

**PAGE 7
NATION**

Assault on human dignity: Rahul on atrocities against labourers in UP factory



**PAGE 10
LAW & JUSTICE**

Supreme Courts of India, Russia sign MoU on judicial cooperation

PAGE 11: BUSINESS
India's FY27 growth likely to slow down to 6.6%: S&P



**PAGE 12
GLOBAL**

Russia, India working to boost bilateral trade



**PAGE 15
SPORTS**

Munoz scores, Colombia edges Congo to reach knockout stage at World Cup



Passport not proof of citizenship: MEA

Passport remains a travel document and not be treated as conclusive proof of citizenship

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Amid growing public discussion over documents that can establish Indian citizenship, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Wednesday clarified that a passport is primarily a travel document and should not be treated as conclusive proof of citizenship.

The clarification was made by a senior ministry official while outlining the Government's passport services expansion and efforts to improve international mobility for Indian citizens.

"The passport remains a travel document and not a document of citizenship, as it attests the nationality of Indians when they are abroad," the official said, adding that passports are issued only after extensive verification based on records and inputs from multiple Government agencies.



the position under the Citizenship Act, 1955, which determines citizenship based on statutory criteria rather than possession of any single identity document.

Under the law, persons born in India between January 26, 1950 and June 30, 1987, are citizens by birth. For those born between July 1, 1987 and December 2, 2004, at least one parent must have been an Indian citizen at the time of birth. For individuals born on or after December 3, 2004, one

parent must be an Indian citizen, and the other must not be an illegal migrant.

As a result, documents such as passports, Aadhaar cards or birth certificates may serve as supporting evidence but may not, by themselves, conclusively establish citizenship in disputed cases.

Courts have also distinguished identity documents and proof of citizenship. In a 2013 judgment, the Bombay High Court held that the possession of passports, Aadhaar

cards and birth certificates alone was insufficient where applicants failed to establish that they satisfied the citizenship requirements prescribed under law.

The ministry said nearly 1.5 crore passports and related services were delivered in 2025, including the issuance of around 1.39 crore passports. Passport infrastructure has expanded significantly over the last decade, with the number of passport service centres increasing from 77 to

545 across the country. Ten new Post Office Passport Seva Kendras were opened last year, while another 10 are scheduled to become operational this year.

According to the ministry, passport applications are currently processed within six working days, excluding the time taken for police verification. The average time spent by applicants at Passport Seva Kendras and Post Office Passport Seva Kendras has been reduced to less than 45 minutes.

The Government also highlighted improvements in international travel access for Indian passport holders.

The number of countries offering visa-free entry to Indians has increased to 27 from 16 in 2019. Indian citizens currently have access to visa-on-arrival facilities in 47 countries and e-visa arrangements in 66 countries.

Officials said mobility and migration agreements signed with several countries, particularly in Europe, have eased travel for students, researchers, apprentices, tourists and business professionals while creating formal mechanisms for the return of illegal migrants.

HEAVY RAIN PARALYSES MUMBAI



A commuter navigates a waterlogged road after heavy rainfall inundates several parts of the city in Mumbai on Wednesday

Iran invites PM Modi to Khamenei funeral

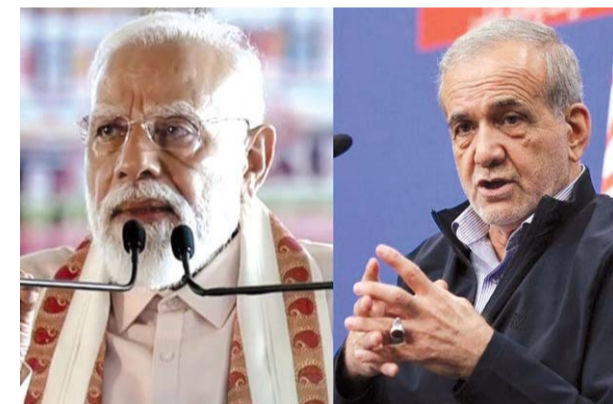
ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has extended a formal invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to attend the burial ceremonies of the late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, according to diplomatic sources.

The multi-day State funeral is scheduled to be held from July 5 to July 9 across key Iranian cities. Sources said there has been no confirmation yet from the Indian side regarding the Prime Minister's participation. No official word has been issued so far by the Prime Minister's Office or the Ministry of External Affairs, sources said.

Khamenei, who guided Iran for nearly 36 years, was killed on February 28 during the opening day of intense US-Israeli airstrikes on Tehran. His death came amid escalating regional conflict that has reshaped West Asian geopolitics.

