

Beijing's \$167 billion project destroys Tibetan heritage

Threatening 600 million downstream



For centuries, Tibetan monks prayed beside the Yarlung Tsangpo River at dawn. On July 19, 2025, Chinese bulldozers tore through monastery grounds where generations once meditated, launching the world's most destructive infrastructure project disguised as clean energy.

China's \$167 billion mega-dam doesn't just generate electricity but it generates submission. By damming Tibet's holiest river, Beijing isn't building infrastructure; it's drowning a civilization while creating the ultimate weapon against India and Bangladesh.

Premier Li Qiang's groundbreaking ceremony felt less like construction and more like a funeral for Tibet's spiritual heart. As officials celebrated, Tibetan families in affected valleys received eviction notices demanding they vacate ancestral homes by month's end. Reports from the region describe the psychological warfare of forcing residents to participate in dismantling their own communities before Chinese crews move in.

The Yarlung Tsangpo is Tibet's spiritual lifeline, flowing through the world's deepest canyon with the force of centuries. Tibetans believe the river carries ancestral prayers to the gods. Now it carries something else: the machinery of permanent occupation.

When completed in 2033, this dam complex will control the water supply of 600 million people across India and Bangladesh. The Brahmaputra River system that sustains millions of farmers downstream begins as the Yarlung Tsangpo in Tibet, and China now controls the tap. It's environmental blackmail on a continental scale, giving Beijing the power to trigger droughts or floods with bureaucratic decisions made in distant offices.

The project's location reveals China's cynical calculations. Building the world's largest dam in one of Earth's most seismically active canyons shows complete disregard for regional safety. Engineering assessments indicate that dam failure could create catastrophic flooding across multiple countries, yet Beijing prioritizes strategic control over the documented risks of accidentally destroying several nations.

Any government genuinely concerned about climate change would protect such irreplaceable natural heritage. Instead, China treats Tibet as an industrial colony to be strip-

mined for energy, regardless of environmental or human costs.

The timing coincides ominously with the 90-year-old Dalai Lama's advancing age, as Beijing races to create irreversible facts on the ground before his death triggers a succession crisis.

Most shaming is the international community's response. Major powers prioritize economic relationships with China over environmental concerns and human rights. Trade considerations consistently outweigh criticism of the project's impact on Tibet's cultural heritage and regional water security. Environmental groups that would chain themselves to trees in Western countries remain silent about destroying one of Earth's last pristine river systems when China holds the bulldozers.

The reason is brutally simple: China buys too much to boycott and sells too much to ignore. Every Western government that privately condemned the project approved new trade deals with Beijing the same week. Even India's response has been muted, prioritizing border negotiations over water security for its own citizens. Construction continues relentlessly across the sacred valley. Ancient meditation sites disappear under concrete. Prayer wheels that operated for centuries have been removed

as scrap metal. Traditional pilgrimage routes are blocked by military security zones. The river that once carried Buddhist mantras now echoes only with industrial machinery.

This represents marks the systematic erasure of Tibet's spiritual landscape as one of the world's last intact mountain ecosystems vanishes beneath concrete and steel. The transformation reveals China's broader strategy of using environmental destruction as a tool of cultural genocide.

China's Tibet dam represents a watershed moment in geopolitics but not just for the water it successfully controls weaponizing environmental infrastructure without meaningful international consequences, Beijing demonstrates that territorial occupation can be permanently cemented through strategic engineering.

The project's success will embolden similar ventures worldwide. When authoritarian regimes observe China's ability to reshape continental geography while maintaining profitable international relationships, the lesson becomes clear: environmental destruction and cultural erasure carry acceptable diplomatic costs when paired with economic leverage.

For the 600 million people downstream who will live under China's hydrological control, the dam transforms water from a natural resource into a geopolitical weapon. Future droughts or floods may not be acts of nature but instruments of Chinese foreign policy, wielded as effectively as military threats but with plausible deniability.

The Yarlung Tsangpo's transformation from sacred river to strategic asset signals the emergence of a new form of territorial control where infrastructure becomes occupation, environment becomes weapon, and international law becomes optional for those powerful enough to ignore it. Tibet's latest tragedy marks not just the death of a river, but the birth of a terrifying new model of authoritarian power projection that the world has chosen to subsidize through silence.

Author: Shruti Kaushik



India-UK Ink Landmark Free Trade Agreement



A New Era in Bilateral Ties Begins

In a major step forward for global trade and diplomatic relations, India and the United Kingdom have signed a landmark Free Trade Agreement (FTA) during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to London, where he met with his British counterpart, Prime Minister Keir Starmer. This historic deal promises to reshape the commercial landscape between the two nations, unlocking new opportunities for businesses, professionals, and consumers on both sides. Under the FTA, the UK has agreed to eliminate duties on 99 percent of Indian exports, covering key sectors such as textiles, leather, gems and jewellery, auto components, chemicals, machinery, furniture, and sports goods. Many of these products currently face tariffs in the UK ranging from 4% to 16%.

The removal of these barriers is expected to significantly boost India's competitiveness in

the British market, particularly in the textile and apparel segment, where UK tariffs of 8% to 12% will be phased out. Industry analysts expect Indian textile exports to rise by as much as 40 percent over the next three years as a result.

Small and medium enterprises, especially in the luxury goods and lifestyle segments, stand to gain substantially. With zero tariffs on gold and diamond jewellery as well as leather goods, Indian MSMEs will be better positioned to access premium segments of the UK market. Additionally, high-end Indian food brands will benefit from improved market access, as tariffs on a wide range of processed food and agro products are set to be removed.

A major win for India's pharmaceutical sector comes in the form of easier approvals and regulatory clearances in the UK. The agreement opens the National Health Service (NHS)

further for Indian generic medicine manufacturers, promising expanded access and shorter approval timelines. Tariffs will also be removed on agrochemicals, industrial chemicals, and plastics, with Indian chemical exports to the UK expected to double by 2030. The electric and hybrid vehicle industry in India will also receive a significant boost under a new preferential quota system, allowing Indian EV makers easier access to the UK market, a step aligned with both countries' climate goals and green economy aspirations.

Another key highlight of the agreement is the facilitation of professional mobility. The UK has committed to easing visa and employment laws for Indian professionals, making it simpler for them to work in Britain. Contractual service providers such as yoga instructors, chefs, musicians, and business visitors will receive assured access for temporary stays. Notably, highly skilled Indian professionals working temporarily in the UK will no longer be required to pay social security contributions for up to three years, a move that could save around ₹4,000 crore annually.

