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Trump announces US-Iran peace deal, Israel balks

After 107 days of war and global turmoil, Trump announces reopening of Strait of Hormuz, halt to military operations, calming global markets

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

US President Donald Trump announced that the United States and Iran have finalised an agreement to end their 107-day conflict, a breakthrough that sent oil prices lower and global stock markets higher amid hopes of easing disruptions to energy supplies.

"The Deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete. Congratulations to all," Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Sunday evening.

The announcement came shortly after Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose country helped mediate the talks, said an agreement had been reached. According to Sharif, the memorandum of understanding is scheduled to be formally signed in Switzerland on June 19.

US and Iranian officials said they had agreed on a framework that would end hostilities, halt the US blockade of Iran and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a vital route for global oil and gas shipments.

Trump said the Strait of Hormuz would reopen following the signing of the agreement and that he had ordered



President Donald Trump walking out of the White House on Sunday AP

an end to the US blockade of Iranian ports.

"Ships of the World, start your engines. Let the oil flow!" Trump wrote.

The precise terms of the agreement have not been made public.

Sharif said the pact called for "the immediate and permanent termination of military operations on all fronts, including in Lebanon."

IRAN'S DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SAID BROADER NEGOTIATIONS WOULD CONTINUE DURING A 60-DAY CEASEFIRE PERIOD, INCLUDING DISCUSSIONS ON SANCTIONS RELIEF

In a statement, Iran's Supreme National Security Council said military operations on all fronts, including Lebanon, would end permanently starting Monday night.

Iran's deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi said broader negotiations would continue during a 60-day ceasefire period, including discussions on sanctions relief and the future of Iran's

nuclear programme. The nuclear issue remains one of the most contentious aspects of the negotiations. Sources had previously told Reuters that it would be addressed in the follow-up talks.

The war had become a growing political challenge for Trump ahead of the US midterm elections, with rising fuel prices weighing on public sentiment.

Republican Senator Lindsey Graham welcomed the agreement but said scrutiny would now shift to the nuclear negotiations.

"Under our law, any nuclear deal with Iran will be sent to Congress for review and a vote," he said. "Congratulations to all in getting us to this point."

Vice President JD Vance said the agreement had already been signed electronically over the weekend and rejected suggestions that Iran would receive immediate financial benefits.

"We already signed the deal digitally yesterday, and there's been no money released. And that won't change," Vance said on ABC's Good Morning America.

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PM MODI HAILS DEAL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday welcomed the understanding reached between the United States and Iran on ending the conflict in West Asia, and hoped the implementation of the pact will help restore peace



PTI

in the region and ensure the freedom of navigation.

"I welcome the understanding reached between the United States and Iran on ending the conflict in West Asia, which has caused serious economic disruption across the world and led to loss of life in many countries," PM Modi posted on X.

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Israeli ministers reject deal

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi



Itamar Ben Gvir

Two senior Israeli ministers voiced strong opposition to a proposed ceasefire agreement between the US and Iran, arguing that Israel must retain the freedom to continue military operations against regional threats. National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the deal could

undermine Israel's security interests and warned against any arrangement that limits the country's ability to act against Iran and its allies.

Israel's Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir criticized the pending agreement, stating that Israel should not be bound by deals that restrict its ability to defend itself.

DETAILED REPORT ON >> P12

Bulls charge as oil drops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi



Stock markets rose for the second straight session with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 736 points on Monday, propelled by a rally in global equities and a sharp decline in crude oil prices after the US and Iran finalised a deal. Crude oil prices fell to three-month lows after the announcement of the deal.

DETAILED REPORT ON >> P13

The Bystander



PIONEER IN SHORT

NCERT REVERSES DANCING GIRL EDIT

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will replace the modified image of the iconic Mohenjo-daro "Dancing Girl" figurine in its Class 9 Arts textbook with the original version following criticism from academics and historians. The controversy arose after the bronze Indus Valley Civilisation artefact was depicted with its bare torso visually covered in the opening chapter of Madhurima, NCERT's new Class 9 Arts textbook. Critics argued that the alteration misrepresented one of India's most recognisable archaeological treasures.

Bangladesh protests stopping of PM aide at Delhi airport

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Bangladesh on Monday formally conveyed its deep disappointment to India after Prime Minister's Adviser on Policy and Strategy Affairs and Information and Broadcasting Dr Zahed Ur Rahman was stopped and questioned by Indian immigration authorities at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport.

A senior official of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs confirmed to The Pioneer that Indian Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe was summoned this afternoon, during which Bangladesh expressed its strong displeasure over the incident.

Foreign Minister Dr Khalidur Rahman termed the episode "unexpected" and "unfortunate". Speaking to reporters at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, he said the gov-



Dr Zahed Ur Rahman WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ernment was taking appropriate steps and would issue an official statement later in the day.

Dr Zahed Ur Rahman was stopped by Indian immigration on Sunday evening (June 14) when his name reportedly

appeared on a watchlist during a routine security check. He was questioned and kept waiting for several hours. Although Indian authorities later cleared him to proceed, the adviser chose to return to Bangladesh instead of continuing his official visit.

He was travelling on a regular Bangladeshi passport with a valid SAARC visa, not a diplomatic passport. With no direct flight available to Dhaka that night, Dr Zahed returned home via Colombo.

The adviser had gone to New Delhi to attend the 28th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), being held on June 15-16. The meeting focuses on regional cooperation under the theme "Innovation, Openness, Resilience and Adaptability".

Akal Takht declares Punjab CM Mann Guru Dokhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Amritsar / Chandigarh

In what could be a major emotive issue ahead of the Assembly elections, the Sikh clergy at the Akal Takht on Monday declared Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann *Guru Dokhi* (anti-Guru) and *Khalsa Panth virodhi* (anti-communty), as he was accused of lying regarding a purported objectionable video.

The Akal Takht is the highest temporal seat of Sikhs. Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj



Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Gargajj announcing Punjab CM as Guru Dokhi, Khalsa Panth Virodhi in Amritsar PTI

pronounced the edict from the podium of the Akal Takht after the five *Singh Sahiban* (Sikh high priests) held a meeting in Amritsar. Gargajj claimed that the video circulating on social media — purportedly showing a man

resembling Bhagwant Mann — was found to be "authentic" by two forensic laboratories. The video was neither tinkered nor AI-generated, Gargajj said.

He further said the Akal Takht secretariat had written to the CM in January after Mann announced that he was open to a forensic examination of the video; however, they did not receive any response. Thereafter, the Akal Takht secretariat got the video examined from two labs, he said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

India, Slovakia elevate ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bratislava

India and Slovakia on Monday elevated their ties to a comprehensive partnership and firmed up 11 agreements to expand the bilateral cooperation in a range of areas such as migration, digital technology and defence following talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico.

The two leaders also agreed to work towards the "earliest" implementation of the India-European Union free trade agreement that is expected to significantly shore up the bilateral economic engagement.

Modi is in Bratislava as part of his weeklong visit to Europe. It is the first visit to the European nation by an Indian prime minister.

"We have decided to elevate our relations to the status of a Comprehensive Partnership. This symbolises our shared beliefs, shared priorities, and shared future," he said in his media statement.

The comprehensive partnership aims to take bilateral relations to a new level, strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms and explore new avenues for



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by his Slovakian counterpart Robert Fico, in Slovakia PTI

PM MODI IS IN BRATISLAVA AS PART OF HIS WEEKLONG VISIT TO EUROPE. IT IS THE FIRST VISIT TO THE EUROPEAN NATION BY AN INDIAN PM

deepening cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The prime minister said he and Fico discussed ways to give a "new direction" to the ties.

Modi and Fico also agreed to enhance cooperation in the energy sector with a view to promoting energy security, sustainability and resilience through diversification of energy sources, including nuclear energy and geothermal power.

"Our potential is vast. Our aspirations are even greater. Automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing, and green technologies are areas of particular interest to us," he said.

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WHOLESALE INFLATION HITS RECORD HIGH

India's wholesale price inflation surged to a record 9.68 per cent in May from 8.26 per cent in April, driven by a sharp rise in fuel and power costs amid global energy disruptions linked to the West Asia conflict. The May reading is the highest under the revised Wholesale Price Index (WPI) series, which now uses 2022-23 as the base year instead of 2011-12. The government has also expanded the WPI basket from 697 to 957 items, adding renewable and nuclear energy sources. Fuel and power inflation climbed to 30.33 per cent in May from 24.89 per cent in April, while inflation in crude petroleum rose to 61.51 per cent. Food inflation also edged up to 3.60 per cent.

Jewar's land donors become first passengers at Noida International Airport

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA ■ Noida

Around 170 farmers from the Jewar region, including 20 women, who had voluntarily given up their ancestral land for the Noida International Airport project, were among the passengers on the inaugural commercial flight from the airport to Lucknow on Monday. The gesture was conceived by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath as a tribute to those whose land made the project possible.

The group arrived at the airport holding boarding passes, many travelling for the first time in their lives.

Union Civil Aviation Minister Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu personally distributed commemorative boarding passes to the passengers during the event. The group was scheduled to meet Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow upon arrival.

Abrah Khan, one of the passengers, described the experience as a matter of pride. "We are very delighted and obliged to travel on the first flight from Noida International Airport to Lucknow. What we envisioned is becoming a reality before us today," he said. Khan said the invitation to be part of the first flight had



Union Minister of Civil Aviation Ram Mohan Naidu Kinjarapu with farmers during the commercial flight inauguration from Noida International Airport PTI

come from the Chief Minister himself and called it a matter of honour.

Hera Rashid, a young woman from a village near the airport, called the moment historic. "We will experience the first flight. It is free for us, and we will meet Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow," she said.

A farmer aged around 65, who was among the passengers, said he had given up 30 bighas of his land for the airport project. He expressed happiness at seeing the development take shape, but also raised an unresolved grievance. "We were

also promised a job but have yet to get it," he said.

Another woman passenger said the opportunity to be part of the first flight was a matter of pride for the villagers of the region, many of whom had watched their cropfields transform into one of the country's newest aviation hubs over the past several years.

Jewar MLA Dharendra Singh, speaking about the significance of the moment, said the launch of passenger services was as much about the contribution of farmers as it was about a new air route.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Chief Minister launches cyber security capacity-building drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday announced the establishment of a Cyber Security Research Centre in Madhya Pradesh, describing data as the most valuable asset in the digital age and stressing that protecting it is as important as safeguarding the nation's borders.

The announcement was made while inaugurating a state-level workshop on "Strengthening the Cybersecurity Framework for State Data" at the Kushabhau Thakre International Convention Centre in Bhopal. The workshop brought together senior government officials, cybersecurity experts, Chief Information Security Officers (CISOs), policymakers and industry representatives to discuss emerging cyber threats, data protection and digital governance security.

Addressing the gathering, Yadav said cyber technology and the challenges associated with it have evolved rapidly across the world in recent years, with cybercrime methods becoming increasingly sophisticated. Referring to Operation Sindoor, he noted that the use of advanced technologies and drones had highlighted new dimensions of security challenges, underscoring the need for robust digital defence mechanisms.

The Chief Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for anticipating emerging threats and taking proactive measures to strengthen national security. He said workshops focusing on cyber-



crime, deepfakes and digital threats would help identify effective strategies to build a stronger cybersecurity culture.

Announcing the Cyber Security Research Centre, Yadav said it would be established in collaboration with the Military College of Telecommunication Engineering (MCTE) in Mhow and other academic institutions. The centre will serve as a hub for cybersecurity research, innovation, skill development and advanced threat monitoring. Equipped with modern security systems, it will facilitate real-time detection and surveillance of cyberattacks while promoting a proactive and predictive approach to cyber defence.

Highlighting the importance of digital governance, the Chief Minister said the success of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) systems and India's globally acclaimed UPI payment infrastructure had

increased the government's responsibility to ensure data security and build public confidence in digital platforms. He said the transparent DBT mechanism has ensured that welfare benefits reach beneficiaries directly and efficiently.

Yadav warned that cyber-crime poses invisible yet serious threats, capable of wiping out a person's life savings within moments. He stressed that there is no room for negligence in matters of cybersecurity and data protection. In the event of a data breach, he said, governments may also face financial liabilities, making cybersecurity a top governance priority. Principal Secretary, Science and Technology, M. Selvendran said Madhya Pradesh is among the leading states in e-governance, with continuous efforts underway to expand digital services. He noted that while digital inno-

ventions have earned national recognition, the growing volume of personal, financial, land, education and health-related data requires enhanced protection measures.

Selvendran said the Madhya Pradesh Computer Emergency Response Team (MP-CERT) has been established to monitor cyber threats, coordinate responses and strengthen the state's cyber resilience. He described the workshop as an important step towards building a stronger institutional and policy framework for cybersecurity. MPSEC Managing Director Ashish Vashishtha said more than 1,700 government services are currently being delivered digitally in the state. He highlighted the role of MP-CERT, the Security Operations Centre at the State Data Centre and the State Wide Area Network (SWAN) in strengthening cybersecurity infrastructure.

Sanjay Singh backs AAP growth

Indore: Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha MP and senior leader Sanjay Singh on Monday claimed that the AAP is the only political party capable of emerging as a credible alternative to the BJP.

Addressing the party's state-level workers' convention and oath-taking ceremony in Indore, Singh alleged that the BJP focuses on Hindu-Muslim politics, while the AAP works on issues such as electricity, water, education, employment and inflation. He also criticised the Central Government, accusing it of favouring big industrialists over the interests of common citizens.

Singh urged party workers to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level and take AAP's governance model and public welfare agenda to every household across Madhya Pradesh.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav during an interaction programme with the local residents under 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Abhiyan' at Bhim Nagar slum locality in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Chief Minister honours Chandni for academic excellence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday visited Bhim Nagar near the Vidhan Sabha to personally congratulate Chandni Vishwakarma, the topper of the Madhya Pradesh Board Class 12 examination, and praised her achievement as a shining example of perseverance, hard work and determination in the face of adversity.

Travelling to the locality on an electric scooter, the Chief Minister said Chandni's success proves that no goal is unattainable for those who possess courage, commitment and the will to overcome challenges. He described her accomplishment as an inspiration for lakhs of students across the state, particularly those from economically weaker backgrounds.

Upon reaching Bhim Nagar, Yadav met Chandni and her family members, congratulated her on her outstanding academic performance and wished her success in her future pursuits. He also

interacted with local residents and took photographs with the young achiever and her family.

The Chief Minister assured Chandni that financial constraints would never become an obstacle in her educational journey and said the state government would ensure that she receives the benefits of all eligible welfare and educational support schemes. He encouraged students to remain focused on their goals and continue striving for excellence through dedication and discipline.

During his visit, Yadav also interacted with residents regarding the completion of 12 years of governance under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and highlighted various welfare initiatives aimed at improving the lives of the poor, women, youth and farmers.

The Chief Minister's choice of transportation also drew attention. Riding an electric two-wheeler and wearing a helmet, he used the occasion to promote fuel conservation and envi-

ronmentally sustainable mobility. MLA Bhagwan Das Sabnani, who accompanied him as a pillion rider, also wore a helmet.

Yadav said the global fuel situation has made it imperative to adopt cleaner and more efficient modes of transportation. He urged citizens to embrace electric vehicles as a practical step toward reducing fuel consumption and protecting the environment.

The Chief Minister noted that he had earlier decided to reduce the size of his official convoy in the interest of efficiency and sustainability. As part of this initiative, electric vehicles have been incorporated into the Chief Minister's motorcade, reflecting the government's commitment to promoting green mobility and environmental responsibility.

Residents of Bhim Nagar welcomed the Chief Minister's visit, while Chandni's achievement continued to be celebrated as a story of determination triumphing over difficult circumstances.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav witnesses an MoU signed between the Department of New and Renewable Energy, Madhya Pradesh Urja Vikas Nigam Limited and the German Government supported Indo-German Agri Voltaic Cooperation Project at the State Mantralaya in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

German-backed project to support agro-solar growth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh has taken a significant step towards promoting agro-solar energy generation, with the State Government entering into a strategic partnership with the German Government-supported Indo-German Agri-Voltaics Collaboration Project (IGCA).

The initiative, aligned with the vision of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, aims to integrate solar power generation with agricultural activities, creating new income opportunities for farmers while strengthening renewable energy production.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed and exchanged on Monday at the Mantralaya in Bhopal between the Department of New and Renewable Energy, Madhya Pradesh Urja Vikas Nigam

Limited (MPUVNL), and IGCA in the presence of the Chief Minister.

Agri-voltaics is an innovative land-use model that combines farming and solar energy generation on the same piece of agricultural land. The approach enables farmers to continue cultivation while installing solar panels for electricity production, reducing the need for additional land acquisition, minimising land-use conflicts and ensuring food security.

Under the collaboration, the German development agency GIZ will provide technical expertise and support to the State Government in developing a comprehensive agri-voltaics ecosystem. The partnership will help formulate a dedicated agri-voltaics framework in Madhya Pradesh in alignment with key renewable energy initiatives, including the PM-KUSUM 2.0 scheme.

Officials said the initiative is expected to improve land-use efficiency, enhance farmers' incomes, strengthen energy security and contribute to climate-resilient rural development across the state. The non-binding agreement will remain in effect until May 2030.

One of the key benefits of the programme is the creation of dual income opportunities for farmers. Through the Agri Solar PV model, farmers will retain ownership of their land and continue agricultural operations while simultaneously generating solar power. Government subsidies will support the installation of solar infrastructure, allowing farmers to earn additional revenue from clean energy generation without sacrificing agricultural productivity.

The Indo-German collaboration will also support the identification and develop-

ment of suitable agri-voltaics projects across Madhya Pradesh. Assistance will be provided in project design, technical and economic feasibility assessments, financial viability studies and implementation planning.

The initiative places strong emphasis on capacity building and stakeholder engagement. Awareness and training programmes will be organised for farmers, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), energy developers, distribution companies (DISCOMs) and other stakeholders to encourage wider adoption of agri-voltaics technology.

In addition, the German agency will assist the state in developing an enabling policy and regulatory framework to facilitate large-scale implementation of agri-voltaics projects while safeguarding agricultural productivity and food security.

Road widening demolition sparks residents' protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

A major demolition drive for the widening of the road between Gutkeshwar Temple and Sadar Bazaar Road gathered pace in Indore on Monday, with the Municipal Corporation removing more than 80 houses and shops as part of the project.

According to civic officials, over 100 municipal personnel, assisted by nine PoCLAIM machines and five JCBs, were deployed for the operation. Authorities said the action was being carried out to facilitate road expansion and improve traffic movement in the area.

However, the drive triggered emotional scenes as several residents alleged that their homes were being demolished without adequate rehabilitation or compensation. Many affected families claimed they had been living in the locality for generations and had not been offered alternative housing, plots or financial assistance.

Among those affected was 65-year-old widow Krishna Pathak, who said her family had lived on Gutkeshwar Temple

Road for four generations. Watching the demolition of her home, she expressed anguish over losing the only shelter she had known throughout her life.

Another resident, Rajkumari Mishra, said she and her husband had no children or alternative means of support. She alleged that a significant portion of her house had already been demolished and feared the remaining structure would also be removed.

While residents said they were not opposed to development and road widening, they urged authorities to provide proper rehabilitation measures before carrying out demolitions. Affected families have appealed to the administration to allot plots, flats or other permanent housing arrangements to those displaced by the project.

Several residents alleged that vacant government land in the vicinity had been left untouched, while long-standing residential properties were targeted under the demolition drive. They urged authorities to ensure fair rehabilitation and adopt a more balanced approach while implementing urban development projects.

BHEL holds camp valedictory

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The BHEL Educational Welfare Wing concluded its 15-day free computer training camp with a colourful closing ceremony held recently. President Rosy Upadhyay attended the event as the chief guest and was welcomed by Vice President Lalita Chatterjee. Addressing the participants, Upadhyay highlighted the growing importance of computer literacy in today's digital era and encouraged students to continuously upgrade their knowledge and skills. She extended her best wishes to the trainees for a successful future.

The programme featured cultural performances by girl students, while boys presented a play emphasizing the significance of computer education and promoting the message, "Enhance your computer knowledge, advance Digital India."

Certificates and gifts were distributed to all participants in recognition of their successful completion of the training programme.

RS nomination row sparks muted Congress protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

A Congress protest against the rejection of Rajya Sabha candidate Meenakshi Natarajan's nomination witnessed a poor turnout in Bhopal on Monday, despite the party leadership's call for a statewide agitation against the Election Commission and the BJP.

The demonstration, organised outside the Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) office, saw only a handful of Youth Congress workers participate. Protesters raised slogans against Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar and burnt an effigy to register their opposition to the rejection of Natarajan's nomination papers.

The low turnout stood in contrast to the directions issued by MP Congress organisation in-charge Sanjay Kamle on June 12, calling on Youth Congress, NSUI and Mahila Congress workers to jointly organise demonstrations and gheraos of BJP offices on June 15, 16 and 17.

Despite the call for a larger mobilisation, protesters remained outside the PCC

office and did not proceed towards the BJP headquarters. Police personnel deployed at the venue outnumbered the demonstrators, and no major law-and-order situation was reported.

However, the Bhopal unit of Youth Congress described the protest as a strong stand against what it termed the "dictatorial attitude" of the Central government and the Election Commission. The demonstration was held under the guidance of MP Youth Congress leaders and led by district general secretary Anees Sharma.

Among those present were district vice-president Neeraj Yadav, general secretary Darshan Kori, block president Mohan Rudele, Bhupendra Mishra, Rijul Sen and Sujal.

In a statement, Bhopal Youth Congress president Amit Khatri alleged that the rejection of Meenakshi Natarajan's Rajya Sabha nomination was politically motivated and amounted to an attack on democratic principles. He further accused the Election Commission of acting in favour of the ruling establishment and said the party would continue its agitation against the decision.

Three dumpers seized during raid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Acting on the directions of Collector Shivam Verma, a joint team of the Revenue, Mining and Police departments carried out a surprise inspection at the sand market on Devguradia Road under the Bicholi subdivision and initiated action against vehicles violating transport and traffic norms.

The operation was led by SDM Ajay Shukla and involved officials from the revenue and mining departments, along with police personnel. During the inspection, several dumpers parked along the roadside were found obstructing traffic, while some vehicles were allegedly carrying overloaded sand.

Taking immediate action, the team seized three dumpers and shifted them to Khudel police station premises. Officials said proceedings have also been initiated against seven other vehicles found violating regulations. The administration stated that strict action would continue against illegal transportation of minerals, overloading and vehicles causing disruption to traffic movement.

Child undergoes surgery after brutal dog attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

A three-year-old girl suffered severe facial injuries after being attacked by a stray dog while playing outside her home in Delwadi village of Mahidpur tehsil on Sunday morning. Doctors performed a two-hour surgery and administered 55 stitches to save her face, while concerns remain over possible damage to her eyesight.

The victim, identified as Mahi, daughter of Kalu Singh, was playing near her house when the stray dog suddenly attacked her. According to family members, the animal knocked the child to the ground and mauled her face, inflicting deep wounds around her eye, nose, lips and other facial areas.

Hearing her screams, relatives and villagers rushed to the spot and managed to rescue the child after a struggle. She was immediately taken to the District Hospital in Agar in critical condition.

Doctors said Mahi had suffered extensive facial trauma and significant blood loss. Anaesthetist Dr Jitendra

Kaithwal said the skin on one side of her face had been badly torn, requiring urgent surgical intervention. Given the seriousness of the injuries, ophthalmologist Dr Shashank Saxena was called in to assist the medical team.

A two-hour operation was carried out to repair the damaged tissue and control the bleeding. Doctors administered 55 stitches to reconstruct the injured areas. Dr Saxena said the dog bite caused a deep wound near the child's eye and there remains a possibility that her vision may be affected.

After receiving emergency treatment and anti-rabies vaccination, Mahi was referred to MY Hospital in Indore for advanced medical care. Her condition is currently being monitored by specialists.

The incident has sparked concern among residents of Delwadi village, who claim that the stray dog menace has been growing in the area. Villagers have urged authorities to take immediate steps to control the stray dog population and prevent similar attacks, particularly on children.



State eyes bigger cultural, religious events

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has directed the Culture Department to organise large-scale cultural and religious events across Madhya Pradesh over the coming months, linking communities through shared traditions while promoting the state's rich heritage and government initiatives.

Chairing a review meeting of the Culture Department at the Mantralaya on Monday, Yadav said upcoming festivals, fairs and cultural celebrations are symbols of religious faith and gratitude towards nature. He called for broad-based participation in events such as Shraavan Mahotsav, Bhujaria celebrations and programmes dedicated to the legendary warrior bro-

thers Alha and Udal. He also suggested that Nag Panchami celebrations be used to spread awareness about biodiversity conservation and snake protection.

Emphasising the importance of preserving Madhya Pradesh's cultural legacy, the Chief Minister said the state's traditions, art forms and archaeological heritage are invaluable assets that must be promoted at national and international levels. He also released the Culture Department's "Kala Panchang" for 2026-27, a comprehensive annual calendar outlining cultural and artistic activities planned throughout the year.

Yadav announced that a dedicated Vikramaditya Academy will be established to undertake research and related activities centred on

the life and legacy of Emperor Vikramaditya. He also called for restructuring the Culture Department to better align its specialised functions with modern cultural and tourism needs.

Highlighting the need for coordinated efforts, the Chief Minister said the Culture, Tourism, Religious Trusts and Cottage and Village Industries departments should work together to boost religious and spiritual tourism. Such initiatives, he said, would also provide greater recognition to Madhya Pradesh's traditional handicrafts, embroidery and artisanal products.

In a significant decision, Yadav proposed expanding the Chief Minister Teerth Darshan Yojana to include major religious sites within Madhya Pradesh, including the state's two Jyotirlingas,

prominent Shakti Peeths and other revered pilgrimage centres.

Reviewing the progress of the Shri Ram Van Gaman Path and Shri Krishna Pathay projects, he directed officials to accelerate construction work. He described both projects as important not only from a religious perspective but also for strengthening tourism and cultural development in the state.

The Chief Minister also stressed greater public participation in cultural programmes across villages, towns and cities to ensure younger generations remain connected to their cultural roots. He said renowned singers, artists and performers associated with Madhya Pradesh should be identified and encouraged to showcase their talent in the state,

helping promote local cultural diversity on a larger platform.

Yadav further directed the Culture Department to actively recommend deserving artists, social workers and environmentalists from Madhya Pradesh for Padma awards. He also proposed creating a permanent financial assistance scheme for Padma awardees from the state who may require support.

During the meeting, officials informed the Chief Minister that 17 religious and cultural "Lok" projects and 20 museums are currently under development across the state. Additional Chief Secretary Shiv Shekhar Shukla said cultural infrastructure projects worth nearly Rs 4,160 crore have been undertaken since 2023, with several nearing completion.



BJP MP Alok Sharma and Mayor Malvi Rai honour security personnel during a programme on Yatri Suvidha Divas at Raja Bhoj airport in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo



Members of the Rajput community honour newly appointed Indian Cricket team U-19 captain Yashvardhan Singh Chouhan, in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

Student robbed at knifepoint

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Police have arrested two youths for allegedly robbing a college student at knifepoint inside Smart City Park under the Shyamla Hills police station limits in Bhopal.

According to police, the incident took place on Sunday night when 23-year-old Deepu Yadav, a student of a private college, was sitting in the park with a female friend. Two youths allegedly approached them carrying a knife. Sensing danger, the student asked his friend to leave the spot.

The accused then allegedly surrounded the student, threatened him with the knife and assaulted him. Police said the duo snatched around Rs 2,000 in cash and a pair of earphones from the victim. They

also allegedly forced him to transfer approximately Rs 1,200 to their account through a PhonePe transaction using his mobile phone.

Following the incident, the student approached Shyamla Hills police station and lodged a complaint. Based on his statement and the description of the suspects, police launched a search operation.

During the investigation, the accused were identified as Krishna and Ritik. A police team subsequently tracked them down and arrested them after a brief search operation.

A case has been registered against the accused under relevant sections related to robbery and other offences. Police said further interrogation is underway to ascertain whether the two were involved in other criminal incidents.

Children should learn values early: Devkinandan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Religious preacher Devkinandan Thakur shared his views on faith, worship practices and traditional marriage customs during the third day of a Shrimad Bhagwat Katha being held at the Rudraksh Kingston campus in Bhopal.

Addressing devotees, Thakur said people should understand the distinction between those considered worthy of worship in Sanatan Dharma and those who are not. He stated that offering prayers to entities regarded as "apoojya" (not worthy of worship) according to religious scriptures could lead to spiritual and familial difficulties. He emphasised the importance of following scriptural

guidance in matters of faith and devotion.

During his discourse, Thakur also referred to the practice of offering chadars at Ajmer Sharif after the fulfilment of wishes. He claimed that such acts of devotion at places he does not consider scripturally sanctioned could affect the acceptance of worship by Hindu deities. His remarks drew reactions from devotees present at the event.

The preacher also urged parents to involve their children in religious gatherings and spiritual activities. He said values and cultural traditions are best instilled from an early age and noted that children often absorb teachings more readily than adults.

