

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Yoga May Boost Cognition, Reduce Depression, Aid Gut Health In Early Alzheimer's: AIIMS Study

NEW DELHI, JUN 20: Yoga may help improve cognition, reduce depressive symptoms and partially restore healthy gut bacteria in people with Alzheimer's disease, according to a new study by researchers at the AIIMS, Delhi.

The collaborative study by Departments of Anatomy and Neurology, published in the *Journal of Alzheimer's Disease* in June, found that a 12-week structured yoga programme was associated with significant improvements in cognitive performance and mood, alongside favourable changes in the gut microbiome of patients with mild Alzheimer's disease.

The study provides preliminary evidence that lifestyle interventions such as yoga may help create a healthier microbial environment in the gut, Dr Rima Dada, Professor in the Department of Anatomy at AIIMS and also the corresponding author of the study, said.

"The enrichment of beneficial bacteria and reduction of pro-inflammatory microbes after yoga point towards biological mechanisms that could contribute to improved brain health," she said.

Dr Manjari Tripathi, Head of Department, Neurology, AIIMS Delhi, said, "While yoga cannot be considered a cure for Alzheimer's disease, our findings suggest that it may serve as a valuable adjunctive therapy in early Alzheimer's disease and



mild cognitive impairment. We observed improvements in cognition and mood, along with favourable changes in the gut microbiome, indicating a possible influence on the gut-brain axis."

Alzheimer's disease, the most common form of dementia, is characterised by progressive memory loss and cognitive decline. Increasing evidence suggests that alterations in gut microbes may influence brain health through what scientists call the "gut-brain axis".

The study involved patients with clinically diagnosed mild Alzheimer's disease and cognitively healthy individuals.

The Alzheimer's patients underwent supervised 60-minute yoga sessions every day for 12 weeks, while researchers assessed their cognitive performance, depressive symptoms and gut microbial composition before and after the intervention.

According to the findings, Montreal Cognitive Assessment (MoCA) scores, a

widely used measure of cognitive function, improved significantly after the yoga programme.

At the same time, depression scores measured using the Patient Health Questionnaire-9 (PHQ-9) showed a marked decline.

Researchers also observed notable shifts in gut microbial composition following the intervention.

Beneficial bacteria known to produce short-chain fatty acids -- compounds linked to reduced inflammation and better gut and brain health -- increased after yoga.

These included faecalibacterium prausnitzii, roseburia intestinalis, bifidobacterium and akkermansia.

In contrast, levels of potentially harmful and pro-inflammatory microbes such as collinsella aerofaciens and klebsiella species declined.

The analysis further showed that the gut microbial profiles of Alzheimer's patients moved closer to those of healthy participants after the yoga programme, suggesting a partial restora-

tion of microbial balance.

The findings support the possibility that yoga exerts beneficial effects on the gut-brain axis by reducing stress, improving autonomic nervous system regulation and creating a more favourable environment for beneficial microbes, the authors said.

"These microbial and functional improvements were accompanied by enhanced cognitive performance and reduced depressive symptoms, suggesting beneficial modulation of the gut-brain axis in Alzheimer's disease participants," the researchers noted.

However, they cautioned that the study had important limitations, including a small sample size and the absence of a control group undergoing another form of intervention.

The authors said larger randomised controlled trials with longer follow-up, dietary monitoring and integration of metabolomic and immune markers would be needed to confirm whether yoga directly causes the observed microbiome and cognitive changes.

Despite the limitations, the study adds to a growing body of evidence suggesting that yoga could serve as an accessible, low-cost, non-pharmacological adjunct to support cognitive and emotional health in people living with Alzheimer's disease. (Agencies)

Prez, PM unveil projects worth over Rs 47,600 crore in Odisha

RAIRANGPUR, JUN 20: President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi jointly unveiled development projects worth more than Rs 47,600 crore in Odisha on Saturday, officials said.

The projects, spanning sectors such as energy, industrial infrastructure, roads, drinking water, health, education, tourism and irrigation, were unveiled on the second anniversary of the BJP government in Odisha.

According to an official statement, the initiatives are aimed at strengthening infrastructure, improving connectivity, enhancing energy security and creating employment opportunities across the state.

Among the major projects for which foundation stones were laid are the 600-MW Upper Indravati pumped storage project and the Stage-II expansion of the IB Thermal Power Station, comprising two 660-MW units.

The foundation stone for the Bharat Coal Gasification and Chemicals Limited (BCGCL) project at Lakhanpur in Jharsuguda district was also laid.

Other projects include a 300-tonne-per-day municipal



solid waste-based compressed biogas plant in Bhubaneswar, a bridge over the Kathajodi river connecting Bhubaneswar and Cuttack, widening and strengthening of the Dhalpur-Harbhanga road in Boudh district, four-laning of the Nuapada-Ghatipada section of NH-353, the Kusumdihi mega lift irrigation project, an IGNOU regional centre and an indoor badminton complex at Rairangpur.