For Indian consumers, the FTA brings its own set of advantages. Luxury British imports such as Scotch whisky, premium cars, gin, chocolates, cosmetics, salmon, and biscuits are set to become more affordable. India has agreed to reduce tariffs on Scotch whisky and gin from the current 150% to 75% immediately, with a further reduction to 40% over the next decade. Duties on British-made cars, currently exceeding 100%, will be brought down to 10% under a gradual quota system.

This agreement marks one of the most comprehensive trade pacts India has signed with a Western nation and signals a new chapter in India-UK relations. It reflects a shared vision of deeper economic integration, mutual prosperity, and strategic partnership in a rapidly evolving global economy.

Author: LEA

Turkey's Uyghur Betrayal

Exposes Hollow 'Ummah' Claims

Erdogan's deportation of Muslim Uyghurs reveals selective solidarity driven by Chinese economic interests



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Turkey's forced deportation of a legal Uyghur resident this week has exposed the cynical reality behind President Erdogan's claims to champion the global Muslim community.

Ali Abdurrezzak, a long-time Istanbul resident with valid residency documents, was detained at the airport and forcibly deported to Saudi Arabia without legal justification. His crime was simply 'Being Uyghur', a member of a Muslim minority systematically oppressed by China. Despite mounting evidence of internment camps, forced sterilizations, and the erasure of Uyghur culture, Ankara increasingly looks the other way when justice conflicts with Beijing's economic leverage.

The Hypocrisy Exposed

For years, Erdogan has positioned himself as a defender of the 'Ummah', the global Muslim community thundering about persecution from Palestine to Kashmir. Turkey's Constitution even references protecting "Turkic peoples," explicitly including Uyghurs facing cultural genocide in East Turkistan.

But China's Belt and Road investments and \$28 billion in annual trade have apparently outweighed Islamic solidarity. The same government condemning Western "Islamophobia" now facilitates Beijing's campaign against Uyghur Muslims. For Ankara, economic pragmatism clearly trumps moral consistency.

What's the difference between a Palestinian Muslim and a Uyghur Muslim? Apparently, whether helping them costs Turkey Chinese investment. One is championed with slogans; the other is erased in silence.

Economic Planning Over Faith

Abdurrezzak's deportation, conducted without legal basis, suggests systematic Chinese pressure to eliminate Uyghur voices from

Turkish soil.

Turkey once hosted the world's largest Uyghur diaspora, seen as a refuge for those fleeing Chinese persecution. But that sanctuary is rapidly disappearing under Beijing's growing influence.

The timing of this betrayal makes it even more noticeable. Just days after the deportation, Amsterdam City Council officially recognized "East Turkistan" instead of "Xinjiang," joining a wave of growing European support for Uyghur rights. While Western cities take principled stands, Turkey supposedly the torchbearer of Islamic values caves to authoritarian pressure.

This follows a familiar pattern. Erdogan talks tough about Muslim solidarity until real costs emerge. Turkish authorities have previously detained Uyghur activists, shut down their community spaces, and quietly cooperated with Chinese intelligence. Each such act chips away at Turkey's credibility as a Muslim advocate.

If Turkey cannot protect legal Muslim residents from arbitrary deportation to satisfy Chinese interests, what credibility does it have criticizing others for Muslim persecution? How can Erdogan claim to represent the Ummah while facilitating Beijing's brutal campaign against one of Islam's most persecuted communities?

Ali Abdurrezzak's deportation represents more than an individual tragedy and it signals the death of principled Turkish foreign policy and exposes Erdogan's Islamic posturing as hollow political theater. For Turkey's remaining Uyghur community, the message is chillingly clear: even legal residency, shared language, and shared faith cannot protect them when Chinese interests are at stake.

The country that claims to defend Muslims worldwide has proven it will sacrifice them for the right price.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

France will officially recognize The State of Palestine



In an unprecedented move by one of the G7 countries, France is to officially recognize the State of Palestine at the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in September, says President Emmanuel Macron in a post on X (formerly Twitter).

"Consistent with its historic commitment to a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, I have decided that France will recognize the State of Palestine" -Emmanuel Macron, President of the French Republic.

To fulfill the legitimate aspirations of Palestinian people and aimed for lasting peace in the Middle East, France endorses the recognition of State of Palestine reiterating two-state solution is a the only viable solution for peace and prosperity, implied in a letter sent to Palestine authority.

While Macron encouraged other nations to recognize Palestine, he also recounted his attention on the release of all the hostages the massive humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza and the de-militarization of Hamas ensuring rebuilding Gaza.

Macron stirred international communities resulted in a mixed response varying support from countries like Spin, Saudi Arabia and Jordan to condemnation from countries like the U.S., and Israel. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu expressed severe dislike on the decision of France stating, **"the Palestinians do not seek a state alongside Israel; they seek a state instead of Israel"**. He further asserts that such move rewards terror and risks creating another Iranian proxy, just as Gaza becomes.The United States strongly rejected and calling it as a reckless decision. In a post on X, the Secretary of State, Marco Rubio stated-

"This reckless decision only serves Hamas propaganda and sets back peace".

Palestinian Authorities welcomed the France decision praising France's commitment to international law and the support of the rights of Palestinian peoples. The militant group Hamas commented it is positive steps in the right direction. It added "We call on all countries of the world-especially European nations and those that have not yet recognized the State of Palestine-to follow France's Lead". So far more than 140 nations in the world recognized Palestine, report suggests.

Author: LEA

The Kuki Cartel: Insurgency, Statehood, and the Drug Trade in Manipur

The fragile calm in Manipur hides a storm brewing beneath the surface. What began as a peace-building measure the Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement signed in 2008 between the Government of India, the Government of Manipur, and two Kuki insurgent umbrella groups, the United People's Front (UPF) and the Kuki National Organisation (KNO), has over time taken a dark and unintended turn.

Originally meant to curtail violence and create a path for dialogue, the agreement has become a camouflage for something far more dangerous: a seamless fusion of armed insurgency and the booming narcotics trade. Today, the stretch from Myanmar's Tonzang through Manipur's border towns into Dimapur in Nagaland forms a well-oiled corridor for drug smuggling, weapons movement, and political profiteering.

Insurgents in Camps, Business in the Hills

The SoO agreement allowed members of 25 Kuki insurgent groups where 17 are under the KNO and 8 under the UPF to reside in designated camps under government oversight. But instead of these camps being spaces of rehabilitation, they've turned into safe havens where militants continue to maintain networks of influence, power, and illicit trade.

These groups, largely composed of Kuki-Chin-Mizo ethnic communities, have roots on both sides of the India-Myanmar border. The KNO is primarily led by the Thadou-Kuki

WHO ARE GERMAN HAAKIP & TIGER?

