

I had only one idea before me throughout the trial, i.e. to show complete indifference towards the trial in spite of serious nature of the charges against us.
-Bhagat Singh

STRENGTHENING BILATERAL TIES

Hansa-3(NG) Powers India's Flight to Aviation Self-Reliance

DR JITENDRA SINGH



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi concluded a significant three-day state visit to Sri Lanka, marking his fourth trip to the island nation. This visit, at the invitation of Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, aimed to bolster the multifaceted partnership between the two countries, focusing on defense, energy, and economic cooperation. Upon arrival, Prime Minister Modi was accorded a grand ceremonial welcome at Colombo's historic Independence Square, a gesture highlighting the deep-rooted ties between India and Sri Lanka. Notably, he became the first foreign leader to receive such an honor at this venue. In recognition of his contributions to strengthening bilateral relations, Narendra Modi was conferred the Sri Lanka Mitra Vibhushana, the highest honor awarded to foreign dignitaries by Sri Lanka.

A pivotal outcome of the visit was the signing of a five-year defense cooperation agreement. This pact encompasses the training of Sri Lankan military personnel in India and emphasizes collaborative efforts in information and technology sharing. Prime Minister Modi underscored the shared security interests of both nations, emphasizing the interconnected nature of their safety.

President Dissanayake reassured India of Sri Lanka's commitment to regional stability, stating unequivocally that Sri Lanka territory would not be utilized for activities undermining India's security.

Energy cooperation featured prominently during the visit. India, in collaboration with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), agreed to develop an energy hub in Trincomalee, located in northeastern Sri Lanka. This ambitious project includes the construction of a multi-product pipeline and aims to transform Trincomalee into a pivotal energy center.

Additionally, Prime Minister Modi inaugurated a 120-megawatt solar power plant in Sri Lanka's eastern region, reflecting India's commitment to supporting Sri Lanka's transition to sustainable energy sources.

The two nations also signed agreements to interconnect their electricity grids, facilitating power trade and enabling Sri Lanka to explore electricity exports.

Beyond defense and economic collaborations, the visit emphasized cultural ties and developmental projects. Prime Minister Modi, accompanied by President Dissanayake, visited the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi temple in Anuradhapura, symbolizing the shared cultural and spiritual heritage of the two nations.

In Anuradhapura, both leaders jointly launched India-assisted railway projects, including the signaling system for the Maho-Anuradhapura railway line and the flagging off of a train at Anuradhapura Railway Station. These initiatives aim to enhance Sri Lanka's transportation infrastructure and connectivity.

Modi's visit is viewed within the broader context of regional geopolitics, particularly concerning China's expanding influence in Sri Lanka through substantial infrastructure investments. By strengthening defense and energy ties, India aims to reinforce its strategic presence in the Indian Ocean region and support Sri Lanka's sovereignty and economic stability.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Sri Lanka has significantly advanced the bilateral relationship, encompassing defense cooperation, energy collaboration, economic assistance, and cultural ties. The agreements and initiatives launched during this visit are poised to foster mutual growth, and reflecting the enduring partnership between India and Sri Lanka.

India is currently the third-largest domestic airline market globally. By the end of this decade, it is projected to serve an astounding three hundred million domestic passengers, cementing its position as a powerhouse in global aviation. This exponential growth in passenger volume reflects more than just an expanding aviation industry – it signifies the rising aspirations of millions of Indians.

With the political dispensation headed by PM Sh Narendra Modi determined to place India as frontline nations and live upto global benchmarks and as the country gears up to handle the rapidly expanding aviation needs, the most pressing necessity is the demand for pilots, a crucial component in sustaining this growth trajectory. As per recent reports from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the demand for pilots in India is projected to increase at least fivefold in the next two decades, a significant increase from the current count. This surge in demand is attributed to India's civil aviation sector experiencing rapid growth in passenger traffic and fleet expansion, fueled by the forward-thinking initiatives introduced by the Civil Aviation Minister, Shri K Rammoan Naidu.

