

**DIA, DEOGHAR IAS ACADEMY**

# ***Daily News Feed***

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A bleach unit in Didwai village, Panipat district, Haryana. ONE KILN PULPWAY

# Cast-off capital

Over the past two decades, Panipat, a city in Haryana known in Indian history for three major battles, has emerged as one of Asia's largest processors of textile waste. **Ashok Kumar** finds that the city has a large number of illegal bleaching and dyeing units, essential in the conversion of scrap cloth into low-quality thread. These units discharge contaminated water into drains that merge with the Yamuna river

**T**he Yamuna along Panipat's Khokipur village is dry, leaving the riverbed exposed. A flock of birds - resident species of cormorants and herons - has gathered around a pool of residual water in the river on a hot June afternoon. There are also some migratory gulls. In search of food, occasionally break the silence with their croaking and keow calls.

A large herd of cows and buffaloes, almost figurines from a distance, graze on the sparse greenery on the riverbed. Rajbir, a *paali* (cowherd) in his mid-30s, keeps an eye on the herd from under a tree on the riverbank. Like most people in India's plains, he waits for the monsoon to set in. For Rajbir though, it is not the heat that's disturbing. He is worried about his cattle frequently falling sick after they cool off in the pools of leftover Yamuna water.

"The *nallah* (Drain No. 2) carrying effluents from factories in Panipat city falls into the river just ahead of our village, contaminating it with hard chemicals. With the onset of the monsoon, the water flow goes up in the river, diluting these chemicals and mitigating their harmful effects," explains Rajbir. Cattle cool off in a pond in summer, but there is none in the village, he grumbles. A *gumtha* is tightly wrapped around his head, one end of it tied firmly in his teeth to protect his head and face from the temperature that has crossed 40 degrees Celsius.

Panipat in Haryana, just 90 kilometres from Delhi, is known for three famous battles fought on its land across two centuries, between 1526 and 1761. There is little evidence of that now. Over the past two decades, it has emerged as one of Asia's largest weaving, dyeing, and textile recycling hubs.

Panipat is a processing hub for around 30 lakh tonnes of textile waste, says Sanjay Gang, Northern India Rotor Spinners Association president, comprising about 100 units. Cloth scraps come in daily from factories in the US, the UK, Canada, Europe, Turkey, China, and Japan. In units here, these are processed into yarn, which is further sold in Tando (Uttar Pradesh), Solapur (Maharashtra), and Tirupur (Tamil Nadu), for use in blankets, cushions, bed sheets, carpets, and several other products.

This is called shoddy yarn, with short filaments, later used in cheap products, says Kirti Srivastava, assistant professor at the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Kanpur. This is called downcycling, when the final product is of lower value than the original.

She says this is waste colonisation that developed countries practice. "The Global North burdens the Global South, usually countries with a burgeoning population and high inequality, with its waste," she adds.

A part of this process is bleaching cloth scraps. Several illegal bleaching units function on Panipat's periphery, devoid of any mechanism for the safe disposal of the chemical-laden waste water, mostly acidic and chlorine-based. They operate on agricultural land taken on lease from the farmers. "This highly contaminated water is just allowed to seep underground, polluting the groundwater, or is drained into open land and local drains. It eventually travels to Drain 2 that merges with the Yamuna," says Varun Gulati, a Delhi-based environmentalist.

Rajbir laments that no one listens to the people here: "Teham par kut hain patrakar aaye hai."

**Photo keech kar le gaye. Video bhi banaya. Lekin kuch nahi hua.** (Journalists have come here many times. They took photographs. They made videos too. But nothing happened.)

**The *nallah* (Drain No. 2) carrying effluents from factories in Panipat city falls into the river just ahead of our village, contaminating it with hard chemicals.**

**Cloth to yarn**  
Taking a nap on his farm under a structure resembling a palapa, Krishan, who owns a couple of acres of land, says the ground water in Khokipur and the neighbouring villages along Drain No. 2 is smelly. "It is not fit for drinking and irrigation. Those residing in these villages suffer from various skin related ailments and, in some cases, even cancer. We avoid installing hand pumps near this drain," he says. Then, laughing ironically, adds, "Imagine people in Delhi who have to drink this contaminated water."

In March 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his "Mann Ki Baat" broadcast, spoke about the problem of textile waste. "Several start-ups have started working on textile recovery facilities... some cities are creating new identities in dealing with textile waste. Panipat is emerging as a global hub of textile recycling," he had said.