GERMAN HAAKIP
Commander in Chief
KNF - MC (Kuki National Front - MC)

TIGER
Commander in Chief
KNF - P (Kuki National Front - P)

Signatories of SoO (suspension of operation) with Government of India

Should India allow to build illegal roads and name after the leaders of armed militants involved in attack and murder of civilians?



ethnic group and has a more dominant presence and louder calls for a separate state carved out of Manipur. The UPF, though smaller and less aggressive in tone, is no less significant — representing other Kuki-Zomi tribes and pushing for greater autonomy and political recognition.

The Narco Highway

The real tragedy is not just the failure of the SoO framework but what has evolved alongside it. Churachandpur, Moreh, and Tonzang now mark the critical vertices of what locals call the "Narco-Terror Triangle." These towns and the routes connecting them have become staging grounds for heroin smuggling, methamphetamine trade, and arms trafficking. Myanmar's Chin State is just across the porous international border and a major production zone for poppy and synthetic drugs.

From Tonzang, shipments enter India through Moreh and travel via remote villages 'Sajik Tampak', 'Singheu', 'Misao Lhavom' reaching Saikot and Tuibong in Churachandpur before heading north toward Kangpokpi, Dimapur, and deeper into Indian cities. Along this route, drugs are not just moved but protected by insurgent cadres, political allies, and even rogue law enforcement.

Faces Behind the Web

The drug empire is not faceless. It wears the mask of politicians, commanders, and

negotiators. Lunkhosei Zou, former Autonomous District Council chairman, was caught red-handed with heroin worth crores and cash stashed away. In Myanmar's Tonzang, Thangsuanmung Zou, Commander-in-Chief of the Chin Defense Force (CDF), controls key routes into India.

And then there are those operating outside the SoO framework: Tiger, the KNF(P) commander linked to the Koutruk ambush and under investigation by the NIA, and German, the commander of KNF(MC), who also leads the UKNA. These figures command forces that often collaborate unofficially with SoO groups — blurring the line between designated peace partners and active militants.

Politics, Identity, and the Kuki Statehood Dream

All of this unfolds against the backdrop of a community's demand for political dignity. The Kuki Inpi Manipur, the apex body representing the Kuki people, has urged KNO and UPF to place the demand for a separate Kuki state at the heart of ongoing peace talks.

Dr. Seilen Haokip, a key negotiator and spokesperson for KNO, resides in Churachandpur — the epicenter of both the drug network and the statehood movement. His role is emblematic of the dual lives many leaders lead in the region — peace talkers by day, power brokers by night. UPF's leadership, including Aron Kipgen, echo similar demands as frustration mounts over delays in political resolution.

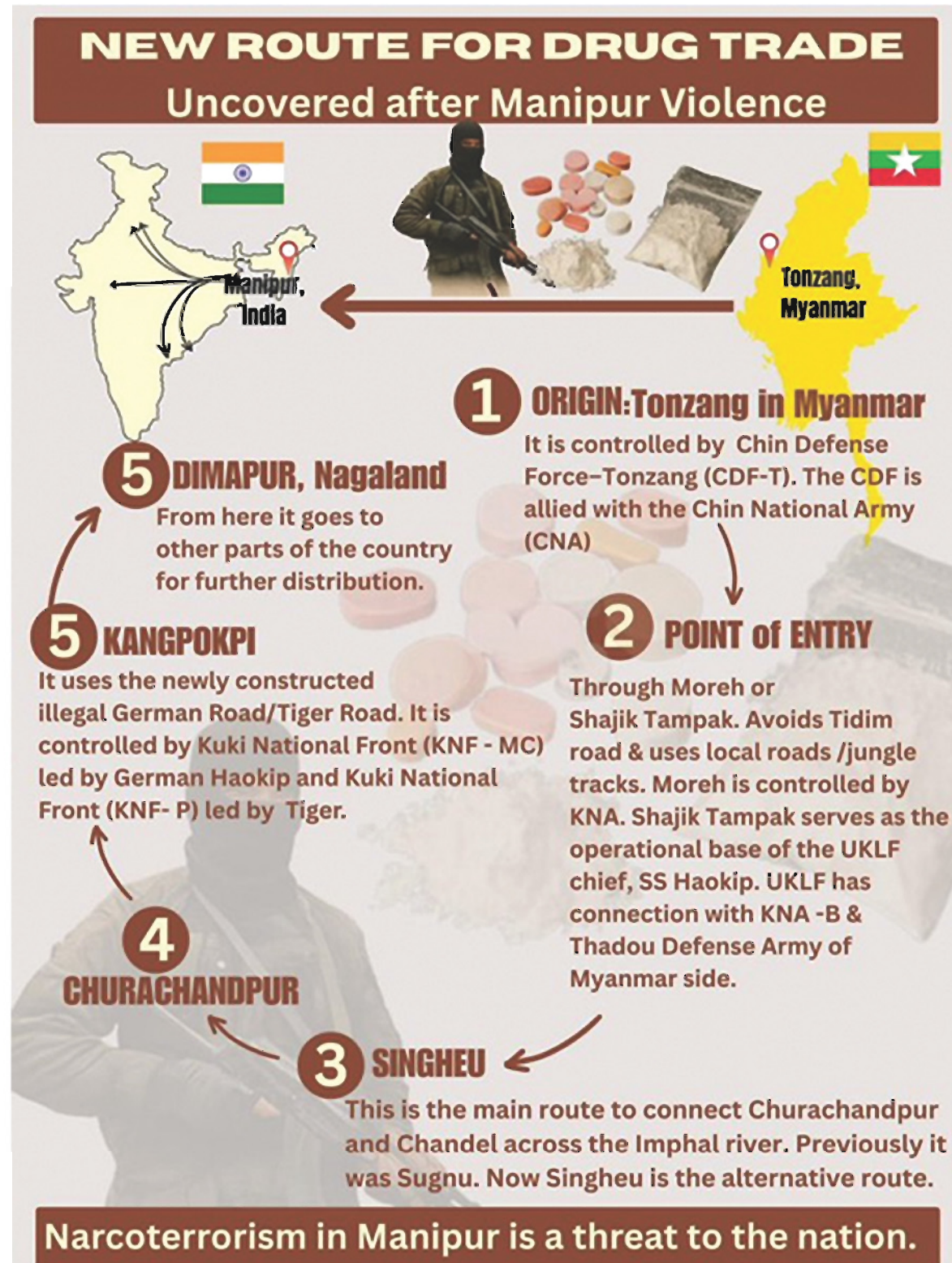
Reality on the Ground

The promises of the SoO disarmament, restricted movement and cessation of violence are observed more in breach than practice. Cadres freely extort businesses, collect taxes, and maintain their weapon stockpiles. Camps are not containment zones but operating bases. Meanwhile, the shared ethnicity between Kuki-Zomi groups in Manipur and Chin tribes in Myanmar ensures a steady flow of supplies, manpower, and safe havens.