Commenting on contemporary wedding practices, Thakur questioned the

growing trend of conducting marriages late at night. He said traditional Sanatan customs favoured solemnising weddings during the godhuli bela (twilight hours), which he described as a more auspicious time for marriage ceremonies.

According to Thakur, nighttime weddings deviate from traditional practices and may contribute to challenges in marital life. Drawing a symbolic comparison between divine and demonic tendencies associated with day and night, he stressed the importance of preserving traditional customs and rituals.

The week-long Bhagwat Katha continues to attract large numbers of devotees, with spiritual discourses focusing on religious teachings, cultural values and social traditions.

Teacher aspirants renew protest

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Teacher recruitment aspirants in Madhya Pradesh intensified their protest on Monday, demanding immediate appointments and an increase in sanctioned posts. The candidates, who claim to have cleared both stages of the teacher recruitment examinations, staged demonstrations from the Tribal Welfare Department office to the Directorate of Public Instruction (DPI).

Expressing frustration over the prolonged delay, several aspirants said they had been waiting for appointments

for more than five years despite qualifying for the recruitment process. "We do not need the government's monthly assistance of Rs 1,500. We want the jobs we are qualified for," said one protester.

Another candidate alleged that the recruitment process had effectively turned into a "five-year plan," with appointments yet to be made while fresh recruitment announcements continue to be issued.

The protesters also questioned why regular vacancies were not being increased despite a shortage of teachers in government schools.

Stalkers barge into minor's Gautam Nagar home

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

In a disturbing incident from the Gautam Nagar area, a 17-year-old girl was allegedly stalked and molested by two local youths who forcibly entered her residence. The police have registered a First Information Report (FIR) and launched a search operation to apprehend the absconding accused.

The victim, a 10th-grade student, had been facing continuous harassment while commuting to her coaching classes. According to the Gautam Nagar police, the two accused, who reside in the

same neighborhood, regularly stalked her and passed lewd comments.

Distressed by the continuous stalking, the minor reportedly changed her route to the coaching center multiple times, but the youths persisted. The ordeal escalated on Sunday afternoon when the accused followed her to her house.

Taking advantage of her family's absence, the two youths, along with their accomplices, allegedly barged into her home. They pressured the minor for friendship, and when she refused to entertain them, they resorted to physical harassment and obscene acts.

The terrified girl raised an

alarm, prompting the accused to flee the scene. Upon her parents' return, she narrated the harrowing ordeal, after which the family immediately approached the Gautam Nagar police station to file a formal complaint.

The police have registered a case under relevant sections and initiated an investigation. Authorities stated that efforts are currently underway to trace and arrest the accused youths.

Investigators are currently scanning CCTV footage from the vicinity and deploying informers to track the escape route of the absconding youths and ensure their speedy arrest.

WCR GM inaugurates new training institute in Bhopal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

West Central Railway General Manager Dileep Kumar Singh inaugurated the newly constructed Multi-Disciplinary Zonal Training Institute (MDZTI) at Nishatpura in Bhopal and interacted with the first batch of 40 trainees undergoing the Loco Pilot Promotion Course.

During his visit, Singh reviewed training arrangements and assessed various facilities at the institute, including hostels, classrooms, the mess, administrative block, auditorium and training halls. He also inspected the proposed model room and ongoing development works, directing officials to maximise the use of modern infrastructure to ensure high-quality training for railway employees. The General Manager also planted a sapling in the campus and emphasised the importance of environmental conservation and creating a green institutional environment.

Later, Singh conducted a window trailing inspection of the Bhopal-Itarsi rail section. He reviewed railway tracks, signalling systems, bridges, level crossings, overhead equipment and other safety-related infrastructure. He instructed officials to ensure strict adherence to safety standards while expediting maintenance and infrastructure development works.

At Bhopal railway station, the General Manager inspected

passenger amenities, foot overbridges, cleanliness arrangements and crowd management systems. He also interacted with union representatives to discuss issues concerning railway employees and directed officials to maintain a safe, clean and passenger-friendly environment.

During his visit to Itarsi, Singh met Narmadapuram MP Darshan Singh Choudhary and discussed passenger facilities, station development and regional railway requirements. He assured that the suggestions received would be examined and acted upon appropriately.

The General Manager also reviewed the progress of the Itarsi Bypass Rail Line project and inspected the Electric Loco Shed at Itarsi. He examined locomotive maintenance systems, simulator facilities and repair operations, directing officials to maintain the highest standards of safety, quality and efficiency in railway operations and maintenance activities.

Senior railway officials from the headquarters and Bhopal division accompanied the General Manager during the inspection and review visits.

Singh also emphasised the importance of continuous skill upgradation and technology-driven training to enhance operational efficiency and safety across the railway network. He urged officials to maintain high standards of infrastructure development while ensuring timely completion of ongoing projects.

Woman dies, three missing in river

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Sidhi

A picnic outing turned tragic in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district on Monday when four people, including a minor girl, drowned in the Son River near Bhanwarsen Ghat under Rampur Naikin police station limits. While the body of a young woman has been recovered, search operations are continuing for the three others who remain missing.

According to officials, the victims were part of a family group and relatives from Maihar district who had visited the popular riverside spot for a picnic. The incident occurred around noon when the group entered the river for a bath and was swept into deep waters, reportedly after getting caught in a powerful whirlpool.

The deceased has been identified as Jyoti Sen (24), a resident of Budha Baur village in Maihar district. Her body was recovered nearly half a kilometre downstream from the accident site. Family members have been informed.

The missing persons have been identified as Subhi Sen (15), daughter of Ramdayal Sen, Neelu Bais (22), son of Lallu Bais, both residents of Budha Baur, and Lakhna Kevat (26), a resident of Ghogatpur in Rajgarh district.

Following the incident, police and administrative officials rushed to the spot. Rampur Naikin Tehsildar Ashish Mishra said rescue teams had been alerted and search operations were underway.

BJP leader's nephew sparks political row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

A political controversy erupted in Madhya Pradesh after a video allegedly featuring Chetan Sharma, nephew of senior BJP leader and former MLA Satyanarayan Sattan, surfaced on social media. In the video, Sharma is seen making controversial remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, senior BJP and RSS leaders, and their families, while also praising the Congress and former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Identifying himself as a Congress worker, Sharma credited previous Congress-led governments for establishing major national institutions and infrastructure projects, including IITs, IIMs, ISRO,

BHEL and the Bhakra Nangal Dam. He also criticised the BJP-led government on several issues and made remarks targeting senior political leaders.

The video drew sharp reactions on social media, particularly because of the language used against constitutional authorities and political figures. Responding to the controversy, former BJP MLA Satyanarayan Sattan said Sharma is his brother's son and has not been politically active with him since joining the Congress several years ago. He added that he had not yet watched the video in full.

Amid the backlash, Sharma released another video apologising for his comments. In the apology, he admitted that he had used inappropriate and objectionable language

while referring to Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. He expressed regret over the remarks and sought forgiveness for his conduct.

The issue also prompted a response from Congress leader Kanupriya Sattan, who is Sharma's sister. She acknowledged that the language used in the viral video was inappropriate and said constitutional offices must be treated with dignity and respect. However, she maintained that some of the concerns raised by Sharma related to issues affecting ordinary citizens.

The controversy has triggered a fresh political debate in the state, with leaders from both sides weighing in on the remarks and the subsequent apology.



Women protect their children from the scorching heat in Bhopal on Monday.

Bhopal Airport completes 12 years of transformation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Raja Bhoj Airport has completed 12 years of operations at its modern integrated terminal, marking a significant chapter in the growth of civil aviation in Madhya Pradesh. Since the inauguration of the new terminal building in 2013, the airport has witnessed substantial expansion in passenger traffic, aircraft movements, infrastructure and connectivity, emerging as one of central India's important aviation hubs.

Over the past decade, the airport has undergone continuous modernisation aimed at enhancing passenger convenience, operational efficiency and safety standards. Several key infrastructure projects have been executed during this period, including



Airport Authority officials offer tilak to air passengers to welcome them and to elevate passenger convenience to commemorate Yatri Suvidha Divas at Raja Bhoj airport in Bhopal on Monday. Pioneer photo

the development of a modern fire station, a new Air Traffic Control (ATC) building, upgraded navigation systems, taxiway improvements and enhanced security infrastructure. Passenger facilities have also been strengthened through better terminal amenities and technological

upgrades. Airport officials said the transformation has significantly improved the overall travel experience while enabling the airport to handle growing passenger demand. The facility today offers modern services comparable to major airports in the region.

Aircraft movements have also registered a sharp rise during the period, highlighting the airport's expanding role in regional connectivity. The increase has been supported by improved infrastructure and the addition of new routes by airlines.

Connectivity from Bhopal has witnessed significant

expansion as well. While the airport initially offered limited direct services, it is now linked to eight major cities across the country, strengthening business, tourism and administrative travel. Enhanced connectivity has played a key role in integrating Madhya Pradesh more closely with major economic and commercial centres.

Officials attribute the airport's growth to sustained investment in infrastructure, efficient operations and rising demand for air travel. They said future development plans will focus on further improving passenger facilities, operational capacity and connectivity.

As Raja Bhoj Airport completes 12 years of its modern terminal operations, it stands as a symbol of the state's aviation progress.

MCTE symposium explores EMS operations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mhow

The Military College of Telecommunication Engineering (MCTE), Mhow, organised a Technology Symposium on "Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations (EMSO) - Dominance in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO)", bringing together officers from the Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force for discussions on one of the most critical aspects of modern warfare.

The symposium served as a platform for professional deliberations on the growing importance of the electromagnetic spectrum as a decisive force multiplier in contemporary and future military operations. Officers undergoing various courses at MCTE, along with faculty

members and subject matter experts, participated in the event and exchanged perspectives on achieving spectrum superiority, enhancing operational effectiveness and strengthening integration across multiple warfighting domains.

The programme featured two technical sessions and a special address focusing on key aspects of Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations, including spectrum dominance, cross-domain convergence, operational challenges and future capability development. Speakers highlighted how control of the electromagnetic spectrum has emerged as a vital component of military success, influencing communication, surveillance, intelligence gathering and precision operations across the battlespace.

A dedicated equipment display formed an important part of the symposium, showcasing contemporary technologies and capabilities in the electromagnetic spectrum domain. Participants gained insights into emerging systems and ongoing technological advancements designed to enhance operational readiness and effectiveness in increasingly contested and technology-driven environments.

The event was enriched by the presence of distinguished veterans with extensive operational experience in Electromagnetic Spectrum Operations. Their insights provided participants with a deeper understanding of evolving threats, emerging opportunities and future capability requirements in the electromagnetic domain.



IN FOCUS



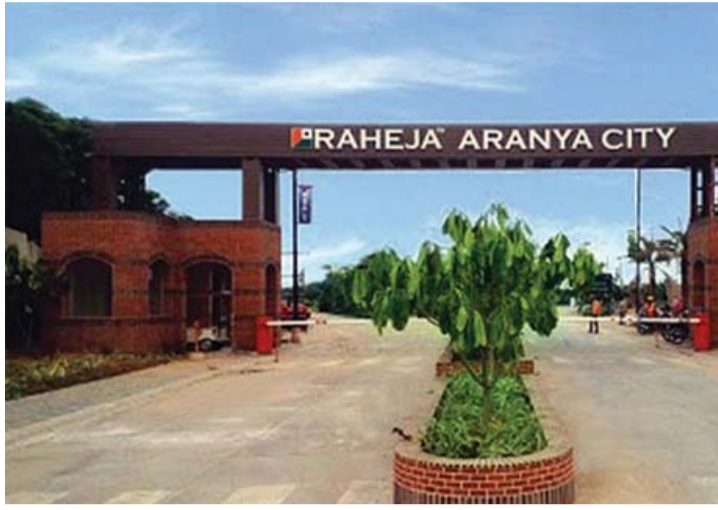
Prime Minister Narendra Modi receiving Slovakia's highest honour, the Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class), his 33rd global award from a foreign country. PIONEER PHOTO

ED attaches ₹503 crore in Raheja Developers case

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally seized properties worth about ₹503.48 crore from Raheja Developers Ltd., its Chairman and Managing Director Navin M Raheja, and his family. This step, under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002, is part of a larger investigation into claims that homebuyers were cheated. With this Provisional Attachment Order (PAO) from the ED's Delhi office, the total value of attached properties in the case is now about ₹1,617.29 crore.

This order follows earlier claims that large sums collected from homebuyers were routed through related businesses and shell companies for reasons unrelated to the projects. The ED found that Raheja Developers Ltd. collected about ₹2,425.99 crore from around 4,600 homebuyers for different residential projects, promising to deliver homes. The case began after the Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police filed several First



Information Reports (FIRs) in response to complaints from buyers who said they were cheated and did not receive the flats they were promised. Many complaints concern projects in the National Capital Region (NCR), especially in Gurugram, such as Raheja Revanta. Homebuyers have reported long delays, not getting their homes

even after years of payments, and not knowing how their money was used.

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has carried out several searches connected to the Raheja Revanta project in Gurugram, which has faced many complaints from buyers. On June 27, 2025, the ED searched offices and homes linked

to the company and its associates under Section 17 of the PMLA. During these searches, officials seized documents, digital evidence, jewellery, bullion worth about Rs 15.82 crore, and foreign currency valued at around Rs 15 lakh. Additional searches took place on April 25, 2026.

Analysis of the seized materials and other evidence reportedly showed a complicated system for moving money. The funds were allegedly used for things not related to the projects, raising concerns about money laundering linked to cheating and criminal activity. Braheja Developers Ltd., founded in 1990 by Navin M. Raheja, has built many residential and commercial projects in Delhi-NCR and attracted thousands of buyers.

The company has faced ongoing complaints from homebuyers about delays and quality issues. Some projects have also undergone insolvency proceedings under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) following action by homebuyer groups.

This new attachment by the ED

has increased regulatory pressure on the company and its leaders. However, provisional attachments made by the Adjudicating Authority under the PMLA can be challenged in court. The ED says that its investigation is ongoing. The agency is following the money trail and examining the roles of related companies, including N A Buildwell Pvt. Ltd. and Riyasat Palaces Ltd. These companies were also involved in the April 2026 attachment of properties valued at about Rs 1,113.81 crore and were the final recipients of the allegedly diverted funds.

This shows the ED's focus on real estate cases in which large sums were collected from homebuyers and allegedly misused. Thousands of affected buyers are waiting for the courts and regulators to resolve the case, and they may recover some money from the attached assets if the charges are proven. The investigation continues, and the ED is expected to file additional reports and request confirmation of the attachments soon.

Massive rally planned in Bharuch amid dispute over historical Jama Masjid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bharuch

A large procession has been planned in Bharuch amid an ongoing dispute concerning the historical origins and heritage status of the city's Jama Masjid, leading to heightened tensions in the area.

Organisers associated with a heritage conservation campaign have called for the rally, which is expected to draw participants from different parts of Gujarat as well as neighbouring Maharashtra. Religious leaders, community representatives, and supporters have gathered in significant numbers ahead of the march. The procession is scheduled to begin from the Hostel Ground and proceed towards the Collector's office,

where participants intend to submit a memorandum outlining their demands. A signature campaign has also been launched as part of the broader movement.

In view of the expected turnout, police authorities have intensified security arrangements across the city. Additional personnel, including senior officers and specialised units, have been deployed to maintain law and order and monitor the situation. Officials remain on alert as large crowds assemble in the city. The disputed site is currently under the jurisdiction of the Archaeological Survey authorities. No official statement regarding the controversy had been issued by the concerned department at the time of reporting.

Nabin, Shah, other party leaders meet at Rajnath's house amid rejig talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Amid speculation about a reshuffle of the BJP's central team, senior leaders of the party including Union minister Amit Shah held a meeting on Monday at the residence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

According to sources, BJP president Nitin Nabin, national general secretary (organisation) BL Santhosh and RSS pointsman for the party Arun Kumar were also present at the meeting.

While there was no official word from the BJP, party sources said the meeting discussed a range of issues, including rejig of the central team of the party's office-bearers. The BJP's new central team under Nabin, who took charge in January, is expected to be announced this month, with sources suggesting that it will have a "mix of senior and younger leaders".

Sources also suggested that some holding positions in the government may also be moved to the party and assigned key responsibilities. On May 28,



BJP chief Nabin appointed Union minister Harsh Malhotra as the Delhi BJP president. Archana Gupta was made the BJP Haryana president and Sardar Kewal Singh Dhillon the party's Punjab unit chief. Abhishek Debroy, a first-time MLA from Matabari assembly constituency in Tripura, was appointed as the BJP's state unit.

PM Modi to lead main event of Yoga Day to be held in Kolkata on June 21

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the main event of the International Day of Yoga in Kolkata on June 21, Union Minister for Ayush Prataprao Jadhav said on Monday.

Addressing a press conference, Jadhav said this year's theme, 'Yoga for Healthy Ageing', highlights the role of yoga in promoting physical health, mental well-being and healthy ageing. "This year's main event of the International Day of Yoga will be held on Kolkata's historic Red Road under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," he said.

Jadhav said that International Day of Yoga (IDY) is receiving unprecedented support across the



globe and yoga events will be held in nearly 2,500 locations worldwide.

"Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Modi, Yoga has evolved into a global mass movement and millions of people across the world have embraced yoga as an integral part of their daily lives," the minister said.

This year's theme addresses one of the most significant needs of our time. Yoga plays a vital role in enabling people

to lead healthy, active, self-reliant, and mentally resilient lives as they age, he said.

Highlighting the growing international outreach of the movement, the minister said that in coordination with the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), more than 210 Indian missions abroad will organise yoga events at nearly 2,500 locations across the world. "This reflects how yoga has transcended its origins as India's cultural heritage to become a shared global movement for health and well-being," he said.

"Across the world, people are living longer than ever before. The real challenge, however, is to ensure that these added years are healthy, active, independent and meaningful.

Jharkhand Rajya Sabha election: All MLAs will vote on conscience, says NDA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ RANCHI

The NDA on Monday claimed that all 81 MLAs of Jharkhand will vote according to their conscience during the June 18 Rajya Sabha election, and expressed confidence in the victory of the BJP-backed Independent candidate, though the opposition coalition does not have numbers in the state assembly.



A meeting of the ruling INDIA bloc legislators will be held on June 16 and 17 to chart the strategy for the polls, the Congress's Jharkhand affairs in-charge K Raju said.

JMM candidate Baidyanath Ram, Congress nominee Pranav Jha and BJP-supported Independent candidate Parimal Nathwani are contesting for the two Rajya Sabha seats in the state.

A candidate is required to

secure a minimum of 28 first-preference votes to emerge victorious.

The BJP-led NDA with 24 MLAs cannot make Nathwani a winner in the polls, unless there is cross-voting, a ruling party legislator said. In the Jharkhand Assembly, the INDIA bloc has 56 members.

The BJP claimed that the NDA members are united and are confident of the victory of its supported can-

didate. During the NDA legislature's party meeting, chaired by Jharkhand BJP chief Aditya Sahu, various strategies were discussed for the Rajya Sabha polls, a party statement said. Nathwani, along with AJSU party chief Sudesh Mahto and state IJP (Ram Vilas) president Birendra Pradhan, was present in the meeting.

Jaiswal said Nathwani is an independent candidate, and

all 81 MLAs in the state assembly are voters in this election. "He (Nathwani) is reaching out to all parties, and everyone has confidence in his track record.

He previously served the state as an MP twice. On June 18, all MLAs will vote according to their own judgment and the voice of their conscience, and Parimal Nathwani will secure victory for the third time," Jaiswal

added. BJP state general secretary Amar Kumar Bauri wondered why the Congress was scared if the party has the required numbers. A five-member Congress delegation led by Raju and the party's state unit president, Keshav Mahto Kamlesh, met Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Monday to discuss strategies for the polls. "We had a fruitful meeting with the chief minister.

FROM PAGE - 1

Trump announces US-Iran peace deal...

However, Trump has said the formal signing ceremony will take place in Switzerland on June 19 and that the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz will follow that signing.

Iran also insisted that shipping through the Strait could involve service-related charges.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Iran was not seeking transit tolls but would collect fees for services such as navigation support, environmental protection and potentially ship insurance provided jointly with Oman.

"We have always said that we are not seeking to collect transit tolls. However, in return for the services that we will provide - including navigation services, environmental protection, potentially ship insurance and other services offered by Iran and Oman - the necessary costs will be covered and the corresponding fees will be collected," Baghaei was quoted as saying by the state-affiliated Tasnim news agency.

In a joint statement, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Italy said they were prepared to lift sanctions on Iran in response to "clear, verifiable steps" to limit its nuclear programme.

"We are clear that toll-free freedom of navigation must now be restored in the Strait of Hormuz," British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said. "Iran must never have a nuclear weapon."

The coming weeks are expected to determine whether the ceasefire framework can be converted into a broader agreement covering sanctions, nuclear restrictions and long-term regional security arrangements.

Akal Takht declares Punjab CM Mann Guru...

"A position of chief minister is respectable. But chief minister Bhagwant Singh (Mann) lied at the Akal Takht (about the video)," claimed Gargaj.

The matter stems from the summoning of Mann by the Akal Takht in January this year for video clips where he is allegedly making comments on *Guru ki Golak* (a gurdwara donation box) and indulging in "objectionable activities" with the pictures of the Sikh Gurus and slain militant Jamail Singh Bhindranwale. Mann appeared before the secretariat in Amritsar on January 15 and submitted that the videos circulating on social media were fake.

He also said that the video was fake or AI-

generated and that the *Singh Sahiban* could get its forensic examination done from any lab in the country.

The Sikh clergy has also summoned all Sikh MLAs, regardless of party affiliation, and the Punjab Cabinet before the Akal Takht on June 29 in connection with an anti-sacrilege law. The Akal Takht and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) had earlier raised objections to the anti-sacrilege law, saying it was enacted without consulting the Sikh *Panth*.

The Akal Takht had earlier asked the State Government to remove provisions from the anti-sacrilege Act which are "against the Guru Granth Sahib, the Khalsa *Panth* and the sentiments of the *Sangat* (Sikh community)." Notably, the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Bill, 2026, was unanimously passed by the Punjab Assembly on April 13. It includes a provision for stricter punishment, including life imprisonment for any act of sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib.

Reacting to the development, AAP Punjab media in-charge Baltej Singh Pannu on Monday said that after losing the trust of the people and facing repeated electoral defeats, the Badal family and Shiromani Akali Dal have dragged revered Sikh institutions into their political battle in a desperate bid to regain relevance. He asserted that the so-called forensic report being used to target CM Bhagwant Mann has failed to establish even the identity of the person seen in the video, exposing what he described as another failed attempt by Sukhbir Singh Badal and Bikram Singh Majithia to defame the Chief Minister.

Pannu said the same Badal family under whose rule Punjab witnessed beadbi incidents, Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan tragedies is now trying to claim moral authority, while remaining unable to digest the fact that the Bhagwant Mann Government has enacted Punjab's toughest law against beadbi and delivered transformative governance through initiatives ranging from increased canal water reach and daytime power for farmers to 70 lakh health insurance for families.

Addressing a press conference, Pannu said Sri Akal Takht Sahib is the supreme and most revered institution of Sikhs across the world and cannot be treated as the personal estate of Sukhbir Badal or the SAD. "Sri Akal Takht Sahib belongs to the entire *Panth* across the world, not to Sukhbir Singh Badal or the Shiromani Akali Dal. The Jathedar Sahib was appointed in the middle

of the night at the behest of Sukhbir Badal without consulting Sikh sects or organisations, and at a place where there was not even Parkash of Sri Guru Granth Sahib," he said.

Pannu asserted, "Under such circumstances, his loyalty towards the Badal family and the statement of SGPC President Harjinder Singh Dhali describing himself as a soldier of Sukhbir Badal are proof of the politicisation of these revered Sikh institutions."

Questioning the forensic report released in connection with the controversial video, Pannu said, "The report nowhere states who the person visible in the video actually is. Even if we accept the claim that the video was not generated through AI, the Jathedar must explain what the height of the individual seen in the video is. Does the height of CM Bhagwant Singh Mann match the height of the person visible in the footage? Which hotel room is it where photographs of Guru Sahib are displayed, as is being claimed? The report has completely failed to establish who is actually visible in the video."

Jewar's land donors become first...

"The very families who dedicated their ancestral land for the national interest and the state's bright future are today taking to the skies from that same soil," he said. He added that hands that once tilled the land now held boarding passes.

Singh described the flight as carrying a meaning beyond travel. "When the farmers of Jewar boarded the flight to Lucknow today, it was not merely their journey; it was a historic flight representing India's development, the dignity of farmers and a transforming Uttar Pradesh," he said.

The families on board were largely those who had sold their ancestral land during the first phase of the project, land that for generations had been used for farming and now forms part of the runway and terminal infrastructure of one of India's newest greenfield airports.

For the villagers of Jewar, Monday's flight closed a particular kind of loop. The land they once worked has become the ground from which they took off. Whether the promises made to them, including the job assured to the 65-year-old farmer who gave up 30 bighas, are fulfilled in the months ahead remains a question that will likely shape how this communi-

ty comes to view the airport that now stands where their fields once were.

India, Slovakia elevate ties

"Today, we combined our strengths on all these issues and took several important decisions for the benefit of the people of both countries."

Modi also said that the defence cooperation between India and Slovakia is a testament to the "deep mutual trust and strategic convergence" between the two sides.

A Letter of Intent was finalised on defence cooperation following the talks between the two leaders.

The prime minister said it will give new momentum for cooperation between the defence industries of the two sides.

"India and Slovakia are also moving forward with close coordination on the global stage. We agree that all disputes and tensions should be resolved peacefully," he said.

"We also agree that global institutions need to redefine themselves to address the realities and challenges of the 21st century. We will work to strengthen global efforts in this regard," he added.

Modi also conveyed his appreciation to PM Fico for the cooperation Slovakia extended in finalising the India-EU free trade agreement.

"We will work towards its earliest implementation so that industries, startups, and traders of both countries can derive maximum benefit from it," he said.

In his remarks, PM Fico hailed the India-EU FTA, describing it as one of the "most ambitious" trade pacts ever signed.

"Slovakia not only welcomes this agreement, but it will take the necessary and practical steps for the implementation of this agreement," he said.

The agreements inked following Modi-Fico talks are set to provide for deeper bilateral cooperation in areas of labour migration, defence, digital technologies, higher education and quantum communication.

In the meeting, the two leaders, recognising the growing geopolitical, economic and technological importance of the Indo-Pacific, acknowledged the value of a stronger partnership between India and Slovakia in support of mutually beneficial cooperation, regional connectivity, open international trade, freedom of

navigation, and peaceful resolution of disputes, according to a joint statement.

Modi and Fico expressed support for the orderly, safe and legal mobility of skilled professionals and welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation in the field of labour migration to facilitate mobility.

The two sides also agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a Social Security Agreement, which would contribute to safeguarding the welfare and social protection of working professionals engaged in mobility between India and Slovakia.

The statement said Modi and Fico supported comprehensive reforms of multilateral institutions, particularly the UN Security Council. In this context, India appreciated Slovakia's continued support for India's permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UN Security Council.

The two leaders also unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms, including cross-border terrorism, and strongly condemned the Pahalgam terror attack.

They agreed to establish a Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism and called for concerted international efforts to combat terrorism in a comprehensive and sustained manner, the joint statement noted.

It said the leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral and multilateral cooperation in counterterrorism, including within the framework of the UN and called for strong and decisive action against terrorists and terrorist entities, including those designated by the United Nations Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee.

Modi and Fico further underscored the importance of holding perpetrators, organisers and sponsors of terrorist acts accountable and agreed to work closely towards the early finalisation and adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) within the UN framework.

PM Modi hails deal

"India hopes that the implementation of this understanding will help restore peace and stability in the region and ensure the freedom of navigation and commerce," he added. The prime minister said India looks forward to deliberations on the remaining issues reaching a sustainable final agreement.

War ends, but cheaper fuel will take more time

RAJESH KUMAR
New Delhi

With the Strait of Hormuz finally reopening after a US-Iran deal eased immediate supply worries, the real question for common Indians is simple: will this actually bring cheaper petrol, diesel, and LPG cylinders to our homes? The answer is: not yet. The maritime traffic in the Strait of Hormuz might take months or years to return to pre-war levels. Apprehensions stem from fast-changing, uncertain and fluid geopolitical uncertainties still persisting. Given the mistrust between Iran and the USA despite the pact and Israel continuing a tough stance, the reopening of the Hormuz on Friday hangs in the balance.

Stock markets in India and globally may have zoomed on Monday after Trump's statement. But the implementation of the finer details of the pact poses the biggest challenge. Therefore, common people will have to wait for months or more before a clear picture emerges.

Experts believe that while lower crude oil prices may improve the economics for Oil Marketing



Companies (OMCs), consumers may not immediately benefit from lower fuel prices. The Government may choose to maintain current retail fuel prices for some time. The Government didn't pass on the full impact of the energy price increase to consumers. They may hold prices at current levels to allow oil marketing companies to recover some of the losses before reducing prices. After the announcement of the

deal, Oil prices dropped on news of the ceasefire. Price of Brent crude, the global benchmark for oil, fell 4 per cent, to around \$84 a barrel as traders anticipated the return of energy supplies through one of the world's most important maritime corridors. A fall in global crude oil prices does not immediately mean lower prices at Indian petrol pumps. The outlook for LPG prices also points towards selective

relief rather than a broad reduction. While the agreement has eased immediate fears, significant questions remain about how and when normal shipping activity can resume in the strait.