Garg says his father was the first to set up a spinning mill in Panipat in 1981. Two to three more mills came up in the city over the next two decades, but the boom came in the early 2000s with technological advancement.

"Only 10-15 tonnes of scrap could be processed daily at these units earlier. But high-speed spinning mills equipped with the latest technology process around 100-125 tonnes of scrap daily," he says, in his expansive office, adding that almost 90% of the imported scraps end up in Panipat. Gang owns Akshay Spinning Mills on the busy arterial Gohana-Panipat road. There are more than 250 such mills owned by around a hundred industrialists, scattered across the city.

On the outskirts of Panipat, scores of illegally run bleaching units have mushroomed to cater to the growing need to bleach the cloth scraps before they are shredded and made into yarn. A few of the larger spinning mills have their own bleaching processes, adhering to the norms laid down by the Haryana State Pollution Control

Board (HSPCB). These include checking the units for effluents that are safe to be discharged into the Yamuna.

Garg maintains that the spinning mills are "non-polluting units" that give "a fresh lease of life to the garbage collected from across the globe", but downplays the role of illegally run bleach units. "Only a fraction of the cloth scraps imported need to undergo bleaching," claims the second-generation industrialist, insisting that the mills do not outsource production to illegal bleaching units.

**Bleach-washed**  
In a complaint to the Central Pollution Control Board in January this year, Gulati said illegal bleaching units were running in several villages across Panipat: Naulya, Dahar, Bijnhau, Balana, Palki, Kaurad, Dehwal, Marvi, Gwolda, Parbana, Chandra, and Nara. "Chemicals containing acid and chlorine are added to the water to wash scraps and this poisonous water is later released into the ground by digging pits or into storm water drains," he said in his complaint.

Warning of a catastrophe of epic proportions like the Bhopal gas disaster, the letter mentioned around two dozen illegal units along with their addresses. It said that the owners of these bleaching units, emboldened by the inaction of the HSPCB, had now set up illegal plants to make acid and bleach chemicals using toxic chlorine gas. This, in case of leakage, could cause a major accident.

Running a bleaching unit in Didwai village, a 38-year-old man, not willing to be identified, says he has set up an Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) to adhere to the HSPCB norms, but the "plant is not functional; it is not run". A fully running ETP could cost several lakhs, he says. It has been set up just to get the permission to run a bleaching unit. "Water is reused a couple of times to bleach, and finally discharged into the drain," he says.

"The man says that he has constructed tanks on his agricultural land and rented them out to a spinning mill owner. 'I only provide the land and the bleach powder, which I make using chlorine gas. The mill owners' contractors hire the labour for the bleach job," he says.

Yamuna Ruchao Ashwin conowner Shiv Singh Rawat says that scores of dyeing and bleaching units in Panipat functioning without clearances and treatment infrastructure discharge acidic, chlorine-laced waste water into the river. "The discharge either flows through sewer lines or is dumped via tankers into open land. Ultimately it ends up in the Yamuna through Drain No. 2. The visual discoloration of the water at the point of merger of Drain No. 2 and the Yamuna is a stark indicator of the contamination," he says.

Multiple water sample reports of Drain No. 2 by the HSPCB Laboratory in April this year con-

firmed that several parameters were much higher than the permissible levels fixed by the Central Pollution Control Board. For instance, Biological Oxygen Demand was at 68 mg/l, with the maximum level set at 30 mg/l; Chemical Oxygen Demand was at 284 mg/l, while it should have been no more than 50 mg/l, and Total Dissolved Solids were at 1,858 mg/l, with the cut-off at 500 mg/l.

Rishi Kumar, another bleaching unit owner in Didwai, says there could be 40-50 units in Panipat, and only one-fourth were running with permission. "The recycle market has been sluggish after it reached its peak in 2023. The profit in the bleaching business is around 10-20 paise per kg of scrap. But running a unit as per the norms increases the cost by 21 per kg. So, it is not financially viable," says Kumar, who runs his unit with due permission from the HSPCB. He says he has 50 sinks on his 5-acre agricultural land, but only half of them are occupied, as the demand is weak. "I have my own labour force staying inside the unit. We work both ways. We buy cloth scraps from traders, bleach them, and sell them to the spinning mills. The mill owners also send us scraps to bleach," says Kumar.