Indian security forces, already stretched thin, face an almost insurmountable challenge in intercepting these deeply embedded networks that stretch across borders and are fortified by familial, ethnic, and financial ties.

Conclusion

What began as a peace initiative now reads like a case study in strategic drift. The SoO framework may have reduced headline-grabbing violence, but it has simultaneously allowed a parallel order to take root. An order where insurgency, drug trade,



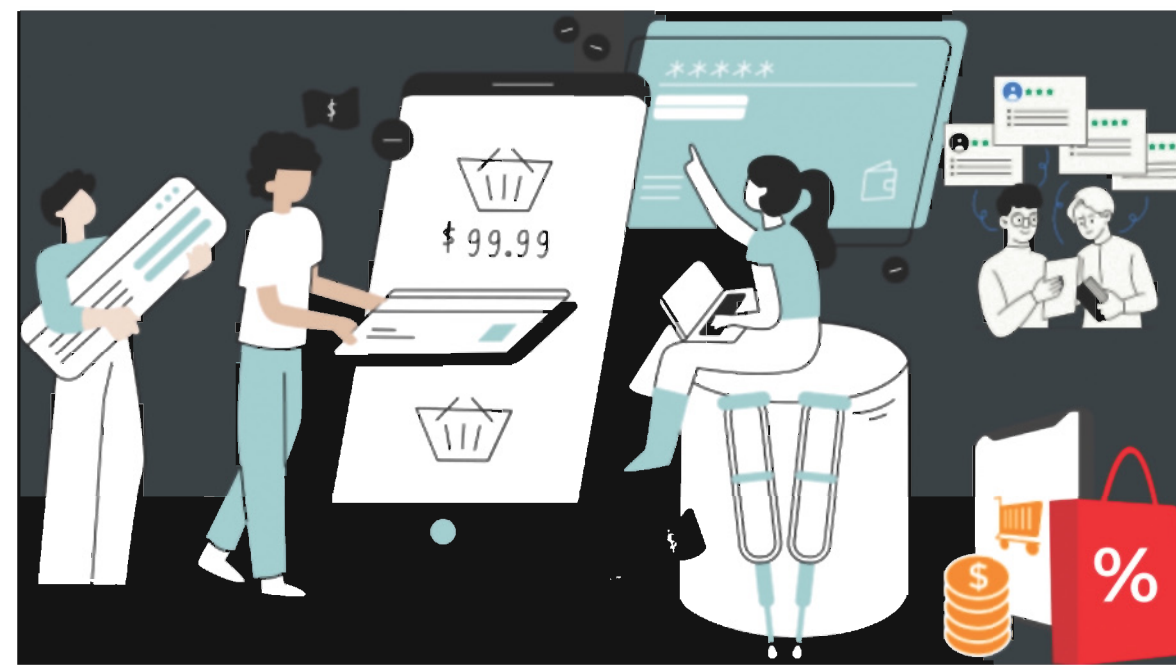
and identity politics have fused into one powerful cartel.

Unless there is a radical rethink that redefines the terms of engagement, holds violators accountable, and tightens cross-border coordination — Manipur may soon lose

even the illusion of peace. The road from Tonzang to Dimapur is no longer a path of trade and travel. It's a corridor of shadows, where dreams of statehood, drugs, and guns walk side by side.

Author: Sruti Kaushik

Center urged E-Commerce platforms to self-audit for unfair trade practices and eliminate Dark patterns



The rapid expansion of E-Commerce is a boon for Indian digital economy where the consumer protection is often compromised due to expanding cyber vulnerabilities. To mitigate this trend and to protect consumers, the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) issued an advisory to all e-commerce platforms to self-audit within three months ensuring non-engagement of deceptive and unfair trade practices aligned with dark patterns recognized by Ministry of Consumer Affairs in late 2023.

What are Dark Patterns? Dark Patterns are user interfaces created by e-commerce platforms in a deceptive way to mislead or manipulate consumers, influencing them to make choices that are not in the best interest of consumers or not intended to buy initially. These dark patterns resulted in not only unfair trade practices but also the cause of unhealthy economic conditions, leaving genuine traders suffering.

How do dark patterns affect consumers? It exploits psychological vulnerabilities to drive actions that influence the decisions making process, impairing user autonomy. It drives us to buy unintended and unwanted things, leading to addiction and overuse and most importantly violating consumer rights and privacy.

The following are the known dark patterns identified by the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA).

Dark Pattern	Definition
False Urgency	Falsely implying urgency or scarcity to mislead users into making an immediate purchase or action.
Basket Sneaking	Adding extra items (e.g., products, donations) to a cart during checkout without the user's consent increases the total cost.
Confirm Shaming	Using guilt, fear, shame, or ridicule to push users toward a purchase or subscription continuation.
Forced Action	Forcing users to buy additional goods or sign up for unrelated services to complete their original purchase.
Subscription Trap	Making it difficult or complex for users to cancel a paid subscription.
Interface Interference	Manipulating the interface to highlight certain information while hiding or obscuring other relevant details to mislead the user.
Bait & Switch	Advertising one outcome based on user actions, but delivering a different, deceptive result.
Drip Pricing	Hiding parts of the total price until later in the purchasing process misleading users about the final cost.

Disguised Advertisement	Presenting ads as user-generated content, news, or organic content to mislead users.
Nagging	Repeatedly interrupting users with unrelated prompts, options, or messages that disrupt the intended transaction.

Let me explain with an example where you can fit yourself into it. Consider an e-commerce platform that includes a default pre-checked donation checkbox during final checkout just before making payment. If you are rushing through the process, you may not notice and most likely will proceed to pay by unchecking the box. Here, the default selection box takes advantage of inattentiveness and subtly pushes you to donate. While donation is considered a good cause, these types of prompt manipulation influence the decision, which is a classic example of a dark pattern in e-commerce.

A recent press release from the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, indicated that e-commerce grievances are significantly increasing and registered 8919 complaints in the last two months. It also noted that National Consumer Helpline (NCH) facilitated refund of ₹7.1 crore, where e-commerce related amount to the highest signaling the increasing potential harm. Moreover, reports suggest that the rapid increase of dark patterns identified in other platforms including OTT platforms used to stream shows and movies. A LocalCircles survey reveals widespread use of dark patterns by Indian OTT media platforms, with one in two users reporting hidden fees, forced actions, and billing traps. According to International Consumer Protection and Enforcement Network (ICPEN), "over 76% of websites examined used at least one dark pattern and nearly 67% used multiple possible dark patterns".