Meanwhile, Indian LNG carrier Disha has safely transited through the Strait of Hormuz — the first Indian flagged LNG carrying vessel to exit the war zone in more than three months. Disha, managed by a Shipping Corporation of India-led consortium, is carrying 62,370 metric tonnes of LNG cargo, a Shipping Ministry official said on Monday.

A normalisation of traffic through Hormuz would also provide relief to policymakers. Reduced geopolitical risk in the Gulf would give the government greater flexibility in managing energy and economic policy, containing inflation, and maintaining fiscal discipline. The benefits could be particularly significant for sectors such as aviation, petrochemicals, fertilisers, shipping and logistics, all of which are highly sensitive to energy costs.

India imports more than 85 per cent of its crude oil needs. If the ceasefire holds and shipping

through Hormuz returns to normal, lower oil and gas prices could ease pressure on consumers, reduce fuel-related inflation and improve the overall economic outlook in the coming months.

Post assembly elections, petrol and diesel prices were raised by about ₹7.50 per litre each, while CNG rates were up ₹6 per kg. LPG prices too were increased by ₹89 per 14.2-kg cylinder in two instalments. Notwithstanding the price increase, state-owned oil companies continue to lose about ₹650 crore per day as retail rates lag cost. With oil prices easing and the reopening of the Strait, these will gradually come down, industry sources and analysts said.

Pre-war, India imported more than 88 per cent of its crude oil requirements, with half of it being sourced from Gulf producers whose exports transit through Hormuz. It was 60 per cent import dependent to meet LPG needs, 90 per cent of which came through the strait. The country depended on imports to meet half of its natural gas needs, of which 65 per cent came from countries like Qatar and the UAE.

States Focus



HOME SECRETARY REVIEWS NEET-UG READINESS

The Union Home Secretary, Govind Mohan, on Monday reviewed the preparedness of the State Governments for the NEET(UG) Re-examination, 2026, with a special focus on student convenience, security arrangements, and the integrity of the examination process. Chairman, Railway Board; Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy; Secretary, Department of Higher Education; Secretary, Department of Posts; DGs of CRPF, CISF, BCAS, and DG, NTA; and senior officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare were also present. States and UTs were requested to facilitate the smooth travel of students. (PNS)



PAPER LEAKS STRIKE BLOW TO YOUTH'S DREAMS: RAHUL GANDHI

Ahead of his first student convention in Kota, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said every paper leak and cancelled exam is not just a failure of the system but a blow to the dreams of millions of youth of the country. In a post on X in Hindi, Gandhi said it is not the fruit of hard work that students get, but the punishment for daring to dream. He urged the youth to fight for their future and said he stands with them. "One thing I want to say to every young person in this country — today, in this nation, it's not the fruit of hard work that you get, but punishment for daring to dream. "Every paper leak, every cancelled exam, every stalled recruitment — these aren't just failures of the system, but blows struck against the dreams of millions," he said in his post. "I know you're exhausted. You're angry. But remember this - when the government refuses to listen, you have to raise your voice louder. "That's why I'm calling on all of you - June 17, Kota. Let's come together and become a roar that can't be ignored," Gandhi said. (PTI)

Left parties slam US for killing Indian seafarers



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Five major Left parties on Monday issued a scathing joint statement strongly condemning the US Navy for a "dastardly attack" on commercial vessels in the Strait of Hormuz, which resulted in the deaths of three Indian seafarers. Terming it the third such assault on vessels operating with Indian crew members, the political outfits announced nationwide protests against American imperialist aggression and hit at the Centre for its "meek response."

The joint declaration was issued by CPI(M) General Secretary MA Baby, CPI General Secretary D Raja, CPI(ML)-Liberation General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, AIFB General Secretary G Devarajan, and RSP General Secretary Manoj Bhattacharya.

The Left leaders alleged that the US administration is acting like a "gangster trying to impose its hegemony over the entire world," violating the United Nations Charter and fracturing the core principles of free navigation in international waters. They expressed deep concern over Washington's threats to continue blockading and targeting civilian maritime traffic in the region.

Training their guns on the ruling dispensation at the Centre, the Left parties claimed that the BJP-led Union Government has abjectly failed in its primary duty by reneging on an independent foreign policy to become a "junior partner to the US."

"The meek response of the Government and its failure to force an apology from the US is the latest example. This is an affront to India's sovereignty and self-respect," the joint statement noted.

The opposition parties further highlighted that American military interventions in Iran and West Asia have severely disrupted the global economy, triggering spiralling energy costs and acute scarcities of fertilisers and other essential commodities. They urged New Delhi to shed its submissive posture, condemn the aggression, and lead the Global South against US actions.

Demanding immediate accountability, the Left units have asked the Union Government to secure proper financial compensation for the families of the deceased seafarers and deploy all diplomatic channels to punish those responsible for the deaths. Mass demonstrations will be organised across all State units to mobilise public opinion against the blockade.

NDA Govt focused on improving ordinary citizens' quality of life in 12 yrs: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said the NDA Government has increasingly focused on improving ordinary citizens' quality of life over 12 years and worked on easier access to opportunities, better infrastructure, improved public services and quality education, among others.

Terming his dispensation "a Government for the middle class", Modi further said it a privilege to be working towards fulfilling the aspirations of the middle class as they have contributed to nation-building in countless ways.

"Over the last decade, governance has increasingly focused on improving the quality of life of ordinary citizens. Our efforts are



about easier access to opportunities, better infrastructure, improved public services, affordable healthcare, quality education, cleaner cities and reduced burdens in everyday life," Modi said in a post on X.

The 'MyGov India', a flagship citizen engagement platform of the central government, stated that under

Modi's leadership, India's middle class has seen a strong rise in living standards over the past 12 years, supported by better infrastructure, improved connectivity, tax relief measures, and expanded public services.

From smoother transport to stronger digital access, everyday life has become

more efficient and opportunity-rich for millions of families across the nation, it said.

According to the platform, connectivity has reached unprecedented levels with internet penetration expanding across rural and urban India.

With over 103 crore connections and drastically reduced data costs, citizens now enjoy seamless access to education, employment opportunities, digital payments and entertainment at minimal cost, it said.

The MyGov India said rail travel has become faster and more comfortable with the expansion of Vande Bharat services and with 164 operational trains and over 9 crore passengers already served, travel time has reduced significantly across key routes.

ED questions Abhishek Banerjee in teachers' recruitment scam probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi/Kolkata

Trinamool Congress national general secretary and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee appeared before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday for questioning in its money laundering investigation linked to alleged irregularities in the primary teachers' recruitment scam in West Bengal. Banerjee reached the ED office at the CGO Complex in Salt Lake around 11 am, following a summons issued earlier this month.

Officials said Banerjee was questioned as part of the PMLA investigation into financial transactions and suspected illegal gains from

recruitment irregularities during the Mamata Banerjee-led TMC Government. This is the first time the ED has questioned him in this case. The agency has been investigating the primary teachers' recruitment scam since 2022, after a CBI FIR. They are looking into the money trail, including how alleged bribe money was moved through accounts and companies, and whether any funds were hidden. Sources said investigators showed Banerjee documents, digital records, and statements from other accused people.

The scam involves irregularities in hiring primary school teachers by the West Bengal Board of Primary Education. Allegations say



that ineligible or lower-ranked candidates were given jobs in exchange for bribes, ignoring the merit list. The Calcutta High Court can-

celled the appointments of more than 25,000 teachers and non-teaching staff, calling the process "vitiated by manipulation and fraud."

The Supreme Court agreed with this decision. In July 2022, the ED arrested former state Education Minister Partha Chatterjee in connection with the case. Searches at his aide Arpita Mukherjee's properties found about ₹50 crore in cash and ₹4.5 crore in gold jewellery.

So far, the ED has seized properties worth about ₹154 crore in the primary teachers' recruitment case. Several charge sheets have been filed, naming multiple people, including former officials, as accused. In related school recruitment cases, including SSC assistant teachers and Group C and D posts, the ED has seized assets totalling over ₹600 crore. Political reac-

tions to Monday's events were predictable. The ruling BJP welcomed the investigation as a move towards accountability, while TMC leaders said the actions against their party members were politically motivated.

This follows the BJP's landslide win in the May 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections, which ended the TMC's 15-year rule. Abhishek Banerjee, who is the nephew of former Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, has said he is not involved in any wrongdoing. The ED's questioning is part of its ongoing effort to trace all financial transactions in the alleged scam. The investigation is still underway, officials said.

Tamil Nadu Govt expands breakfast scheme for schools



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Monday announced that the CM's Breakfast Scheme for school-going students will be expanded up to Class 8. The initiative will be launched on September 17, he said.

The CM's Breakfast Scheme, launched during the previous DMK regime by the then chief minister MK Stalin, currently covers students upto Class 5 from Class 1 in the State-run and Government-aided schools.

Chairing a review meeting of the Social Welfare and Women Empowerment Department, Vijay advised officials to ensure expeditious implementation of welfare schemes.

Kashmiri Pandit conclave sparks rifts in community

MOHIT KANDHARI
Jammu

A recent Global Kashmiri Pandit Conclave held in SKICC, Srinagar, has once again created fissures within the members of the Kashmiri Pandit community, prompting those living in different migrant camps in Jammu to question the motives behind hosting a section of overseas Kashmiri Pandits in their absence.

After the culmination of the grand conclave, members of the Panun Kashmir in Jammu launched a scathing attack on the organisers of the event, claiming such exercises have become a recurring feature over the years and have consistently failed to address the central question of the genocide and forced exile of Kashmiri Hindus.

In New Delhi, Roots in Kashmir and Youth for Panun Kashmir strongly condemned the recent conclave held in Srinagar by an unregistered organisation claiming to represent Kashmiri Pandits. Certain statements made by some



of its speakers, particularly certain foreign citizens, appear to be part of a larger agenda aimed at whitewashing the genocide of Kashmiri Pandits and their forced displacement.

Referring to the SKICC gathering, Agnishekhar, Governor, Panun Kashmir, noted that it was organised by a few overseas Kashmiri Pandits under the guise of a "heritage tour."

He remarked that the tragedy of the Kashmiri Hindu community appears

to have entered a new phase where genocide survivors are invited to celebrate heritage before the nation has even acknowledged the crime that severed them from that heritage. "The victims remain exiled, justice remains absent, rehabilitation remains elusive, yet we are repeatedly offered heritage tours as if civilizational dispassion can be cured through sightseeing," he said. "A homeland is not a museum exhibit to be

visited periodically. It is a living national space to which a people have an inalienable right."

Agnishekhar also questioned its projected independence. He observed that when invitations are reportedly extended by a serving Government functionary, such as former Director General of Police of Jammu and Kashmir, Rashmi Ranjan Swain, presently Chairman of the Odisha Uniformed Services Staff Selection Commission, the programme inevitably raises questions about official patronage and intent.

According to him, the State continues to suffer from policy paralysis, offering symbolic engagements while avoiding substantive solutions.

Senior members of the Panun Kashmir, PL Kaul Budgami, Chief Advisor, Kuldeep Raina, General Secretary, BL Kaul, Organising Secretary, Bebooji Zutshi, Coordinator Jammu and Archana Pandita, Coordinator, Panun Kashmir Yuva Jammu, were also present on the occasion.

India's climate tech funding rose from \$315 million to \$2.6 billion: Report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Climate tech funding in India rose from \$315 million in 2020 to \$2.6 billion in 2025, with the growth largely driven by increased transactions in sectors such as electric mobility, renewable energy, and energy-transition infrastructure, according to a new report.

The India Climate Tech 2026 Report also stated that over the years, investor interest has increasingly shifted from funding climate innovation in isolation to backing companies enabling large-scale implementation of the energy transition.

The report was recently released by Tracxn, a data intelligence platform for private market research. It highlighted that with roughly 85 per cent of India's crude oil imported, technologies like renewable energy, electric mobility, battery storage, and critical minerals are now being viewed not only as climate solutions but



also as tools for improving energy security.

This change is being supported by several Government initiatives, such as PM E-DRIVE, a ₹10,900 crore programme extended to 2028, which aims to accelerate electric-vehicle adoption and charging infrastructure.

Another initiative is the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme, effective October 2026, which has established a compliance carbon market covering around 490 industrial units across nine sectors.

In addition, the Rare Earth Permanent Magnets (REPM)

scheme, a Rs 7,280 crore programme, has strengthened domestic clean-energy supply chains, according to the report.

"India's dependence on imported crude oil and critical clean-energy inputs aligns directly with policy initiatives such as PM E-DRIVE, the REPM scheme, and broader critical-mineral programmes. As a result, policy support, private capital, and energy-security priorities are increasingly converging around the same set of climate tech sectors," said the report.

States Focus



BIHAR TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN GOVT SCHOOLS: CM

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Monday said his administration would improve the quality of education in Government schools to such an extent that even officers and politicians would prefer to send their children there, making coaching institutes redundant. Addressing a public gathering in Gayayi district, Choudhary said the Government had already announced the establishment of model schools, to be known as 'Sanskriti Vidyalayas', in every block of the State. "We have already announced opening up of Sanskriti Vidyalayas in each block. My dream will remain unfulfilled until children of leaders and officers start studying in those schools," he said. The chief minister said quality coaching facilities would be provided in these schools till 8 pm. "We will establish such a system that all coaching institutes will have to be shut down, and only Government schools will continue to operate," he claimed.



INITIATING CORRECTIVE STEPS AFTER POLL LOSS: CPI(M)

CPI(M) state secretary MV Govindan on Monday said the party was undertaking a comprehensive review and corrective process following its defeat in the Assembly elections and alleged that fake reports were being circulated to undermine the exercise. In a Facebook post, Govindan urged the public to remain vigilant against what he termed fabricated media reports lacking any basis in reality and said legal action would be initiated against those responsible. "Strong public resistance will be organised against such false propaganda. Legal action will also be taken against fake news," he said.

DMK slams Rahul Gandhi for damaging INDIA bloc unity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

Tamil Nadu's main Opposition DMK on Monday asked whether it was not shameful for the Congress party to pull off all kinds of "underhand tactics" to prevent INDIA bloc parties from coming to power in states where Assembly elections are held, and later seek support from them when the Lok Sabha polls are round the corner.

The DMK strongly criticised Congress, alleging it was "backstabbed" by the grand old party with its top leader Rahul Gandhi's blessings in the April 23 Tamil Nadu Assembly polls and mocked at him for "lecturing unity" in the recent INDIA bloc meeting.

DMK's official organ, 'Murasoli', in an editorial, said Rahul Gandhi has given a lecture on unity and termed it a case of belated enlightenment. "Isn't Rahul himself the one who ruined this unity in every single



State?" the daily asked.

On June 11, Rahul Gandhi released his speech at the INDIA bloc leaders' meeting as the allegations made against the Congress by the constituent parties of the INDIA bloc spread widely in the public domain. A situation arose where the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha was under pressure to release his speech on the INC website.

The left parties, the Samajwadi Party (SP), and the Rashtriya Janata Dal

(RJD) have fiercely criticised Rahul, highlighting how he acted in a manner that disrupted the unity of the opposition, the DMK mouthpiece further claimed.

The speech of John Brittas, a CPI (M) Rajya Sabha MP, is highly significant.

In Kerala, the Congress party and the CPI(M), with equal influence, contested against each other in the Assembly polls held in April, and no one blamed them for clashing head-on.

However, the allegation

made by Rahul Gandhi was absurd, the DMK daily alleged.

During the campaign, Rahul had asked, "Why hasn't PM Modi arrested Pinarayi Vijayan (then CM)? There is a secret deal between the two." This accusation was flagged by the Marxist party as a serious allegation, it said.

Murasoli reproduced what it called criticism of Brittas in front of Rahul at the INDIA bloc meeting.

According to the DMK newspaper, Brittas alleged that during the Kerala Assembly campaign, Rahul had spoken blatant lies by claiming that there was a secret understanding between the Left and the BJP, adding that the Left did not need a certificate from the Congress to prove its anti-BJP stance. Referring to Rahul's comment that "the Left is no longer the Left," CPI general secretary D Raja slammed it, saying it showed the former's political immaturity.

With just ₹75 in cash, NCPI lands 20 MPs



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) had just ₹75 left in cash as its closing balance at the end of the financial year 2022-23. The figure appears in the annual auditor's report submitted by the party to the Election Commission of India (ECI) for 2022-23, offering a snapshot of a little-known outfit that has now unexpectedly entered the national political conversation after a group of 20 dissident Trinamool Congress (TMC) Lok Sabha MPs announced their merger with the party on Sunday.

The Tripura-based NCPI is an obscure party which does not hold a single elected representative or seat anywhere in India.

The NCPI registered itself as a political party in January 2023, with a building in Sankarail in West Bengal's Howrah district as its address in the ECI records.

During the financial year 2022-23, the NCPI declared receiving ₹1,13,075 in "donations from well-wishers". Its expenditure was almost the same, ₹1.13 lakh, including ₹49,400 spent for the 2023 Tripura assembly polls.

Among the nine contributors were party president Shewly Kundu and vice president Uttiya Kundu, husband and wife by relation, who contributed ₹15,000 and ₹18,000 respectively.

The NCPI's financial contribution and the auditor's reports

of 2023-24 and 2024-25 are not available in the ECI records. It has contested elections in 2023, wherein it fielded four candidates in the Tripura assembly elections and appealed to voters through its campaign slogan: "Reject political turncoats". These four seats were Chawamanu, Ambassa, Karamchara and Kailashahar. However, its candidates finished behind NOTA, with some securing a few more votes.

Out of these four, two candidates contested on the party's symbol, the third contested as an Independent, while the nomination of the fourth candidate was rejected. One of its candidates, Barjeda Tripura, polled 536 votes, 36 more than NOTA, while another secured 286 votes. The candidate who contested as an Independent got 376 votes. Barjeda said that he works as a daily wage labourer and has no knowledge of the latest political developments involving the party.

The party's symbol was a pen nib, which had reportedly been allotted to it as a Registered Unrecognised Political Party. A Registered Unrecognised Political Party (RUPP) is a political organisation officially registered with the Election Commission of India (ECI) under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951. However, it is "unrecognised" as it may not have met the strict electoral vote criteria required to be elevated to a "state" or a "national" party.

Andhra CM seeks Singapore partnership in AI, quantum computing, research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Amaravati

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Monday requested Singapore PM Lawrence Wong to extend cooperation in technology, semiconductors, quantum computing, AI and university research.

Naidu is on a two-day visit to Singapore to attract investments and review key collaborations related to Amaravati and other projects. "CM Chandrababu met with Singapore Prime Minister Lawrence Wong. The CM



requested cooperation in technology, semiconductors, quantum computing, AI and university research," a press release said.

During the 30-minute meeting, Naidu sought

Singapore's assistance in establishing a semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem and building capacity in the sector.

He requested cooperation in urban governance for Amaravati, the state's greenfield capital, and other urban centres, the release said.

In addition to informing the Singapore Prime Minister about Andhra Pradesh's natural farming initiatives, Naidu asked him to consider the possibility of importing the State's horticulture and aquaculture products. Naidu called for Andhra

Pradesh-Singapore collaboration in the development of ports and airports, while exploring other opportunities for cooperation.

Wong enquired about the construction of the greenfield capital, including educational institutions, infrastructure and building projects being developed to international standards, the release said.

Naidu said Amaravati would emerge as "one of the most liveable cities" and briefed Wong on Andhra Pradesh's population management initiative.

CISF strengthens maritime security for blue economy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is set to play a major role in strengthening India's maritime and coastal security framework after being designated as a Recognised Security Organisation (RSO) under the International Ship and Port Facility Security (ISPS) Code.

The move, aligned with Union Home Minister Amit Shah's vision for a technology-driven and collaborative security architecture, is aimed at supporting India's Blue Economy 2.0 vision and Amrit Kaal 2047 goals.

Under the new mandate granted on May 6, 2026, CISF will conduct Port Facility Security Assessments (PFSAs) and prepare Port Facility Security Plans (PFSPs) for 264 ports across the country.



During 2026-27, security assessments of 27 major and non-major EXIM ports will be carried out in the first phase.

To build specialised expertise, CISF has partnered with premier institutions such as Rashtriya Raksha University, Indian Register of Shipping and Indian Maritime University for advanced maritime security training. While 45 officers have already completed specialised courses,

another 90 personnel are currently undergoing RSO training. Once completed, the force will have nearly 135 trained RSO consultants capable of independently conducting specialised port security assessments and consultancy assignments nationwide.

In line with the Home Minister's directions, CISF has also launched standardised training programmes

for Private Security Agencies and personnel from government agencies engaged in port security. So far, 2,123 private security personnel and 124 personnel from Coastal Police organisations and State Security Forces have completed the training.

Further strengthening coastal security, CISF has developed a security template for fishing harbours, fish landing centres and fishing points, while guidelines are being prepared to improve monitoring and compliance across the coastal ecosystem.

The Government has also approved the establishment of the Bureau of Port Security under the Merchant Shipping Act, 2025, where CISF is expected to remain a key stakeholder in maritime security planning and capacity building initiatives.

Priyank Kharge urges RSS to register, disclose finances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Bengaluru

Karnataka Home Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday asked the RSS to register itself, clarify its legal status and disclose its sources of funding, income, expenditure and assets, arguing that it must uphold transparency and constitutional accountability.

Congratulating the RSS on completing 100 years of existence, the minister wrote to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat requesting legal clarification on its organisational status.

Posting his letter to Bhagwat on social media platform 'X', Priyank said that an organisation that claims to have over 60,000 shakhas and crores of swayamsevaks across India and abroad must also uphold transparency, accountability and constitutional compliance.



Calling upon the RSS to use the occasion of its centenary not merely for celebration, but for constitutional introspection, Priyank said, "The best tribute it can pay to India in its 100th year is to register itself, disclose its activities and finances, pay all applicable taxes, and function as a transparent and accountable organisation within the framework of Indian law."

The minister, who is the son of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, pointed out that according to the 2025-26 Karnataka report of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha, the RSS's highest decision-making body, the organisation has 4,127 daily shakhas, 1,389 weekly milans and 60 monthly mandalis in the State.

He said the report also noted that the RSS had organised 2,194 Samajotsavas with 19.61 lakh participants and conducted 562 route marches involving 2.21 lakh uniformed participants across Karnataka.

The minister said that the RSS, with such an extensive organisational presence, especially when it involves regular public mobilisation, uniformed route marches and large-scale social outreach, cannot be treated as a private or informal arrangement. The

activities of the RSS raise legitimate questions about legal status, accountability, financial transparency, public order, permissions, sources of funding and compliance with the Constitution and laws of India, he underlined.

He asked why the RSS should remain exempt if citizens, labour organisations, NGOs, trusts, temples and companies are expected to register, disclose and comply with the law.

"In this context, it is only fair and necessary that the RSS also comes forward and places the following information in the public domain: its legal status and organisational structure, details of its office bearers and authorised representatives, sources of donations, contributions and income, and details of expenditure and assets," the letter said.

Revanth Reddy accuses Union minister of blocking metro loan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday accused Union Minister G Kishan Reddy of creating hurdles for the disbursement of ₹13,600 crore refinancing loan by the Central PSU IRFC for the Hyderabad Metro Rail project.

He said the State Government has also paid Rs 1,400 crore margin money and a processing fee of ₹84 crore to the Indian Railway Finance Corporation (IRFC) for the loan disbursement. The State Government secured the loan at an interest of four per cent, whereas former CM K Chandrasekhar Rao and even the Centre led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi got loans for interest in the range of 8-11 per cent, he claimed. He also said IRFC is like an intermediary in the loan, as the original loan is provided by Japan.



CM A Revanth Reddy addressing a press conference regarding the 'Old City Metro Rail' project in Hyderabad, Telangana

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on May 21 and told them that if you facilitate work so easily for Revanth Reddy, it would be difficult for the BJP to continue in Telangana. Because of this complication, the Centre is not disbursing loans. That's why I am after Kishan Reddy all these days," he told reporters.

Monday (June 15) is the last day for loan disbursement, and whether Kishan Reddy would get the Rs 13,600 crore loan disbursed or not, CM Reddy asked. The transaction is between IRFC and

Hyderabad Metro Rail Ltd (HMRL) of the State Government, he said. There was no immediate reaction from Kishan Reddy. The Telangana Government on May 25 secured a ₹13,600 crore refinancing agreement from IRFC for the Hyderabad Metro Rail Project.

L&T Metro Rail (Hyderabad) Ltd and HMRL signed the agreement to this effect in Delhi. The State Government has recently acquired 100 per cent shares of L&T Metro Rail Hyderabad Ltd through the HMRL.

Assam CM Himanta pays tribute to martyr Kushal Konwar on death anniversary

TONY DAS
Guwahati

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Monday attended the 'Swahid Diwas' programme to commemorate the 83rd death anniversary of legendary freedom fighter Swahid Kushal Konwar. Organised by the Assam State Freedom Fighters' Association at the Swatantra Senani Bhawan in Rupnagar, the event saw the Chief Minister paying rich tributes to Konwar and other martyrs who made invaluable contributions to India's independence struggle.

Speaking on the occasion, Sarma emphasised that Kushal Konwar embodied extraordinary courage and patriotism, and his legacy continues to inspire every generation. He noted that Konwar was among the few freedom fighters sentenced to death for participating in the historic Quit India Movement of 1942, adding that his unwavering commitment to truth and self-sacrifice gave fresh momentum



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma pays tribute to Swahid Kushal Konwar on his 83rd death anniversary at Swatantra Senani Bhawan in Rupnagar on Monday

to the freedom movement. Reflecting on the martyr's life, the Chief Minister stated that born in 1905, Konwar actively joined the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1921 at the tender age of 17. Despite family responsibilities, he worked to spread education by establishing the Rengmai Primary School. Though he later worked as a garden inspector at the Balijan Tea Estate, he voluntarily resigned following Mahatma Gandhi's call to dedicate himself entirely to the national movement. Sarma highlighted that Konwar was a devout follow-

er of Mahatma Gandhi and a strict practitioner of non-violence and the Swadeshi philosophy. As a dedicated satyagrahi, he gave up salt and pledged to use only indigenous products. Recalling the events of the 1942 Quit India Movement, the Chief Minister clarified that while an agitated section of protesters removed railway tracks at Changpool near Sarupathar on October 10, 1942, leading to the derailment of a military train and the deaths of several British soldiers, Konwar strongly opposed this violence and had no involvement in it.

Tripura mulls handing over schools to private bodies: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Agartala

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Monday said the State Government is considering amalgamating some schools and handing them over to reputed organisations such as the Ramakrishna Mission to improve the quality of education.

The NITI Aayog, in a recent report, pointed to a shortage of more than 8,000 teachers in Government-run schools in the northeastern State.

"We are planning to merge some schools and entrust their management to organisations or societies like the Ramakrishna Mission so that students receive quality education," Saha told reporters.

He said many students, particularly in tribal areas, prefer English-medium institutions, leading to lower enrolment in Government-run schools.

"We are trying to create an environment in



Government schools comparable to that of private institutions to attract more students. The Government is spending more than private schools," he said.

Most government schools in Tripura are Bengali-medium, while a majority of private schools offer English-medium education. In 2021, the State Government converted 125 schools into Vidyajyoti Schools under the CBSE curriculum to improve educational standards.

The chief minister also said the dropout rate in the State has been steadily declining and highlighted the Government's efforts to encourage girls to continue their education.

BJP hits out at Kerala CM Satheesan for criticising VCs attending Bhagwat event

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Monday hit out at Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan for criticising three vice-chancellors who attended an RSS centenary event addressed by Mohan Bhagwat, accusing the Congress of hypocrisy and double standards.

The remarks came after Satheesan criticised the participation of the Vice Chancellors of Kerala University, Mahatma Gandhi University and Malayalam University in the RSS centenary programme in Thiruvananthapuram on Saturday, demanding that they apologise to the people of Kerala.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said the Congress has objected to vice-chancellors attending an event of a "nationalist organisation" while continuing to take support from groups such as the Muslim League, Jamaat and SDPI.

"This is the height of



hypocrisy. The Congress has a problem with three vice-chancellors attending the event of a nationalistic organisation. Yet it takes support from the Muslim League, Jamaat and SDPI," Poonawalla said in a video statement. He alleged the Congress, which is under the "total control" of the Muslim League in Kerala, has no issue with groups and individuals espousing radical views but targets nationalist organisations.

"They have a problem with nationalists, but they have no problem giving a platform to

those who want an Islamic republic, those who call naxalites martyrs...such elements are eulogised, and nationalists are given all kinds of threats," he said.

Poonawalla said there is no prohibition on vice-chancellors attending RSS-linked events and alleged that Congress governments had earlier sought to prevent government servants from attending RSS events and shakhas. "There is no ban or prohibition on any vice-chancellor attending any event linked to the RSS," he said.

He claimed that the

Madhya Pradesh High Court has lifted such restrictions and observed that the RSS is among the most nationalist organisations in the country.