Following media reports, the National Green Tribunal has taken suo motu cognisance of the illegal bleaching units and issued notices to the HSPCB and Panipat Deputy Commissioner, among others, directing them to file an affidavit a week before the hearing on August 29. HSPCB Regional Office, Panipat, Bhupinder Singh Chahal says the department has ordered closure of 20 units and sent show-cause notices to a dozen more a month ago. Chahal, however, says the department does not have the figure for the illegal units.

**Dip in demand**  
Two types of cloth waste are imported: cloth scraps and second-hand clothes. The majority of godowns on Barsat Road, where they are concentrated, deal in scraps. These are bought by spinning mills to be made into yarn. Ramjan, a worker at a warehouse on Barsat Road, says his employer imports 30 tonnes of cloth each season, mostly from Korea and China, both before the onset of summer and winter. "The scraps are sold for 120 a kg. The discarded clothes are sold at 100-120 per piece.

Mostly traders from Delhi and Assam buy these second-hand clothes and sell them in local markets at high margins," says Ramjan. Delhi's Sarojini Nagar market is one such hub. Running a firm in the name of A.R. Traders on Barsat Road, Ravinder Garg mostly deals in scraps. "We sell it to the spinning mill owners through agents. A small percentage of the wastage, not accepted by the spinning mills, ends up as fuel for local industry," says Garg. He too says the market has been sluggish for the past two years, and his annual sale of scraps has fallen to almost half, at 270 tonnes per year. To boost the industry, Mukesh Gulati, executive director at the Foundation for MSME Clusters, which aims at empowering small and medium enterprises through skilling and sustainable efforts, says India should develop a re-mark for products with recycled materials.

This will strengthen India's domestic ecosystem of recyclers and sustainable textile producers. "This will generate greater awareness, as many will wrongly perceive recycled products as inferior. Correcting this perception is key to unlocking the full potential of India's circular economy," he says. He talks about France mandating recycled content in public sector uniforms; the Netherlands recycling railway uniforms into train interiors; and Germany's procurement law preferring recycled goods. The Nordic countries use ecobabels to support green procurement in health care and municipal services, he adds.

Half-burnt bits of cloth often show up on terraces. "The waste cloth ends up as cheap fuel in furnaces and boilers. Panipat has a thermal power plant, a petroleum refinery, sugar mills, and fertilizer factories. At dusk, Panipat's air turns toxic," says lawyer Anil Rathore, who practices in Panipat.

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The point at which Drain No. 2 in Panipat falls into the Yamuna river. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPENGA



# 'India-U.K. FTA a game changer for trade'

**The Hindu Bureau**

NEW DELHI

Terming the India-U.K. Free Trade Agreement (FTA) a 'game changer', Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said that the Indian government had ensured the protection of all sensitive sectors of the Indian economy, while benefiting every section including



Piyush Goyal

farmers and the MSME sector. Addressing a press conference at the BJP

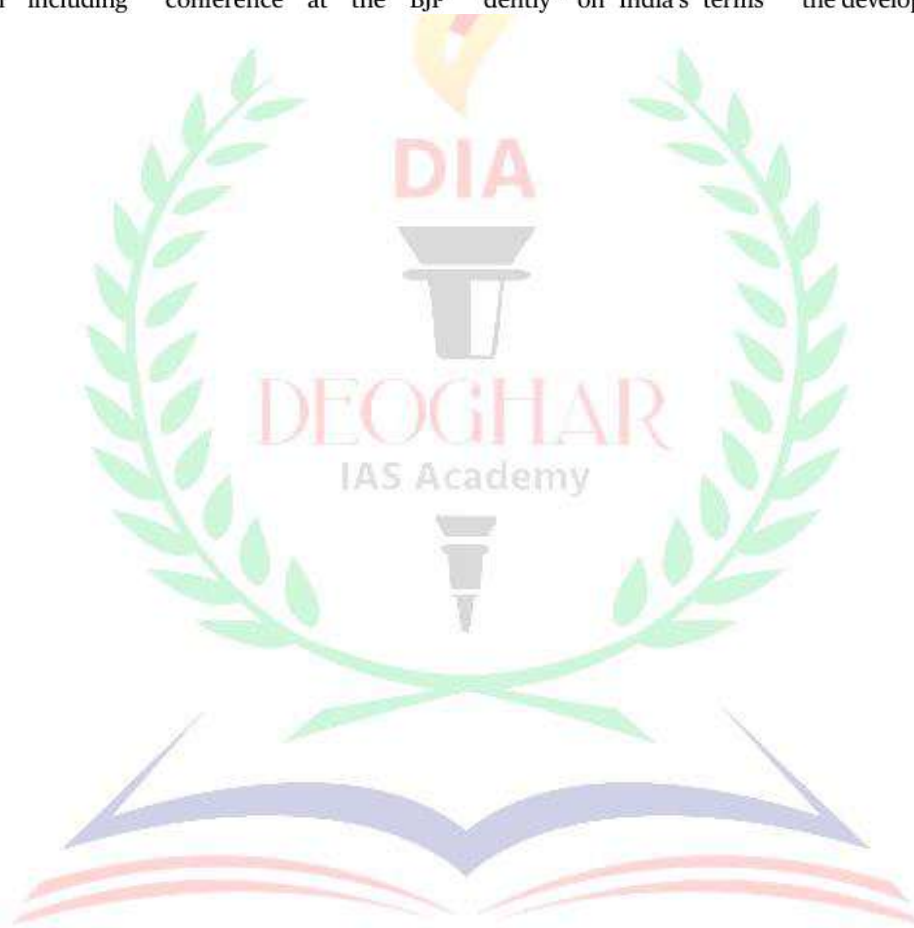
headquarters here on Saturday, Mr. Goyal also said that trade talks with the U.S. and Oman were continuing apace.

