



# **BASAI News Updates**

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# EAM turns focus to science, tech ties

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**WASHINGTON:** A day after saying that there was no doubt in his mind that India's "number one" partnership in science should be with the US, external affairs minister S Jaishankar started his official engagements in Washington DC with a meeting focused on technology in its various dimensions at the National Science Foundation on Monday.

During the interaction, Jaishankar met top representatives from the trifecta of administration (including top White House and commerce officials), academia (including university presidents), and industry (including those representing semiconductors, biotech and computing sec-



**S Jaishankar**

tors).

After the meeting, Jaishankar tweeted, "Began my Washington DC program with a Round Table organized by the National Science Foundation. Thank Director Dr. S. Panchanathan for putting together a great selection of policy, research, industry and academia." The session, he added, covered "tech security, trusted research and talent development". "Encouraged by

the enthusiasm for India-US partnership in these domains," he said. The meeting was seen as a sign of the forward-looking, multifaceted cooperation between India and the US in domains that will define the future. These are based on a high degree of strategic trust and will have dramatic implications for national security, economy and employment and cutting-edge innovation.

## **The Indian context**

The meeting focused on national security and tech, workforce development for tech, and economic security, according to a person familiar with the development.

Jaishankar first laid out India's context and its advances

in the science and tech domains. The minister also spoke about how India was focused on tech development, be it through the production-linked incentives scheme to boost manufacturing or the New Education Policy 2020 to nudge pedagogy from traditional modes of learning to focus on creativity and innovation. The minister, it is understood, also spoke of "trusted data" and "trusted scientific research" and how they could be a key driver of economic growth and innovation. There was a focus on enhancing coordination with what the Indian ambassador to the US, Taranjit Singh Sandhu, who attended the meeting, termed the "triple helix of innovation — admin, academia, and industry".

# Assam women make biz out of areca palm waste

Press Trust of India

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**CHAYGAON:** Converting waste sheaths of areca palm trees to dinner plates and other wares has become a ray of hope for women of two blocks in Assam's Kamrup Rural district, as they engage in entrepreneurial ventures to become economically independent.

The biodegradable disposable dinnerware made of waste sheaths also addresses the concern of pollution caused by materials such as styrofoam and plastic.

Villages under Chaygaon and Bongaon blocks of the district, 40 km from the state capital, are dotted with areca palm trees that were earlier considered to be a source only for 'Tamul' (betel nut), while its sheath, a waste material, was at times used to make temporary boundary walls of homes.

"We never thought the waste sheaths could be used to manufacture products that have a demand not only in the state, but across the country and help

us earn a living," said 35-year-old Sonoti Rabha.

An initiative named 'Project Pragati' was introduced in the two blocks about four years ago by an NGO 'Dhriiti-The Courage Within' by engaging rural women through mobilisation and training in producing plates from waste sheaths of areca palm trees, said Anirban Gupta, co-founder of the organisation.

"When the idea was first introduced among people in the mobilisation camps, no one could believe that a waste material can be converted into a product that has a profitable market not only in India but across the world," he said.

In the last four years, the project has helped build an arecanut manufacturing cluster with 30 women entrepreneurs setting up home-based producing units, and 350 others engaged as raw material collectors and machine operators.

"The project is primarily aimed at enhancing the income of rural women through value addition to locally and abundantly available raw materials.



Villages in Chaygaon and Bongaon blocks of the district, 40 km from the state capital, are dotted with areca palm trees. REUTERS

For most of these women, it is their first opportunity to own a business and earn independent incomes," he said.

Alpana Das, new to entrepreneurship, said they earn ₹200-250 daily by making the dinner plates and it has enhanced their financial status.

Banks do not hesitate to give loans now, a smiling Das said.

The dinnerware made of areca palm sheaths has better dimensional stability, is hygienic, biodegradable, and microwave safe, and also addresses the issue of pollution caused by styrofoam containers and plastic dishes, Gupta pointed out.

The making of an eco-friendly disposable plate goes

through the process of leaf gathering, drying, sorting, cleaning, production, packaging, and above all marketing, making the whole activity a business for many micro and nano-woman entrepreneurs.