"It is clear that for Congress, the objective is to suppress nationalists and give a platform to Islamist and radical elements," he alleged.

In a post on X a day earlier, Satheesan said the participation of the vice-chancellors in the RSS event is a "grave lapse" and unbecoming of Kerala's educational tradition and the dignity of their office. "The people of Kerala hold the post of vice-chancellor in high esteem. By attending a programme led by an RSS leader who preaches extreme communalism, they have undermined that respect," he said.

Satheesan said any act that promotes communalism is unacceptable, irrespective of who commits it, and asserted that the three vice-chancellors who attended the RSS programme must apologise to the people of Kerala.

Parties being broken to push delimitation: Jayant Patil

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

NCP (SP) leader Jayant Patil on Monday alleged that attempts were being made to split political parties so that the BJP-led Union Government had enough support for the proposed delimitation exercise.

"The Government wants to get this (delimitation bill) passed at any cost. That is why every party is being broken and manipulated, and efforts are being made to gather as many MPs as possible," Patil told reporters when asked about the merger of rebel MPs of the Trinamool Congress into the Tripura-based Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI).

Questioning the need to increase the number of elected representatives through delimitation, Patil said legislators often did not get an opportunity to speak even with the present strength of legislatures.

"If the number rises,



where will they be able to speak? Merely increasing the numbers will not solve the problems of Maharashtra and the country," the NCP (SP) leader said.

Efficient administration was key to better governance rather than the number of legislators, the former Maharashtra minister added. On concerns over possible defections, Patil said every party faced the risk of splits due to pressures of different kinds.

Commenting on Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's suggestion that parties which broke away

from the Congress in the past should merge into the Grand Old Party to face the BJP's challenge, Patil said no such discussion was taking place within the NCP (SP).

Asked about calls from some INDIA bloc leaders to project a prime ministerial face, Patil said his party had not yet discussed the matter.

He also expressed concern over the possibility of a drought due to the El Niño phenomenon, especially in Maharashtra, and said the government should begin preparations while taking all stakeholders into confidence.

TV actor Sanchita Ugale dies by suicide in Palghar



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Palghar

Television actor Sanchita Ugale, known for her roles in popular shows like "Kumkum Bhagya" and "Wagle Ki Duniya", allegedly committed suicide at her residence in Maharashtra's Palghar district, police said on Monday. She was 22.

Ugale allegedly hanged herself from a ceiling fan at her home in the Nallasopara area around 7pm Sunday when she was alone at her home, an official said. "A police team inspected the scene immediately after being alerted about the incident. We did not find anything suspicious at the spot, and no suicide note was recovered," a police official said.

The actor's father told the Achole police that he does not suspect any foul play or hold anyone responsible for her death, the official said.

The police have sent the body to a Government hospital for postmortem. They have registered a case of accidental death and launched a probe to ascertain the motive behind the extreme step, the police said. Ugale was known for her role as Diya Tandon in TV serial "Kumkum Bhagya". She had previously spoken about how landing the role was a major turning point that brought her recognition.

She also acted in "Wagle Ki Duniya" - Nayi Peedhi Naye Kisse" and went on to play the lead role in the "serial 'Dilwala Dulha Le Jayegi'". Ugale also featured in some films, portraying the younger version of Tara Rani in the Vicky Kaushal-starrer "Chhaava" and made an appearance alongside actor Manoj Bajpayee in investigative thriller "Silence 2: The Night Owl Bar Shootout".

After criticism, NCERT to restore original Dancing Girl image in school textbook

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) will replace the modified image of the iconic "Dancing Girl" figurine of Mohenjo-daro in its Class 9 Arts textbook with the original version, following criticism over the 'clothed' depiction of the artefact. The move comes as a debate erupted over the representation of one of the most recognisable archaeological artefacts from the Indus Valley Civilisation in school textbooks.

Asked by PTI whether the NCERT will replace the retouched image of the 'Dancing Girl' in the Class 9 Arts textbook with the original version, its Director Dinesh Saklani replied in the affirmative.

The bronze figurine — "Dancing Girl" of Mohenjo-daro — was depicted with its bare torso covered in the opening chapter, "History of Arts", of Madhurima, NCERT's new Class 9 Arts education textbook.

In the version carried in the textbook, the torso of the figurine appears visually altered compared to the photographs of the original artefact, with shading used across the upper body that obscures anatomical details visible in the sculpture.

Unlike the image used in the new Class 9 arts textbook, the "Dancing Girl" in NCERT's Class 6 Social Science textbook appears



in a form closer to the original bronze sculpture.

Michel Danino, who headed the textbook development committee for NCERT's new Class 6 Social Science books, said he had been told that the Dancing Girl figurine was considered "not age-appropriate".

"This refers to our Grade 6 Social Science textbook. The reason I was given was that the image of the Dancing Girl was not 'age-appropriate', Danino said.

"Our team disagreed; we even checked with teachers of Class 6 and they told us there was never a problem with the Dancing Girl," he said. Danino said, "The notion that nudity is inappropriate is, in my opinion, an obsolete Victorian view. Yet we speak of decolonising Indian education."

Reacting to the image used in the Class 9 textbook, Danino said his first response was of "disbelief". "If the Dancing Girl cannot figure as she is, and with proper dimensions, in a

chapter on Indian art, then we have a serious problem," he said.

Danino said the modification "misrepresents the original artefact". "The modification misrepresents the original artefact just as the Church's addition of a fig leaf to Michelangelo's statue of David in the Middle Ages misrepresented that beautiful work of art," he said.

On the significance of the figurine, Danino said archaeologists have offered differing interpretations and that little is known about its context. However, he noted that the same kimbo posture had been found on at least two potsherds from the Harappan site of Bhirrana in Rajasthan, suggesting that it held "a precise cultural value, probably an artistic one". He also criticised any alteration of images of historical artefacts. "Unless this is clearly done to indicate the possible reconstruction of a partial artefact, altering such an image amounts to creating a fake artefact. It points to a serious lack of understanding of how historical artefacts are to be pictured," Danino said.

The chapter identifies the Dancing Girl as a bronze figurine from Mohenjo-daro dating to around 2600 BCE. The textbook states that the bronze figurine from Mohenjo-daro was made using the "lost-wax technique prevalent in West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh".

Odisha distributes voter roll revision forms to 99% electors

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhubaneswar

Enumeration forms for the special intensive revision of electoral rolls in Odisha have been distributed to around 99 per cent of the State's voters, and 34.54 per cent of those have been digitised, an official said on Monday.

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi participated in the SIR campaign at his native Raikala village in Keonjhar district, filling out his enumeration form. The enumeration forms have been distributed to over 3.30 crore voters as on June 14 evening, taking the total coverage ratio to 98.95 per cent, said an official at the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), Odisha. Around 34.54 per cent of the forms, which translates to 1.15 crore voters, have been digitised so far.

In an X post, the CEO said, "During the ongoing SIR-2026 campaign at Raikala village in Keonjhar district, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi participated in the exercise by filling up his own Enumeration Form."

"By personally taking part in the process, he conveyed a strong message encouraging public participation in the preparation of an accurate, transparent, and updated electoral roll."

In a statement, CM Majhi emphasised the importance of having a clean, accurate, and error-free voters' list, and called upon all people to cooperate with the district administration and BLOs conducting door-to-door verification. The tribal-dominated Sundargarh district is at the forefront in distributing enumeration forms. "The administration has been successful in reaching the counting forms to every eligible voter in district. Sundargarh is also leading in digitising collected data. To date, digitisation of 62.71 per cent of forms has been completed in Sundargarh district," CEO said.

Data most valuable asset in current era, digital security need of hour: MP CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Monday announced that data security has become as vital to national integrity as protecting physical borders, terming digital assets as the world's most valuable modern commodity. Speaking at a state workshop titled "Strengthening the Cybersecurity Framework for State Data," Yadav said the state government was planning to establish a specialised Cyber Security Research Centre to counter increasingly sophisticated global online threats.

"Today's most valuable asset is data. Digital security is the need of the hour. Data security is as important as national border security. Over the past few years, the nature of cyber technology and its associated challenges have been rapidly evolving, not only in the country but globally," Yadav said.

He emphasised that data security directly impacts ordinary citizens, expressing concern over tech-savvy criminals stealing



the lifelong savings of people. The CM warned that there is no room for negligence, clarifying that the state government holds itself financially accountable for compensation in the event of a data breach.

"There is no room for negligence in matters of cybercrime. The state's data is our most valuable asset. The government will also be responsible for financial compensation in the event of a data breach. The government has accorded top priority to cybersecurity," he said. The objective of the workshop was to facilitate discussion on cybersecurity challenges, emerging cyber threats, data protection requirements, and security of digital governance systems.

Farmers take out tractor rally in Gujarat to protest land acquisition, debt waiver, MSP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ahmedabad

Hundreds of farmers from across Gujarat drove their tractors from Ahmedabad to Gandhinagar on Monday to oppose the Government's move to acquire their land for laying electric poles and press for various demands.

The 'Kisan Adhikar Yatra', organised by the Congress and various other farmers' unions, started from Shantipura Chowkdi in Ahmedabad and moved towards the State Capital Gandhinagar with a large convoy of tractors.

Several farmers carried their plough as a symbol of their labour and protest. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) joined the rally to support cultivators.

From Shantipura Chowkdi, the rally will reach Gandhinagar, where a farmers' meeting has been organised.

Congress MLA Tushar Chaudhary said farmers have multiple demands,



including debt waiver, payment of full support price and stopping private power companies from indiscriminately installing electricity poles in their fields without taking them into confidence and paying them proper compensation.

Gujarat Congress president Amit Chavda claimed farmers in the state were facing the worst conditions and the highest level of exploitation.

"BJP leaders, and (Prime Minister) Narendra Modi himself, used to promise that farmers' incomes would be doubled. Today, however, electric poles belonging to

Adani and other companies are forcibly erected in farmers' fields. When farmers demand compensation or reimbursement for crop damage, they are beaten by the police, and women are subjected to atrocities," Chavda alleged.

The police behave as if they were agents of these companies, even as farmers struggle with a lack of fertilisers, the menace of fake seeds, inflation, flawed land measurements, and a lack of irrigation water, on top of which, there are attempts to forcibly seize their land, he charged.

"Despite repeated agita-

tions over these issues, the Government remains indifferent. That is why the Gujarat Congress Kisan Cell, along with various other farmers' unions, has organised the rally. The Congress has always fought for farmers' causes, and our struggle will continue until they receive justice," Chavda said.

Several Congress leaders, including Chavda, Tushar Chaudhary, Lok Sabha member Geniben Thakor, Seva Dal president Lalji Desai, and Pal Ambalia, participated in the rally as it proceeded towards Gandhinagar.

AAP leaders also joined the rally, with party president Isudan Gadvi saying they stand with the farmers in the fight for their rights.

"We will support this rally. It is a farmers' rally, not one belonging to any political party. This is a fight for farmers' rights, which is why we will participate in this rally with full strength," he said.

WCD minister seeks action on remarks against women in comedy shows

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Union Women and Child Development Minister Annapurna Devi on Monday said making inappropriate remarks about women in stand-up comedy shows was "extremely wrong" and called for legal action against those indulging in such conduct. Her comments came amid a controversy surrounding comic Pranit More, web developer Himanshu Jangra and others over remarks made during a comedy show that allegedly glorified coercion and non-consensual conduct towards a woman, leading to the registration of a case. The minister, however, did not refer to that controversy in her comments.

Asked about comedians making objectionable jokes about women during stand-up shows, the minister told reporters in Indore, "It is extremely wrong. Whether it is a comedy show or any other programme, action should certainly be taken against people who make inappropriate remarks about women." Authorities have taken cognisance of such matters in the past, and action is being taken, she noted. No person has the right to make such inappropriate comments about women that have an adverse impact on society and people, she said.

To a query about the ongoing debate on raising the minimum legal age of marriage for women, Annapurna Devi said the issue required wider social discussion.

Under Indian law, a marriage involving a male under 21 years or a female under 18



years is considered a child marriage. The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006, provides for imprisonment of up to two years, a fine of up to ₹1 lakh, or both for those found guilty.

On the debate surrounding the possible implementation of a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in Madhya Pradesh and issues such as live-in relationships and polygamy that have figured in the discussion, the minister said, "Some laws already exist in this regard, but people's mindset can also change through social participation. There is a need to increase awareness at the grassroots level." Before moving forward on socially sensitive issues, the Government considers the views of all stakeholders, she emphasised.

The Madhya Pradesh Government has constituted a high-level committee to seek public opinion on the feasibility of implementing a Uniform Civil Code in the State. The committee is currently touring different parts of the State. Earlier in the day, she held a meeting with officials and reviewed the activities of the Indore regional centre of the Savitribai Phule National Institute of Women and Child Development.

Ex-BJP MLA arrested over clip linked to Ankita Bhandari case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Dehradun/Haridwar

Former BJP MLA Suresh Rathore has been arrested in connection with a probe into a viral audio-video clip related to the alleged naming of a 'VIP' in the Ankita Bhandari murder case, police said on Monday.

Superintendent of Police (City) Pramod Kumar said that Rathore was detained from his office in Buggawala, Haridwar, and brought to the Dalanwala police station in Dehradun before being formally placed under arrest.

The development follows a press conference held by Rathore three days ago, where he had stated that the



Uttarakhand High Court had quashed two of the four FIRs registered against him at the Bahadurabad and Jhabrera police stations. The FIRs had been filed against Rathore over the alleged circulation of objectionable audio and video clips on social media related to the case.

Rathore had stated that

A single bench of Justice Rakesh Thapliyal, however, had allowed the police investigation to continue in the remaining two FIRs. The complainants, Dushyant Gautam and Aarti Gaur, countered that the circulated material was deliberately aimed at tarnishing their reputation.

Gautam, BJP national general secretary and Uttarakhand in-charge, was allegedly identified by Rathore as the "VIP" in the clips made public in connection with the case. Speaking to reporters in Haridwar on Friday, the former legislator had denied releasing any audio or video clips on social media or making remarks against senior party leaders or

the chief minister. Expressing regret if his statements had caused hurt, Rathore alleged that a conspiracy had been orchestrated to damage his political career. On Saturday, State Minister Deshraj Karnwal held a press conference, calling Rathore's claims regarding the high court relief "misleading".

Ankita Bhandari, a 19-year-old receptionist at a resort in Pauri district, went missing and was found dead in September 2022. The incident triggered widespread protests across Uttarakhand, leading to the arrest of three persons, including the resort owner, who were subsequently convicted for her murder.

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Editor's TAKE

US-Iran deal: A fragile yet welcome respite

The peace agreement between the US and Tehran, if it endures, could be the most consequential diplomatic breakthroughs of this decade

The announcement by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif - swiftly confirmed by US President Donald Trump - that Washington and Tehran have reached a peace agreement is indeed a great breakthrough, and the world can take a sigh of relief, but with a small caveat: it should hold. For the United States, this deal is a strategic win dressed up as a humanitarian one. Washington secures what it has long sought: a pathway to constraining Iran's nuclear ambitions, the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz to toll-free commercial shipping, and a claim to regional peacekeeping without boots indefinitely on the ground. Trump, never shy about legacy-building, has a feather in his cap. For Iran, the gains are tangible and immediate. The maritime blockade imposed on the country will be lifted. Its reported \$24 billion in frozen assets, at least half of which is to be released before final negotiations begin, represents a significant economic lifeline. Crucially, the draft memorandum reportedly excludes Iran's missile programme and its support for resistance groups from the scope of future talks - a significant diplomatic preservation of the sovereignty Tehran has guarded. Here lies the central question. This is emphatically a memorandum of understanding, not a final peace treaty. Sixty days of nuclear negotiations lie ahead, and the track record of such frameworks counsels realism over euphoria. A deal that comes with a resumption clause is less a peace and more a ceasefire with paperwork. The devil, as always, will be in the implementation. The 14-article draft demands an ambitious \$300 billion reconstruction commitment from the US and its allies - a figure that will face fierce scrutiny in Washington. Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's objections remind us that regional spoilers retain the power to destabilise even well-intentioned agreements. The Strait of Hormuz handles roughly a fifth of the world's oil and gas trade. Its blockade had sent energy markets into anxiety spirals. Oil prices should ease, supply chains should breathe again, and the spectre of a wider regional conflagration should recede.

India has more skin in this game than most. As one of Iran's historically significant trading partners and a major importer of Gulf energy, India had been quietly absorbing the shocks of the blockade. The reopening of the Strait directly stabilises India's energy import costs at a time when the economy can ill afford inflationary fuel shocks. Equally significant is the Chabahar port project - India's strategic gateway to Central Asia through Iran - which had been caught in the crossfire of sanctions and tensions. A more stable Iran means Chabahar can once again become the diplomatic and trade asset India always envisioned.

India's large diaspora in the Gulf and its remittance flows also benefit from regional de-escalation. New Delhi, which has long practised strategic autonomy by maintaining ties with both Washington and Tehran, is now well positioned to deepen engagement with both sides. The June 19 signing in Switzerland will be a ceremony, not a conclusion. The world should welcome this agreement with open eyes: hopeful, but watchful.

Swasth Bharat, Sashakt Bharat: 12 years of health care development

The journey of Ayushman Arogya Mandir represents a significant expansion of comprehensive primary healthcare and the much required transition from a reactive to proactive care



ANUPRIYA PATEL

Stronger health systems lead to higher economic productivity, greater workforce participation, and sustained long-term growth. Good health, therefore, is not only a social good but also a national asset - the foundation upon which human potential is built and national strength is measured. Health, therefore, is not only a social good but also a national asset, and every rupee invested in it is an investment in the nation's people.

Thus, Universal Health Coverage (UHC) - ensuring that all people, regardless of socio-economic status, can access the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship - is not only a Sustainable Development Goal to be achieved by 2030 but also a health priority.

India's National Health Policy 2017 (NHP 2017) is aligned with the goal of achieving Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and SDG 3, guided by a simple but powerful belief - healthcare should be within reach of every person. Its four pillars - Affordability, Accessibility, Quality, and Availability translate that belief into action, anchoring a comprehensive continuum of care across all stages of life. Aligning with the goals, National Health Mission supports States in delivering an integrated three-tier model of health systems with a two-way referral linkages across rural and urban areas including vulnerable populations.

At the primary level, Ayushman Arogya Mandir (AAM) provides comprehensive preventive, promotive, curative, rehabilitative, and palliative care health care services. eSanjeevani telemedicine platform ensures the availability of specialists connecting the community to the specialist through these AAM. And, a special Tele-MANAS platform, which has reached a cumulative 38.93 lakh contacts as on date. Connecting from AAM are the secondary facilities at the Community Health Centre (CHC)/ First Referral Unit (FRU) and District Hospital (DH) that serve as the first point of referral to provide in-person specialist and hospitalisation care, with tertiary institutions including medical colleges serving on the top of the apex to more complex and super-specialist service's needs.

This three-tier system is supported by escalation in Government health budget, with National Health Mission spending growing by 168 per cent over the past decade, reflecting government's commitment to health as a national priority.

The journey of Ayushman Arogya Mandir represents a significant expansion of comprehensive primary healthcare and the much required transition from a reactive to proactive care. The expansion from 6 to 12 comprehensive health packages is a structural response to India's changing demographic and epidemiological profile. As we navigate the dual challenge of ageing population with a rising tide of non-communicable diseases, the expanded scope covers Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), mental health, elderly care, emergency services, and eye, ENT, and oral health along with yoga and health promotion - reflecting a system designed for the population India is becoming.

As of May 2026, more than 1.8 lakh AAM are operationalised across country to provide door step healthcare services and the scale of this expansion is visible through more than 120 crore OPD consultations at AAM, more than 70 crore eSanjeevani teleconsultations, and more than 46.1 crore wellness sessions promotion good health and well-being.

At the primary care level, population-based screening for diabetes, hypertension, and common cancers oral, breast, and cervical targets all adults above 30 years, making early detection a routine. This screening is an integral component of service delivery under Ayushman Arogya Mandir, integrating NCD prevention into comprehensive primary healthcare. The expansion of NCD services is a multi-layered approach to early detection, prevention,



management, and treatment. Dedicated NCD clinics, Day Care Cancer Centres, Tertiary Care Cancer Centres, and State Cancer Institute's decentralise advanced oncology services and bring specialist care closer to the patient.

Also, whole-of-government approach is applied for preventive activities. FSSAI promotes healthy eating habits; the Fit India Movement drives physical activity; and the Ministry of AYUSH advances yoga and wellness. Sustained public awareness campaigns and Health Day observances reinforce these efforts. Prime Minister Modi's personal appeal to reduce edible oil consumption by 10 per cent underscores a simple but powerful conviction: that the fight against NCDs is won as much in households as in hospitals. To support the primary care expansion, a new cadre of Community Health Officers were introduced at the AAM level, bringing clinical and public health competence closer to the community. This expansion was mirrored at the doorstep, where the frontline network grew to over 10 lakh ASHAs - linking the community with the health systems.

Alongside expansion, India took on the harder challenge of transforming the standard of care itself. The National Quality Assurance Standards, indigenously developed and internationally certified, turned quality from an aspiration into an accountability. Over 65,000 public health facilities, including 54,926 Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, are now NQAS-certified. Further, laboratory standards for IPHLS embed rigour into the system.

What made NQAS work was not the standard alone, but the ecosystem built around it - LaQshya for maternal and newborn care, Kayakalp for cleanliness and infection control, and MusQan for child health. Together, they have made quality a baseline rather than a benchmark. The result is a system that does not just treat more people - it treats them better.

If primary care is the system's first promise, targeted interventions like National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission and Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme further reflects Governments commitment to reducing the OoPE across the country, with a cumulative savings of more than ₹10,102 crore to families who would otherwise have borne that burden alone.

Putting people's health into people's hands, India strengthened its community platforms - a deliberate, decentralised architecture that puts planning, monitoring, and accountability in local hands. Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Committees (VHSNCs), Jan Arogya Samitis (JAS), and Rogi Kalyan Samitis (RKS) have made representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies active partners in health. In urban areas, Mahila Arogya Samitis (MAS) further deepen the focus by placing women at the centre of community outreach for transparency, accountability, and community voice for the trusted feedback loop.

True health security means being as ready

for tomorrow's threats as for today's. PM-ABHIM, launched in 2021 with an outlay of Rs. 64,180 crore, draws directly on the lessons of COVID-19 - building surge capacity, strengthening laboratory networks, expanding real-time disease surveillance, and developing One Health research infrastructure. It is, in essence, turning hard lessons into durable public health architecture.

When illness does require hospitalisation, Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY provides the financial cushion that prevents care from becoming catastrophic to the family. As the world's largest publicly funded health assurance scheme, it covers ₹5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care - a protection extended in 2024 to all senior citizens above 70, regardless of income. Underlying all of these initiatives is a digital backbone without which a system of this scale cannot function. The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission ABHA IDs, interoperable health registries, and unified health interfaces has made the records

portable, access seamless, and delivery intelligent. Nearly 91 crore ABHA IDs have already been generated with India progressing towards digital health systems.

Taken together, free services, community-level diagnostics, front-line specialists, referral transport, dialysis, hospitalisation cover, and a digital backbone do not add up to a collection of schemes - they add up to a system. The health gains are not accidental. They are what sustained, layered public investment looks like when it works.

The results are no longer abstract; they are visible in India's public health record. Maternal mortality has fallen from 254 per lakh live births in 2004-06 to 87 in 2022-24, meeting the NHP 2017 target. From 1990 to 2024, India cut MMR by 84 per cent - nearly twice the global decline of 48 per cent - and earned UNFPA recognition for leadership in maternal health and family planning. The broader picture tells the same story: as per the latest NFHS, fertility has reached 2.0, institutional deliveries have risen to 90.6 per cent, and full immunization now stands at 98.6 per cent. These are signs of a system learning to prevent, detect, and respond. That is why India's elimination milestones matter: maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015, and trachoma as a public health problem in 2024 - making India only the third country in South-East Asia to do so.

This is the larger lesson. NHP 2017 set the direction, NHM built the delivery infrastructure from Sub-Health Centres to tertiary hospitals, and Ayushman Bharat gave that system its four working pillars: AAMs for primary care, PM-JAY for financial protection, PM-ABHIM for resilience and infrastructure, and ABDM for the digital backbone. Together - with free medicines, diagnostics, transport, and dialysis - they amount to more than a collection of schemes. They form a national health shield for our people, and a reminder that public health, when treated as nation-building, can transform both lives and the future of the country.

MATERNAL MORTALITY HAS FALLEN FROM 254 PER LAKH LIVE BIRTHS IN 2004-06 TO 87 IN 2022-24, MEETING THE NHP 2017 TARGET FROM 1990 TO 2024, INDIA CUT MMR BY 84 PER CENT - NEARLY TWICE THE GLOBAL DECLINE OF 48 PER CENT - AND EARNED UNFPA RECOGNITION FOR LEADERSHIP IN MATERNAL HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING

The writer is the Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, and Chemicals and Fertilisers

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People practice yoga in a river ahead of the International Day of Yoga in West Bengal. PHOTO: PTI

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INDIA-FRANCE PARTNERSHIP GAINS NEW MOMENTUM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the French city of Nice marks another significant milestone in the steadily strengthening India-France relationship. His comprehensive bilateral discussions with French President Emmanuel Macron reaffirm the depth and strategic importance of this partnership. France remains one of India's most trusted allies in Europe and an indispensable strategic partner on a wide range of global and regional issues. Cooperation between the two nations has expanded beyond traditional areas of defence and security to encompass emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, infrastructure, science, space, healthcare, clean energy, and workforce mobility. It is also encouraging that India will participate in this year's G-7

Summit, reflecting its growing global influence and its role in shaping a new international order. Stronger ties with France can help India emerge as a more resilient and influential stakeholder in an increasingly uncertain world. The visit highlights the shared commitment of both nations to innovation, sustainability, and economic growth. As global challenges become more complex, robust Indo-French cooperation will not only benefit the two countries but also contribute to international stability and progress. We hope the latest engagements produce tangible outcomes and further elevate this vital partnership to new heights.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US-Iran deal offers hope for stability

The reported breakthrough peace agreement between the United States and Iran is a welcome development after months of military tensions and uncertainty in West Asia.

The proposed deal, expected to be formally signed in Switzerland, offers hope for lasting peace and regional stability. Among its most significant provisions are the continuation of the ceasefire, the reopening of the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz, and the easing of restrictions on Iranian ports. These measures could help restore confidence in global trade routes and reduce geopolitical risks. Future negotiations on Iran's nuclear programme, sanctions, and regional security also indicate a willingness to address longstanding disputes through diplomacy rather than confrontation.

Their efforts demonstrate the value of dialogue and international cooperation in resolving complex conflicts. For India, the agreement carries substantial economic significance. Greater stability in the Gulf region can help ensure uninterrupted energy supplies, moderate crude oil prices, ease inflationary pressures, and support economic growth. As a major importer of energy, India stands to benefit considerably from a calmer and more predictable regional environment.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

Restore faith in institutions

India's growing trust deficit calls for far-reaching institutional reforms rather than incremental policy adjustments. The controversies surrounding critical national examinations such as NEET have exposed serious weaknesses in governance and accountability, raising concerns about the credibility of systems that shape the futures of millions of young people.

When merit-based examinations are marred by irregularities, public confidence suffers and deserving candidates are left disillusioned. Equally concerning is the persistent underinvestment in education. India's expenditure on education remains significantly below the globally recommended benchmark of six per cent of GDP, limiting opportunities for meaningful improvements in quality and accessibility.

To strengthen democratic institutions, the government must ensure greater transparency, establish independent oversight mechanisms, and protect administrators from undue political influence. Public institutions should function on the principles of fairness, professionalism and accountability rather than partisan considerations. At a time when India aspires to become a global leader, it cannot afford to neglect the foundations of good governance.

VIJAYKUMAR H K | RAICHUR

Protecting Indian seafarers is a priority

The killing of five Indian sailors has once again highlighted the vulnerabilities faced by Indian seafarers working in international waters. The incident raises serious concerns about maritime security and the responsibility of nations to safeguard civilian lives during periods of conflict. As India's global economic and strategic footprint expands, the protection of its citizens abroad must remain a national priority. The deaths of Indian crew members serving on merchant vessels cannot be viewed as unfortunate collateral damage. The government must pursue a thorough investigation, ensure accountability, and provide adequate compensation and support to the affected families. The episode also underlines the importance of adhering to international maritime law, including the principles outlined in the San Remo Manual governing armed conflict at sea.

India's growing maritime ambitions require a corresponding commitment to defending the rights and safety of its seafarers. Diplomatic engagement and legal action must be employed to prevent such tragedies from recurring. The nation also owes them a firm assurance that their lives and security will be protected.

SANJAY CHOPRA | MOHALI



Reimagining India-Japan relations: The transformative role of universities

A stronger and more substantive educational partnership can result in the creation of the talent, trust and shared understanding needed to sustain India-Japan collaboration for multiple generations



C RAJ KUMAR

India and Japan are at a pivotal moment in their relationship. Both countries are trying to find their place in the rapidly changing global environment. In this context, the most important investment they can make is not only in infrastructure or technology, but in education.