Two railway multi-tracking projects worth more than Rs 732 crore were also dedicated to the nation.

The 19-km Jakhapura-Jajpur Keonjhar Road-Baitarani Road multi-tracking project, built for Rs 323 crore as part of the Bhadrak-Nergundi multi-tracking project, is expected to ease congestion on the heavily loaded Howrah-Chennai main line and improve passenger and freight movement.

The 27-km Hindol Road-Meramandali multi-tracking project, completed at Rs 409 crore as part of the Budhapank-Salegaon multi-tracking project, will enhance train handling capacity and facilitate

smoother movement of coal, steel, power-sector inputs and other industrial commodities.

The leaders also inaugurated the 300-bed district headquarters hospital building at Boudh, 24 Atal bus stands and nine automated testing stations in different districts.

Other projects inaugurated include the Nayagarh town bypass on NH-57, the underground pipeline component of the Kusumi Smart Irrigation Project, and a sports complex and tribal research centre at Rairangpur. (Agencies)

Centre Bans 16 Fixed-Dose Drug Combinations Citing Public Health Concerns

NEW DELHI, JUN 20: The Centre has prohibited the manufacture, sale and distribution of 16 fixed-dose combination (FDC) drugs, saying they lack "therapeutic justification" and their continued use was not considered beneficial in relation to the potential risks involved.

The move, the Union Health Ministry said, was to safeguard public health and promote rational use of medicines while ensuring only effective and scientifically validated medicines are available to the public.

FDC drugs are those which contain a combination of two or more active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) in a fixed ratio.

The decision follows a review of FDCs undertaken in compliance with the Supreme Court's directions. The Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB) had con-

stituted an expert committee to examine various drug combinations and identify those that were irrational, therapeutically unjustified or potentially harmful.

"The manufacture for sale, sale, distribution and supply of the identified 16 FDCs for human use shall stand prohibited with immediate effect across the country," the Ministry said.

It added that these combination drugs were found to "lack therapeutic justification" and were "not considered beneficial" with respect to the risks involved.

It further said that the prohibited formulations span a range of therapeutic categories, including certain dermatological preparations, analgesic (painkillers) and antispasmodic (muscle relaxants) medicines, and antibiotic-based combinations.

Among the banned formulations are combinations

such as Acetyl Salicylic Acid with Ethoheptazine; Dicyclomine, Paracetamol and Clidinium Bromide; Dicyclomine, Paracetamol, Clidinium Bromide and Chlorzoxipoxide; Gliclazide with Chromium Picolinate; and Paracetamol with Lignocaine.

Several antibiotic-based combinations have also been prohibited, including Amoxicillin with Serratiopeptidase, Amoxicillin with Serratiopeptidase and Lactobacillus Sporogenes, Amoxicillin with Cloxacillin, Lactic Acid Bacillus and Serratiopeptidase, Cefadroxyl with Probenecid, and Cefuroxime with Serratiopeptidase.

The banned list additionally includes several dermatological and skincare formulations containing combinations of Aloe Vera or Aloe Extract with ingredients such as Vitamin E, Jo-

joba Oil, Orange Oil, Wheat Germ Oil, Tea Tree Oil, Allantoin and D-Panthenol.

The Ministry banned the FDC in the notifications issued under Section 26A of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

The Ministry noted that the action is part of the government's efforts to promote the rational use of medicines and strengthen patient safety. It recalled that several irrational FDCs had been prohibited in previous years following detailed scientific reviews.

All state drug controllers, regulatory authorities and enforcement agencies have been directed to ensure strict implementation of the notifications.

Manufacturers, importers, distributors and other stakeholders have also been advised to take necessary corrective measures to comply with the law.

Seven-fold rise in funds under externally aided projects in northeast under Modi govt: FM

SHILLONG, JUN 19: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said externally aided projects should not be viewed merely as financing mechanisms, but as instruments for local produce to reach global markets, strengthen livelihoods and transform the northeast's geographical challenges into opportunities for economic growth.

Chairing a conference on "Leveraging externally aided projects in the northeastern states" here, she said that assistance under the externally aided projects (EAP) in the northeastern region has seen a seven-fold rise under the Narendra Modi government.

"The scale of support to the Northeast had increased from around Rs 9,000 crore during 2004-2014 to nearly Rs 76,000 crore between 2014 and 2026," the Union minister said.

Highlighting that farmers, artisans and the youths in the northeast have historically



faced greater challenges in reaching markets, Sitharaman asserted that the Centre has made infrastructure and connectivity the cornerstones of its development agenda for the region.

"More than 10,000 km of roads have been built in the region since 2014 at a cost of more than Rs 1 lakh crore. Another 5,000 km of highways are currently under construction," she told the conference.

Describing the Northeast as "blessed as few places on earth are", the Union finance

minister said its breathtaking landscapes, rich cultural resources and hardworking people deserved better market access and visibility.

