

15 Indian tourists killed in Vietnam boat accident

21 persons rescued after sightseeing boat overturns near Phu Quoc, a major tourist attraction; 10 persons from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh, and two from Kerala among the victims

The Hindu Bureau
CHENNAI

Fifteen Indian tourists were killed in Vietnam on Saturday when a sightseeing boat capsized off the coast of Phu Quoc, a major attraction known for its coral reefs and island-hopping excursions.

The speedboat was leaving the Hon May Rut Ngoai, an island in the An Thoi archipelago, with 32 Indian tourists and four crew members when it overturned about 400 metres off the shore.

A total of 21 people, including all 4 crew members, were rescued and admitted to hospitals. Two survivors remain in critical condition and are receiving intensive medical care.

The Indian Embassy in



Sea shock: An image from Vietnam News Agency shows rescue efforts at the accident site off Phu Quoc in Vietnam on Saturday. ANI

Vietnam confirmed that 10 of the 15 victims were from Tamil Nadu, three from Andhra Pradesh, and two from Kerala.

Local media outlets reported strong wave and wind conditions in the region during the accident. Tourist boats in the vicinity of the accident site rushed

to pull passengers from the water before the border guards, the Navy, the Coast Guard, and other forces joined the search-and-rescue operation, Vietnamese news portal VN Express International reported.

The exact cause of the incident is yet to be ascertained. Television footage

aired by Vietnamese media showed rough seas and strong winds as rescue teams threw lifebuoys to people in the water.

VN Express International also quoted eyewitnesses saying some of the passengers were trapped inside the overturned boat, which made rescue difficult.

Expressing grief over the incident, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the Indian Embassy and Consulate are providing all possible assistance. "Our officials are also in close contact with the Vietnamese authorities," Mr. Modi said in a post on X.

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TRAGEDY NEAR SHORE

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15 Indians killed in Vietnam boat accident

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C. Joseph Vijay has directed State officials to coordinate with the Ministry of External Affairs and high-ranking officials at the Indian Embassy in Vietnam to take immediate steps to bring back the bodies of those from the State who lost their lives and provide those affected by the accident with all necessary assistance. The victims from Tamil Nadu have been identified as Balaji and Alagurajan from Trichy; Sridhar from Salem; Santosh Kumar from Chennai; Ravisankar from Tiruvannamalai; and Sheik Abdullah, Vinaya Kumar, Muruga Prabu, Babu, and Senthil Kumar from Dharmapuri.

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu expressed deep anguish over the loss of three lives from the State and directed the officials to take necessary measures to bring back the survivors. The deceased were identified as Nallapeta Adisheshaiah Ravi Teja and Mudium Sreedhar of Kadapa and Gelli Jaya Lakshmi of Machilipatnam.

A statement from the Kerala Chief Minister's Office said: "The Chief Minister has directed the NORKA (Non-Resident Keralites Affairs) CEO to contact the Vietnam Embassy to obtain more details about the boat accident in which two Keralites were among those affected". The CMO identified the victims from Kerala as A. C. Thomas, 57, and his wife Loveni Thomas, 56, both from Kottarakkara.

Vietnamese Prime Minister Le Minh Hung ordered an investigation and directed authorities to hold those responsible accountable. He also asked officials to review waterway and maritime safety.

(With inputs from State bureaux and agencies)

Boat carrying tourists had barely left shore when it capsized, says witness

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

The boat carrying Indian tourists that capsized off an island in south Vietnam on Saturday had barely travelled 300-400 metres from the shore when it suddenly overturned, an Indian national who witnessed the tragedy said.

Ashish Kumar, a 48-year-old distributor of a mobile phone company from Andhra Pradesh's Guntur, said the tourists were divided into batches and ferried to the island as part of a company outing.

"We had all gone there as sellers, distributors and employees of Lava Mobile. We reached Vietnam on July 9 and were supposed to return to India on Sunday morning," Mr. Kumar told PTI over the phone.