India, at present hosts 38 Flight Training Organizations (FTOs). With a soaring demand for skilled pilots, it is vital to develop a large and world-class flying training ecosystem in the country, with proportional increase in the number of trainer aircrafts. Currently, the small civil aircraft market in India is largely controlled by foreign companies, with domestic players lacking any significant foothold.

To be a fully self-reliant, our country needs indigenous civil aircraft development. This would showcase the nation's expertise and capabilities, positioning India as a preferred destination for aerospace component manufacturing. By excelling in every stage, from initial design to final production, such efforts would significantly strengthen the country's aviation industry.

The improved Hansa-3 aircraft, with commercial name Hansa-3(New Generation), indigenously designed and developed by Council of Scientific and Industrial Research-National Aerospace Laboratories (CSIR-NAL), boasts several advancements that cater to the needs of the flying community. Featuring a cutting-edge glass cockpit, a fuel-efficient Rotax 912 iSe3 Sport engine, and

enhanced performance metrics like a range of 620 nautical miles and seven hours of endurance, the aircraft redefines modern trainer aircraft standards. Having obtained key certifications, the Hansa-3(NG) is now certified for day and night operations, with further steps taken to extend its capabilities for IFR operations.

CSIR-NAL's Hansa-3(NG) marks a significant milestone in advancing India's aviation ambitions. It aligns seamlessly with Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's vision of establishing India as a global aviation hub by the end of this decade and achieving the broader goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.

CSIR-NAL's recent collaboration with an industry partner intends to meet both domestic and international demand with increase in the production of Hansa-3(NG) aircrafts. The production facility, set to be established in Bengaluru, will start manufacturing 36 aircraft annually, scaling up to 72 units to address growing needs. As India's first all-composite airframe aircraft, the Hansa-3(NG) is a game-changer, enabling flying clubs to train the next generation of pilots while also promoting a culture of hobby flying.

Beyond training, the Hansa-3(NG) holds immense potential for roles such as surveillance, aerial photography, environmental

monitoring, and more. Its deployment will stimulate the small aircraft manufacturing ecosystem, boosting local infrastructure and enabling small to medium-scale enterprises to contribute to the aviation supply chain.

The Hansa-3(NG) symbolizes India's progress toward realizing Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat, with the aviation sector playing a pivotal role in the nation's self-reliance movement. As the Hansa-3(NG) establishes itself as a cost-effective and versatile trainer aircraft, it also signals India's readiness to compete globally in aerospace manufacturing. The collaboration between CSIR-NAL and industry partner is not just about meeting present needs, it is about shaping a future where India emerges as a leader in aviation, innovation and technology.

India's aviation industry is on the brink of unparalleled growth. With strong initiatives, innovative technologies like the Hansa-3(NG), and the collective effort of stakeholders, the country is poised to elevate itself as a global aviation hub, fulfilling its aspirations for a robust and self-reliant aerospace ecosystem.

(The writer is Minister of State for Science and Technology (Independent Charge))

World Health Day 2025: A Step Towards a Healthier Society

Health is real wealth - but are we truly taking care of it? In today's fast-paced life, people are so busy earning money that they often forget to look after their own health. World Health Day reminds us that a happy life is only possible with a healthy body. Celebrated every year on April 7, this day is a great opportunity to raise awareness about health and focus global attention on pressing health issues. The World Health Organization (WHO) was founded on April 7, 1948. Initially, World Health Day was observed on July 22, 1949, but it was later shifted to April 7 so students and youth could participate more actively. Since 1950, WHO has celebrated this day with a specific theme each year to spread awareness about particular health challenges. This year's theme, "Healthy Start, Hopeful Future," focuses on the health of mothers and newborns. According to WHO, nearly 300,000 women die each year due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth, and over 20 million newborns are either still-born or die shortly after birth. Most of these deaths are preventable with timely care and proper awareness. In many parts of the world, especially rural areas, women still rely on tra-

ditional methods and hesitate to seek professional care. Many don't even realize when it is necessary to consult a doctor. In India, the situation is even more concerning in rural and remote areas. Outdated traditions, superstition, and a lack of awareness still affect women and child health. Beliefs like avoiding doctors during delivery, depending solely on home remedies, or neglecting proper nutrition during pregnancy are still common. These problems are rooted in two main issues - lack of education and deep-rooted generational beliefs. Many rural areas still lack proper hospitals, doctors, and medical information, which leads to late diagnosis and complications.