"With this [India-U.K. FTA], India would be able to ship 99% of its exports to U.K. duty-free," he said.

The Minister asserted that the agreement was signed with the U.K. "confidently" on India's terms

while protecting "sensitive items" like agriculture and ethanol.

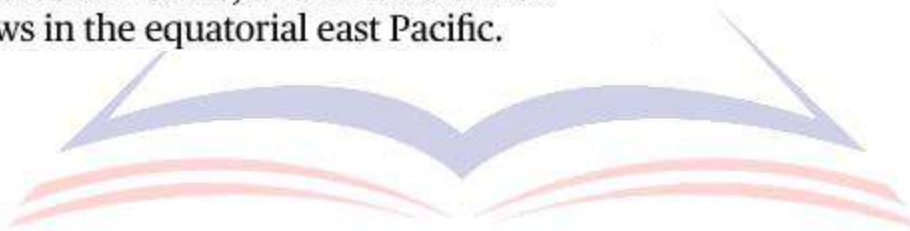
"I believe that this FTA carries a very big message for the future economy of India. We will all see the benefits that India will get under it in the coming years," he said. Mr. Goyal added that the agreement will open doors for India to the developed world.





## Ocean heatwaves imply earth close to tipping point

Scientists found that the 2023 marine heatwaves were the most extreme recorded. Sea-surface temperatures stayed above the 90th percentile for up to 120 days over 96% of ocean, producing 53.6 billion degrees C-days of thermal stress. The heatwaves were found to have been triggered by extra sunshine and a shallow mixed layer in the North Atlantic; fewer clouds and stronger currents in the Southwest Pacific; sustained heat gain in the North Pacific; and El Niño-driven ocean flows in the equatorial east Pacific.





# What makes NASA-ISRO NISAR satellite special?

What is the need for NISAR? What is synthetic aperture radar? How will NISAR serve India's needs, especially on agriculture, forestry, and disaster management? How was NISAR built? How soon will the data NISAR produces be available for users?

Vasudevan Mukunth

## The story so far:

**T**he Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch the NISAR satellite from Sriharikota on July 30 onboard a GSLV Mk-II rocket. 'NISAR' stands for NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar and is a joint mission of the two space agencies. It is a sophisticated earth-observation satellite designed to study changes on the earth's surface in fine detail, covering earthquakes, volcanoes, ecosystems, ice sheets, farmland, floods, and landslides.

## What's the need for NISAR?

NISAR is the first major earth-observing mission with a dual-band radar, which will allow it to observe changes more precisely than any other satellite. It will be able to see through clouds, smoke, and even thick vegetation, both at day and night, in all weather conditions. The three-tonne machine costs more than \$1.5 billion, making it one of the most expensive earth-observing satellites to date.

The earth's surface is constantly changing. Natural disasters, human-driven changes, and climate shifts all affect environments and human societies. Satellites provide critical information by taking snapshots of these changes from space, helping scientists, governments, and relief agencies prepare for, respond to or study them. To this end, NASA and ISRO have created a powerful global mission that also allows ISRO guaranteed access to a stream of high-resolution data tailored to India's needs.