He said one of the three boats carrying 32 Indian tourists had left the Hon May Rut Ngoai island for another island, while the



Vietnam Coast Guard personnel rescue tourists after a boat carrying them capsized near Hon May Rut Ngoai Island on Saturday. ANI

remaining two groups stayed back to take photos.

"The incident happened around 1.30 p.m. local time. The boat had gone barely 300 to 400 metres when it tipped over. We were taking pictures and it happened before we could react," he said.

"We were all screaming for help," Mr. Kumar said, adding that the weather conditions were not adverse. "There was some wind but that is expected

in an island," he said. He said rescue teams reached the spot soon after and brought the survivors and bodies back to the shore. However, "there were no medical teams even to administer CPR. We are all in a state of shock," he said.

Family travel

Mr. Kumar said while he was travelling alone, several members of the group had come with their families.

"A distributor friend I know was travelling with his wife on the boat. His wife died, while he is fighting for his life in a hospital," he said.

The group has since returned to its hotel, he added.

In a statement, Lava International said it is "deeply saddened" by the tragedy and confirmed that those involved included some of its channel partners and team members.

"We are in constant touch with the Embassy of India in Vietnam and the local authorities to gather information about the safety and well-being of our people. Our immediate priority is to extend all possible support to those affected and their families," the company said.

Fifteen Indian tourists were killed in the incident, according to Vietnamese media reports. The speedboat also had four crew members on board.

Read

● IT IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LONGEST AND MOST POWERFUL (2,400 KILOWATT) HYDROGEN TRAINSETS

PM to flag off India's first hydrogen train: Why the technology is so challenging

Dheeraj Mishra
New Delhi, July 11

PRIME MINISTER Narendra Modi will flag off India's first hydrogen-powered train in Jind, Haryana on July 17. This will mark a major milestone for the Indian Railways in a green technology where few countries have ventured so far.

According to the Railways, this is one of the world's longest (eight passenger cars and two driving power cars) and most powerful (2400 kilowatt) hydrogen trainsets.

The train can carry at least 682 passengers on the 89-km Jind-Sonapat railway section at a maximum operational speed of 75 km/h. It will make two round trips a day, covering 356 km and consuming an estimated 300 kg of hydrogen.

Hydrogen is highly flammable and needs to be transported at very high pressure. How will the Railways do this? And how will the train work? We explain.

HYDROGEN TRAINS ELSEWHERE

French rolling stock giant Alstom presented the technology for the first time at a 2016 exhibition in Berlin. Its two-car trainset, the Coradia iLint, was launched in Germany two years later, becoming the world's first hydrogen-powered passenger train.

Later, countries such as Japan, China and the US also launched their own hydrogen-powered trains.

The technology, however, is still evolving to cater to the mass transportation of passengers and freight. That is why few countries have hydrogen train services, and those that do

use them mostly for relatively short trips.

HOW THESE TRAINS WORK

Normal electrical locomotives require overhead wires to draw the alternating current that powers their movement. Hydrogen trains don't. They run on the simple formula of combining hydrogen with oxygen to produce the tractive electricity.

In the Indian hydrogen train's case, each of the two driving power cars will have four sets of integrated power packs, comprising hydrogen fuel cells and a lithium ferro phosphate battery. The hydrogen fuel cell will draw in the hydrogen stored on board (440 kg) at high pressure and oxygen from the outside air, then combine them to release electrical energy. One power



The technology, however, is evolving. A handful of countries use them mostly for short trips. PHOTO: NORTHERN RAILWAYS

pack will release 300 kW of energy — 115 kW from the fuel cell and 185 kW from the lithium ferro phosphate battery. The four power packs will provide 1200 kW of power.

Since the train has two power cars, the total power gen-

erated doubles to 2400 kW (3200 hp). This is comparable to the horsepower generated by normal 'electric multiple unit' or 'diesel-electric multiple unit' trains that cover similar, short-haul distances.

A senior Northern Railway

official said that the train was essentially created by replacing the diesel engines on old 'diesel electric multiple unit' rakes with a zero-emission hydrogen-electric propulsion system. The official explained the working of the power pack of the hydrogen cell and battery. "The fuel cell provides a constant power output, meaning it does not fluctuate with the train's changing power demand. When the train starts moving, it initially draws the power from the fuel cell, and since the train's power requirement at that stage is lower, the surplus electricity from the fuel cell goes into charging the onboard battery. As the train reaches higher speed and its power demand increases, the battery kicks in

to provide power in addition to the fuel cell," he said.