Impact of Health Infrastructure on Economic Growth

India is a country with a massive population, and providing equitable healthcare to all is a major challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed how fragile our healthcare system can be - shortages of hospital beds, oxygen, and basic medical supplies became national concerns. But this problem is not limited to India; even developed nations faced system failures. This highlights the global

need for resilient and inclusive health infrastructure.

If timely reforms are not implemented, weak healthcare systems can severely impact a country's economy. India's economy heavily depends on its working-class population. If workers or their families are not healthy, productivity drops, ultimately slowing the pace of national growth. Health is not just a personal concern but a pillar of economic and social stability. Widespread diseases can affect GDP and disrupt national progress. Hence, investment in healthcare is not an option; it is a necessity.

How Can India Improve Its Healthcare System?

Ensuring accessible and equitable healthcare for every citizen in a densely populated country like India is a difficult task. However, targeted reforms and genuine efforts can bring lasting improvements:

Increase Health Budget: The government must allocate more resources to healthcare for better hospitals, health centers, and modern medical equipment.

Strengthen Rural Health Services: Remote areas still suffer from a lack of doctors, med-

icines, and infrastructure. Telemedicine, mobile health units, and well-trained local health workers can bridge the gap.

Enhance Medical Education: Improving access to modern, affordable medical education will increase the number and quality of doctors and nurses in the country.

Promote Health Awareness: Educating citizens to recognize symptoms and seek early treatment can prevent serious illnesses.

Focus on Hygiene and Nutrition: Clean water, sanitation, and proper nutrition are basic but essential for good health.

If these areas are addressed with commitment and strategic planning, India can develop a strong, accessible, and sustainable healthcare system that not only improves lives but also supports national progress.

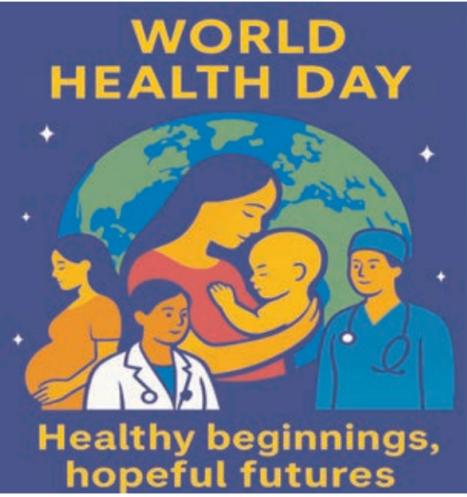
Conclusion: Healthcare is not a luxury - it is a fundamental right of every citizen. A strong and accessible healthcare system not only improves the quality of life but also forms the backbone of a country's social and economic development. The time has come to prioritize health through policy, funding, and public participation so that we can build a healthier, stronger, and more prosperous India.

The Journey to Health Begins Before Birth

PROF (DR.) VIKAS SHARMA & DR. ABEEDA MUSHTAQ

Health is the greatest treasure a human being can possess. It is the silent force that powers our thoughts, fuels our actions and colors every experience in life. Without good health, all other achievements such as education, career, relationships and aspirations lose their foundation. The value of health becomes undeniable when it begins to falter, revealing just how essential it is for both personal well-being and the progress of society. It affects not only the physical body, but also the emotional, social and economic stability of individuals and nations. Recognizing the vital importance of health and the urgent need for global cooperation in improving it, World Health Day was established. Celebrated each year on April 7th, this day marks the founding of the World Health Organization in 1948. The first World Health Day was celebrated in 1950, two years after WHO was established. It was created at a time when the world was still healing from the devastation of the Second World War and grappling with widespread poverty, illness and loss. The need for an international body that could unify health efforts and support countries in building strong public health systems was more urgent than ever. The birth of the World Health Organization was a promise that health would no longer be a privilege of the few, but a right for all.