The funeral programme, as shared by Iranian officials, includes official cere-



monies and public mourning events in Tehran and Qom on July 5, 6 and 7. The final burial rites in the holy city of Mashhad on July 9.

The invitation was conveyed through diplomatic channels, with the Iranian Embassy in New Delhi reaching out to the Ministry of External Affairs. India had conveyed its condolences soon after Khamenei's demise, with senior officials expressing grief over the veteran leader's passing.

Experts said the Indian Government is currently

weighing its response, keeping in view India's strategic interests in the region and its relations with Iran, Israel and the United States. Any decision on high-level representation will be taken after careful assessment of the evolving situation.

The ceremonies are expected to draw heads of state and senior dignitaries from several countries. New Delhi's choice of participation or representation will be closely watched for signals on India's diplomatic balancing act in the volatile West Asian theatre.

AI flight enters Pak airspace on go-around, returns safely

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

An Air India flight operating from Delhi to Amritsar reportedly strayed into Pakistani airspace on Monday night while carrying out a go-around manoeuvre at Amritsar airport on June 22. The aircraft, an Airbus A321 (Flight AI-479), safely returned to Indian airspace after receiving a warning from Lahore Air



Traffic Control (ATC) and later landed in Amritsar after a brief diversion back to the national capital.

According to the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), interim action has been taken against the concerned Air traffic controller at Amritsar and the operating crew for non-reporting of the event pending an investigation.

PM takes stock of cybercrime cases, flags digital arrest acams

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday reviewed complaints about cybercrime and digital arrest scams. He expressed concern about the growing misuse of digital platforms for cheating. He said these cases require a coordinated, timely response from all involved, and citizens should not have to go from one agency to another for help.



During the review, the Prime Minister said there should be clear responsibility, quicker responses, and better teamwork between

law enforcement, banks, and digital platforms. He pointed out that acting quickly in cyber fraud cases can help prevent financial losses and rebuild trust in digital systems. The key takeaway is that speed and coordination are essential. The Prime Minister asked all concerned agencies to work closely together to improve every step, from preventing and reporting cybercrimes to investigating and resolving complaints.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Shiv Sena (UBT) to loose Parliament office

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ New Delhi/Mumbai

A very precarious situation has arisen for the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena, which has lost six of its Lok Sabha MPs to the rival Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena recently.

The Thackeray-powered Shiv Sena, which has seen several ministers in NDA regimes once upon a time and nonetheless also a

Speaker in Lok Sabha (late Manohar Joshi), will be without an office space/chamber in the Parliament House complex.

The Thackeray faction on Wednesday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to share the demands submitted to him by the six rebel MPs of the party who have joined the Shinde-led party.

Apart from losing office space, the reduced parliamentary presence may also



affect Shiv Sena (UBT)'s role in national political consultations, as parties with less than five MPs are not invited to all-party meetings convened by the Centre on key legislative and national issues. The allotted office in the Parliament House complex will have to be vacated by the UBT Shiv Sena due to a reduction in its Parliamentary strength, Parliament sources said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

ED probes LeT funding link in Mundra drug haul

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

On Wednesday, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) searched five locations in Delhi as part of a money-laundering investigation. Authorities are looking into claims that money from the 2021 Mundra Port heroin seizure was used to fund the Pakistan-based group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

The searches targeted places linked to Delhi businessman Harpreet Singh Talwar, also known as Kabir Talwar, who runs several nightclubs, and another location connected to someone named Shamshudeen. The opera-



tion was carried out under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) after new information suggested that drug money was invested in Delhi's entertainment and hospitality businesses.

Talwar was arrested by the National Investigation

Agency (NIA) in August 2022 for his alleged role in this case and was recently granted bail by the Gujarat High Court. Since then, authorities have increased their focus on his suspected involvement in laundering drug money through legal

businesses. These recent raids mark a major step forward in what officials call a narco-terrorism investigation. In September 2021, the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) seized 2,988.21 kilograms of high-quality Afghan heroin at Mundra Port in Gujarat's Kutch district.

The shipment, worth about ₹21,000 crore on the international illegal drug market, came through Iran, hidden in a load of semi-processed talc stones, which are used in many industries. The NIA later called this a "test case" for smuggling drugs into India disguised as regular commercial imports.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

MINOR RAPE-MURDER CASE

3 cab apps under Delhi Police lens

KHUSHI MEHROTRA ■ New Delhi

Delhi Police plan to send formal notices to three major app-based cab companies, asking for detailed records about how they hired and verified Bashu Kumar Singh, the 29-year-old accused of raping and murdering an 11-year-old girl in Mehrauli, south Delhi. This move aims to find out how he was able to work as a driver.