"Later, when the train's power requirement goes down, especially when the train is nearing the station, the battery power cuts off and the excess energy of the fuel cell starts charging the battery. Thus,

after covering a complete circuit, the battery is almost 80% charged at the end of the journey," said the official.

The main part of the system — the fuel cell — has been imported from the Canadian company Ballard, which specialises in its production.

STORING AND SUPPLYING HYDROGEN

Normal atmospheric pressure is measured as one "bar". Hydrogen, however, has to be

stored at 200-500 bar. This is the biggest challenge in using hydrogen as a clean fuel in trains. There are other issues too. Hydrogen production levels are low and transporting is difficult. To ensure the continuous supply of hydrogen for the trains, the railways has set up a 3000-kg-capacity fueling facility at Jind. A chiller plant has also been developed to keep the hydrogen at minus 15 degrees Celsius during dispensing — the low temperature will transform it into a liquid state and, thus, ensure its easy dispensing. The Railways, however, has not yet announced any other hydrogen train project. The official quoted above said that the future of the project would depend on how the first train works. **FULL REPORT ON**

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Navy commissions stealth frigate *INS Mahendragiri*

V. Kamalakara Rao
VISAKHAPATNAM

The Indian Navy commissioned the sixth advanced P17A-class stealth frigate 'INS Mahendragiri' in Visakhapatnam on Saturday.

The commissioning ceremony, held at the Eastern Naval Command (ENC) headquarters, in the presence of Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, marked a significant leap in India's capacity to design, construct, and deploy state-of-the-art naval platforms independently.

Named after the majestic mountain range in the

Eastern Ghats, the vessel symbolises the resilience and indomitable resolve of the Indian armed forces. Its induction into the Navy is viewed as a cornerstone of the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative, reflecting the country's shift from an importer of military hardware to a global hub for sophisticated warship manufacturing.

An advanced stealth frigate, *INS Mahendragiri* is equipped with cutting-edge technology that places it among the most formidable assets in the Indian Navy's fleet. The vessel features a sophisti-



INS Mahendragiri heading towards Visakhapatnam coast for its official inauguration. SPECIAL ARRANGMENT

cated Combined Diesel or Gas (CODOG) propulsion system, an Integrated Platform Management System

(IPMS), and an array of indigenous combat systems designed for high-intensity naval warfare.

Mr. Singh underscored the balance between embracing next-generation technology and maintaining robust conventional military power. While acknowledging the transformative impact of drones, artificial intelligence, cyber warfare, and hypersonic weapons, he emphasised that the bedrock of national security remains the resolve and expertise of trained soldiers.

"Future wars may be fought with AI, but they will still be won by national resolve, trained soldiers, and credible military power," Mr. Singh remarked.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with his New Zealand counterpart, Christopher Luxon, at an event in Auckland on Saturday. PTI

India, New Zealand set trade goal, elevate ties

Press Trust of India
AUCKLAND

New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon.

Vowing to work towards a peaceful Indo-Pacific, India and New Zealand on Saturday elevated ties to a strategic partnership and decided to ramp up maritime security while setting a target of doubling annual bilateral trade to ₹35,000 crore by 2030.

“We have decided to elevate our ties to a strategic partnership. We will move forward across every sector with clear goals and concrete outcomes,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi said after talks with his

The talks between the two leaders yielded 18 concrete outcomes, including 10 agreements. Key among them were a four-year road map to expand overall relations alongside three crucial pacts aimed at boosting hydrographic data sharing, facilitating mutual naval logistics, and framing enhanced maritime engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

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HISTORICAL BOND

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India, New Zealand set trade goal, elevate ties

Expanding bilateral trade through the early implementation of the free trade deal was also a key focus of the talks, underscored by Wellington's commitment to invest USD 20 billion in India over the next 15 years.