We common people must be aware of these dark patterns and not fall into the perpetrator's trap.

If so, contact immediately National Consumer Helpline (NCH) by calling 1915 or use the NCH website to register your grievances.

Author: LEA

Bharat NCX2025 Fourth National Cybersecurity Exercise Inaugurated at RRU

'Enhancing The Operational Preparedness of Indian Cyberspace' a themed exercise of National Cyber Security Exercise -Bharat NCX 2025 inaugurated by National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) in partner with Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) at its own campus, a two-week program started on 21st July 2025. This is the fourth of its kind initially started in 2022.

Bharat NCX 2025 aimed to bring closer cybersecurity professionals, stakeholders, policymakers, industry leaders and defence personnels to mitigate cyberspace vulnerabilities by simulating real-world cyber incidents including sophisticated attack on critical infrastructure, deepfake manipulation, autonomous malware response scenarios and API security breaches.

The exercise offers live-fire simulations mirroring real-world attacks on both IT and Operational Technology (OT) equip participants with pragmatic insights on how AI reshaping cyber-security landscape.

Moreover, it promotes the collaboration of private-public sectors to mitigate evolving cyber threats.

In the special note by Dy. National Security Adviser, T.V. Ravichandran IPS extolled the need of real time simulation saying cyber security varying from governance and healthcare to energy, transportation, and defence being the foundation of Indian national security, economy and public safety and trust.

Furthermore, a dedicated Strategic Decision-Making Exercise (STRATEX), The CISO Conclave and Bharat Cybersecurity Startup Exhibition are considered as key events of the exercise.

Author: LEA



Bangladesh Orders 25 Boeing Aircraft in Bid to Ease U.S. Trade Tensions

In a strategic move to defuse mounting trade tensions with the United States, Bangladesh has placed an order for 25 aircraft from Boeing. The deal is part of a broader effort by Dhaka to reduce its US \$6 billion trade surplus with Washington and avoid looming tariff hikes that threaten its key export sectors.

The agreement, signed earlier this month, reflects Bangladesh's intent to recalibrate its trade relationship with the U.S. amid pressure from the Trump-era tariff framework. The country faces the possibility of a 35% move that could severely impact its textile and garment industry a sector that constitutes more than 80% of Bangladesh's exports and is highly dependent on access to the U.S. market.

bilateral ties and ease the impact of punitive tariffs. "We are not just buying planes; we are building a strategic trade partnership," said one senior trade official familiar with the negotiations.

The Boeing deal is also seen as a move to strengthen aviation infrastructure as Bangladesh's economy continues to grow. With increasing demand for passenger and cargo transport, the new aircraft will help expand the national carrier's fleet and boost connectivity across Asia, the Middle East, and North America.

By diversifying its import profile and engaging in reciprocal trade, Bangladesh hopes to demonstrate goodwill and avoid being caught in the crosshairs of U.S. trade protectionism.



In exchange for the aircraft deal, Bangladesh will also increase its imports of critical U.S. goods, including wheat, soybean oil, and cotton, all commodities vital to its domestic supply chains and industrial sectors. Under the terms of the agreement, Bangladesh will import 700,000 tonnes of U.S. wheat annually over the next five years, signaling a long-term shift in agricultural trade flows.

Officials in Dhaka have indicated that this dual-pronged approach is combining a high-value aviation purchase with expanded agricultural imports is designed to improve

The success of this strategy could serve as a model for other developing economies navigating trade friction with major partners.

Whether the deal will be enough to shift Washington's stance remains to be seen, but for now, Bangladesh is betting on diplomacy through commerce to protect its vital export markets and safeguard millions of jobs tied to them.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Bhutan's Third Internet Gateway Faces New Setback Amid Regional Tensions and Strategic Concerns



Bhutan's much-anticipated Third International Internet Gateway, initially set to go live in January 2025, remains stalled due to a combination of political turmoil in Bangladesh and deepening regional suspicions. Airtel, the new Indian partner of Bhutan Telecom, has not yet received right-of-way clearance in Bangladesh, delaying the project that is vital for Bhutan's digital and strategic future.

According to a GovTech official, Bangladeshi regulators have acknowledged the issue and are seeking a solution. However, the ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has left the new government distracted by domestic instability. Although diplomatic ties with Bhutan remain intact, Dhaka is currently prioritizing internal governance and security over external connectivity projects.

More critically, Bangladesh is reportedly skeptical that the fiber-optic line may also serve India's North-East under the guise of Bhutanese use raising concerns of broader Indian strategic intent. With India-Bangladesh relations at a low following the political shift, such suspicions have further slowed the clearance process.

From a strategic standpoint, the delay is not just about bandwidth. For Bhutan, this third gateway via Gelephubypassing the vulnerable Siliguri Corridor which has major implications for cyber defense, data sovereignty, and secure communication. During Cyclone Amphan, Bhutan's complete internet outage highlighted the dangers of relying on a single route.

With increasing cyber threats and regional digital surveillance, a third diversified route becomes critical not only for digital development but also for national security. Bhutanese officials remain hopeful, but the project now lies entangled in the crosswinds of geopolitics and cyber strategy.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Is Nepal Facing SriLanka's Past?

Technical failures in IOC- built infrastructure raise questions over construction quality

Nepal Oil Corporation (NOC) is grappling with yet another technical crisis at its Amlekhgunj pipeline facility, marking the second major infrastructure failure in just two months and raising serious concerns about the quality of Indian Oil Corporation (IOC)-constructed petroleum infrastructure.

The latest breakdown occurred in the loading bay area where a critical pipe has shifted approximately 10 centimeters due to alignment issues during fuel loading operations. An IOC technical team is expected to arrive on July 30, with the pipeline likely closed for up to seven days for repairs.

"There is a problem in the pipe while loading from the storage tank to the tanker through the loading bay," NOC officials confirmed. This mirrors a similar breakdown from two months ago when IOC technicians spent six days repairing the same loading systems.

Project Plagued by Delays

The second phase of the Amlekhgunj-Motihari pipeline, jointly inaugurated by Prime Ministers KP Sharma Oli and Narendra Modi, saw Nepal invest Rs 1.54 billion against IOC's Rs 750 million contribution. Originally scheduled for completion by March 2024, the project faced significant delays before finally beginning petrol and kerosene imports in January 2025.

IOC contracted Indian company Lekhita International for construction, but repeated failures have raised questions about quality control measures in the state-of-the-art facility designed for complete automation with 24 loading bays and 36 filling points.