She said the region possesses enormous natural and human potential, but the key challenge is converting that into prosperity.

Sitharaman said EAPs not only bring financing but also international best practices in project design, procurement, environmental safeguards and community participation.

"When we speak of EAPs,

we are not speaking of loans or project costs but of a development model that combines central support, state execution and global expertise, all for local communities," she said.

"They bring innovative technologies and tested models because institutions like the World Bank and IFAD work in difficult geographies and bring their experience for our benefit," she said.

Noting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the region over 75 times since 2014 and Union ministers more than 700 times, Sitharaman said no northeastern state should have to go to Delhi seeking support.

Development should be driven by outreach rather than requests, she stressed, adding that the Modi government has placed connectivity, infrastructure and sustained political engagement at the heart of the northeast's development. (PTI)

Pakistan should be reverted to FATF's 'grey list', Owaisi urges NDA Govt

HYDERABAD, JUNE 20: AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Saturday demanded Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led NDA Government to revert Pakistan to its "grey list".

The Hyderabad MP, in a post on 'X', said: "Vivek Agarwal is the first Indian to have been elected Vice President of FATF, what @narendramodi government must do is to bring back Pakistan in Grey List."

Owaisi opined that the USA list of TRF (The Resistance Force) is of "no real use".

"UN listing is needed of TRF. Modi Government should have & must have tried to list ISI also, we must remember the Red Fort suicide blast of November 2025," the AIMIM leader further said.

Earlier, the US designated Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) proxy TRF, which claimed responsibility for the Pahalgam ter-



ror attack, as a global terrorist outfit. India was on Friday accorded the vice presidency of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global body that sets standards for combating money laundering and terrorist financing, for the first time.

The country has been a member of the influential international body since 2010.

Union Culture Secretary Vivek Aggarwal was appointed the vice president of the body at the conclusion of the plenary meeting held at the outfit's headquarters in

Paris. Countries which fail to address strategic deficiencies in their regimes to counter money laundering, terrorist financing, and proliferation financing, and are under increased monitoring, are placed in the grey list of FATF. (PTI)

Haridwar land scam: Dhamsi govt orders dismissal of ex-municipal chief, major penalty for then DM

DEHRADUN, JUN 19: In a major administrative crackdown against corruption, Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhamsi has ordered strict action in the Haridwar Municipal Corporation land purchase scam, recommending dismissal of the then municipal commissioner and a major penalty for the then district magistrate, officials said on Friday.

According to an official statement, the chief minister has also approved the registration of criminal cases against 10 individuals, including senior officials and land sellers, following a detailed vigilance inquiry that established prima facie evidence of a criminal conspiracy and fraud causing financial loss to the civic body.

Under the state government's zero-tolerance policy against corruption, a recommendation has been forwarded to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) for immediate dismissal of the then commis-

sioner of Haridwar Municipal Corporation, Varun Chaudhary.

Concurrently, then Haridwar district magistrate Karmendra Singh has been found guilty of gross negligence in discharging his official duties. The government has decided to impose a major punishment on him, and a formal recommendation has been sent to the DoPT for further action.

Both Chaudhary and Singh are IAS officers. The chief minister has also directed that a censure entry be recorded against the then sub-divisional magistrate, Ajayveer Singh, alongside the withholding of his three salary increments.

The disciplinary measures follow an initial wave of actions on June 2 in which the state government suspended a total of 10 officials, including the two IAS officers and state civil services officer Ajayveer Singh, following a preliminary inquiry report by IAS Ranveer Chauhan in the last week of

May. The service extension of two personnel was also terminated then.

According to official sources, the initial probe had revealed that the Haridwar Municipal Corporation bypassed established guidelines to purchase 2.3070 hectares of land near a garbage dump at Gram Sarai for an exorbitant Rs 54 crore, whereas its estimated market value was around Rs 15 crore. The land use of the said plot was changed from agricultural to commercial, which led its price to jump from Rs 15 crore to Rs 54 crore.

The transaction involved altering the land use from agricultural to commercial, which artificially inflated the price and caused a massive loss to the state exchequer, sources said.

Following the initial findings, the chief minister had directed the Vigilance Department to conduct a comprehensive probe, ordered a special audit of all municipal works executed during

Varun Chaudhary's tenure, and ordered the cancellation of the tainted land deal.

The latest approval for criminal prosecution follows recommendations from the State Vigilance Committee headed by the chief secretary. The accused will face charges under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Prevention of Corruption Act.

The officials named for criminal prosecution include Varun Chaudhary, then assistant town commissioner Ravindra Kumar Dayal, then tax superintendent Laxmikant Bhatt, then assistant engineer and in-charge executive engineer Anand Singh Mishran, then property clerk Vedpal, and then draftsman Dinesh Kandpal.

In addition to the officials, criminal cases will be registered against the land sellers and private individuals involved, identified as Suman Devi, Jitendra Kumar, Abhishek Yadav, and Sujit Kumar Singh.