A joint statement noted that Mr. Modi and Mr. Luxon reaffirmed their shared commitment to a free, open, and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

The resolve by the two countries to work jointly for a peaceful Indo-Pacific comes amid growing global concerns over China's increasing military muscle-flexing in the region, including apprehensions over its test of a submarine-launched, long-range ballistic missile earlier this week.

The two sides also agreed to establish a maritime security dialogue, besides a joint working group on counter-terrorism.

An India-New Zealand joint action plan on sport was also firmed up. It provides for collaboration in high-performance sports, sports science, sports medicine and athlete development.

The two Prime Ministers called for freedom of navigation and overflight, and other lawful uses of the seas, in accordance with international law, particularly the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, the joint statement noted.

In his remarks at the meeting, Mr. Modi said deeper cooperation between India and New Zealand, both maritime nations, will inject new strength into the Indo-Pacific.

Mojtaba vows revenge for father's killing after Trump's new threat

'Vengeance is the will of our nation and must inevitably be carried out,' says Iran's Supreme Leader in a written message; earlier President Donald Trump had said any attempt to assassinate him would lead the U.S. to 'completely decimate' Iran

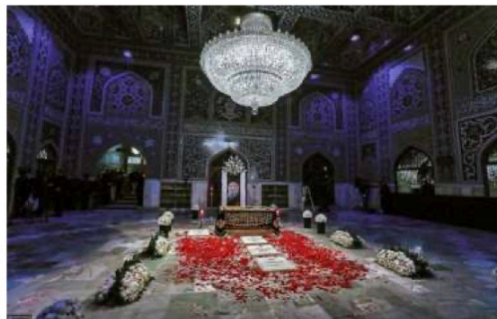
Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran's Supreme Leader on Saturday vowed revenge for the U.S.-Israeli killing of his father and predecessor, hours after President Donald Trump warned against any attempt to assassinate him.

Mr. Trump has declared their ceasefire over, while mediators have been trying to salvage diplomacy.

"Vengeance is the will of our nation and must inevitably be carried out," Mojtaba Khamenei said in a written message.

He became Iran's Supreme Leader after his father Ali Khamenei's killing in late February by



Laid to rest: The graves of Ali Khamenei and members of his family at the Shrine of Imam Reza, in Mashhad, Iran. AFP

U.S.-Israeli strikes, but has not been in public since before the war. "This matter depends neither on my personal existence nor on that of other officials. Whether we are present or

not, it will come to pass," he wrote in his first message since his father's funeral this week. He said Iran had compiled a list of individuals to be targeted.

Hours earlier Mr. Trump

had posted on his Truth Social platform that any attempt to assassinate him would lead the U.S. to "completely decimate" Iran. "1000 Missiles are Locked and Loaded and aimed at the Islamic Republic of Iran, with thousands of more to immediately follow, should the Iranian Government act on its threat, pronounced in many corners of the Globe, to assassinate, or attempt to assassinate, the sitting President of the United States of America, in this case, ME," Mr. Trump wrote.

"Orders have already been given, and the US Military is ready, willing, and able, for a one year period of time, subject to exten-

sion, to completely decimate and destroy all areas of Iran."

With both nations stepping up their threats, mediators have been working to bring diplomacy back on track. Iran's *Tasnim* news agency reported on Friday that a Qatari delegation was visiting Iran to "try to reinforce Qatar's role as a mediator".

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi meanwhile insisted Tehran had stuck to its end of the bargain after the two sides signed a memorandum of understanding last month.

Tehran "has so far kept its word", he said. "Reality check: There can only be mutual compliance."

Germany's AfD pledges to expel all illegal immigrants

Agence France-Presse

MAGDEBURG

Germany's far-right AfD party on Saturday unveiled a manifesto for its first 100 days in office if it wins control of an eastern region, pledging to immediately expel all undocumented immigrants.

The Alternative for Germany has a lead of nearly 20 points over the mainstream conservatives in opinion polls in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, which votes for its government in September.

In an address to delegates in the city of Magdeburg, AfD candidate Ulrich Siegmund set out the first 10 measures he promised to implement once in office, following the September 6 vote.