Sri Lanka's Costly Lesson

Nepal's struggles mirror challenges faced by Sri Lanka, which suffered devastating economic consequences from over-dependence on fuel imports.

Sri Lanka's export income, contributing directly to the nation's crippling economic crisis. The debt-laden country experienced months of shortages of food, fuel and electricity, with inflation peaking at 57% before declaring sovereign default in April 2022.

The crisis forced Sri Lanka to take decisive

action in March 2023, breaking Indian oil companies' 80% market dominance by opening its petroleum sector to international competition.

Chinese Investment: Sinopec invested \$100 million for retail operations and signed a separate \$4.5 billion agreement for an oil refinery in Hambantota, taking over 150 fuel stations.

US-UK Partnership: California-based RM Parks partnered with Shell PLC, investing \$110 million in a 20-year agreement to operate 150 retail stations.

Australian Entry: United Petroleum entered with plans to manage 150 stations and build 50 new ones.

This diversification broke Lanka Indian Oil Company's control over 280 fuel stations, reducing Indian dominance from about 80% of the market.

Supply Security Maintained

Despite technical setbacks, NOC has assured continued fuel supplies during repairs. The Amlekhgunj depot's storage capacity can sustain daily sales for seven days, ensuring distribution to major depots across the country.

However, recurring infrastructure failures and recent fuel price increases attributed to IOC pricing pressures raise a critical question: Will Nepal face the same economic devastation that forced Sri Lanka into sovereign default, or will it learn from its neighbor's experience and diversify its energy partnerships before it's too late?

A destabilized Nepal would inevitably create regional instability, potentially triggering refugee flows, trade disruptions, and security challenges that would directly impact India's northern borders and economic interests. For ordinary Nepali families already struggling with rising fuel costs and uncertain supply chains, the lessons from Sri Lanka's crisis serve as both a warning and a call for action before economic hardship becomes unbearable.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Beijing's Bet on a Failing Myanmar

When Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi landed in Naypyitaw in the summer of 2024, the Myanmar junta was on the back foot. Military commanders, who once swaggered through press conferences and security summits, now wore the tension on their faces. They were losing towns, losing troops, and increasingly, losing time.

A year earlier, Beijing had opted to keep its distance. Myanmar's 2021 coup had drawn global condemnation, but for China, the calculus was different. A military regime may have been unpalatable, but it offered predictability and ensured that democratic contagion wouldn't creep across its southern border. That quiet confidence crumbled when the Brotherhood Alliance launched a series of coordinated offensives in late 2023, seizing strategic corridors and cutting supply routes deep into junta territory. For Beijing, silence was no longer an option.

What followed wasn't dramatic, but it was decisive. According to those familiar with the shift, China agreed to channel over \$1 billion in "advance payments" tied to oil and gas infrastructure. Officially, there was no mention of military aid. But the outcomes spoke clearly. Fuel imports resumed. The kyat stabilized. The army began retaking territory. And Chinese-made drones and aerial munitions started appearing in renewed offensives, especially in Shan State. In the factories near Magway, Chinese engineers helped restart weapons production. Financial lifeline became operational support.

The strategy extended beyond air strikes. China reportedly pressured the United Wa State Army and other ethnic militias along the border to halt their cooperation with resistance forces. Intelligence sharing dried up. Arms routes were disrupted. Border surveillance tightened. All without deploying a single Chinese soldier.

Yet the partnership was never comfortable. At a regional forum in June 2025, Chinese envoy



Deng Xijun praised the Myanmar military for "returning stability" to Lashio—a town captured days earlier through a brutal offensive.

The junta's response was cold. No joint declaration. No photo-ops. Behind the scenes, Myanmar was already warming up to Russia and Belarus, hoping to diversify its defense ties and avoid being held hostage by Beijing's ambitions.

For the people of Myanmar, the message from Beijing was unmistakable. The airstrikes, the destroyed clinics, the vanished protesters they saw China's hand in it all. Anti-China sentiment surged online and in exile media. Activists accused Beijing of not just enabling the junta, but of restoring the criminal networks and scam syndicates that once plagued northern border towns.

From Beijing's perspective, it was always about safeguarding core interests: energy routes, trade access, and regional insulation

from Western influence. Democracy wasn't the problem but unpredictability was. A fragmented Myanmar threatened all three. So the decision was made to buy time and control, even if it meant supporting a regime with shrinking legitimacy.

But that choice comes with consequences. The junta is fractured, increasingly isolated, and losing its grip, and the people who are exhausted, angry, and digitally connected have taken note of who stood on which side of the line.

China has influence. That's not in doubt. But in Myanmar, it's no longer clear whether that influence rests on solid ground or just shifting rubble.

Author: Shruti Kaushik

Philippines Chooses Taiwan Over China's Threats

Fed up with China's bullying tactics in their backyard waters, the Philippines has struck up an unlikely friendship with Taiwan that's sending shockwaves through regional politics.

Behind the scenes, Filipino and Taiwanese coast guards are now patrolling together, sharing intelligence about Chinese ship movements, and coordinating responses to what Manila calls Beijing's escalating intimidation campaign in the South China Sea.

The partnership would have been unthinkable just two years ago. But President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. has had enough of trying to play nice with China.

Philippine government officials mentioned that they have been tried the nice approach for years but it got them nowhere. And even China just got more aggressive.

Breaking Old Taboos

The shift became official in April when Marcos quietly lifted restrictions that had prevented government workers from meeting with Taiwanese officials for decades. He also allowed Taiwanese visitors to enter the Philippines without visas which Taiwan had been requesting for years.

On paper, it looked like a tourism boost. In reality, it opened the door for the kind of security cooperation that would have triggered a diplomatic crisis with Beijing under previous administrations.

The numbers tell the story of why Manila changed course. Chinese vessels in Philippine waters have multiplied over the past year, while cyberattacks and espionage operations targeting the Philippines have surged, according to the country's National Security Council.

Secret Meetings and Joint Patrols

What followed reads like something from a spy novel. Filipino academics with ties to the defense establishment began holding hushed meetings with high-ranking Taiwanese generals, sharing notes on how to handle China's growing assertiveness.

Then came the joint coast guard patrols in the Bashi Channel, the narrow waterway between the Philippines and Taiwan that's become a flashpoint for regional tensions.

The cooperation hit its peak last month during a military exercise called Kamandag. While U.S., Philippine, and Japanese forces practiced firing anti-ship missiles from islands just 130 miles from Taiwan, Taiwanese military observers watched from the sidelines.

Though officials insist the drills weren't aimed at any particular country, everyone knows what they were really about: preparing for the possibility that China might try to take Taiwan by force.

Walking a Tightrope

The new partnership puts both countries in a delicate position. The Philippines still officially recognizes Beijing as the legitimate government of all China, including Taiwan. But that's not stopping them from working together where it counts.