"The production of plates is not a simple task. It is time-consuming. From gathering raw materials to packing, it requires a lot of effort and time. We leave the raw sheets out in the sun to dry, but in case of sudden rain we have to instantly gather every sheath or else it will rot," Dipjyoti Rabha, another entrepreneur, said. The areca palm sheaths, the basic raw material, have no monetary value, but "we procure those for Re 1 each to help generate income for the local community", said Pratima Rabha said.

Market linkage of the products has been established with a company called Tamul Plates Marketing Private Ltd.

Chaygaon MLA Rekibuddin Ahmed hoped that these women will motivate many more in rural areas to take up entrepreneurship.

# Yamuna inundates farm land in Karnal

TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

KARNAL, SEPTEMBER 27

Around 1,200 acres of land under crops such as paddy, sugarcane and maize has been submerged in Karnal district after water was released from Hathnikund Barrage on Yamuna River.

The water level in the river rose so high that it entered five villages, including Chandrao, Nabibad and Dabkoli, on Monday afternoon. However, the water started receding this morning.

Local residents said Yamuna created havoc in around 30 villages situated along its banks every monsoon. This year also, it has damaged crops on several acres. "Yamuna always poses a threat of flash floods in the villages alongside it. Authorities construct new and repair old embankments but these are damaged every year. There is a need of a permanent project to protect the



Waterlogged fields on the banks of the Yamuna.

fields," said Dalip Singh, a local farmer.

Nasib Singh, another farmer, said that his paddy crop had been submerged after the water level increased in the Yamuna. He asked the government to provide compensation to the farmers.

District Revenue Officer Shyam Lal said directions had been issued to assess the loss incurred by farmers. "Fields are presently waterlogged. We have asked the officials to keep a vigil on the situation," he added.

# Post rains, Ambala Health Dept on alert to check rise in dengue cases

**NITISH SHARMA**  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

AMBALA, SEPTEMBER 27

Waterlogging in vacant plots and grounds due to incessant rains over the past few days has once again increased the threat of rise in dengue cases in the district. These may turn into a breeding ground for mosquitoes.

As per information, 22 cases have been reported in this season so far. The health authorities said the rains and waterlogging might aggravate the situation as last year, when 686 cases of dengue were reported. Untimely rains were the major factor behind the situation.

Harish Sharma, a resident, said, "Vacant plots in residential and commercial areas are waterlogged due to incessant rains. The administration should get the water drained out at the earliest so that there is no spike in dengue cases."

Mithun Verma, Ambala Municipal Corporation member from Ward 10, said, "The rain has stopped, but the empty plots and grounds are filled with water. We have already raised the matter at the House meeting that dengue cases have started to surface and the corporation should start fogging and spilling used oil in the water, besides draining out the water. We will meet the Commissioner and again raise the issue."

District Epidemiologist, Dr Sunil Hari, said, "The department is on alert mode because there are chances of an increase in the number of dengue cases after rains. An increase in fever cases in OPDs is being



Water accumulated on a ground at the Ambala Cantonment on Monday. TRIBUNE PHOTO

## ADMN SHOULD GET WATER DRAINED OUT

“Vacant plots in residential and commercial areas are waterlogged due to incessant rains. The administration should get the water drained out at the earliest.

Harish Sharma, A RESIDENT

## SITUATION UNDER CONTROL

“The situation is under control so far. Necessary steps are being taken to check the breeding of mosquitoes and further curb the rise of dengue cases.

Dr Sanjeev Singla, DEPUTY CIVIL SURGEON

## MC SHOULD START FOGGING

“We have already raised the matter at the House meeting that dengue cases are increasing and the municipal corporation should start fogging and spilling used oil in the water, besides draining it out.

Mithun Verma,  
MC MEMBER, WARD NO. 10



observed. Though the Health Department is making efforts to control the situation, community participation is also required in the effective control and to keep the disease at bay. The breeding checkers and different teams of the Health Department are educating people about the measures to be taken to prevent the

disease.” “We are also requesting the civic bodies to play the jingles in their garbage collection vehicles to educate the citizens. People are being told to go for ELISA dengue test if they experience any symptoms and we have the capacity to take even 500 samples a day”, he added.

Dr Sanjeev Singla,

Deputy Civil Surgeon, said, “The situation is under control so far. Necessary steps are being taken to check the breeding of mosquitoes and further curb the rise of dengue cases.

Water accumulated in the grounds, vacant plots, etc. creates some trouble and we will appeal to all to drain out the water at the earliest.”