I believe that India and Japan need to build a transformative relationship for the 21st century, where education transitions from the margins to the centre of bilateral engagement between India and Japan. The next chapter of India-Japan relations should have a multi-pronged approach focusing on academic collaboration, developed through universities.

Academic collaboration large-scale student mobility

The most important policy priority should be to dramatically increase student mobility. India sends thousands of students abroad every year. Most students prefer destinations such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and Europe. Unfortunately, Japan rarely appears among the preferred destinations for Indian students despite possessing world-class universities.

Japanese universities are leaders in advanced technology, with strong research capabilities, world-class laboratories, and prolific scholars. They provide learning opportunities leading to potentially significant employment outcomes. This impasse vis-à-vis Indian students must change. India and Japan should focus on bringing at least 50,000 Indian students to Japanese universities over the next decade. We need to develop scholarships, tuition fee support, language training programmes, preparatory programmes, and a significantly simplified admission system, all of which should support this objective.

On the other hand, Japanese students should be encouraged to spend semesters, summer and winter programmes, and pursue research opportunities in Indian universities. The vision of educational mobility must become a central feature of India-Japan relations rather than a peripheral activity of marginal significance.

Reforming the visa regime and employment policies

Indian students tend to prefer English-speaking destinations because these countries are believed to have clear and predictable pathways from education to employment. The visa regimes in these countries have enabled graduates to have post-study work opportunities.

Japan should adopt an attractive framework that draws on the vision of these countries when it comes to creating incentives for Indian students to study and then plan towards working in Japanese society.

Indian students who choose to complete their higher studies in Japanese universities should be awarded streamlined work opportunities and work visas after their studies.

There is a case for a multi-year automatic work visa pathway pursuant to graduation, which would significantly enhance Japan's attractiveness for Indian students.

This suggestion assumes significance in the light of the fact that Japan faces demographic decline, labour shortages, and an ageing population. On the other hand, India is gifted with the world's youngest population. The complementarities between India and Japan are obvious.

The focus on educational mobility and skilled migration between India and Japan should be seen from the perspective that is mutually beneficial than an independent policy domain.

Establishing Japan studies centres in India and India studies centres in Japan

There is a case for establishing a nationwide



network of Japan Studies centres in leading Indian universities, anchored by a flagship institution inspired by Hiroshima's remarkable journey from devastation to renewal. Such centres of Japan Studies would not only study Japan's history; they would also examine how universities, research institutions, companies, business enterprises and innovation ecosystems contributed to Japan's rise from the ashes of war to become one of the world's most advanced and thriving economies. Instead of functioning as symbolic academic centres, they ought to become vibrant hubs of learning, knowledge sharing, and experience gathering, through language training, policy research, public lectures, collaborative projects, interdisciplinary initiatives, capacity-building programmes, and experiential learning.

In the same way, universities in Japan should establish or strengthen India Studies centres that would examine India's history, economy, political system, technological transformation, social diversity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

A holistic partnership between India and Japan requires a range of experts and, in the absence of their availability, despite strong diplomatic and economic ties, the outcome can remain superficial. Therefore, universities have a critical role in cultivating the longitudinal intellectual understanding that transcends beyond government engagement.

Japanese corporations have achieved extraordinary success in India. Indian companies are beginning to expand their presence in Japan. These companies should invest systematically and substantially in university partnerships.

Japanese corporations operating in India and Indian companies in Japan should support: Research Chairs; Research Centres; Fellowships; Scholarships; Academic Exchanges; Policy Research Initiatives. Such programmes would help universities focus on developing long-term expertise while recognising that students who gain exposure to real-world industry perspectives can make a significant contribution to the relationship. Corporate involvement will also help bridge the gap between academic learning and workforce requirements. These investments may be viewed as acts of corporate philanthropy.

They also are, or ought to be seen as, strategic investments in future talent, innovation, technology transfer, and cross-border collaboration. Over a period of time, sustained corporate engagement can also contribute to the establishment of a powerful knowledge partnership that connects universities, industries, and governments.

Such an initiative would strengthen intellectual exchange, institutional partnership, and economic cooperation, resulting in the India-Japan relationship being more resilient and future-oriented. India and Japan should work towards creating

joint research centres that focus on critical challenges such as artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, robotics, machine learning, semiconductor technologies, climate change, sustainable energy, water security, public health, urbanisation and demography.

Japan has globally recognised strengths in industrial innovation, precision engineering, and advanced technologies, including artificial intelligence and robotics. India, on the other hand, has seen remarkable capabilities in software development, digital technologies, frugal innovation, entrepreneurship, and large-scale implementation. The complementary strengths of both India and Japan, when combined, can create opportunities for breakthroughs that can benefit not only both these countries but also the wider region.

The Indian and Japanese initiatives through joint research, government laboratories, private companies, and start-up ecosystems must become the future of India-Japan relations.

The researchers of both countries should be able to connect with each other easily through institutions, share expertise, collaborate on projects, and work together on initiatives with practical and pragmatic applications. Such cooperation would fast-track innovation while strengthening long-term academic collaboration.

The collaboration between Indian and Japanese universities ought to extend beyond science and engineering. Social sciences, public policy, law, economics, governance, and international relations must also become major areas of cooperation.

There is an urgent need to understand technological change, demographic transitions, and geopolitical developments, all of which will require interdisciplinary research leading to broad-based academic collaboration which is essential for addressing 21st century challenges.

The way forward

A stronger and more substantive educational partnership can result in the creation of talent, trust, and shared understanding that is needed to sustain the India-Japan collaboration for multiple generations. The indicators of this successful relationship in the decades ahead will be:

- The students who cross borders to learn.
- The researchers who work together to solve common challenges.
- The institutions that deepen the shared understanding of both societies.

These human connections will outlast political cycles, government priorities, trade preferences and economic fluctuations.

If India and Japan place education at the heart of their partnership, they will be leading the development of a knowledge-driven future for Asia.

Professor C Raj Kumar, a Rhodes Scholar, is the Founding Vice Chancellor of OP Jindal Global University

Sweden: India's strategic bet on a changing Europe



ABHISHEK PRATAP SINGH

KAUSTUBH TRIPATHI

There is a telling detail in the optics of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Sweden. He landed not in Stockholm — the capital — but in Gothenburg, Sweden's industrial and port city, home to Volvo, Ericsson and the country's manufacturing core. This was not a diplomatic courtesy call, but a deliberate choice. It was a business proposition set in a moment when the global order is fractured enough to make

such propositions genuinely consequential.

Modi arrived in Gothenburg on May 17 as part of a five-nation tour — the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Italy in Europe, apart from the UAE. This was his first visit to Europe since the landmark India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) came into force in January 2026. The Sweden stop yielded an elevation of bilateral ties to a Strategic Partnership, a Joint Action Plan for 2026-2030, the launch of Joint Innovation Partnership 2.0, and the formalisation of the India-Sweden Technology and Artificial Intelligence Corridor. Bilateral trade stands at USD 7.75 billion, with the stated ambition to double it in five years. This two-day visit to Sweden, therefore, reflects something considerably more significant than a usual diplomatic tour.

To understand this better, one must begin not in Gothenburg but in Washington — or rather, in the gradual erosion of Washington's reliability as an anchor for its European allies. The Trump administration's second term has been a study in the weaponisation of uncertainty. Punitive tariffs, NATO ultimatums, the threat to absorb Greenland, the abandonment of Ukraine to fend largely for itself, and a unilateral military engagement in Iran without allied consultation — each shock has compounded the previous one. European leaders witnessed the passing of 2025 with growing tensions and transactional shifts in their relationship with the US. A Carnegie

Endowment (2025) study recently described what is happening as European leaders undergoing a "crisis of faith in the American system itself" — a monumental shift, not merely a political event.

It is into this vacuum that India has been purposefully stepping up its engagement with Europe. When European Union (EU) Commission President Ursula von der Leyen stood alongside Modi in New Delhi in January 2025 to seal the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA), she framed it in terms that had nothing to do with tariffs on luxury cars or Indian textiles. "India-Europe ties will reduce strategic dependency at a time when global trade is being weaponised," she said. The target of that remark was self-evident. The FTA is not just a trade agreement but Europe's attempt to build an alternative economic architecture, with India as a reliable and supportive pillar.

Sweden's position within this story is worth examining carefully. Stockholm has long punched above its weight in innovation: Ericsson in telecommunications, SSAB in green steel, and a start-up ecosystem that rivals almost any in the world. What Sweden lacks, and what India offers, is scale. A market of 1.4 billion people, a digital talent base of extraordinary depth, a manufacturing ambition under Make in India, and a government that has demonstrated it can move large structural deals. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson captured the mood with unusual honesty when he said of Modi's visit: "It is absolutely the right time, given all the chaos in world trade." That is not usual diplomatic language, but rather a country identifying its strategic moment.

For India, Sweden offers something the US relationship does not easily provide: technology transfer without the full weight of alliance conditionality. Washington's export control regime, tightened under both Biden and Trump, means that critical technologies arrive in India bundled with strategic expectations. Sweden, through the AI Corridor, 6G collaboration, quantum computing and the critical minerals agenda, offers complementary pathways with fewer strings attached. Looking beyond trade, technology and innovation cooperation, the visit also reiterated the importance of boosting Indo-Swedish cultural links, fostering development and strengthening heritage connections between people. This is not anti-American manoeuvring but an intelligent diversification strategy by a country that has learned, from decades of experience, not to concentrate its dependencies.

The Sweden visit is well timed and diplomatically executed. It consolidates the FTA's multilateral promise into a bilateral strategic architecture that is harder to unravel. It builds technology partnerships, particularly in domains such as AI, 6G, critical minerals and green energy, where India's future competitiveness will be determined. It also signals to a Europe anxious about its strategic loneliness that India intends to be a sincere and durable partner beyond opportunism.

The direction is clear. A world in which the US-Europe relationship is structurally strained, supply chains are fragmenting, and technology is becoming the primary currency of geopolitical influence is precisely the world in which India's multi-alignment strategy has the scope and feasibility to operate. Moving beyond economic ties to strategic alignment, innovation-driven trade partnerships and joint efforts in frontier technologies, the visit reflects growing convergence on technology, security and sustainability between India and Sweden amid a changing global order. Gothenburg is more about consolidating India's strategic autonomy at the right moment, in the right city and with the right partner. Indo-Swedish ties represent an expansive and collaborative forward-looking agenda, reflecting a broader global shift towards multipolarity and hedging in response to US transactionalism.

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Not the usual monetary policy meeting: RBI steps in to defend the Rupee



SAMRIDHI PRAKASH

For most of the inflation-targeting era, monetary policy announcements have revolved around one central question: what is happening to inflation? This time was different. While the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee

chose to leave the policy rate unchanged at 5.25 per cent and maintain a neutral policy stance, the real story was not inflation. The focus was the rupee itself.

To be sure, inflation risks are emerging. The RBI has flagged persistent geopolitical tensions, rising wholesale prices driven by higher crude oil and input costs, and the possibility of weather-related disruptions to agricultural output leading to a potential rise in food inflation. Yet these risks have not materially reflected in consumer inflation so far. The inflation challenge remains a concern for subsequent MPC meetings. The depreciation of the rupee, however, is a problem of the present.

The currency has come under significant pressure in recent months amid rising crude oil prices, geopolitical uncertainty and foreign capital outflows. As global investors reassess risk in an increasingly volatile environment, emerg-

ing market currencies have borne the brunt of capital flight. India has been no exception. The pressure on the rupee is not merely a consequence of economic fundamentals; it is also shaped by expectations. Foreign exchange markets are inherently forward-looking. When investors expect a currency to weaken further, they often reposition their portfolios accordingly, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. Speculative pressures can amplify an initial decline, pushing the currency below levels justified by underlying fundamentals. In such circumstances, stabilising expectations becomes as important as stabilising the currency itself.

Traditionally, central banks respond to currency weakness through direct intervention in foreign exchange markets or by raising interest rates to make domestic assets more attractive. This time, the RBI has chosen a different route. Rather than sacrificing growth through higher interest rates or expending reserves aggressively in the forex market, the central bank has sought to strengthen the capital account and improve the attractiveness of India as an investment destination. This implies financing the current account deficit through capital inflows.

The measures announced alongside the policy decision reveal this strategy clearly.

First, the RBI expanded the Fully Accessible Route by including all new issuances of 15-year, 30-year and 40-year government securities, allowing foreign investors to invest in these bonds without being subject to investment caps.



Previously, foreign investors faced limits on how much they could invest in Indian government bonds. The FAR is a special category where those caps do not apply. By adding very long-duration bonds (15, 30 and 40 years) to this route, the RBI is specifically targeting long-term investors who want long-tenor assets and who were previously constrained.

Second, the RBI introduced concessional forex swap facilities to encourage External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) by public sector enterprises, helping government-owned compa-

nies access cheaper overseas funding while increasing foreign currency inflows into the country. By making these borrowings cheaper through a swap facility, with the RBI bearing part of the currency hedging cost, it is incentivising Indian PSUs to borrow dollars abroad. Each such loan is a dollar inflow that supports the rupee.

Third, with the RBI bearing hedging costs and offering temporary regulatory relaxations, banks may be able to offer more attractive returns to NRIs on Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) deposits. FCNR(B) deposits are fixed deposits held in foreign currency by NRIs in Indian banks. The bank and the NRI earn in foreign currency, which is then converted into rupees for use in India - a direct dollar inflow. The 2013 version of this scheme, launched during a major currency crisis, was considered a great success. The RBI is essentially trying to replicate that.

Fourth, the government announced through an ordinance that interest income and capital gains earned by Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) on government securities would be exempt from income tax, effective retrospectively from April 1, 2026. This removes two major tax costs: a 12.5 per cent long-term capital gains tax on government bonds held for more than 12 months, and a 20 per cent withholding tax on interest income from those bonds.

The objective is straightforward: to encourage stable capital inflows into India. Taken together, these are not conventional inflation-management tools. They are currency-stabilisation measures operating through the capital account.

The underlying logic is sound. India's current challenge is not excessive domestic demand requiring monetary tightening.

It is an external-sector shock driven by higher oil prices, geopolitical uncertainty and global risk aversion. Raising interest rates in such a situation could impose unnecessary costs on growth while doing little to address the source of the problem. Attracting stable foreign capital, by contrast, directly addresses the pressure point.

The immediate market reaction suggests that investors understood the signal. The rupee registered its strongest single-day gain in two months following the announcements, as markets interpreted the measures as a credible effort to bolster foreign inflows and strengthen the balance of payments position.

Whether these measures prove sufficient will depend on the trajectory of global developments. If oil prices remain elevated, geopolitical tensions intensify, or capital outflows accelerate further, additional policy responses may become necessary. Yet the message from this monetary policy meeting is clear. This was not a meeting dominated by inflation concerns. It was a meeting focused on preserving currency stability in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

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Bihar: Roshan Anand gets bail in coaching institute vandalism case

A court here on Monday granted bail to Roshan Anand in a case related to the vandalism and pelting of stones at a coaching institute of educator Faisal Khan, popularly known as 'Khan Sir'. Khan Global Coaching Institute was allegedly vandalised and pelted with stones in the Bihar capital earlier this month, with Faisal Khan initially claiming that firing took place at the institution, but police could not confirm it. However, he later said that an investigation would find out what exactly happened. Three people, including Roshan Anand, the director of a rival coaching centre, had been arrested in connection with the incident. Informing reporters about Anand securing bail on Monday, his advocate Niranjan Kumar Singh alleged that the charges against his client were "cooked up and politically motivated". "Section 109 of the BNS (attempt to murder) was wrongfully applied because the case lacked the legally required elements of intention, knowledge and presence of the accused at the crime scene," the lawyer said. He alleged that Faisal Khan used his "political influence" to ruin Roshan Anand's status. "Despite the lack of evidence, Roshan Anand was sent to jail based on a conspiracy and a false statement by Khan sir claiming eight to 10 rounds of gunfire were heard," Singh added. He claimed that despite serious charges under non-bailable sections of the Arms Act in the counter-FIR against Khan Sir, they obtained interim relief by "suppressing material facts and altering statements".



The cost of judicial optics



PRASHANT TEWARI

The annual pilgrimage of India's legal elite to the United Kingdom has, over the years, acquired the status of an unwritten convention. Every summer, an influential gathering of judges, senior advocates, affluent lawyers, law firms, academics, policymakers, of lately power brokers descends upon London and other British cities under the respectable banner of lectures, seminars, conferences and professional exchanges. On paper, these events are intended to promote legal scholarship, judicial cooperation, institutional transparency and discussions on strengthening democracy. In reality, however, they increasingly raise uncomfortable questions about propriety, perception and public confidence in the justice delivery system.

There is nothing inherently objectionable about judges or lawyers participating in international conferences. Exposure to global legal developments is undoubtedly beneficial. The problem arises when the same faces appear year after year at exclusive gatherings financed directly or indirectly by corporate interests, wealthy law firms and business groups, many of whom happen to have significant matters pending before Indian courts. While no impropriety may occur, the optics are deeply troubling.

Justice is not merely required to be fair; it must also be seen to be fair. Public confidence in institutions is built as much on perception as on procedure. In an era dominated by social media, every



photograph, every dinner invitation and every informal interaction is magnified beyond its original context. What may once have remained confined to private circles now becomes instantly visible to millions of citizens.

The real damage often begins after the seminars conclude. Social media platforms become flooded with carefully curated photographs of influential lawyers posing alongside judges, legal luminaries and policymakers. These images are seldom innocent souvenirs. They frequently serve a larger purpose. They project influence, access and proximity. The message being conveyed is subtle yet unmistakable: we have the connections, we have the reach, and we occupy the inner circle.

For clients, especially those entangled in high-stakes litigation, such displays can create the impression that certain lawyers enjoy privileged access to decision-makers. Whether true or false becomes almost irrelevant. The perception itself undermines public faith in the impartiality of institutions. Ordinary litigants, already burdened by delays and rising legal costs, are left wondering whether justice remains equally accessible to all.

The legal profession has always been hierarchical, but social media has transformed hierarchy into spectacle. The modern obsession with public visibility has encouraged some lawyers and law firms to convert professional engagements into branding exercises. The conference hall is merely the venue; the real audience is online. Every photograph becomes a statement of status. Every interaction becomes a signal of influence. Every gathering becomes an opportunity to cultivate an aura of power.

This year, the controversy acquired an additional dimension with the participation of the India's Union Law Minister. His presence has generated a separate debate altogether. The minister's visit appears particularly curious because it coincides with repeated calls from Prime Minister Narendra Modi urging government officials to minimise unnecessary foreign travel and focus on governance outcomes. The Prime Minister's message has consistently emphasised efficiency, accountability and the prudent use of public resources.

Importantly, any review should be conducted independently and

Against this backdrop, the Law Minister's journey to the United Kingdom raises obvious questions. What was the precise agenda? What policy outcomes were expected? What tangible benefits accrued to India's legal system? The answers remain unclear.

The issue is not whether a minister should travel abroad. International engagement is often necessary. The issue is whether such visits satisfy the standards of transparency and accountability expected from public office. Given that the government remains the single largest litigant in Indian courts, the optics become even more sensitive. Any appearance of excessive proximity between the executive branch and influential actors within the legal ecosystem inevitably attracts scrutiny.

The larger concern is institutional credibility. India's judiciary commands enormous constitutional authority and public respect. It remains one of the few institutions capable of acting as the final guardian of citizens' rights. Yet credibility, once weakened, is difficult to restore. Public trust erodes not only through actual misconduct but also through repeated episodes that create doubts about independence and neutrality.

It would therefore be prudent for the government to seek a comprehensive report on the entire sequence of events surrounding these annual legal gatherings by intelligence agencies in India and its counterpart in United Kingdom for comprehensive investigation. Such an exercise should not be viewed as punitive but as corrective. The objective must be to establish clear guidelines regarding sponsorships, disclosures, participation norms and post-event transparency.

Importantly, any review should be conducted independently and

not rely solely on inputs from those who themselves participated in the events. Institutional accountability cannot function effectively when individuals are asked to investigate their own conduct. The process must inspire confidence among citizens rather than merely satisfy bureaucratic formalities. And importantly, the outcome of the investigation must be made public to ensure corrective measures can be taken to put an end to similar fiasco in future.

The United Kingdom or any other overseas destination conferences, seminars, pilgrimage may continue in future years, and perhaps they should. Intellectual exchange and legal dialogue are valuable. However, the legal fraternity must recognise that the environment has changed. In the age of smartphones, viral photographs and relentless public scrutiny, appearances matter more than ever. What may seem like harmless networking to insiders can appear like an exclusive club operating beyond public accountability.

The controversy surrounding this year's events is therefore not about travel, seminars or academic discourse. It is about trust. It is about the widening gap between institutional conduct and public perception. Most importantly, it is about safeguarding the credibility of institutions whose legitimacy depends entirely upon the confidence of the people they serve.

The law derives its authority not from power but from trust. Any practice that diminishes that trust, however unintentionally, deserves careful examination. That is the real lesson emerging from this year's judicial soap opera in the United Kingdom.

Writer is a public policy expert and columnist

SC stays proceedings before HCs on pleas challenging transgender law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed further proceedings before the high courts on petitions challenging the provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana agreed to hear the Centre's petition seeking to consolidate and transfer all pending pleas challenging the Act from various high courts to the apex court. Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the bench that the issue relates to constitutional validity of a central Act. "Issue notice," the bench



said, adding, "further proceedings before the high courts shall remain stayed". On May 27, Mehta had mentioned the matter before the top court and sought an urgent listing of the transfer petitions. The top law officer had said that since multiple high

courts were currently seized of the matter, there was a significant risk of "divergent views" and conflicting judicial rulings on the validity of the federal legislation.

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026, has come under intense legal

scrutiny from human rights activists and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

The primary bone of contention is the removal of the concept of "self-identification" of gender, a right previously upheld by the Supreme Court in its landmark NALSA judgment.

The 2026 Amendment reportedly mandates medical or administrative interventions for gender recognition, which the petitioners argue violates the right to dignity, privacy, and bodily autonomy.

On May 4, the apex court had sought responses from the Centre and others on separate pleas challenging the validity of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026.

RTI activism has become new business, says SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday said that RTI activism has become a new business, while refusing to grant anticipatory bail to an activist and other accused of obstructing a public servant in road construction work.

A bench of Justices Sandeep Mehta and Vijay Bishnoi denied bail to RTI activist Rakesh Kumar Behl and his aide, and questioned their authority to monitor the road construction work.

Justice Mehta observed, "RTI activism has become a new business. The Central government has issued funds, it will take care of the construction of the road. You are nobody. So-called RTI activist! Yellow journalism. Dismissed."



Concurring with the views of Justice Mehta, Justice Bishnoi said, "Who are you to monitor the construction of all these roads? Are you some superior authority or what?"

Behl has challenged the Punjab and Haryana High Court's order denying him anticipatory bail.

His counsel contended that they had been falsely implicated in the case as they had highlighted the corruption involved in the road construction work.

NEET paper leak: Court allows CBI to quiz 3 accused in jail

A court here on Monday allowed the CBI's plea to question three accused in jail in the NEET paper leak case. Duty judge Surender Mohit Singh was hearing the agency's plea to question in judicial custody three accused, Manisha Sanjay Waghmare, Dhanunjay Nivrutti Lokhande and Shubham Madhukar Khairnar.

"It has been revealed that the (three) accused are the prime conspirators, who had facilitated the leakage and dissemination of NEET UG 2026 questions in exchange for monetary consideration prior to the examination of NEET UG 2026 held on May 3," the plea stated. The plea sought the court's permission to quiz the accused persons for getting necessary clarifications in connection with the probe. The CBI has arrested 13 persons in the case. The NEET-UG for admissions into medical courses took place on May 3 this year but was cancelled by the NTA on May 12 amid allegations of a paper leak. The re-exam will now take place on June 21.



SC to hear plea challenging appointment of Bihar minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Bihar government and others on a petition challenging the re-appointment of Deepak Prakash as a minister in the state.

Prakash was recently appointed Panchayati Raj minister in the Bihar Cabinet headed by Chief Minister



Samrat Choudhary, even though he is neither an elected member of the Bihar assembly nor the state legislative council.

"What is the current position," a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana asked the counsel appearing for petitioner Rakesh Kumar Singh.

The counsel said Prakash is still a minister.

"Issue notice," the bench said while agreeing to hear the petition.

Tribunal awards ₹92.58 lakh to road accident victim's mother

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

A Delhi Motor Accident Claims Tribunal has awarded ₹92.58 lakh as compensation to the mother of a 28-year-old woman who died in a road accident in Goa in December 2016.

Presiding Officer Richa Manchanda was hearing the claim petition filed by the mother of Megha Sehrawat, who lost her life after a mini bus hit the scooter she was riding in Goa on December 30, 2016.

In an order dated June 6, the tribunal said, "In view of the aforesaid discussion and the evidence that has come



on record, petitioners have been able to prove on the basis of preponderance of probabilities that deceased had sustained fatal injuries in road accident due to rash and negligent driving of

mini bus by its driver". The tribunal said the deceased sustained fatal injuries due to the rash and negligent driving by the bus driver, Pradeep Namdev Shetgaonkar.

SC issues notice to Centre, Punjab on plea alleging non-implementation of RTE Act

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Monday sought responses from the Centre and the Punjab government on a plea alleging non-implementation of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, in the state.

The plea has sought a direction to the Centre to ensure effective and continuous compliance with the provisions of the Act, including the one relating to admitting at least 25 per cent children belonging to the weaker section and disadvantaged group in Class 1 in private schools, by



the Punjab government. "Have you been able to identify some schools which are not doing it," a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana asked the petitioner who was appearing in person. The petitioner claimed that

the provisions of the Act were not being implemented in Punjab for the past 15 years.

He referred to a 2012 verdict of the apex court which had upheld the validity of the RTE Act. The bench referred to an affidavit filed earlier by the state which had said that

over 450 students belonging to the economically weaker section were admitted in private schools.

The petitioner said the number should have been around 50,000 since, as per the government figures, nearly two lakh students were admitted every year at the entry level.

"We are issuing notice," the bench said.

The top court suggested that the petitioner conduct a survey in at least one district to find out how many private schools were there and how many of them were not implementing the provisions of the Act.

Victim's testimony totally untrustworthy: Delhi court acquits two in gang rape case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has acquitted two men accused in a 2020 gang rape case, saying that the victim's testimony was totally untrustworthy and full of concealment and exaggeration.

Additional Sessions Judge Kadambari Awasthi was hearing the case against Sagar and Nikhil, who were facing charges under IPC sections related to gang rape, criminal intimidation and assault.

In an order dated May 30, the court said, "It is further estab-

lished that the testimony of the prosecutrix is totally untrustworthy being full of material contradictions, concealment, improvement, exaggeration, inconsistencies and hence, does not inspire the confidence and creates a genuine doubt about her version in the mind of the court."

According to the prosecution, the complainant had alleged that on October 22, 2020, the two accused took her to a guest house on the pretext of arranging her transfer in the civil defence department and sexually assaulted her.



The prosecution claimed that one accused allegedly raped the woman inside the hotel room while the other later sexually assaulted her. It was further alleged that the accused threatened her with dire consequences if she disclosed the incident.

During the trial, the prosecution examined 21 witnesses, including the complainant, hotel staff, police officials and forensic experts.

The court, however, said that while the testimony of a prosecutrix can form the sole basis for conviction, it must be

of sterling quality and inspire confidence.

"In the consideration of the court, the sterling witness should be of very high quality and caliber whose version should therefore, be unassailable. The court considering the version of such a witness should be in a position to accept it for its face value without any hesitation," the judge said.

The judge noted contradictions and inconsistencies in the complainant's testimony and said that the prosecution had failed to establish the charges beyond reasonable doubt.

The court also took note of deficiencies in the electronic evidence, including the non-retrieval of relevant CCTV footage from the DVR seized during investigation.

"It is also established from his (witness) testimony that the prosecutrix had entered the room with accused Sagar at her own will without any pressure and coercion by any of the accused persons and also given her ID at reception," the court said.



PIOTECH

'The IIT story is India's story'

In conversation with Prabhath Kumar, IRS (Principal Additional Director General, NACIN, Mumbai, and Chairman of Pan IIT Alumni India)

An alumnus of IIT Delhi, Prabhath has authored the landmark book *IIT: The Story of India's Most Prestigious Educational Ecosystem*. In this free-wheeling interview, he talks about his journey from a small Bihar village to leading the world's most influential alumni network, his vision of "From Silicon Valley to Indus Valley", and why IITians must now become the architects of a Viksit Bharat.



Q. Your journey began in a village in Bihar. What was the turning point that set you on the path to IIT Delhi and then the Indian Revenue Service?

A: I often say I was a "boy with no dreams" until Class VIII. My school in Dumka once invited a young lady IAS officer to speak to us. She spoke about service, not power. That one interaction changed my life. Later, I cracked the IIT entrance. After my Master's, I chose the IRS - not because I had a second option, but because I believed that revenue administration is the backbone of nation building. Every tax collected builds a road, a school, a hospital. That was my covenant.