NISAR's science and application goals span six areas: solid earth processes, ecosystems, ice dynamics, coastal and ocean processes, disaster response, and additional applications (including tracking groundwater, oil reservoirs, and infrastructure like levees, dams etc.). The planned mission lifetime is three years although its design lifetime is at least five years. Notably,

During a disaster, NISAR can collect data for 'damage proxy maps' to be delivered in under five hours

the mission's data policy entails that the data NISAR produces will be freely available to all users (typically) within a few hours.

## How does NISAR work?

Once it is launched, NISAR will enter into a sun-synchronous polar orbit at 747 km altitude and an inclination of 98.4°. From here, instead of snapping pictures, NISAR's synthetic aperture radar (SAR) will bounce radar waves off the planet's surface and measure how long the signal takes to come back and how its phase changes. The ability of a radar antenna to resolve smaller details increases with its length, called its aperture. In orbit, deploying an antenna hundreds of metres long is impractical. SAR gets around this by mimicking a giant antenna. As the spacecraft moves forward, it transmits a train of radar pulses and records the echoes. Later, a computer coherently combines all those echoes as if they had been captured simultaneously by one very long antenna, hence the "synthetic aperture".

NISAR will combine an L-band SAR (1.257 GHz), which uses longer-wavelength radiowaves to track changes under thick forests and soil and deformations on the ground, and an S-band SAR (3.2 GHz), which uses shorter-wavelength radiowaves to capture surface details, such as crops and water surfaces.

Although NISAR will operate globally at L-band, ISRO has reserved routine, planned acquisitions with the S-band SAR over India. The latter acquisitions have extended sensitivity to biomass, better soil-moisture retrieval, and mitigate ionospheric noise – all capabilities tuned to India's needs in agriculture, forestry, and disaster management. Because the L-band radar is the principal tool for NASA's mission goals, the instrument is expected to operate in up to 70% of every orbit. This said, operating both radars together is an official implementation goal so that mode conflicts over the Indian subcontinent are minimised.

Polarisation is the direction in which the electric field of some electromagnetic radiation, like radiowaves, oscillates. SAR can transmit and receive radar signals with horizontal or vertical polarisation. Using different combinations will allow the instruments to identify the structure and types of different surface materials, like soil, snow, crop or wood.

The swath width, that is, the breadth of the bands on the ground the SARs will scan, is an ultra-wide 240 km. The radars' SweepSAR design will transmit this beam and, upon its return, digitally steer multiple small sub-apertures in sequence, synthesising beams that sweep across the ground track. This scan-on-receive method allows the 240-km swath without compromising resolution.

The resulting scans will have a spatial resolution of 3-10 m and centimetre-scale

vertical mapping – enough to spot impending land subsidence in cities, for example – depending on the mode. Each spot on the ground will be scanned once every 12 days. The satellite also features a large 12-m-wide mesh antenna. NISAR will produce annual maps of aboveground woody biomass of 1 ha resolution and quarterly maps of active and inactive cropland. High-resolution maps of flooded versus dry areas will be available as well. During a disaster, NISAR can also be directed to collect data for 'damage proxy maps' to be delivered in under five hours.

This said, for certain acquisition modes, NISAR won't be able to achieve full global coverage at the highest resolution. Above roughly 60° latitude, every alternative observation will be skipped due to converging ground tracks. Similarly, some 10% of the surface may not be mapped from either direction (of the satellite's passage over the ground) in any given 12-day cycle.

## How was NISAR built?

At the time the two space organisations agreed to build NISAR, NASA and ISRO decided each body would contribute equivalent-scale hardware, expertise, and funding.

ISRO supplied the I-3K spacecraft bus, the platform that houses the controls to handle command and data, propulsion, and attitude, plus 4kW of solar power. The same package also included the entire S-band radar electronics, a high-rate Ka-band telecom subsystem, and a gimbaled high-gain antenna. The S-band electronics were designed and built at the Space Applications Centre in Ahmedabad.

NASA's biggest contribution was the complete L-band SAR system. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) supplied all radio-frequency electronics, the 12-m antenna, a 9-m carbon-composite boom, and the instrument structure that carries both radars. The agency also fabricated the L-band feed aperture and provided the supporting avionics, including a high-capacity solid-state recorder, a GPS receiver, an autonomous payload data system, and a Ka-band payload communications subsystem. The spacecraft was to be integrated at the ISRO Satellite Centre in Bengaluru after the two radars were mated at JPL. Following observatory-level tests, the mission will lift off from Sriharikota onboard a GSLV Mk-II rocket, with ISRO providing end-to-end launch services.