Manila's calculation is simple: China's pressure campaign isn't working, so why not push back? The U.S. has already promised \$500 million to upgrade Philippine military equipment, and now Taiwan offers another avenue for security cooperation.

For Taiwan, isolated by China's diplomatic pressure, the partnership offers a rare opportunity to work with another government on security matters. It's exactly the kind of international engagement Beijing has spent decades trying to prevent.

The Regional Undercurrent

The evolving partnership between Manila and Taipei signals a deeper regional transformation. Nations that once tiptoed around Beijing to preserve fragile ties are now drawing clearer lines, responding to China's increasingly forceful posture with growing defiance. The irony is striking: in trying to isolate its rivals, China is inadvertently binding them closer. Whether this newfound alignment can endure Beijing's inevitable pushback remains uncertain. But for now, two wary neighbors united by shared anxieties over a rising superpower are choosing solidarity over silence.

Author: LEA



Bolstering Missile Capabilities Strengthening Nuclear Deterrence



India, one of the rising powers of Asia continues to bolster its military missile arsenal, tested Akash Prime surface-to-air defence missile followed by test of two nuclear deterrence Prithvi-II and Agni-I short range ballistic missiles on 16th and 17th July 2025 respectively. India's back-to-back missile tests posit the capabilities of striking harder than adversaries think if conflicts arise.

Akash Prime

Akash Prime is an advanced version of Akash used during the Operation Sindoor, capable of tackling fighter jets, cruise missiles and drones, having detrimental effect on adversaries' arial capabilities. Capable of operating in altitude over 4500 meters and range of 25-30 km, it succeeded destroying two high-paced Unmanned Aerial Vehicles during the test run taken place at Ladakh, signalling India's capacity to operate from a position of advanced defensive capability and precision in targeting. Its high-altitude performance and ability to engage simultaneously make it ideal for defending sensitive border areas like Jammu & Kashmir. Moreover, Akash Prime is indigenously designed and developed boosting India's self-reliance.

Nuclear Deterrence Missiles

On the following day, India test-fired its two nuclear capable Short-Range Ballistic Missiles Prithvi-II and Agni-I from Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha. It was carried out by the elite Strategic Forces Command at the offshore of Odisha, validated all the technical and operational parameters, said Ministry of Defence. The Prithvi-II is developed to reach the target up to 350 km with 500 kgs of payload capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear

warheads whereas Agni-I can reach the extend of 700-900 km with 1000 kgs of payload. Agni-I bridges the gap between short-range Privthi missiles and long-range Agni variants like Agni-V that covers 5000-8000 km. Moreover, Agni-I mobility and solid-fuel propulsion ensures rapid deployments and survivability. Both missiles are integral part of India's nuclear deterrence, a no first use nuclear policy aimed mainly deterring regional threats from Pakistan and China.

Self-reliant India (Aatmanirbhar Bharat)

India realised the potential of indigenous domestic capabilities out of 'Operation Sindoor' resulted in bolstering areal defence features. These missiles were indigenously built by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) partnered with state owned Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) and Bharat Electronic Limited (BEL). Due to domestic productivity, it becomes cost effective compared approximately one third price of western systems saving billions in foreign exchange. The indigenous ecosystem allows modification and continuous alteration based on operational feedback enhancing reliability, durability and adaptability in diverse conditions whereas western systems are not easy to modify based on our will.

A likely comparison with adversaries' capabilities

While India and its adversaries are in capable of missiles ranging from short-medium-long and intercontinental, lets equate the recent test-fired missiles like Akash Prime, Agni-I and Prithvi-II with adversaries' similar arsenal.

Aspect	Akash Prime (India)	HQ-16 (China)	LY-80 (Pakistan)
Range	25–30 km	40–50 km	~40 km
Altitude	Up to 20 km (optimized for >4,500 m terrain)	Up to 25 km	Up to 20 km
Guidance	Indigenous active RF seeker	Semi-active radar homing	Semi-active radar homing
Mobility	Highly mobile, road-based launchers	Mobile, integrated with networked radar systems	Mobile, less integrated than China's HQ-16
Cost	~₹2 crore per unit, cost-effective	Higher cost, estimated ~₹5–6 crore per unit	Like HQ-16, reliant on Chinese supply
Key Features	High-altitude performance, multi-target engagement (up to 4 targets), indigenous upgrades	Longer range, networked with PLA's C4ISR systems	Export variant, less advanced integration
Strategic Role	Localized air defense for LAC/LoC, counters drones and missiles (e.g., Operation Sindoor)	Regional air defense, part of the A2/AD strategy	Tactical air defense against Indian air assets

Aspect	Agni-I (India)	DF-15 (China)	Shaheen-I/IA (Pakistan)
Range	700–900 km	600–900 km	750–900 km
Payload	Up to 1,000 kg	500–750 kg	~700–1,000 kg
Propulsion	Solid-fueled	Solid-fueled	Solid-fueled
Accuracy (CEP)	~25–50 m	~10–30 m	~50–100 m
Mobility	Road/rail-mobile, rapid deployment	Road-mobile, highly survivable	Road-mobile, moderate survivability
Key Features	Nuclear/conventional warheads, indigenous design	High precision, potential MIRV variants, advanced guidance	Nuclear-focused, less advanced guidance
Strategic Role	Deterrence against Pakistan, western China	Regional A2/AD, countering U.S. allies and India	Counter India's conventional superiority

Aspect	Prithvi-II (India)	DF-11A (China)	Ghaznavi (Pakistan)
Range	350 km	300–600 km	~290–300 km
Payload	500–1,000 kg	500–800 kg	~700 kg
Propulsion	Liquid-fueled	Solid-fueled	Solid-fueled
Accuracy (CEP)	~25 m	~20–30 m	~100–250 m
Mobility	Road-mobile, less rapid than solid-fueled systems	Road-mobile, high survivability	Road-mobile, moderate survivability
Key Features	High precision, anti-BMD measures, indigenous	High precision, advanced guidance, exportable	Nuclear-focused, less accurate
Strategic Role	Tactical strikes, battlefield support	Tactical precision strikes, A2/AD support	Tactical deterrence against Indian forces

Juxtaposing India's Akash Prime, Agni-I and Prithvi-II with like system of Pakistan and China implies India's calculus on regional security deterrence and tactical superiority. As illustrated in the pictures, India's systems are excelled in cost effectiveness, indigenous adaptability and high-altitude performance particularly the Akash Prime. Agni-I and Prithvi-II ensures providing diverse tactical options with accuracy and mobility compatibility to counter Pakistan and parts of China.