World Health Day was envisioned not merely as a celebration, but as a yearly reminder of that promise. It was meant to spark conversations, raise awareness and inspire action on critical health challenges affecting humanity. Over the decades, the themes chosen for World Health Day have reflected the changing needs of the world, from eradicating deadly diseases and addressing mental health to strengthening health systems and tackling climate-related health threats. These themes are not just symbolic; they act as a mirror to our shared struggles and a guide toward solutions. The creation of World Health Day highlighted a powerful truth: health must not be seen as an individual concern alone, but a collective responsibility. Diseases do not respect borders and neither should our compassion or our response to health crises. By setting aside a day to reflect on global health, the world was



taking a stand against silence, neglect and inequality in healthcare.

In the present day, the relevance of World Health Day has only grown. We live in a time when modern medicine has made extraordinary advances, yet millions still lack access to basic healthcare. Life-saving treatments exist, but they remain out of reach for the poor and marginalized. Diseases that are preventable continue to claim lives simply because people cannot afford treatment or are not aware of the solutions. In many parts of the world, communities face double burdens, battling both infectious diseases and the rising tide of non-communicable conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and cancer. Mental health, though deeply intertwined with physical well-being, is still surrounded by stigma and neglect in many societies. Meanwhile, climate change is emerging as one of the

most significant threats to global health, as rising temperatures increase the spread of disease, reduce food security and contribute to natural disasters that displace millions.

The COVID-19 pandemic further exposed deep cracks in global health systems. It served as a painful reminder that preparedness is not just about medical equipment, but about trust, cooperation and equity. The world witnessed how the lack of investment in public health infrastructure and unequal distribution of resources can lead to catastrophe. Vulnerable populations, especially in low-income regions, suffered the most. The lessons learned from the pandemic continue to shape how we approach health challenges, with a renewed focus on universal health coverage, healthcare access and the mental well-being of individuals.

This year, the theme of World Health Day is "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures." It is a call to action that emphasizes the importance of starting life on the right foot with access to quality healthcare, clean environments and supportive communities. The message is simple yet powerful. If we want a better future, we must begin by giving every child the best start in life. Health does not begin at adulthood, it begins before birth. When pregnant women receive proper prenatal care, balanced nutrition and emotional support, their babies have a much greater chance of being born healthy. These early investments pay dividends far into the future. A child who is healthy is more likely to grow, learn and participate meaningfully in society. A healthy beginning leads to stronger families, more resilient communities and ultimately, more peaceful and productive nations.

Unfortunately, a healthy start is still out of reach for far too many. In many parts of the world, women give birth without medical assistance, sometimes in unsanitary and unsafe conditions. Access to clean water, nutritious food and vaccinations remains limited in numerous regions. Millions of children suffer from preventable illnesses, malnutrition, or lack of early education simply because their communities lack the resources to support them. These early disadvantages often translate into poor academic performance, reduced job opportunities and lifelong health issues. The cycle of poverty and ill

health continues, not because children lack intelligence or ambition, but because they were never given the fair start they deserved. This is not a failure of individual effort. It is a failure of systems and structures that should protect the most vulnerable.

The theme also draws attention to the critical role of mental and emotional well-being in shaping a child's future. A healthy beginning is not only about physical health. It is about feeling safe, loved and valued. Children who grow up in nurturing environments where they are emotionally supported and mentally stimulated are better prepared to handle life's challenges. Yet in many places, mental health is overlooked and children facing trauma or neglect are left without help. Raising awareness about emotional wellness, creating safe spaces for children and supporting parents through education and resources are just as important as providing vaccines or clean water. To truly honor the theme of "Healthy Beginnings, Hopeful Futures," societies must commit to long-term investments in maternal and child health. This includes strengthening healthcare systems, training healthcare workers, ensuring that essential medicines and nutrition are accessible and integrating health education into schools and communities. It also requires governments and policymakers to prioritize health in budgeting and planning. But most of all, it requires a shift in mindset from treating health as a cost to recognizing it as a foundation for development. Health is not just a medical issue. It is a matter of human dignity, equality and justice.