While the mission operations are to be centred at the JPL Mission Operations Center, day-to-day flight operations will be led from the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network in Bengaluru.

Once NISAR is in orbit, most of its data will be sent through NASA's Near Earth Network facilities in Alaska, Svalbard (Norway), and Punta Arenas (Chile), which can together receive around 3 TB of radar data per day. They will be complemented by ISRO's ground stations in Shadnagar and Antarctica. After the raw data arrive, India's National Remote Sensing Centre will process and distribute all products required for Indian users, mirroring NASA's pipeline.



**Ready for lift-off:** A view of the NASA-ISRO NISAR ahead of its launch on July 30 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. ANI





**Cool-off point:** A vendor sells ice cream at the buzzing Ima Market in the heart of Imphal. The market hosts 5,000-6,000 stalls and serves as a generational bridge.

# Women's business

Ima Market in Manipur's capital Imphal is entirely run by women and hosts 5,000-6,000 vendors, who sell a variety of products catering to needs of the local people as well as tourists; the market stands testimony to the empowerment of women in the State and the socio-economic role they play



**Ritu Raj Komwar**  
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**T**he Ima Market located in the centre of Manipur capital's Imphal is a market entirely run by women. Known as Ima Keithel (Mothers' Market) in the Meitei language or as Nupi Keithel (Women's Market), the bustling hub consists of three large buildings with pagoda-style roofs. It is a commercial centre as well as a popular tourist attraction. It was established in the 16th century and hosts 5,000-6,000 women vendors, who sell a variety of products such as vegetables, fruits, textiles, toys, fish, spices, and utensils.

Male shopkeepers and vendors are not allowed to set up or run stalls in the market and the State government has made it a punishable offence.

Vendors at the market, dressed in traditional phaneks (long skirts tightly draped around the waist) and inaphis (shoulder drapes very similar to shawls), get ready every morning to welcome shoppers, many of them tourists. The economic backbone of many families, the market has served to empower women at the socio-economic level.

Women in Manipur enjoy a unique status in society. Their empowerment is visible through their active participation in the economic realm.

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who visited the market in November 2022, in a post on X, had lauded the market for being "a great example of Nari Shakti (women's strength) powering economic growth".

Women from diverse faiths and tribes run their own stalls with pride and purpose.

"All of us come together and actively participate when it comes to issues concerning Manipur as a whole. We are not only contributing to the State's economy and supporting our families financially, but we also take part in important social and political matters. This involvement is not limited to just one district – women from all districts and communities, including Muslims and tribal groups, come together. They bring their local products to this market, sell them to us at wholesale rates, and we, in turn, sell those items. It's a wonderful and effective system," a vendor told ANI last July.

"We want to bring peace. We all want to live together in harmony. Whether it's the Tangkhul, Naga, Kuki, or any other tribe in Manipur, we all wish to come together, work together, and live with love and unity," said another vendor. (With ANI inputs)



**Money makes money:** Women running a money exchange business at the market.



# Two half-dose combination of drugs right for BP control in Indians: study

**Ramya Kannan**  
CHENNAI

With evidence lacking thus far for guiding optimal combination hypertension therapy in South Asian patients, a recent study has recommended half doses of two drugs in a single pill combination right from starting treatment for hypertension.

The paper, "Comparison of dual therapies for hypertension treatment in India", published in the journal *Nature Medicine*, investigated the blood pressure (BP)-lowering efficacy and safety of three commonly recommended anti-hypertensive combinations in a single pill in a multi-centre trial across 32 sites in India. Nearly 2,000 adults with uncontrolled or untreated hypertension were studied and interventions included three single pill dual combinations – amlodipine with perindopril, perindopril with indapamide, and amlodipine with indapamide.

All three combinations,



Around 2,000 adults with uncontrolled BP were studied and the interventions included three pill combinations. ISTOCKPHOTO

in patients aged 30-79, delivered equivalent reductions in BP and similar rates of BP control, researchers said. All combinations were equally safe and effective with high tolerability over six months, they wrote in the paper.