While China's systems offer superior range, precision and integration with The Anti- Access/Area Denial (A2/AD), they are less optimized for India specific operational needs such as high-altitude warfare (we are not comparing most advanced missiles with increased range). Pakistan's arsenal predominantly depends on foreign technology mainly Chinese technology, lags in precision, compatibility, originality and to note they can't customize easily as per their needs. India's successful interception of Fatah-II during "Operation Sindoor" exemplified this trend.

India's Indigenous ecosystem, exemplified by the recent tests strengthen India's defence capabilities amid China's growing influence in the region particularly within neighbouring countries and Pakistan's asymmetric tactics while indicating adversaries its readiness to counter threats as well as take offensive measures. Will this accretion of indigenous missiles into its arsenal prove efficacious in ensuring long-term regional stability and deterrence? Let the time reveal the rest, nonetheless, India's proactive advancements lay a strong foundation for addressing raising security challenges.

Author: LEA

Aatmanirbhar Bharat How BEL's Radars Enhance Indian Army's Defence Strategy



The Ministry of Defence (MoD), Government of India, has signed a contract worth approximately ₹2,000 crore with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) for the procurement of advanced Air Defence Fire Control Radars for the Indian Army. The agreement, finalized in New Delhi on July 25, 2025, falls under the Buy (Indian-Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured, or IDDM) category, marking a significant push under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat (Self-reliant India) initiative.

Key highlights of the contract:

• **Purpose and Capability:** These Fire Control Radars are designed to detect, track, and engage a wide spectrum of aerial threats—including fighter aircraft, attack helicopters, and drones—providing the Indian Army with an edge in modern aerial warfare.

• **Indigenous Content:** The radars will have a minimum of 70% indigenous content. This not only furthers self-reliance but also empowers Indian MSMEs with significant opportunities in component manufacturing and raw material supply.

• **Modernization and Operational Impact:** The procurement mark a crucial milestone in the ongoing modernization of the Army's Air Defence Regiments, significantly enhancing operational readiness and national security.

• **System Features:** According to DRDO, the system includes an X-Band active array 3D search radar, Ka-Band tracking radar, electro-optical sensors for passive 2D-tracking, laser range finder, gun control unit, power generator, and a commander's cabin—all mounted on a high mobility vehicle. The system can control multiple air defence guns simultaneously.

• **Economic and Strategic Value:** This initiative aligns with the government's push to promote indigenous defence production, contributing to economic growth and supporting thousands of MSMEs as part of the defence manufacturing supply chain.

This landmark deal is part of broader efforts by the Indian government to increase indigenous defence production, which reached all-time highs in 2024-25, and to bolster the country's stature as a global exporter of defence equipment.

Author: LEA

Turkey chose to develop The Thermobaric GAZAP Bomb

Turkey chose to develop the thermobaric GAZAP bomb rather than pursue a nuclear option for several interrelated strategic, legal, and technological reasons:

• **NATO Membership and Non-proliferation Obligations:** As a NATO member, Turkey is under strong legal and diplomatic obligations not to develop nuclear weapons. The country is a signatory to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT), which prohibits it from building or acquiring nuclear arms.

• **Strategic Need for High-Yield Conventional Weapons:** Thermobaric weapons like GAZAP offer destructive power "just below nuclear" in effect and can devastate large areas or fortified targets without crossing into the political and ethical red line of nuclear weapons. This provides Turkey with a potent deterrent and tactical tool, enhancing its military profile while staying within international law.

• **International Law and Acceptability:** While thermobaric weapons are controversial, especially if used on civilian targets, they are not banned by international law if employed against military objectives. Nuclear weapons, by contrast, are heavily stigmatized and internationally regulated.

• **Technological and Industrial Policy:** Developing advanced conventional munitions like thermobaric bombs aligns with Turkey's broader strategy of self-reliance, exporting defense technologies, and reducing dependency on foreign suppliers, especially amidst fluctuating relations with Western allies.

• **Diplomatic Calculus:** Pursuing nuclear weapons would bring severe consequences: economic sanctions, political isolation, and significant security risks. Building thermobaric munitions boosts Turkey's deterrence without those costs.

In summary, Turkey likely views weapons like the GAZAP as the optimal balance between maximum destructive capability and continued alignment with its legal, strategic, and diplomatic commitments as a non-nuclear NATO power. There are no credible sources suggesting that Turkey is seeking to develop or field nuclear weapons.

Author: LEA

China Navalizes CH-Series Drones to Expand Maritime Dominance

China is accelerating the transformation of its unmanned aerial fleet by adapting its widely used CH-series drones including the CH-3, CH-4, and CH-5/9 for maritime missions. The move marks a strategic shift in how the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) integrates unmanned systems into its operations across contested waters like the South and East China Seas.

Originally developed for land-based reconnaissance and strike roles, the CH-series drones are now being upgraded for naval environments. These enhancements include corrosion-resistant airframes, maritime surveillance radars, sea-skimming missile payloads, and navigation systems capable of operating in GPS-denied environments. goal is to enable persistent monitoring, rapid targeting, and long-range precision strikes with minimal human intervention.

The CH-3, a tactical UAV with a range of 240 km, is being tested with Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) for ocean surface monitoring. The CH-4, which has been exported to multiple countries, is now equipped with Ku-band maritime radar, improved endurance, and anti-ship missile compatibility, possibly with AR-series guided munitions. It serves both ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) and light strike roles.

The more advanced CH-5 and CH-9 platforms offer long-endurance and heavy payload capacity. These drones are being fitted with

satellite communication systems, electronic intelligence (ELINT) sensors, and AI-enabled targeting algorithms that support autonomous decision-making, target tracking, and data fusion with naval assets. With operational ranges exceeding 1,000 km and flight times over 30 hours, they are ideal for blue-water missions and area denial strategies.

Artificial intelligence plays a key role in this upgrade cycle. The drones are being integrated into swarming trials and manned-unmanned teaming exercises, allowing them to operate in tandem with surface ships, aircraft, and coastal missile units. These drones can share real-time battlefield intelligence and carry out saturation attacks or decoy missions in future conflict scenarios.

By navalizing these drones, China is preparing for a future of unmanned maritime warfare that offers reach, flexibility, and plausible deniability. These assets are well-suited for gray-zone operations, such as monitoring foreign vessels near disputed reefs or supporting maritime militia units without escalating into open conflict.

The implications: China's rapidly evolving drone fleet strengthens its ability to assert control over contested waters while raising the cost of surveillance and deterrence for regional rivals. As a result, countries like India, Japan, and the United States are reassessing their naval drone capabilities in response to this unmanned expansion.

Author: Sruti Kaushik