Q. You are now the Chairman of Pan IIT Alumni India. How has the organisation evolved under your leadership?

A: Pan IIT was already a strong network - over 500,000 alumni across 23 IITs. But we were seen largely as a networking and social platform. I wanted to turn it into a catalyst for national transformation. We have launched focused initiatives: the PARINITI AI Think Tank to shape sovereign AI policy, a proposed venture fund for deep-tech startups and a series of high impact summits - Hyderabad, Bengaluru, Chennai, Jaipur, Mumbai - with more coming in Vizag, Bhubaneswar, Indore, Patna and a mega event in Delhi.

Q. You often use the phrase "From Silicon Valley to Indus Valley". What does it mean?

A: For decades, the brightest IITians left for America. That was brain drain. But today, India has changed. The Government has created an enabling atmosphere - the ₹1.2 lakh crore RDI fund, the India AI Mission, the National Quantum Mission, PLI schemes, a semiconductor push and a massive data centre push. The world is looking at India as a destination for innovation and manufacturing. So my appeal is simple: return to the new Indus Valley - not with nostalgia, but with purpose. Build here, scale here, die here.

Q. Your book, IIT: The Story of India's Most Prestigious Educational Ecosystem, has just been published. What is its central theme?

A: The book is not a memoir. It is a mirror and a compass. It traces the IITs from the Hijli Detention Camp - where freedom fighters were once imprisoned - to 23 campuses producing world class talent. It celebrates the Bhakra Brigade, the early graduates who chose nation before self. But it also asks hard questions: the salary hype, the mental health crisis, the flight from core engineering, and the pressure of placements. My message is that the IITs were not built to produce crorepati coders alone. They were built to not only to create the physical and digital infrastructure of India but India itself.

Q. What kind of response have you received from the IIT diaspora?

A: Overwhelming. When I was in Los Angeles earlier this year, Shashi Tripathi, the event Chair of Pan IIT Long Beach event that happened in April, hosted a dinner in my honour. More than 50 IITians from across Southern California came to listen. They asked sharp questions: "Is it really the right time to return?" "What about my children's education?" "Can I really build a global company from India?" My answer is: look at the evidence. IITians have already built Flipkart, Zomato, Zoho, Ola, Razorpay - billion-dollar companies from Indian soil. The Government is actively courting deep tech and hardware ventures.

Q. You have launched the PARINITI AI Think Tank. Why is sovereign AI so critical for India?

A: Most Indian enterprises and government applications run on foreign foundational models. That is convenient, but dangerous. Sovereignty in AI means owning the entire stack - data, models, compute, applications. We cannot allow sensitive citizen data to be processed by models trained on foreign values and subject to foreign laws. PARINITI is not an academic exercise; it is a policy action group. We are preparing to work with policy makers, regulators and industry to create frameworks for frugal compute, Indian language models, and AI native digital public infrastructure.

Q. You also speak about a proposed venture fund. What gap will it fill?

A: Deep-tech startups in India struggle to get patient capital - long-term, risk-tolerant funding. Most venture capitalists want quick exits. The Government's RDI scheme has a ₹20,000 crore fund-of-funds and ₹80,000 crore debt fund but that works at scale. We need an alumni-driven fund that can write the first cheque for a semi-conductor design startup or a space-tech venture. The Pan IIT venture fund will fill that gap - providing capital, mentorship and access to global markets.

Q. Many IITians today are focused on high-paying jobs in finance or software. How do you convince them to think about nation-building?

A: A high-paying job can still be a platform for giving back. But I ask them to expand their definition of success. The salary hype is a trap a ₹1.2 crore domestic package leaves barely ₹55-60 lakh in hand after taxes. A \$2,00,000 US offer often saves less than \$40,000 a year after living costs. Meanwhile, India is offering unprecedented opportunities to build real assets factories, rockets, AI models, semiconductor fabs.

Q. You have been waking up at 4.30 am to write your book. What drives that discipline?

A: (laughs) It's not heroism; it's necessity. I have a full-time job as a senior IRS officer, and I chair Pan IIT. The only time I could steal was early morning. For more than a year, I wrote for four hours before my official day began. My family made sacrifices. But I believed that the IIT story needed to be told - not by an outsider, but by someone who has lived it. That conviction kept me going. Discipline is not about motivation; it is about commitment to a purpose larger than yourself.

Q. JEE Advanced result has just been published and the admission season is on. What is your final message to young IIT entrants and current students?

A: First, congratulations on cracking the JEE - it is an extraordinary achievement. But do not let the rank become your identity. You are entering a temple of learning, but the real pilgrimage is what you do after you leave. Read my book - not because I wrote it, but because it will help you make informed choices about branches, about careers, about life. And remember the watchtower of Hijli. Its light now falls on Bengaluru, Delhi, and California. Carry that lantern forward. Build here, scale here, die here. The IIT story is India's story - and the next chapter is yours.

Flight 171: Why India needs a right to digital autopsy

One year after Ahmedabad, India must rethink who owns the truth when technology fails



NISHANT SAHDEV

In 1964, the mathematician Norbert Wiener published a remarkable book titled *God & Golem, Inc.* Wiener, widely regarded as the father of cybernetics, spent much of his career thinking about a question that has only become more urgent with time: What happens when human beings create increasingly intelligent systems but gradually lose the ability to understand, supervise, or challenge them?

To explain the danger, Wiener often returned to the old tale of the Sorcerer's Apprentice. A young apprentice discovers a magical broom capable of carrying water. Delighted by the prospect of avoiding hard work, he sets the broom in motion. The problem is that he does not know how to stop it. The broom faithfully follows its instructions, carrying bucket after bucket of water until the entire house is flooded.

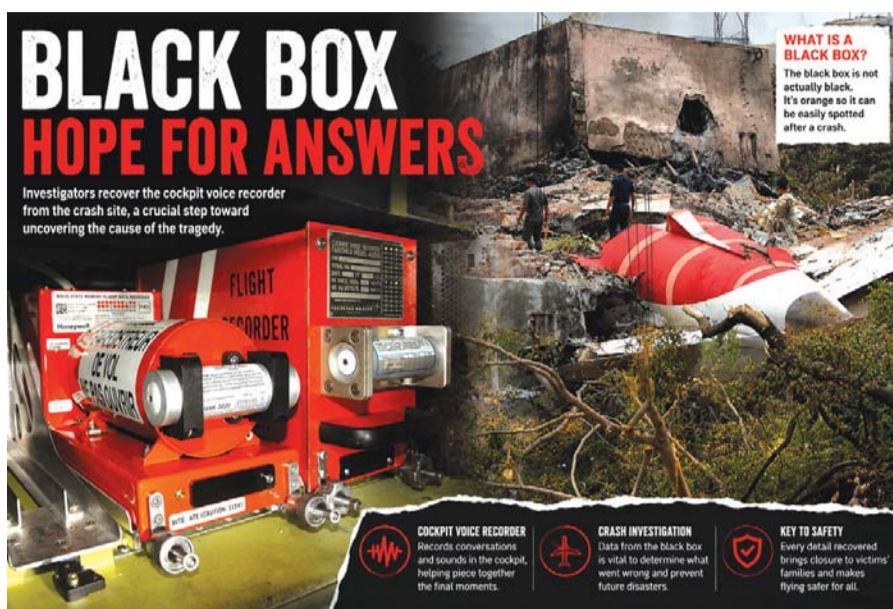
The lesson was never that the broom was evil. The lesson was that obedience without judgment can become dangerous when complexity exceeds human control. Sixty years later, Wiener's warning feels less like philosophy and more like public policy.

A few days ago marked one year since Air India Flight 171 crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad, claiming 260 lives and becoming one of the most devastating aviation disasters in recent Indian history. Families continue to mourn. Survivors continue to live with trauma. Investigators continue their work. The purpose of revisiting the tragedy is not to prejudice the outcome of any investigation. The final conclusions must come from evidence, not opinion columns.

Yet Flight 171 raises a larger question that extends far beyond aviation. Who owns the truth when technology fails? For most of the twentieth century, major industrial accidents were primarily mechanical events. Investigators examined broken structures, damaged engines, fractured metal, failed components, and physical evidence. Understanding what went wrong was difficult, but the evidence itself was visible and accessible. That world is disappearing.

Modern aircraft are not simply machines. They are software - defined systems operating in an environment. Millions of lines of code interact with sensors, computers, control systems, and automated decision-making architectures. Every flight generates enormous quantities of data. The modern jetliner is, in many ways, a flying data center.

Aviation is not unique. The same change is happening everywhere. Cars are becoming software platforms on wheels. Hospitals increasingly depend on algorithmic



systems. Financial markets are based on automated trading infrastructure. Electrical grids rely on digital controls. Military systems increasingly incorporate autonomous capabilities. Artificial intelligence is being embedded into everything from customer service to critical infrastructure.

As technology upgrades, the most important evidence after a failure is often not physical. It is digital. The challenge is that digital evidence does not behave like physical evidence. When a bridge collapses, investigators can examine the steel. When a boiler explodes, engineers can inspect the fragments. When a software - driven system fails, the answers may exist inside proprietary algorithms, protected databases, encrypted logs, firmware architectures, and corporate intellectual property frameworks.

The result is a growing tension between two legitimate interests. Companies invest billions developing advanced technologies and naturally seek to protect proprietary information. Intellectual property drives innovation and competitive advantage. At the same time, societies have a compelling public interest in understanding failures that result in large-scale loss of life. The question is where those interests should meet. Flight 171 illustrates why that question can no longer be ignored.

One year later, public discussion remains dominated by speculation. Every new development generates another wave of theories, accusations, and counter-accusations. The absence of definitive answers creates a vacuum, and vacuums are quickly filled by narratives. This uncertainty is not merely an aviation issue. It is a preview of a future in which increasingly consequential decisions are mediated by systems that few people fully understand.

The traditional response has been to reassure the public that there is always a

"human in the loop." The phrase appears constantly in discussions about automation, artificial intelligence, and advanced control systems. The concept sounds comforting. No matter how sophisticated the technology becomes, a human remains responsible. In practice, however, the reality is becoming more complicated. Modern systems often operate at speeds, scales, and levels of complexity that exceed normal human cognition. Human operators are frequently asked to supervise processes they cannot continuously monitor in detail. Most of the time, automation works exceptionally well. Indeed, modern aviation remains one of the safest forms of transportation ever created.

But when highly automated systems encounter rare or unexpected situations, investigators must examine not only human decisions but also the design assumptions embedded within the technology itself. That requires transparency. Transparency does not mean publishing every line of source code on the internet. It does not mean eliminating intellectual property protections. It does not mean undermining innovation.

It means recognising that mass-casualty events occupy a different category of public interest. When a major technological system fails and human lives are lost, independent investigators should possess the legal authority, technical access, and institutional capacity necessary to examine the relevant digital evidence. India should begin preparing for this reality now. The country has emerged as one of the world's largest digital societies. Hundreds of millions of citizens rely daily on sophisticated technological infrastructure. India is simultaneously becoming a major aviation market, an AI adopter, a semiconductor participant, and a significant player in the global digital economy.



Industrial parks: Technology centre in India proposal stage to pilot scale to production



Industrial sectors in India see a huge hyper-scale over the past decade owing to its robust and resilient revamping of policy frameworks and successful implementations. Government of India is continuously seeding micro to macro ideas from people-to-people approach across India and worldwide to develop our Viksit Nation.

India is on the Mission Mode leading to foster Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with global collaborators boosting in-house demand and supply chain ecosystems. The FTAs would push trade in different sectors like agriculture, energy, oil, critical minerals and many more, and equivalently tap the immense potential of incredibly talented skill pool available in our nation as

India stands out to be Skill Capital of the globe. Industrial parks and cluster rapidly evolved from proposal stage to pilot scale through plug-n-play mechanisms leading to enhance productivity in India by adapting the best practices of ease of manufacturing. It focusses on various quality measures through MSMEs Mantra-Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) and robust packaging. It has been adopting various measures like setting benchmarks for manufacturing and quality based on global standards. Also, India is a country well know for its ease of business thereby achieving ease and economy of living, ease of affordability by common citizens.

Emerging Parks Technology Centre: Viksit Infrastructures

Industrial Parks
Earlier India has started initiatives like PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) under National Technical Textiles Mission (NTTM) across various locations in



our country. Government of India is successfully adapting the unique framework model

like Samarth (Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector) to activate industrial employment opportunities in textile sectors. India has quickly adapted the innovative ideas and concepts of Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi's famous 5F fore-front vision - which stands for: "Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign" [Land to Market]

It meets the fully integrated supply chain starting from "FARMERS to FOREIGN" thereby elevating our social status and security of our nation. Presently, emerging industrial parks under the umbrella of BHAVYA (called as Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna) recently introduced is a pioneering plug-n-play program that will provide hand holding support for variety of stakeholders to achieve sustainability, social infrastructure, Digital and integrated manufacturing infrastructures. Industrial parks have the primary objective to pump innovation and productivity and foster optics of domestic to international markets, leading to achieve Aatma Nirbhar Bharat for our nation.

Government of India is aiming to establish parks in small to larger scale i.e., micro to medium across every corner of our nation based on the regional strengths and availability of natural resources. The industrial parks are planned to open in tribal areas as well to empower India's strength of tribal community as well. This will pave the way for the growth of Tribal communities in terms of productivity, product and process development and most important segment of employment opportunities as well.

The industrial parks will have different elements such as Common testing facility, Sewage Treatment Plants, Centre of Excellence, Environmental clearance which will be strengthened combinedly by State and Central Government.

BHAVYA Scheme is aimed to Strengthen the ease of manufacturing ecosystem of our nation through integrated investments and indigenous industrial infrastructure as well. Hundred Industrial parks will be quickly established at distinct parts of our nation through adding an essential element of offering various incentive benefits to the different stakeholders. This will push the manu-

facturing and market supply chain for our nation. The scheme is expected to promote technology development, technology acquisition, technology information, knowledge sharing and transfer, human capital development, IP protection, testing and certification services, and significant fund raising for the project's development. [Source: Letaba, Petrus (2019)]. It will also strengthen the industry-government-university interactions and collaborative partnership as well. The industries will participate through the PPP model framework.

Technology Centre - Industrial Hub
India is moving ahead to develop multifaceted advanced technology centres in India with special focus on introducing massive auto cluster in Auto Nagar in Belagavi, Bengaluru. This is expected to boost the local industrial manufacturing ecosystem. The various components of the auto cluster include industrial training facility, skill development centre, Research and innovation labs, advanced instrumentation and equipment facilities, and a technical education college. It will generate local employment opportunities and strengthen.

"Kalpana to Siddhi for Viksit 2047".
Government of India is actively and smartly accommodating industrial investment from across the globe thereby develop massive industrial infrastructures and MSME technology centre at various parts of the country. This development proportionately enhances the buyer-seller ratio, research and innovation and make everyone witness the Mantra "Kalpana to Siddhi for Viksit 2047".

"Manufacturing Mission" program in India is aimed to manage 5Ms:
● Money
● Material
● Method
● Mechanism and most importantly
● Manpower

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The writer is a physicist at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a columnist on AI, infrastructure and global systems

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12 years of Modi: What changed in India's voice abroad



SURJIT SINGH FLORA

A record can settle a statistic, but it can't settle a memory. On June 10, 2026, Narendra Modi crossed 4,399 consecutive days in office and passed Jawaharlal Nehru's 4,398-day record as India's longest-serving elected prime minister. That milestone matters, but only up to a point. The larger question is how those 12 years changed the way the world read India, and how Indians, in time, will judge the trade-offs behind the power, pride, welfare, growth, and strain that came with them.

Why the record matters, and why it does not settle the verdict

Long rule gives a leader time to leave deep marks on institutions, habits, and public feeling. It also gives critics time to build a case. That is why 4,399 days is more than a calendar fact, yet less than a final verdict.

Modi's record is narrow and precise. He has passed Nehru's continuous elected tenure. Nehru still had longer total time in office if the pre-election period after Independence is counted. The distinction may sound technical, but it matters because political memory is often built on such details.

Length alone doesn't decide greatness. It proves durability. It shows an ability to win, to hold a coalition, and to dominate public life. Still, long tenure can also produce fatigue, sharper opposition, and a sense that one leader's style has become the state's style. Longevity proves endurance, not agreement on legacy. Repeated mandates tell a story about voters as much as about Modi. India has held competitive elections at huge scale, across language, caste, class, and region. That fact should not be lost in arguments over personality.

His third term, secured in 2024 through the National Democratic Alliance after the BJP fell short of a solo majority, added another layer to the record. It showed continuing public trust, but it also showed limits. The elec-

torate renewed him, yet it also trimmed his dominance. That mix matters because it keeps the record inside the frame of democracy, not outside it.

How continuity changed the way India was seen from abroad

Foreign capitals now discuss India in a different tone than they did in 2014. The country is no longer treated only as a future market or a slow-moving democracy with unrealized promise. It is read as a state with clearer intent, a stronger diplomatic voice, and more willingness to shape outcomes.

A useful lens comes from around the globe. The views of India and Prime Minister Modi is mostly practical and positive, tied to growth, foreign ties, and outreach to Indians abroad. That perspective matters less as endorsement than as evidence. It shows that even outside India's own partisan arguments, Modi came to personify a more self-assured India.

The India that Modi projected to the world

Modi's foreign image rested on more than speeches and summits. It drew force from scale, state capacity, and a repeated message that India would no longer wait for permission to matter. The pitch worked because it matched visible change.

From emerging economy to strategic partner

India spent much of the last decade moving from "important market" to "necessary partner." Large democracies wanted India in supply chains, in security talks, and in technology partnerships because China had become harder to depend on. New Delhi used that shift well.

The United States, Europe, Canada, Japan, and Australia all widened ties with India.

he Quad gained weight. Electronics manufacturing expanded, helped by policy support and global firms looking for alternatives to China. India's space success, especially Chandrayaan-3's moon landing in 2023, added a symbolic layer. The message was plain: India wanted to build, design, and negotiate at a higher level.

Digital public infrastructure as India's new calling card

If one policy area changed India's



image fastest, it was digital public infrastructure. UPI turned instant payments into an ordinary part of daily life. Aadhaar-linked systems, Jan Dhan bank accounts, and direct benefit transfers showed that a state of India's size could move money and services at scale. That mattered abroad because other Governments began to study the model. India's "stack" became shorthand for low-cost public tech that could widen access without waiting for old systems to catch up. For years, India's story abroad had leaned on private-sector software talent. During the Modi years, it also came to include public digital capacity.

A louder voice in a multipolar world

India's diplomacy grew sharper and more visible. During its G20 presidency in 2023, New Delhi pushed the African Union's entry as a permanent member. That move gave India a claim to speak for more than itself.

At the same time, India kept its habit of strategic autonomy. It drew closer to Washington, bought Russian oil, talked climate justice, and refused to fit neatly into any camp. On technology, security, and trade, it argued for room to choose. That posture gave India weight in a world where old blocs no longer explain every decision.

How Indians may remember Modi at home

Domestic memory is never singular in a

country this large. PM will be remembered differently in small towns and big cities, in poor households and upper-middle-class homes, in majority communities and among minorities who felt less secure. Still, some themes are already fixed.

The promise of a more efficient state

For many supporters, the Modi years will mean a Government that reached the household more directly. Jan Dhan accounts widened access to banking. Direct benefit transfers cut some layers of leakage. Welfare delivery became more centralized and more visible.

Roads, rural housing, electrification, toilets, and tap-water schemes helped shape the image of a state that could act faster than before. Even critics often concede that the language of delivery changed. Citizens came to expect dashboards, deadlines, and personal branding around public schemes. Whether every promise matched lived reality is a different question, but the idea of a more efficient state took root.

A leader who speaks in symbols as much as policy

Modi's politics has never been only administrative. It is also theatrical in the old sense of the word, built around gesture, ritual, and repetition. "Mann Ki Baat" created a regular channel into private homes. Temple openings, national anniversaries, and public campaigns gave many supporters a sense that the state was speaking in familiar cultural

language. This style strengthened his personal bond with voters. It also changed the emotional texture of power. Under Modi, politics became more presidential without becoming a presidential system. His face carried schemes, victories, warnings, grief, and celebration. That compression of state and leader will matter in historical memory.

The harder questions around nationalism and social change

The same years also sharpened fears about exclusion. Modi's critics argue that Hindu nationalist politics moved from the margins to the center of state power. They point to minority anxieties, harsher public discourse, and a climate in which dissent could feel more suspect. Supporters answer that national confidence had been too long restrained by elite caution and old forms of secular politics. They see a correction, not a rupture. Yet memory will not ignore the social cost of polarization. For many Indians, the Modi years brought pride. For others, they brought a narrower idea of belonging. Both impressions are now part of the record.

The pandemic, security, and the test of command

Long-serving leaders are often judged less by routine governance than by crisis. Modi faced several such tests, and they hardened both loyalty and criticism.

COVID and the politics of control

The pandemic put state capacity under brutal strain. India's first lockdown in 2020 was sweeping and sudden. It projected command, but it also exposed the vulnerability of migrant workers and the limits of planning.

Later came a different picture. The CoWIN platform, domestic vaccine production, and the mass rollout of doses showed administrative reach on a huge scale. Free food grain support softened some of the economic blow. Yet the second wave in 2021, with its oxygen shortages and mass grief, remains a wound in public memory. Supporters remember order restored. Critics remember the cost of central control and the dangers of triumphalism before the crisis had passed.

Security doctrine and the new, firmer Indian posture

On security, Modi broke with the older image of Indian restraint. The 2016 sur-

gical strikes after Uri and the 2019 Balakot airstrike after Pulwama signaled a willingness to answer terror attacks across borders. After the Galwan clash in 2020, India hardened its military posture along the China frontier and sped up border infrastructure.

Those actions fed a national story of firmness. They also helped shape India's external image as a state more willing to impose costs. Critics can question the politics around these moments, or the use of national security in domestic campaigns. Even so, the change in tone is hard to deny.

What legacy will survive the politics of the moment

Modi may not be remembered as a leader of one reform, one war, or one slogan. He is more likely to be remembered as the politician who recast India's self-image. Under him, India spoke more often in the language of scale, ambition, and national will.

That is a large achievement because self-image has political force.

A country that sees itself as consequential behaves differently abroad and expects more at home. Yet this legacy will remain contested. Indians will argue for years over whether the gains were broad enough, whether power grew too concentrated, and whether democratic habits weakened as the state grew stronger.

The answer will not rest on one speech or one election result. It will rest on how India weighs confidence against inclusion, delivery against dissent, and national purpose against the pluralism that has always made the republic harder to govern and harder to reduce to a single voice.

Modi's place in Indian memory will be larger than any one policy or campaign. He will likely be remembered as the leader who made India speak to the world with more force, and who made many Indians feel the country's scale in a new way. Yet memory rarely stays obedient to power. It keeps both praise and grievance. If Modi changed how the world read India, Indians will still decide whether that new reading was generous enough, democratic enough, and built to last.

The writer is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton, Canada

Israeli ministers reject proposed US-Iran ceasefire

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Two senior Israeli ministers voiced strong opposition to a proposed ceasefire agreement between the United States (US) and Iran, arguing that Israel must retain the freedom to continue military operations against regional threats.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said the deal could undermine Israel's security interests and warned against any arrangement that limits the country's ability to act against Iran and its allies.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir criticized the pending agreement, stating that Israel should not be



bound by deals that restrict its ability to defend itself. Speaking ahead of his party's weekly faction meeting in

the Knesset, he urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to allow the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to continue oper-

ations against Hezbollah and other hostile groups.

Ben Gvir stressed that the safety of Israeli citizens and soldiers must remain the Government's top priority. While expressing appreciation for US support and President Donald Trump's backing of Israel, he emphasised that responsibility for the country's security lies solely with the Israeli Government.

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich also condemned the proposed agreement, calling it a "bad deal" for both Israel and the wider international community. He argued that Iran must never be allowed to acquire nuclear weapons and warned against any outcome that could

enable Tehran to move closer to that goal. According to Smotrich, recent joint US-Israeli actions against Iran produced significant strategic gains and weakened the Iranian regime.

Nevertheless, he said Israel would continue using all available means to prevent Iran from becoming a nuclear threshold state and to counter what he described as a terrorist regime.

Smotrich further noted that the Israeli Government and Prime Minister Netanyahu are facing unprecedented political, security and diplomatic pressure, insisting that the leadership has managed challenges that few political rivals could withstand.

Russia pounds Kyiv, Kharkiv in deadly night-time drone and missile strikes

HANNA ARHIROVA ■ Kyiv

Russia fired hundreds of drones and dozens of missiles at Ukraine's biggest cities in a nighttime bombardment that killed at least 11 people and set fire to a renowned religious site, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other officials said Monday.

The attacks on the Capital, Kyiv, and the second-largest city, Kharkiv, came after Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin spoke separately by phone with US President Donald Trump on Sunday. The exchange suggests



Washington hasn't given up on its diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting that followed Moscow's all-out invasion of its neighbour in February 2022.

The war in Ukraine is also set to feature in talks on Tuesday between G7 leaders at a summit in France. Zelenskyy and Trump are due to attend the gathering,

as the Ukrainian leader pushes to keep the war on leaders' minds while the Iran war diverts international attention from Ukraine's plight.

"This is how Russia shows the world its intention to continue the war," Zelenskyy said in a post on X, referring to the overnight attack. "It is very important that there be a response from the G7 countries... and that this response be decisive and substantive; more pressure on the aggressor and more support for Ukraine's air defence, especially anti-ballistic capabilities," the Ukrainian leader said. (AP)

UN chief welcomes announcement of peace deal between US, Iran



UN chief Antonio Guterres

YOSHITA SINGH ■ United Nations

UN chief Antonio Guterres has welcomed the announcement of a peace deal between the US and Iran that provides for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Secretary General Guterres described it as a critical step towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict. The US and Iran finalised a deal to end their 107-day war and open the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway used to ferry one-fifth of the global oil supplies, on Friday after an in-person signing of the agreement in Switzerland. US President made the announcement on Truth Social on Sunday evening, easing pressure on the global energy markets, as officials said the peace agreement would be signed on June 19 in Switzerland. (PTI)

Congo sees record one-day Ebola spike as cases hit 782 amid response gaps

JEAN-YVES KAMALE/ MARK BANGCHEREAU ■ Kinshasa

Congolese authorities have reported one of the highest increases in Ebola cases in one day, as weak contact tracing, insecurity and funding gaps continue to hinder the response a month after the outbreak was declared.

The Congolese Ministry of Health said that 72 new cases were reported in a 24-hour period, bringing the total number of confirmed



cases to 782. This includes 181 confirmed deaths, after 32 new deaths were confirmed.

However, the number of cases in Congo is believed to be higher because the outbreak was confirmed on

May 15, weeks after it is suspected to have begun, and the contact tracing coverage rate is at 56 per cent, a sharp decrease from last week. The latest Ebola outbreak is caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus, which has no approved vaccine or treatment, unlike the Zaire virus, which was responsible for most of Congo's past 16 outbreaks of the disease.

Fifty-six people have recovered, and the current fatality rate of the outbreak is 23 per cent, the ministry said. (AP)

Thousands of British Kashmiris stage protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Thousands of British Kashmiris gathered at Parliament Square to march up to Trafalgar Square in London to protest against a crackdown by Pakistani forces in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

The crowds waved banners and chanted slogans in favour of a "revolution" against the Pakistani forces in the region. They demanded human rights in support of the Joint Awami Action Committee in PoJK and action against "terror-



ism" being propagated in the region. Slogans of "Pakistan forces out" among others echoed at the protest.

The protesters also raised concerns over alleged civilian killings, harassment of women and the use of force against peaceful protesters

in PoJK. Calls for "justice" rang out as demonstrators waved placards to highlight recent unrest reported from the region.

The protests follow similar demonstrations outside the Pakistani Consulate in Bradford earlier

this week. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is among the organisations to express serious concerns about the so-called regional Government's decision to proscribe the Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) under anti-terrorism legislation. Several civilians and policemen were killed during recent clashes between police and JAAC activists in PoJK's Rawalakot.

India maintains that Pakistan has been in illegal possession of Indian territory in the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

UK PM Starmer announces ban on social media apps for children under 16

ADITI KHANNA ■ London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer on Monday announced that social media app access will be banned for all children under the age of 16 for their "happiness and safety".

In an address from 10 Downing Street in London, Starmer said it was the right choice both as Prime Minister and as a father of young children. He admitted that it will not be easy to impose such a ban involving some of the most powerful tech companies in the world, but the



health and well-being of children were paramount.

"Today is a big moment for our country. This is a big step, real change for our children

and our future because today I can announce that the Government will ban access to social media for all children under the age of 16,"

said Starmer. "This is not something I do lightly, and I will not present it as cost-free as if social media has brought no benefits to young people, because clearly that is wrong. But Government is always about choices, and it's clear to me that a full ban is the right choice," he said.

The announcement followed a lengthy consultation process fed into by campaigners, including parents, whose children have been impacted by the harmful effects of social media apps such as TikTok, Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube.

While messaging apps such as WhatsApp will not be included in the ban, gaming services and live streaming platforms where strangers can contact children unchecked will be restricted through an age verification system yet to be finalised.

