. If the people cast their votes, there can be a democratic beginning in the country from today," he said.

Shafiqur Rahman, the chief of right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami

which is leading an 11-party alliance, cast his vote at the Monipur Uchcha Vidyalaya and College.

He said his party would accept the election results if the polls were held in a free and neutral manner. "We want the results that will come through a fair process. If the vote is free and impartial, we will accept the outcome. Others must also accept it. That is the beauty of democracy. This is what we want," he said.

The Election Commission made elaborate security arrangements, deploying nearly 1 million security personnel -- the largest-ever in the country's electoral history.

There were reports of electoral violence in some places.

In Gopalganj, three persons, including a 13-year-old girl, were injured in an alleged hand bomb attack at a polling station, BDnews24 reported.

The blast occurred around 9 am at the Reshuna International

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