"It must be noted that we are not recommending a multi-drug regimen. Polypharmacy will only lead to discontinuation of treatment," says Prabhakaran Dorairaj, principal investigator of the study, from the Centre for Chronic Disease Control, New Delhi. "What

we are recommending is to start with half doses of two drugs in a single pill combination. If BP control does not happen, then it is important to titrate to full doses. Despite this, if BP continues to be higher than 140/90, then additional drugs are to be added," he explains. "It is really astounding we have been basing treatment on Western guidelines, so far," Dr. Prabhakaran adds. This study tests the global guidelines for hypertension treatment among patients in India, since these combi-

nations are already available here. These drugs work through multiple pathways and are synergistic, with low side effects, he says.

"Many physicians, even cardiologists, think that they should start with a low dose and then keep escalating it," says Nagendra Boopathy, co-author, and interventional cardiologist, Sri Ramachandra Medical Centre, Chennai. "Even patients are reluctant to start on drugs, but these combinations we have tested are really effective in bringing down BP, and the side effects are minor," he adds. The side effects observed during the trial included cough, swelling of feet and lower potassium in some sub-groups, and not statistically significant.

Dr. Prabhakaran adds: "The biggest problem in India is poor control of hypertension. Only around 20% of individuals with hypertension are treated to target in urban areas and it is even lower in rural areas."



# Modi, Muizzu signal reset in bilateral ties

PM highlights support for 'strong, time-tested' friendship between India and the Maldives

President of the island nation stresses territorial safeguards, but acknowledges foreign support

Messages put out by the two leaders show a substantial resolution of differences since 2023

Meera Srinivasan  
MALE

India is looking forward to deepening its ties with the Maldives across multiple sectors, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Saturday, highlighting the "bipartisan support" within the island nation for the "strong and time-tested" friendship.

Mr. Modi, who was in the Maldives on a two-day state visit, held talks with top Maldivian leaders across the political spectrum, including Vice-President Uz. Hussain Mohamed Latheef, parliamentary Speaker Abdul Raheem Abdulla, former President Mohamed Nasheed, and key members of the Opposition. He also attended the island nation's 60<sup>th</sup> Independence Day event at the Republic

Square in its capital, Male.

Mr. Modi's visit marks a major reset in bilateral ties that had soured after Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu came to power in 2023, campaigning mostly on an 'India [military] out' plank.

## 'Need other nations'

While "every square inch" of Maldivian territory will be safeguarded by its citizens, the country needs other nations for "certain resources and technical expertise", Mr. Muizzu said on Saturday, appearing to be alluding to the country's revived partnership with India in key sectors.

He was addressing the Maldives National Defence Force and the Maldives Police Service on the country's Independence Day, seeking to balance the Maldives' sovereignty with its need for external support,



**Guest of honour:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu on his left during the 60th Independence Day celebrations of the Maldives in Male on Saturday. PTI

especially to cope with economic pressures.

The revival in ties between India and the Maldives could be seen in the memorandums of understanding (MoUs) and agree-

ments signed during the Prime Minister's visit to the island nation on July 25 and 26. Notably, Mr. Muizzu and Mr. Modi inaugurated a new building of the Maldives' Ministry of De-

fence in Malé, along with other jointly executed infrastructure projects.

## 'Resilient partnership'

The sentiment also came through in Mr. Muizzu's ad-

dress at the state banquet hosted for Mr. Modi on Friday. Asserting that India has long stood as the "closest and most trusted partner" of the Maldives, he pointed to this year marking 60 years of diplomatic relations between the Maldives and India. He called it "a milestone" that reflects the shared history of the countries, and "the depth and resilience" of the partnership.

Messages put out by the leaders showed a substantial resolution of differences. "We both agree that the India-Maldives friendship will always be bright and clear," Mr. Modi said following his discussion with the Maldivian President on Friday. Posting on X on Saturday evening, Mr. Muizzu thanked the Prime Minister for what he called a "defining visit", that "sets a clear path" for India-Mal-

dives relations.

The political opposition in the Maldives welcomed the Muizzu government's shift in its India policy. Abdullah Shahid, who was the Foreign Minister in the former Ibrahim Mohamed Solih government and later served as the President of the UN General Assembly, said he conveyed to the Prime Minister that "while governments may change, the Maldivian people's appreciation for India's friendship remains constant."

## Muizzu's 'realisation'

A senior politician, who requested anonymity, told *The Hindu* that the turnaround in ties was possible after Mr. Muizzu's "realisation" that he needed to work with India "no matter what". He added: "India's broad shoulders and thick skin also helped."