"All I've ever wanted for my own children, hand on heart, is for them to be happy and for them to be safe, and I think that's what any parent wants," said Starmer.

"Social media is making children unhappy; it's making it easier for bullies to harass and abuse them. And

it could even be harming their mental health, exposing them to content that is dangerous. "Because that's what grabs the attention, it's designed to be addictive, of course it is. Features like the infinite scroll. They're designed to lock you in for hours; if nothing else, there's an opportunity cost to that. It stops children doing their homework, reading, playing with their friends outside, going to bed at a decent hour," he said.

Asked about the timeline for the enforcement of the ban, the UK PM told reporters

that the legislative powers had been put in place for the law to come into force by Spring next year. "It won't be easy, some technology companies want us to think that social media is unchangeable, part of an almost natural order.

But we have to resist that kind of learned helplessness; we have agency, we can change it, and we will. "Yes, it's hard, hard to legislate for, hard to regulate, hard to enforce. That's why we sought a wide range of views on this," he said. (PTI)



US-Iran peace deal boosts investor sentiment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai

Stock markets rose for the second straight session with benchmark Sensex closing higher by 736 points on Monday, propelled by a rally in global equities and a sharp decline in crude oil prices after the US and Iran finalised a deal to end their 107-day war.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 736.38 points, or 0.97 per cent, to settle at 76,264.33. During the day, it zoomed 1,293.12 points, or 1.71 per cent, to 76,821.07.

Rising for the second day, the 50-share NSE Nifty surged 231 points, or 0.98 per cent, to



end at 23,853.90. During the day, the benchmark rallied 388.5 points, or 1.64 per cent, to 24,011.40. Sensex had rallied 1,695 points or 2.3 per cent and Nifty soared by 461

points or nearly 2 per cent in the previous session on Friday. The US and Iran finalised a deal to end their 107-day war and open the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow

waterway used to ferry one-fifth of the global oil supplies, on Friday after an in-person signing of the agreement in Switzerland.

US President Donald Trump made the announcement on Truth Social on Sunday evening, easing pressure on the global energy markets, as officials said the peace agreement would be signed on June 19 in Switzerland.

Crude oil prices fell to three-month lows in global markets after the announcement of the US-Iran deal. Global benchmark Brent Crude dropped 5 per cent to trade near \$82.90 per barrel.

Among 30 Sensex firms, Trent, InterGlobe Aviation,

Bajaj Finserv, UltraTech Cement, Eternal and Maruti were the major winners.

NTPC, ICICI Bank, Asian Paints and Hindustan Unilever were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi jumped over 5 per cent, while Japan's Nikkei 225 index climbed nearly 5 per cent. Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index also ended higher.

Markets in Europe were trading in the green. US markets ended in positive territory on Friday. "The easing of geopolitical tensions following the USA-Iran peace agreement is a significant

positive for global risk assets. The immediate correction in crude oil prices is particularly encouraging for an import-dependent economy like India, as it helps alleviate inflationary pressures, improves macroeconomic stability, and provides greater policy flexibility," Rajesh Palviya, Head of Research, Axis Direct, said. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,082.18 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. On Friday, the Sensex jumped 1,695.40 points, or 2.30 per cent, to settle at 75,527.95. The Nifty ended sharply higher by 461.30 points, or 1.99 per cent, at 23,622.90.

Rupee rises 47 paise to settle at 94.71 against US dollar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Mumbai

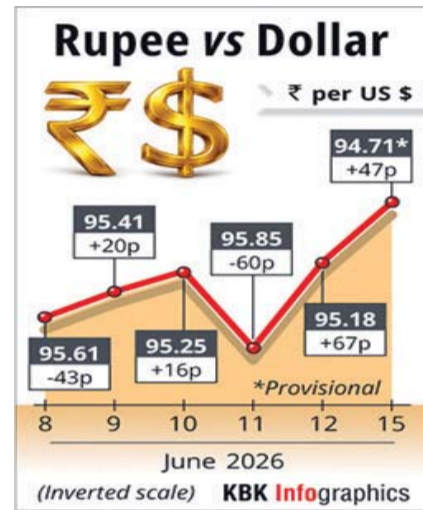
The rupee rose 47 paise to settle at 94.71 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday as global crude oil prices dropped sharply after US President Donald Trump announced that the US and Iran finalised a deal to end the war.

A surge in the domestic equity markets and a weaker US dollar further drove the local unit, forex traders said.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 94.70 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 94.45-94.77. Eventually, it settled at 94.71 (provisional), up 47 paise from its previous close.

The rupee jumped 67 paise to close at 95.18 against the greenback on Friday.

The US and Iran finalised a deal to end their 107-day war and open the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway used to ferry one-fifth of the global oil supplies. The deal is expected to be signed on Friday in Switzerland. President Trump made the announcement on Truth Social on Sunday



evening, easing pressure on the global energy markets, as officials said the peace agreement would be signed on June 19 in Switzerland.

Gold regains sparkle, as US-Iran deal boosts demand for bullion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Gold prices climbed by ₹2,500 to ₹1.59 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday, while silver advanced to ₹2.60 lakh per kg, tracking strong global trends after the US and Iran struck a peace deal framework.

According to marketmen, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity jumped ₹2,500 to ₹1,59,400 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Friday's closing level of ₹1,56,900 per 10 grams.

Silver also advanced for the second straight session, surging ₹5,000 to ₹2,60,700 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes). The white metal had settled at ₹2,55,700 per kg in the previous session. Analysts



said the uptrend in precious metals gathered pace after Washington and Tehran announced an interim agreement to end hostilities and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, a key route for global energy supplies. "Gold advanced on Monday, supported by gains in the international market, with spot gold climbing above the \$ 4,325 per ounce level," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said. The agreement drove oil prices to

a multi-week low, reduced concerns over inflation and lowered the likelihood of a more aggressive monetary policy stance, while a weaker dollar and lower Treasury bond yields further supported the bullion, he added.

In the international markets, spot gold increased by \$121.33, or nearly 3 per cent, to \$4,340.65 per ounce, while silver advanced by \$2.74, or 4.04 per cent, to \$70.74 per ounce.

"Gold climbed above \$4,300 an ounce on Monday, advancing for a third consecutive session, as oil prices declined and concerns over persistent inflation and potential rate hikes receded," Rajkumar Subramanian, Head - Product & Family Office, PL Wealth, said.

More measures to attract foreign capital likely: Sitharaman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday said the measures announced by the RBI and Government to boost foreign fund inflows are the "first step" to bring back foreign capital and indicated that more steps could be in the offing.

Sitharaman also said that there is a need to be prepared for exigencies arising out of the evolving global situation as the Indian economy is facing "severe strain" from import of key raw materials, as well as crude oil and fertilisers.

Speaking at the Mindmine Summit 2026, Sitharaman said an analysis by the RBI and the Government has shown that the bond market can be a "very good magnet" to absorb foreign capital.

Accordingly, to reduce compliance burden for foreign investors in Government Securities (G-Secs), the Government on June 5 expanded the list of specified securities under the Fully Accessible Route (FAR) to also include new issuances in G-Secs.

Besides, income tax exemption was given to income from interest and capital gains made by FPIs



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman

from investments in G-Secs. Sitharaman said these measures are the "first step" towards drawing foreign capital back.

"Although at the moment it's confined to the bond

RBI's swap facility for Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) (FCNR(B), deposits with maturities ranging from 3-5 years till September 30.

The facility would allow banks to swap US dollar deposits with the RBI, and manage currency risks.

Further, to shore up foreign capital inflows, RBI has brought in a forex swap facility to encourage PSUs to raise external commercial borrowings (ECBs) until September 30.

Sitharaman said under the framework announced by the RBI, currency hedging will be at the expense of the central bank.

India, UK discuss collaboration in tech, research and startups

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Trade ministers of India and the UK have held a bilateral meeting on ways to promote collaboration in innovation, technology, research, startups, and emerging technologies.

"Had a productive virtual meeting with UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Mr. @PeterKyle... We discussed strengthening India-UK collaboration in innovation, technology, research, startups and emerging technologies," Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in a social media post.

The meeting is also important as both sides have inked a free trade agreement but certain issues like British steel safeguard measures have created hurdles in implementation of the pact.

Goyal is expected to visit London later this month.

UK Secretary of State for Business and Trade Peter Kyle and Goyal held a meeting on these issues on June 2 here. India and the UK on July 24, 2025 inked the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).



US Trade Representative to hold trade pact talks with Goyal next week

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer is scheduled to visit India next week for a two-day meeting with Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on June 23-24 to discuss issues pertaining to the interim trade agreement, a top Government official said on Monday.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said: "Our expectation is that discussions will be centred around giving final touches to the framework deal, which has been discussed during the visit of their (US) delegation... and also on the larger BTA (bilateral trade agreement), that has also been



Jamieson Greer

under discussions between the two sides." The USTR is expected to land here on June 22. Earlier, on June 2-4, the US team, headed by its chief negotiator Brendan Lynch, held discussions with Indian officials on finalisation of the deal. On June 5, Goyal

said that India and the US are moving towards closing all the open ends of the interim trade agreement, and both sides are likely to execute the "very, very vibrant" first phase of the BTA by the middle of next month.

At the chief negotiators' level, the two sides held discussions across a wide range of issues, covering trade in goods, non-tariff measures, customs and trade facilitation, economic security alignment and other areas of mutual interest.

On February 7, India and the US issued a joint statement finalising the contours or framework of the first phase of the BTA or an interim trade deal.

Exports rise 18% to \$45.2 b in May

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The country's merchandise exports rose 18 per cent to \$ 45.2 billion, according to the commerce ministry data.

Imports, too, grew 20.62 per cent to \$73.41 billion in May, leaving a trade deficit of \$28.21 billion.

India's merchandise exports rose to \$88.91 billion during April-May 2026-27, marking a 16.09 per cent growth over the corresponding period last year.

India's exports to West Asia in May was marginally down at \$5.30 billion against \$5.38 billion in May 2025, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal said. Gold



imports during April-May this fiscal year surged 60 per cent to \$9.04 billion, according to the commerce ministry data.

Going by the trend, this year will be good for exports, Agrawal added.

Wholesale Price Inflation hits record high of 9.68% in May as fuel costs spike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Wholesale price inflation shot up to a record 9.68 per cent in May, from 8.26 per cent in April, led by a sharp spike in prices of fuel and power, reflecting the impact of energy shocks emanating from the West Asia war.

The May wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation is the highest in the current series with a base year of 2022-23.

The Commerce and Industry Ministry on Monday released the May WPI-inflation data, revising the base year to 2022-23, from 2011-12 earlier - the first revision in nine years. The total number

of items in the new WPI basket has increased from 697 to 957. New sources of

energy, such as solar and wind, have been added under the 'electricity' group. In addition, nuclear electricity has been included in the basket. The ministry also released the producer price indices (PPI) for the first time to track output and input factory gate prices. Besides, Services PPI was released for seven services - Banking, Securities Transaction, Management of Pension Funds, Insurance, Railways, Air (Passenger), and Telecom.

The Government intends to discontinue with WPI data in the next five years and shift to PPI, in alignment with the global best practice.

"Availability of both the Output PPI and Input PPI gives a better understanding of the price movements of output produced vis-a-vis

inputs being used in an industry. It also explains how inflation experienced by producers on inputs is passed on to the output being produced," the ministry said.

WPI INFLATION DATA FOR MAY: "Across groups, mineral oil (containing petroleum products), crude petroleum and natural gas, manufacture of chemicals and chemical products, and manufacture of basic metals have been major drivers of WPI inflation in April and May 2026," the commerce ministry said.

The fuel and power segment, which now accounts for 14.1 per cent of the WPI by weight and also includes the crude petroleum

and natural gas groups, witnessed a sharp rise in the inflation rate to 30.33 per cent in May, from 24.89 per cent in April 2026, reflecting the continued passthrough of elevated global energy prices.

Inflation in crude petroleum was 61.51 per cent in May, as against 56.31 per cent in the previous month.

The sharp rise in WPI inflation reflects the impact of the West Asia crisis and the effective blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, through which the majority of the crude oil is imported to India, and its spillover effect on food prices.

Inflation in food articles was 3.60 per cent in May, compared to 2.43 per cent in April. In manufactured prod-

ucts, inflation rose to 7.48 per cent in May, from 6.68 per cent during April, data showed.

EXPERTS REACTION: ICRA Principal Economist Rahul Agrawal said the recent cooling in global energy and commodity prices after the easing of tensions in West Asia is expected to provide respite to the WPI inflation print for June 2026.

India Ratings and Research, Director, Megha Arora, said WPI inflation in June 2026 is likely to decelerate marginally to 9.3 per cent with easing global crude prices following news of de-escalation in the West Asia conflict.

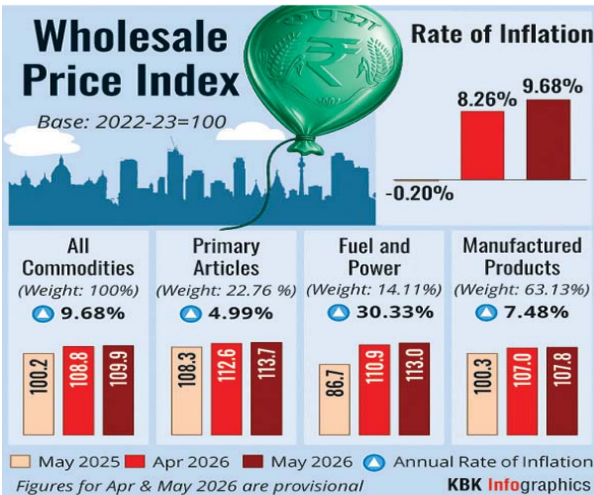
However, it will take some time for WPI inflation to fall

below 2.5 per cent, a level seen during pre-West Asia conflict.

"Besides, the 2026 monsoon is under the shadow of El Nino, and would keep food prices elevated in the near-term. Inflation based on WPI is expected to be higher than CPI on account of the higher weight of fuels in the index," Arora said.

RETAIL INFLATION FOR MAY: Wholesale inflation continued to be much higher than the retail or consumer price index based inflation for the second consecutive month.

Retail inflation had surged to a 16-month high of 3.93 per cent in May, against 3.48 per cent in the previous month.



of items in the new WPI basket has increased from 697 to 957. New sources of



PROSPECT



Jayanta Mallabarua, Finance Minister, Government of Assam, interacts with stakeholders from the tax, accounting and transport sectors to gather feedback for building a more efficient, transparent and taxpayer-friendly taxation ecosystem. PHOTO: KAMAL LOSON TALUKDAR

SBI board to discuss fundraising plans on June 18

State Bank of India (SBI) on Monday said its board will meet on June 18 to discuss fundraising during the current fiscal. "A meeting of the Central Board of State Bank of India is scheduled to be held on 18th June, 2026 to consider approval for raising funds during FY27 through public offer or private placement mode by way of issuance of debt instruments (including capital instruments) to overseas and/or Indian investors in INR and/or any foreign currency," SBI said in a regulatory filing. Shares of SBI closed at ₹1,020.45, up 0.35 per cent over the previous close on BSE. (PNS)

ICICI Prudential Life launches ICICI Pru Signature Secure



ICICI Prudential Life Insurance has launched ICICI Pru Signature Secure, Indian life insurance's first Unit Linked Insurance Plan (ULIP) with a built-in guaranteed maturity benefit. ICICI Pru Signature Secure is a non-participating linked individual savings life insurance plan and has been designed for customers looking for the reassurance of tax-efficient guaranteed benefits. The product offers a simple proposition – invest once, stay protected through life cover during the policy term and receive a maturity benefit at the end of five years. On maturity, the customer receives the higher of the fund value or the guaranteed maturity benefit, providing the reassurance of a guaranteed outcome. For instance, a 45-year-old customer looking for a one-time investment solution can invest ₹5 lakhs in ICICI Pru Signature Secure and remain protected through life cover during the policy term. The customer can choose a life cover (sum assured) of ₹6.25 lakhs and gets a guaranteed maturity benefit of ₹7 lakhs in this case. Commenting on the launch, Vikas Gupta, Chief Product Officer, ICICI Prudential Life Insurance, said customers are increasingly looking for solutions that can help them achieve better post-tax outcomes along with guaranteed returns and financial protection. (PNS)

Infrastructure development will be northeast's growth engine: Gadkari

TONY DAS
■ Shillong

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Monday announced a slew of road projects for the northeast region and said infrastructure development here will serve as the "growth engine". He was speaking at the inaugural session of the "North East India Infrastructure Summit and Exhibition 2026", being hosted on June 15-16 at the Lariti Performing Centre in Shillong. The Union Transport Minister emphasised the central government's commitment to the region's development. "We're committed to ensuring progress of the northeast region, equivalent to other states," he said. Announcing a series of road infrastructure projects, the



Nitin Gadkari, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, at the North East Infrastructure Summit and Exhibition in New Shillong, Meghalaya

minister for roads, transport and highways said, "Infrastructure development in northeast will serve as growth engine for the region." Nagaland Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio and Meghalaya

Chief Minister Conrad Sangma, along with several other dignitaries, were present on the dais. Speaking on the occasion, Sangma said, "Earlier, we didn't dare to dream, but

now we are, and that's a confidence we wish to convey to the investors looking to invest in our region."

The mega summit aims to shine a spotlight on the growth potential of the eight northeastern states.

Earlier in the day, Gadkari also attended a CEO roundtable and inaugurated an exhibition by various companies for the summit hosted at Lariti Performing Centre here.

Ahead of the inaugural session, Meghalaya Chief Secretary Shakil P Ahammed described the summit as a first-of-its-kind event and a "historic moment" for the region.

"The northeast is no more the periphery, but the pole of India's future and growth," he added.

Wind energy sector gains momentum: Pralhad Joshi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

India's wind energy journey is gaining momentum with strong localisation, advanced manufacturing capabilities and growing global competitiveness, Union Minister of New & Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi said on Monday.

Addressing an event on Global Wind Day, Joshi stated that having components ranging from nacelles and blades to wind turbine towers and sophisticated gearboxes, the Indian industry is proving its strength across the wind energy value chain and is well-positioned to expand its footprint in global markets.

The minister also launched the WT-MARUT portal, which facilitates end-



to-end tracking of wind energy components, from manufacturing facilities to project sites, ensuring robust traceability, accountability and compliance across the entire value chain.

As India's wind energy sector continues to scale new heights, the launch of the WT-MARUT Portal marks a major step towards greater transparency, efficiency and digital integration, Joshi said.

Shares of Jaiprakash Associates to be delisted from stock exchanges



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Jaiprakash Associates Ltd, which has been acquired by Adani Enterprises through the insolvency process, will get delisted from stock exchanges with effect from June 18.

In a regulatory filing on Monday, Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) informed that it has received final approval from the BSE Ltd and National Stock Exchange of India Ltd for delisting of its equity shares from both stock exchanges.

Accordingly, the company's equity shares would stand delisted from the BSE and the NSE with effect from June 18, 2026.

The delisting is as per the resolution plan approved by the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Allahabad Bench, Prayagraj.

Last month, the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) rejected a challenge by mining billionaire Anil Agarwal's Vedanta Ltd to the winning bid by Gautam Adani's group for bankrupt real estate firm JAL.

The NCLAT held that the Committee of Creditors (CoC) were right in preferring Adani Group's Rs 14,535-crore bid over Vedanta's resolution plan for JAL.

JAL is into diversified business, including construction, real estate, power and hotels. It also has a Formula One circuit.

Bharti Airtel gets shareholders' nod to raise stake in Airtel Africa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Bharti Airtel on Monday said it has received approval from around 100 per cent of its shareholders to raise its stake in Airtel Africa by 16.31 per cent through a share-swap agreement worth Rs 28,220 crore. Following the transaction, Bharti Airtel's stake in Airtel Africa will rise to around 79 per cent from the current 62.73 per cent.

"Nearly 100 per cent of its (Bharti Airtel) shareholders have approved the ongoing transaction to consolidate its stake in key strategic subsidiary Airtel Africa plc," the company said in a statement.

The transaction involves Bharti Airtel issuing equity shares to Indian Continent Investment Limited, a promoter group entity, on a preferential basis, in exchange for its 16.31 per cent stake in Airtel Africa.

The transaction, being a cashless share swap, presents an opportunity to the company to acquire a large block and increase its economic interest in a high-growth asset without any incremental leverage or cash outflow, the state-



Airtel Africa is central to our growth strategy and is well positioned to deliver robust performance with an increasing contribution to our consolidated revenues. Structured as a share swap, India's largest-ever transaction preserves capital strength for Airtel's core operations and future growth ambitions

— SUNIL BHARTI MITTAL, CHAIRMAN, BHARTI ENTERPRISES

ment said. "Airtel Africa is central to our growth strategy and is well positioned to deliver robust performance with an increasing contribution to our consolidated revenues. Structured as a share swap, India's largest-ever transaction preserves capital strength for Airtel's core operations and future growth ambitions," Bharti

Enterprises Founder and Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said.

He said overwhelming support of shareholders reinforces the confidence that the investors have in the organisation.

"As we look ahead, we see significant potential in Africa for long-term shareholder value creation," Mittal added.

Le Rythme and Enphase Energy empower underprivileged youth in Telangana



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Le Rythme, the implementing partner for Enphase Energy's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives in India, has successfully completed the "Skills Ignite Potential, Empowering Futures" programme.

The three-month training initiative focused on Solar PV Operation & Maintenance (O&M) and employability skills, targeting youth from economically weaker sections in Telangana.

The programme benefited approximately 50 young participants, including women, from Jagtial, Nizamabad, Nirmal, and surrounding districts. It aimed to equip them with industry-relevant green skills to enhance employability and open pathways to sustainable livelihoods in the renewable energy sector.

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.

7	3	8				9		
5				2		1	7	
	9	4			8			
9	1			7				
4								5
		2					3	1
	1			6		5		
8	5		1					6
	7			9		8	4	

SOLUTION (15.6.26)

5	3	8	6	2	1	9	7	4
7	4	2	5	9	8	3	1	6
1	9	6	7	3	4	2	8	5
9	8	3	4	1	6	5	2	7
6	7	1	3	5	2	4	9	8
2	5	4	8	7	9	6	3	1
8	1	5	9	4	3	7	6	2
4	2	9	1	6	7	8	5	3
3	6	7	2	8	5	1	4	9

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

TUESDAY | JUNE 16, 2026

ACROSS

4 Being badly led, sir, they do nothing effective (6)

7 Early form of knitted garment? (8)

8 The only time one and two don't make three (6)

10 Can be sung when taking in air, possibly (5)

13 Lion wrapped in a sort of cloth! (4)

14 A little lake in a quiet part of London (4)

15 The way a pupil can cry (4)

16 Wait in mimicry (3)

17 State there's nothing but a hothead at Number Ten! (4)

19 A home or treatment centre beside the

DOWN

1 An abandoned fight? (5)

2 Mischievous bairn, but with intellect (5)

3 They may cover optics (4)

4 Being taken along as one goes to a new town (2,3)

5 A keeper's right (4)

6 Turn back, or always right around (6)

9 Richard, in slow motion as Victor Meldrew? (6)

11 Deprive Roy? (3)

12 Are out to cheat, love (5)

13 Seek a game to play with a fork (4,3)

15 A sound you could make with a cup (3)

sea (4)

21 Two garments in one? (5,4)

23 Though lordly, he's one's equal (4)

24 Only one tooth? A bit of a farce, simply useless! (4)

26 In Snowdonia at present (3)

27 There's not much in potato mashing (4)

29 As opposed to Windsor? (4)

32 Mark this borough as a resort (4)

33 Good people say it (5)

34 The more competent assembly worker (6)

35 Down-trodden, the poor fellow went first (8)

36 Suit that cannot be worn, like pumps (6)

16 Mercator's pet? (3)

18 Maybe a chore for a poet (6)

20 Quick to grow old in outer Ecuador (5)

21 In life, we don't get many! (3)

22 One functions mechanically in the part of Escamillo (3)

23 Contrarily, I'm this when rude! (6)

25 Fabulous flier from far Oceania (3)

28 For a start, you can mince them! (5)

30 Do you hunger to get your feet under it? (5)

31 Nelson Eddy's donkey (5)

32 Expert activist in the arts? (4)

33 Is it fun to eat? (4)

SOLUTION (15.6.26)

ACROSS	21, Sower	DOWN	1, Can-dle	19, Box
7, Eventual	22, F-ix-ed	21, Single-d	2, O-lives	20, We-D
8, Fine	23, (first) Base	22, F.I.E.	3, Seen	21, Single-d
10, Driven	26, FA-gin	4, An-Do-ver	5, Tub-er	23, Bun-yan
11, For-E-st	28, Cup	6, P-late	8, Film	24, Apex
14, Let	30, Ho-nest	9, Nel	9, Net	25, E-state
16, Ver-ne	31, On-y-K	12, Re-D	12, Re-D	27, Glas
17, Ems	32, Ta-sterful	13, S-nag-S	15, (the) T-wel	28, Con
19, Bowed	33, Dan-ube	18, Local		30, Hold

Bihar liquor seizures rise 11% in first 5 months of 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Patna

The Bihar Police on Monday said liquor seizures in the dry state rose by 11 per cent in the first five months of 2026, with more than 17.5 lakh litres of alcohol worth nearly ₹141 crore seized during the period.

According to a statement issued by the Police Headquarters, a total of 56,904 persons were apprehended between January and May this year in connection with the liquor seizures.

An average of 3,50,677 litres of liquor were seized per month between January and May this year, compared to 3,14,610 litres per month during the corresponding period in 2025, it said.

The total seizure till May stood at 17,53,333 litres, comprising 8,01,537 litres of country-made liquor and 9,51,796 litres of Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL).

The estimated value of the confiscated liquor is ₹140.95 crore, the statement said.

The increase in seizures has been attributed to enhanced surveillance and stricter enforcement of prohibition laws across the state, where the sale and consumption of alcohol have been banned since 2016.

Kamrup: SDLAC meeting reviews land settlement proposals across revenue circles

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Guwahati

The Sub-Divisional Land Advisory Committee (SDLAC) meeting chaired by the District Commissioner of Kamrup, Deba Kumar Mishra, was held on Monday at the conference hall of the Integrated District Commissioner's Office to review proposals relating to land settlement and allotment across the district.

Rangia MLA Bhabesh Kalita, Hajo-Sualkuchi MLA Prakash Chandra Das, and Palashbari MLA Himangshu Shekhar Baishya participated in the meeting and engaged in detailed discussions on constituency-specific land settlement and allotment proposals.

During the meeting, the circle officers presented proposals and status updates pertaining to their respective



THE CIRCLE OFFICERS PRESENTED PROPOSALS AND STATUS UPDATES PERTAINING TO THEIR RESPECTIVE REVENUE CIRCLES

revenue circles. The proposals were reviewed in detail, with discussions focusing on streamlining the land settle-

ment process and addressing issues requiring administrative attention.

The meeting was also attended by Additional District Commissioner (Revenue) Pranjit Kumar Deb, co-district commissioners, circle officers, representatives of the MLAs, concerned departmental officials and other members of the SDLAC.

BRIDCUL (ब्रिडकुल)

Ref : 940/ BRIDCUL - 844 (Elect)/ 26
E-Tendering (2nd Call)
Dated : 15/06/2026

On behalf of Hon'ble, Governor of Uttarakhand, E-Tenders are invited by Managing Director BRIDCUL, from the Contractors registered with any Govt./Semi Govt./PSU/Nigam in suitable Class & Category for the works given as below :-

S. No.	Ref. No.	Name of Project	Estimated Cost (In Lac Including GST)	Earnest Money (In Lac)	Cost of Tender Document (In Rs.)	Time Period
1	BRIDCUL/HQ DDD/09/2026-27	SITC of 13 Passenger MRL Lift Admin & Academic Block at CIPET Doiwala Distt. Dehradun.	37.48	0.75	5000 + 18% GST	18 Month

For above tenders, document download start date is 16.06.2026 and Bid submission end date is 30.06.2026 at 1500 Hrs. The details of e-tender of above works can be obtained directly from website <https://uktenders.gov.in>. Changes, if any will be intimated only through website <https://uktenders.gov.in>.
DGM (HQ)



BRIEFLY

England loses another pacer for second test against NZ



England lost another fast bowler for its upcoming second cricket Test against New Zealand at The Oval with Ollie Robinson ruled out with a knee injury. Robinson took 7-77 overall in the series opener, which England won by 115 runs, and his absence comes after England captain Ben Stokes and teammate Gus Atkinson were dropped Wednesday from the squad while they are under investigation following an incident in a nightclub. Pacer Atkinson cleaned up New Zealand's second innings in first Test with figures of 5-30 to clinch a hard-earned victory. Robinson will stay with the squad and undergo rehab work on his knee ahead of the third and final Test, starting June 25 at Trent Bridge. Uncapped Henry Crocombe has been called up as cover. The England and Wales Cricket Board are looking into what it described as "a breach of team protocols" when Stokes and Atkinson were on a night out - following first-test win at Lord's last Sunday - during which a member of England's security staff was reportedly struck by a rugby player from English club Saracens. (AP)

Iran's World Cup experience less joyful amid war: Taremi



Iran captain Mehdi Taremi says his team is having a challenging World Cup experience amid the multifold disruptions created by their nation's war with the U.S., the tournament's co-host. The Iranians arrived in the Los Angeles area on Sunday from their training base in Tijuana, Mexico, just over the US border - about 140 miles (225 kilometres) from the stadium where they will open group-stage play against New Zealand on Monday night. Iran's training camp was relocated from the US after the war began, and the Iranian team has endured numerous distractions since then, including visa problems. "I have felt the tension from the first moment we arrived at this World Cup," Taremi said through an interpreter. "At any tournament when there is tension, we won't have the same beautiful experience we always talk about with peace and joy. ... I know it wasn't just us. I know several countries had visa problems and changes with training camps. Before we arrived, the feeling, the sensation people always have, how they look forward to the World Cup, I think this time maybe they haven't had the same feeling." The U.S. attacked Iran on Feb. 28, and the initial missile strikes killed its Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. (AP)

Havertz sparks Germany's 7-1 rout of Curacao

KRISTIE RIEKEN ■ Houston

Kai Havertz scored two goals as Germany pulled away from World Cup first-timer Curacao late in the opening half and piled on after that in a 7-1 win Sunday in a group match. Livano Comenencia tied it at 1-1 with his left-footed shot through traffic from the center of the box in the 21st minute to give Curacao its first goal in the tournament and send fans of the tiny Caribbean nation into a frenzy.