World Health Day is not just a date to observe. It is a chance to recommit ourselves to building a healthier world, one where no child is born into disadvantage, where every family has access to care and where the promise of a better future is not limited by geography or income. The road ahead is long and the challenges are many, but the vision is clear. By ensuring healthy beginnings, we do not just heal bodies, we build hope. We give every life a chance to flourish and we light the path toward a future that is not only healthier, but more compassionate, more inclusive and more just for all.

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Decoding the Waqf Bill: Myths vs Facts Uncovered

HARSH RANJAN

Exposing the Misinformation Campaign Against the Waqf Amendment Bill

With certain political entities and vested interest groups within the Muslim community deliberately spreading misinformation to stir unrest, the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 has become a lightning rod for controversy. The bill, aimed at ensuring transparency, curbing corruption, and streamlining the administration of waqf properties, has been distorted beyond recognition by these groups, who seem more concerned with protecting their own privileges than the welfare of the community.

The Truth Behind the Amendment

The resistance to this bill primarily comes from those who have long benefited from the lack of transparency in waqf institutions. Historically, certain groups have held significant control

over waqf assets, and their identities are well known. Their opposition is not driven by genuine concerns for religious rights but by a desire to maintain their hold over vast properties and financial resources that have been mismanaged for years. If their intentions were truly aligned with the welfare of the community, can they explain why the income from waqf properties has been consistently declining year after year?

One of the main distortions being peddled is the claim that the bill enables the government to seize legitimate waqf properties. In reality, the amendment merely empowers the District Collector to review misclassified properties, especially cases where government or private lands have been wrongly designated as waqf. This measure ensures rightful ownership and protects against fraudulent claims, benefiting both the community and the

larger public interest.

Another widely circulated myth is that the bill abolishes the survey of waqf properties. On the contrary, it strengthens the process by assigning the responsibility to the District Collector, who will conduct surveys using established revenue procedures, thereby eliminating inaccuracies and potential manipulation by vested interests.

Exposing the Hypocrisy of Opponents

The most vocal critics of the bill, have long been the principal beneficiaries of waqf assets. Their opposition is a calculated move to safeguard their financial empires built on these properties. These organizations have historically monopolized waqf resources, diverting funds meant for the underprivileged sections of the community towards their own agendas.

The hypocrisy is stark! While they

claim to champion the cause of the Muslim community, they have, for decades, manipulated waqf boards for personal gains. Many waqf boards in India are staffed by individuals affiliated with these groups, who continue to exploit these endowments for political and financial leverage. It is this unchecked exploitation that the amendment seeks to end, making them the loudest opponents of reform.

Strengthening Waqf for the True Beneficiaries

Beyond breaking the monopoly of select groups, the bill enhances inclusivity by mandating representation from various Muslim sects, including Sunni, Shia, Bohra, Aghakhani, and backward Muslim communities, ensuring fair and democratic governance of waqf assets. Furthermore, the introduction of non-Muslim experts to the waqf boards does not threaten Muslim control but rather enhances accounta-

bility, bringing in external oversight to prevent mismanagement.

The bill also introduces financial audits and transparent accounting practices, preventing misuse of waqf funds. Periodic reporting requirements and the ability to appeal waqf tribunal decisions in High Courts will further strengthen legal oversight, ensuring that waqf properties serve their intended purpose, benefiting the needy and preserving India's rich syncretic heritage.

The Need for Reform

The government's move to remove the 'Waqf by User' provision is another crucial step toward eliminating ambiguity in waqf property claims. This provision has been misused to illegitimately claim lands without formal waqf dedication, leading to endless legal battles and land encroachments. By streamlining registration processes, the amendment safeguards both private and pub-

lic lands from wrongful claims, ensuring that only legally declared waqf properties receive recognition.

The Way Forward

The Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 is a progressive step toward ensuring the transparency and efficient management of waqf properties. Its provisions are designed to protect legitimate waqf assets, improve governance, and dismantle the entrenched interests that have long profited from these resources.

It is imperative for the Muslim community to see through the misinformation and recognize that those opposing this bill are doing so for their own benefit, not for the greater good. By supporting this reform, we can ensure that waqf properties are used for their true purpose - uplifting the underprivileged and preserving the cultural and religious heritage they were meant to serve.