The 35-year-old said he would expel all irregular



Ulrich Siegmund, AfD's top candidate for the regional elections in Saxony-Anhalt, speaks in Magdeburg, Germany on Saturday. AFP

migrants from the state "from the very first minute".

"We will use all available leeway, including detention pending deportation, to send back as many as possible," and oblige asylum seekers to carry out community service or risk having their benefits cut, he said.

If the anti-immigration,

pro-Russia and pro-Donald Trump AfD wins, it would be the first far-right party to govern a German federal region since the end of the Second World War.

In the longer term, he aimed to change history curriculums in schools, which the far-right party leader said were too focused on Germany's Nazi-era guilt.

India seeks review of US' forced labour investigation

Ravi Dutta Mishra

New Delhi, July 11

INDIA HAS sought the review of proposed US tariffs of 12.5% citing inconsistencies in its Section 301 investigation into forced labour concerns, as the deadline for fresh US tariffs scheduled to be imposed by July 24 nears.

The US has currently imposed 10% global tariffs.

Joint Secretary in the Department of Commerce Brij Mohan Mishra, during a public hearing, said that India takes the elimination of forced labour seriously as a Constitutional obligation, and as a matter of international law and principle.

"India would like to highlight its concerns with the USTR's report and findings against India," he said.

The USTR has not satisfied the relevant legal standards under Section 301(d) of the Trade Act. A mere absence of a forced labour import prohibition without evidentiary basis of other statutory requirements cannot be construed as unreasonable under Section 301, he added.

The USTR determination does not provide a rationale for countrywide tariffs and impermissibly clubs 46 economies (including India) into a single category, according to the written transcript of the hearing, held on July 8 and published on the USTR website.

The report, he said, relies on broad data and it presupposes that an economy's imports flagged for this stuff involving imports made with forced labour are exported to the US without providing any sector or country-specific evidence and actual linkages with forced labour. In relation to India, there is inadequate and insufficient evidence that a lack of a forced labour import ban causes an unfair competitive advantage to the detriment of



The 12.5% US tariff could come into effect starting July 24. REUTERS

the American industry, he said.

"In conclusion, it is submitted that the USTR reconsider the imposition of tariffs in light of the identified inconsistencies in the report in the Federal Register notice. We ask that any trade problems be addressed within the framework of the India-US bilateral trade negotiation, not through unilateral measures such as this investigation," he added.

Arguing on behalf of Indian industry, Anil Rajvanshi, President of Reliance Industries Limited (RIL), said that their petrochemical intermediates use crude oil and ethane sourced from low-risk origins, including the United States, and are far removed from sectors like agriculture where state-imposed forced labour is typically documented.

Furthermore, they do not subcontract to third-party factories and maintain a strict code of conduct subject to ESG audits. RIL pointed out that the US already imposes significant duties on Indian products like PSF and PET resin, with rates already in the mid-teens to high twenties. Adding a 12.5% Section 301 duty would stack tariffs to between 30 and 40%, which would increase costs and risk production cuts for US downstream users while having little impact on forced labour incentives, Rajvanshi said.

Rajvanshi warned that levying these tariffs would "kill the remaining small portion of the

textile industry that exists in the US" because the downstream industry requires a full value chain of raw materials at competitive prices to flourish.

Making submissions on behalf of Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), Shreyans Gupta, First Secretary in the Embassy of India in Washington, DC, said that the export promotion body objects to the USTR's observations on the import of rice allegedly made with forced labour into India and the alleged impact on such imports in distorting the competitive conditions for the export and domestic sale of rice produced in the US.

Gupta said that the overall value of rice imported into India in relation to the value of rice exported from India to the US is not even 3%.

He added that there are regulatory checks in place that prevent exports of imported rice from India that have been produced with forced labour.

Export of rice from India to the US is allowed only from the rice mills and processing units registered with the agriculture ministry.

"For these reasons, the present investigation against India may be rescinded without prejudice," Gupta said, requesting exemption for Indian rice from the proposed duty if the proceedings continue.

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