It was all Germany after that with the four-time champions regaining the lead on Nico Schlatterbeck's header off Nathaniel Brown's corner kick in the 38th minute.

The margin of victory comes well short of the World Cup record of nine goals which has happened three times, with the last one coming when Hungary beat El Salvador 10-1 in 1982.

Havertz connected on a penalty shot into the left goal in first half stoppage time to make it 3-1. Germany was awarded the penalty shot after Felix Nmecha was tripped in the box by Riechedly Bazoer.

Germany wasted no time after



halftime to extend the lead with Jamal Musiala scoring on a right-footed shot across the goalkeeper's area in the 47th minute.

Brown scored in the 68th minute to push the advantage to 5-1 and Deniz Undav added a goal in the 78th.

Havertz's second goal came in the 88th minute. It was a strong start for Germany against underdog Curacao as the team seeks redemption after failing to get out of the group stage in Russia and Qatar following its 2014 title.

Nmecha one timed it with his

right foot into the near post just inside the upper box with an assist from Florian Wirtz in the sixth minute to make it 1-0.

The crowd of 68,021 was overwhelming rooting for Germany but there was a spirited contingent of people cheering on Curacao as it became the smallest country to ever appear in the tournament.

It was the first match of the tournament at Houston Stadium, normally called NRG Stadium where the NFL's Houston Texans play.

Manuel Neuer, the 40-year-old goalkeeper who came out of international retirement for the tournament, had one save in his first appearance for Germany in almost two years.

The match featured the largest age gap between coaches in World Cup history with Curacao's 78-year-old coach Dick Advocaat becoming oldest ever in the tournament against 38-year-old Julian Nagelsmann, who is the youngest coach in this year's tournament. Germany faces Ivory Coast in its next match in Toronto on Saturday and Curacao meets Ecuador Saturday in Kansas City. (AP)

UEFA head criticised for comments on expanded World Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Ljubljana (Slovenia)

UEFA President Aleksander Ceferin was criticised Sunday by soccer governing bodies in Asia, Africa and the Caribbean for allegedly saying the expanded 48-team World Cup creates uninteresting matches. The associations of Cape Verde, Congo, Curacao, Haiti, Jordan and Uzbekistan issued a joint statement they said was in solidarity with the federations of Algeria, Egypt, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Senegal, South Africa and Tunisia.

"Football does not belong to a select group of nations. Its strength comes from its universality," the statement said. "For many countries, participation in the FIFA



World Cup is not only a sporting achievement. It is a moment that inspires a generation, accelerates football development and creates memories that last a lifetime."

The statement didn't cite the comment by Ceferin. He was quoted by the Slovenian websites Zurnal 24 and Dosi

as remarking on the subject last Monday at a conference in Ljubljana.

"We have a huge number of matches that are completely uninteresting," he said, according to Zurnal 24, while adding the expansion allows small countries to participate and experience the tournament's excitement.

Lamine Yamal declared fit to make his debut against Cape Verde

JAMES ROBSON ■ Atlanta

Lamine Yamal is in "ideal condition" to play in Spain's World Cup opener against Cape Verde on Monday, coach Luis de la Fuente said.

Yamal is not expected to start the game in Atlanta, but has been cleared to play in his return from a hamstring injury that forced the teenaged superstar to miss the final weeks of the season for Barcelona.

"We are following the indications of medical staff from Barcelona, his club, and also from the Spanish national team, with the fitness coaches. Everything says that Lamine Yamal is ready to play tomorrow," de la Fuente said at a news conference. "We don't know how much. It is a matter of how the game is



evolving, the game situation, that gives you a hint of when he might jump on the pitch, but he is in ideal condition to play tomorrow."

Yamal has established himself as arguably the brightest emerging talent in Europe after helping Spain win the European Championship in 2024,

despite only turning 17 on the eve of the final.

Now 18, he is widely regarded as the player most likely to take over from Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo as soccer's biggest star. His popularity in the United States has been evident during the opening days of the World Cup. (AP)

Daichi Kamada's late header gives Japan draw against Netherlands

SCHUYLER DIXON ■ Arlington

Daichi Kamada and his Japanese teammates were minutes away from a World Cup-opening loss that wouldn't have been unexpected considering the opponent.

His tying goal will be remembered for a long time in his homeland, especially if the country with some soccer momentum reaches the round of 16 again.

Kamada scored on a header off Koki Ogawa's corner kick in the 88th minute, sending the Samurai Blue fans into a frenzy and giving Japan a 2-2 draw with the higher-



ranked Netherlands on Sunday.

While the Dutch extended their unbeaten streak to 17 games in group play, the orange-clad Oranje supporters were stunned by the late goal that left them at 21-2-11 in group play at the World Cup.

"Our players managed to be tenacious but at the same time be patient and just keep calm and finding and seizing an opportunity," Japan coach Hajime Moriyasu said through an

interpreter. His team reached the round of 16 for the fourth time in 2022 in Qatar.

Virgil Van Dijk and Crysencio Summerville scored off each post for Netherlands early in second half, while Keito Nakamura had a goal between those as part of a three-goal flurry in just 14 minutes. A mostly uneventful first half changed quickly after the break for a crowd evenly split at AT&T Stadium, the home of the Dallas Cowboys with retractable roof that offered relief from the muggy Texas heat, and the giant video board that fans had a hard time keeping their eyes off. (AP)

Sweden gets 2 goals from Yasin Ayari and pounds Tunisia 5-1

ETHAN WILCOX ■ Monterrey (Mexico)

Yasin Ayari scored twice and Sweden showed it belonged at the 2026 World Cup, pounding Tunisia 5-1 to move atop Group F. Alexander Isak and Viktor Gyokeres each had a goal and an assist, and Mattias Svanberg also scored for Sweden, which entered ranked 39th in the world and missed the 2022 World Cup after reaching the quarterfinals eight years ago in Russia.

Omar Rekik scored for 45th-ranked Tunisia, which is playing



in its seventh World Cup but has never advanced beyond the group stage. The higher-ranked teams in the group, the Netherlands and Japan, played to a 2-2 draw earlier Sunday at Arlington, Texas.

Ayari bookended the scoring for the Swedes at Estadio BBVA with long-range goals in the seventh minute and in second-half stoppage time. He was muted in his celebration of the first goal, raising his hands out of respect for the country where his father was born.

Isak scored his 18th

international goal in 30th minute when Gyokeres found Liverpool striker - who was sidelined much of last season with a broken leg - on counterattack. Isak cut inside and fired a low shot past the hands of Tunisian goalkeeper Mouhib Chamakh. After Reikik stalled Sweden's momentum with his goal in 43rd minute, Isak and Gyokeres put Sweden back in control. Isak stole the ball and found Gyokeres for a one-on-one against Chamakh that the Arsenal striker won easily for his 16th goal in his last 15 appearances for Sweden.

Diallo lifts Ivory Coast past Ecuador 1-0 in World Cup



AARON BRACY ■ Philadelphia

Amad Diallo scored in the 90th minute to lift Ivory Coast to a 1-0 victory over Ecuador in its first World Cup appearance in a dozen years. The teams combined to hit the crossbar three times before the Manchester United winger - who entered as a substitute in the 56th minute - broke through with a left-footed shot from just inside the penalty area that beat diving goalkeeper Hernan Galindez. Wilfried Singo set up

a strong run down right side. Making its fourth appearance in the World Cup and first since 2014, Ivory Coast took a step toward reaching the knockout stage for first time. Ecuador saw its 19-game unbeaten streak end with its first loss since a 1-0 decision against Brazil on Sept. 6, 2024. Elye Wahi hit the crossbar in the 52nd minute for Ivory Coast after Ecuador's John Yeboah and Nilson Angulo did the same in the opening half.

Ecuador, making its fifth World Cup appearance and looking to reach the knockout round for the second time, was playing a virtual home game at Lincoln Financial Field, with most of the crowd of 68,274 wearing the yellow jerseys of La Tri. Ecuador's best chance after halftime came in the 68th minute on Gonzalo Plata's hard shot from about 25 yards out that was parried away by goalkeeper Yahia Fofana. (AP)

GM Guha tops regional qualifier for Esports Nations Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Riyadh

Indian Grandmaster Mitrabha Guha topped the regional qualifiers to book a place in the Indian chess contingent for the Esports Nations Cup here in November, joining compatriot Nihal Sarin in the squad. Sarin had secured a direct invitation through the Champions Chess Tour (CCT) Leaderboard. Chess at ENC will feature 128 players competing for a prize pool of USD 600,000 (₹ 5.7 crore). The competition will begin on November 2 and conclude with the playoff final on November 8. The ENC will run till November 29.

The first stage will consist of all 128 players competing in a round-robin group stage featuring 16 groups of eight players each. The second stage



will see 64 players advance to a single-elimination playoff bracket. Of 128 participants, 64 players received direct invitations through the official CCT rankings, ensuring representation from 64 different countries and territories.

India rally to beat USA 3-2 in Nations Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Auckland

The Indian women's hockey team staged a remarkable comeback to clinch a 3-2 win over the USA in its opening Pool A match of the FIH Nations Cup here on Monday.

For India, Deepika netted a brace while Navneet Kaur also scored. Ashley Sessa and Madeleine Zimmer were on the score-sheet for the USA. The winner of the Nations Cup will be promoted to the elite Pro League, from which India were relegated last season.

The USA got off to a great start and opened the scoring through Ashley, who found the back of the net with a field goal in the fourth minute.

The Americans doubled their advantage just three minutes later when Madeleine Zimmer (7) converted a penalty corner to put India under early pressure. Trailing by two goals, India



gradually began to assert themselves in attack.

Their efforts paid off in the second quarter when drag-flick specialist Deepika (17) successfully converted a penalty corner to reduce the deficit and bring India back into the game.

The momentum continued to shift in India's favour as they

earned another penalty corner midway through the quarter.

Deepika (24) stepped up once again and successfully converted another penalty corner to level the score at 2-2.

India maintained the pressure and completed a stunning turnaround before half-time.



Sri Lanka pull off chaotic superover win over India A

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dambulla

Sri Lanka A finally found a way to get over the line against India A following a Super Over in an emotionally charged tri-series game here on Monday.

Tempers flared after Kugathas Mathulan, the Sri Lanka pacer with a slinging action, was able to keep calm under pressure and defend 16 runs against the destructive Indian duo of Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Suryansh Shedge.

Physical contact too happened as Sooryavanshi was seen pushing a Sri Lankan player following the dramatic finish. It was surprising that Sooryavanshi did not face the first ball of the Super Over.

In regulation time, left-arm pacer Arshad Khan bowled a yorker filled final over to take the game into the Super Over after Sadeera Samarawickrame's sublime 91 to put Sri Lanka A on the cusp of victory.

Arshad, who played for Gujarat Titans in the IPL, conceded just four runs in the final over in which the hosts



needed only five runs. Post the tie result, confusion prevailed over the outcome of the game with India A captain Tilak Varma pushing the umpires to carry on with the game via a Super Over. After due deliberation, the umpires had a change of heart and decided to take the game

into a Super Over. However, the Super Over bowled by Arshad turned out to be expensive as he leaked 16 runs including a wide and no ball.

Mathulan was able to keep calm under pressure and defend successfully against the destructive Indian duo,

which managed only nine. Earlier, Sooryavanshi (21 off 14) once again got out after a flying start but spin bowling all-rounders Suryansh Shedge 72 off 66 and Vipraj Nigam (51 off 49) hit timely fifties to take the visitors to 265. Sri Lanka A, who had gifted India A the game with a late batting collapse in the

series opener, learned from that outing to take the game deep.

It was India A's second loss in the competition, having also gone down against Afghanistan A.

Sooryavanshi (21 off 14 balls) started by smashing pacer Chamika Gunasekara for a six and couple of boundaries but

off-spinner Sahan Arachchige got one to slightly drift wide of his hitting arc and the southpaw hit across the line to spoon it towards point. Tilak Varma (23) and his in-form deputy Ruturaj Gaikwad (32) added 52 for the third wicket in 9 overs but the Sri Lankan spinners made a comeback on a slowish track.

From 91 for 2, a middle-order slump had India tottering at 143 for 7 once off-spinner Vijaykath Vijaykath beat Gaikwad with an off-break to trap him plumb in-front.

Tilak was dismissed when he tried to smash slinger Kugathas Mathulan through point only to be caught by the fielder stationed there.

However, Mumbai's Shedge and UP's Nigam — two multi-skilled players, who are on national selectors' 'targeted list' added 104 runs for the eighth wicket, indicating the depth coming through pathways structure.

Both are capable batters and have done well for their respective state sides in the domestic white ball events. It only helps Indian cricket that they are frontline spinners too.

Neeraj Chopra to return to action at Doha Diamond League



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Fit-again Indian javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra will return to competitive action at the Doha Diamond League on June 19. The 28-year-old has been recuperating from a back injury which has prevented him from competing so far in the season.

"First throw of 2026 lands in Doha! Neeraj Chopra returns to competitive action on June 19," his management firm Vel Sports announced on Instagram.

Chopra is a late addition to the event as his name was not in the list announced by

the organisers on June 12. In May last year, the two-time Olympic medallist India had breached the coveted 90m mark at the same venue. He had recorded 90.23m to finish second behind Julian Weber (91.06m) of Germany.

Chopra was on Sunday named in India's athletics squad for the upcoming Commonwealth Games, subject to achieving the Athletics Federation of India's (AFI) qualifying standard of 82.61m. The Doha Diamond League was to be originally held on May 8 as the season-opening event but was postponed due to West Asia conflict.

West Indies beat Sri Lanka by 5 wickets to clinch the T20 series in Jamaica



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kingston (Jamaica)

Sherfane Rutherford reached his half-century in the last over of a dramatic run chase as West Indies completed a series-clinching five-wicket win with two deliveries to spare in the third Twenty20 international against Sri Lanka. Rutherford was unbeaten on 54 from 40 deliveries and Jason Holder clobbered three sixes in the penultimate over, finishing 21 not out off five balls as West Indies reached 170-5 in reply to Sri Lanka's 169.

Two costly missed catches during Rutherford's innings hurt Sri Lanka's chances of taking the series after the first two games were split. West Indies went into the

deciding game with an attacking focus, deciding to bowl first after winning the toss.

Shamar Joseph (5-33) backed up the decision by snaring five wickets to contain Sri Lanka's innings in a player-of-the-match performance.

West Indies won the first T20 by seven wickets and Sri Lanka won the second by 37 runs on Saturday, leaving the series in the balance. Sri Lanka's innings: Joseph took two wickets in the sixth over and three in the last over of Sri Lanka's innings — twice missing hat-trick opportunities.

Matthew Forde took a stunning one-handed catch off his own bowling to remove Kusal Mendis (5) on the ninth delivery of the match. Sri Lanka accelerated to be

49-1 after five overs, then Joseph struck with wickets on consecutive balls in the sixth. Pathum Nissanka hit 26 from 17 deliveries until he top-edged a catch to Roston Chase to end the 43-run second-wicket partnership. Joseph then trapped Pavan Rathnayake lbw on the next delivery.

Dunith Wellalage anchored a lower-order rally for Sri Lanka that was undone when Wanindu Hasaranga (21 off 13 deliveries) was run out in the 19th over, ending a 49-run partnership for the seventh wicket. Wellalage was the first of three wickets to fall in the 20th, posting 43 from 28 deliveries in a run-a-minute innings.

West Indies chase: After losing



Shai Hope on third delivery of the run chase, bowled by Wellalage, West Indies raced to 52 before losing three

wickets for one run in a 12-ball span that swung momentum back in Sri Lanka's favour.

WEST CENTRAL RAILWAY

OPEN TENDERS, ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT

E-tender on behalf of the president of India acting through Sr. Divisional Engineer (Co-ordination), Divisional Railway Manager (work) West Central Railway, Jabalpur for the following work:- NIT No.: DRMW/JBP-94-2026 Dated: 11/06/2026. Name of work with location: Zonal contract for maintenance works for the Railway service Building, staff quarters and supply of building material for year 2026-27 for the section of SSE/Works/SGO under Assistant Divisional Engineer Sagar Sub division. Approx cost of the work (Rs.): 89,39,877/-, Earnest money (In Rs.): 180000/-, MIT No.: DRMW/JBP-95-2026 Dated: 11/06/2026. Name of work with location: Zonal contract for maintenance works for the Railway Building/ Stations and Railway quarters etc. and supply of building material for year 2026-27 for the section of Senior Section Engineer (Works) Damoh under Assistant Divisional Engineer Damoh Sub division. Approx cost of the work (Rs.): 79,99,957/-, Earnest money (In Rs.): 160000/-, for all above tender Completion Period: 12 Month, for all above tender Last date & time of submission of tender (up to 15:00 Hrs. on): 07/07/2026, for all above tender Tender to be opened at 15:15 Hrs. on: 07/07/2026. The complete information of the above 'e-tender' is available on website "https://ireps.gov.in" and also placed on notice board of the Divisional Railway Manager (Works) Office, West Central Railway, Jabalpur. Tenders other than in the form of e-bids shall not be accepted against above tenders.

Sd/-
Divisional Railway Manager (Works), West Central Railway, Jabalpur

स्वच्छ भारत अभियान एक कदम स्वच्छता की ओर

मध्य प्रदेश राज्य पर्यटन विकास निगम मर्चा.

पर्यटन भवन, भद्रमदा रोड, भोपाल-462003
फोन : +91-755-4027100, 2774340/42, www.mpstcd.com
क्रमांक 278/यात्रिकी/पविनि/26 दिनांक : 15.06.2026

निविदा सूचना 238/2026_STDC_51953_1

मध्य प्रदेश राज्य पर्यटन विकास निगम भोपाल द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ऑनलाइन (Online) निविदा प्रपत्र APPENDIX 2.10 पर म.प्र. लोक निर्माण विभाग में उपयुक्त श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से आमंत्रित की जाती है। कार्य का नाम: श्री जागधरनाथ लोक बांदकपुर (फेज-2) जिला दमोह में संस्कृत विद्यालय प्रवेश द्वार में स्टीन क्लैडिंग, शांति कॉम्प्लेक्स, टॉयलेट निर्माण, आंतरिक एवं बाहरी विद्युतीकरण एवं फायर फाइटिंग के कार्य (14 माह) कार्य की लागत राशि रु. 1090.80 लाख। वेबसाइट पर ऑनलाइन भुगतान कर निविदा प्रपत्र (टेण्डर डॉक्यूमेंट) वेबसाइट के माध्यम से क्रय किये जा सकते हैं। निविदा प्रपत्र ऑनलाइन क्रय करने की अंतिम तिथि 06.07.2026 समय सायं 05:00 बजे तक निर्धारित है। कार्य का विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट <https://mptenders.gov.in> पर देखा जा सकता है।
म.प्र. माध्यम/126396/2026 कार्यपालन यंत्री

PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE

ICICI Home Finance Registered Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai - 400051
Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai - 400059
Branch Office: 2nd Floor, Shop No. 3, 142, Sotaryam Palace, New Road, Opp Balaji Hotel, Do Batti, Ratalam - 457001

Whereas The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under section 13 (12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued demand notices upon the borrowers mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

As the borrower failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on the below-mentioned dates. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of ICICI Home Finance Company Limited.

The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Sr. No.	Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Loan Account Number	Description of property/ Date of Possession	Date of Demand Notice/ Amount in Demand Notice (Rs.)	Name of Branch
1.	Maheesh Rathore (Borrower), Pooja Rathore (Co-Borrower), Rawati Ratalam Madhya Pradesh 457001 Ratalam Madhya Pradesh 457001. LHRAT00001612251.	Residential House Panji No. 83/1, Survey No 734/6, Khata No 168, Ph No. 5, Nayan Road, 2 Gram Raoti, T District Ratalam, M Madhya Pradesh- 45700. Bounded By- North: Property of Mr. Gopal Kasera, South: House of Mr. Bherulal, East: Road, West: Land of Mr. Hemraj And./ Date of Possession: 11-06-2026	07-11-2025 Rs. 77,05,486.5/-	Ratalam

The above-mentioned borrowers(s)/ guarantors(s) are hereby given a 30 day notice to repay the amount, else the mortgaged properties will be sold on the expiry of 30 days from the date of publication of this Notice, as per the provisions under the Rules 8 and 9 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002.
Date : June 16, 2026
Place: Ratalam
Authorized Officer
ICICI Home Finance Company Limited

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.

Corporate Office: Office Nos. 501 & 503, 5th Floor, Lightbridge, Saki Vihar Road, Andheri East, Mumbai Suburban (District), Maharashtra-400072
Sohore Branch: Office No-05, 1st Floor, Tamrakar Mall, Commercial Plot No-15, Sharda Nagar, Sehore-466001, (MP).

POSSESSION NOTICE Appendix IV (for immovable property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice(s) issued by the Authorized Officer of the company to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Sub-Section (4) of the Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement rules, 2002. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of AHFL for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon.

S. No.	Name of the Borrower(s)/Co-Borrower(s) (Name of the Borrower)	Description of Secured Asset (Immovable Property)	Demand Notice Date & Amount	Date of Possession
1	(Loan Code No. 14210000117 / Sehore Branch) Sachin Chouhan (Borrower) Kajal C/o Sachin Chouhan (Co-Borrower)	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, Khasra No. 495/13, Gram Amlaha, Tehsil Iccchawar, Dist Sehore. Boundaries:- East - House Of Arjun Chauhan, West - 15 Ft Wide Way, North - Land Of Arjun Chauhan, South - House Of Ashwapal Chauhan	12-04-2025 & ₹ 8,65,697/-	12-06-2026

Place : Madhya Pradesh
Date : 16.06.2026
Authorised Officer
Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

कार्यालय नगर परिषद् पलेरा जिला टीकमगढ़ (म.प्र.)

क्र० लो.नि.वि./निविदा/2026/949 // निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना // पलेरा दिनांक 12.6.2026

निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु केन्द्रीय ई-रजिस्ट्रेशन प्रणाली से पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से ऑनलाइन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है। निविदा का विस्तृत विवरण विभाग की वेबसाइट www.mptenders.gov.in पर पर देखा जा सकता है। नये कार्य का विवरण निम्नप्रकार है।

क्र.	टेंडर क्रमांक जारी दिनांक	कार्य का नाम एवं स्थान	कार्य का समयावधि एवं लागत	निविदा प्रपत्र का मूल्य एवं ईएमडी	निविदा की अंतिम तिथि
1	2026 UAD_515481 15/06/2026	Design and build sewage treatment plant of installed capacity 2.0 MLD and all appurtenant structures and allied works. Construction of Interception Diversion Structure near outfall point. Construction of RCC sump well along with providing and installing pumps and pumping main Comprising of DI-K7 class pipe of 300mm diameter having length of 100m respectively from Sump well to S.T.P. Reuse of treated Used Water - Hydram, Sump well (Capacity 43 KL), Pipe & pumps 50 mtr. of length towards nallah & Plantation of 110 avenue trees, RCC Structure and nallah channelization 2100-meter length. Providing and laying of HT Feeder and Electrical Substation	12 माह 61938000/-	20000/- 309690/-	20/07/2026

नोट:- निविदा में किसी भी प्रकार के संशोधन का प्रकाशन ऑनलाइन www.mptenders.gov.in की वेबसाइट पर ही प्रकाशित किया जावेगा। पृथक से समाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशन नहीं किया जावेगा। मुख्य नगर पालिका अधिकारी नगर परिषद् पलेरा, जिला-टीकमगढ़ (म.प्र.)

बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र Bank of Maharashtra

पुस्तक पर कार्य करने वाला

ZONAL OFFICE : 1/14, ADMINISTRATIVE ZONE, ARERA HILLS, BHOPAL, 462011.

WHEREAS, POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule - 8 (1)]

The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of Maharashtra under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, and in exercise of the powers conferred under Sub-Section (12) of Section 13 read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002, issued a Demand Notice dated mentioned below calling upon the borrower and guarantor to repay outstanding Amount (mentioned below) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Notice. The notice was sent by Regd AD Post and hand delivery.

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, the undersigned has taken possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under section 13 (4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules on dates mentioned below. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of Bank of Maharashtra, Concerned Branch for an amount herein above mentioned. The borrower's attention is invited to the provisions of sub-section 8 of Sec 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name & Address of Borrowers & Guarantor (s)	Details of Property	Demand Notice Dt	Outstanding Amount ₹
Borrower : M/s S R R Group of Hotels Address :- Koteswar Road, DP 40-3 Chand Nagar Near Vinay Nagar, Gwalior, M.P.-474003 Prop.- Mr. Sonu Rajput S/o Mr. Kamlesh Singh Rajput Borrower & Guarantor: 2. Mr. Sonu Rajput S/o Mr. Kamlesh Singh Rajput Co-Borrower & Guarantor: 3. Mr. Priyanka Kirar W/o Mr. Sonu Rajput Address of All: (1) Koteswar Road, DP 40-3, Chand Nagar, Near Vinay Nagar, Gwalior, M.P.-474003 (2) Flat No. 205, 02nd Floor, Nainagiri Apartment, Khurje Wala Mohalla, Ward No. 44, Lashkar, Dist. Gwalior, M.P.-474001	Gola Ka Mandir Gwalior Branch : Gwalior 1) All that piece and parcel of a residential plot whose adm. area 600 square feet situated within patwala halka No. 70, falling under Village Ajaypur, Dist.- Gwalior within the limits of nagar nigam ward No. 65. The said plot forms part of land bearing Survey Nos. 832, 834, 836, 837, 838, 840/1, 848, 849, 850, 851 (Min-2), 866, 839, 842, and 867. The plot is situated off the main road Boundaries: East: Plot others, West: road 16 feet left open, North: Plot others, South: Land of the Seller, This property is owned by Mr. Sonu Rajput s/o Mr. Kamlesh Singh Rajput Cersai Asset ID -200104828995 2) All that piece and parcel of residential Flat No. 205 whose admeasuring area 41.20 sq. mtr. on the 02nd Floor of the Building "Nainagiri Apartment" Khurje Wala Mohalla bears Municipal Corporation Ward and Building Property No. 44/233 and is presently situated in Ward No. 44 and the said property is constructed on Plot No. 152 and 153, Lashkar, Dist. Gwalior Boundaries: East : 08 feet wide road, West : Plot of Omwati Verma, North : Pataur of Jeevanlal, South : Pataur of Ramesh Ojha, This property is owned by Mr. Sonu Rajput s/o Mr. Kamlesh Singh Rajput. Cersai Asset ID -200095985064	31/03/2026 12/06/2026	₹ 3,090,089.13 + Unapplied Interest at applicable rate + other Charges w.e.f. 31/03/2026
Borrower : Mr. Rajendra Jain S/o Mr. Shankar Lal Jain Co-Borrower : Mrs. Saroj Jain W/o Mr. Rajendra Jain Address of Both : Ward No. 14 in front of Dr. Chandra Shekhar Sharma Krishnapuram Colony Shivpuri Tehsil-Shivpuri, Dist - Shivpuri, M.P.-473551	Shivpuri Branch : Shivpuri All those pieces and parcels of house along with land situated at Krishnapuram Colony Shivpuri Ward No. 14, Shivpuri Tehsil & District Shivpuri (M.P.). The total area of the said property is 412.06 sq. ft. (38.33 sq. meters) and said plot of forming part of Survey No. 855 Boundaries: East : 08 feet wide road, West : Plot of Omwati Verma, North : Pataur of Jeevanlal, South : Pataur of Ramesh Ojha, This property is owned by Mr. Rajendra Jain S/o Mr. Shankar Lal Jain. Cersai Asset ID -200095985064	07/04/2026 11/06/2026	₹ 1,180,286.36 + Unapplied Interest at applicable rate + other Charges w.e.f. 07/04/2026

Date : 12.06.2026
Place : Gwalior/shivpuri
(Amreet Kumar Mishra)
Chief Manager & Authorised Officer, Zonal Office Bhopal