This action comes just days after Bishu was quickly arrested, raising serious questions about background checks in the ride-hailing industry. Investigators said Singh, originally from Bihar and living in



Gurugram, had worked as a cab driver on several platforms in the Delhi-NCR area for almost 10 years, despite a known criminal record.

Early Monday morning, around 5 am, the young girl was taken from the pavement at CDR Chowk in



Mehrauli while she was sleeping with her family. Bishu allegedly drove her away in his cab, sexually assaulted her, strangled her, and left her body in a forested area along the Gurugram-Faridabad road.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



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CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander



PIONEER IN SHORT

AI-INDIGO FACE-TO-FACE ON SAME RUNWAY

A potentially catastrophic runway incursion was narrowly averted on Wednesday evening at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad, where an IndiGo aircraft taxiing for departure and an Air India flight on final approach came dangerously close on the same runway. The incident occurred around 6:30 PM when the IndiGo flight was taxiing out for a departure to Mumbai, while the Air India aircraft (operating flight AI2493 from Mumbai to Ahmedabad) was landing.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Madhya Pradesh aims high in race towards developed India



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday said Madhya Pradesh is committed to making a significant contribution to India's journey towards becoming a developed nation by 2047 and has set a target of contributing nearly \$2 trillion to the country's projected \$30 trillion economy.

Addressing a conclave on the theme "Developed Madhya Pradesh" in Bhopal, Yadav said transformational change is possible only when supported by a strong vision and determination. He credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for bringing about a new era of growth and global recognition for India. He noted that several countries have honoured the Prime Minister with their highest civilian awards and said India is progressing steadily towards the vision of a developed nation.

The Chief Minister said Madhya Pradesh is continuously working to fulfil the

goals of service, good governance and public welfare. He added that the state is now counted among the fastest-growing regions in the country and is advancing on the path of both heritage preservation and development.

Remembering Rani Durgavati on her martyrdom day, Yadav paid tribute to the legendary queen and said her sacrifice would always inspire future generations.

Highlighting the state's economic progress, Yadav said Madhya Pradesh has witnessed sustained growth over the past three years. The state has developed a large land bank for industrial expansion and implemented transparent, industry-friendly policies to attract investors. Its central location in the country provides a major advantage in terms of connectivity and logistics, he added.

The Chief Minister said the state government has placed special emphasis on infrastructure development, particularly road connectivity in

all directions, to facilitate industrial growth and investment.

Referring to the Global Investors Summit 2025 held in Bhopal, Yadav said the event attracted unprecedented investment commitments and resulted in the signing of several MoUs. He stated that investment proposals worth Rs 10 lakh crore have already begun taking shape on the ground.

Yadav also highlighted Madhya Pradesh's emergence as both an agriculture-driven and industry-friendly state. He noted that the government had dedicated 2025 to industry and employment generation and recently launched a Space-Tech Policy to encourage innovation and technology-led growth.

Inviting industrialists to explore investment opportunities in the state, the Chief Minister said Madhya Pradesh offers a conducive business environment and remains committed to becoming one of the country's leading economic growth engines.

MSME summit to showcase entrepreneurship on June 27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Madhya Pradesh will mark International MSME Day 2026 with the "Empowered Entrepreneurs, Prosperous Madhya Pradesh Summit" at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal on June 27. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will participate in the event, which is being organised by the Department of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

MSME Minister Chaitanya Kashyap and Chief Secretary Anurag Jain will also attend the summit. Industry Commissioner Dileep Kumar said the Chief Minister will oversee land allotments, foundation stone-laying ceremonies, inaugurations and distribution of financial assistance to MSME, startup and self-employment beneficiaries.

The summit will feature

buyer-seller meets for enterprises engaged in food processing, textiles and apparel, and engineering sectors. Yadav will also inaugurate an MSME exhibition and an Ease of Doing Business Clinic.

Around 50 exhibition stalls will showcase MSMEs, startups, departmental initiatives, e-commerce platforms, One District One Product (ODOP) schemes, women self-help groups and institutions such as CIPET Bhopal, MSME Technology Centre Bhopal, Bureau of Indian Standards, GeM and NITTR. Representatives of banks and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority will also participate.

During the main session, Principal Secretary Raghendra Kumar Singh will deliver the welcome address. Short films highlighting achievements and future plans of MSME-related departments will be screened.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav flags off the public awareness vehicle at the "Safe Click 2.0" cyber security campaign program at Ravindra Bhawan in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

40 coaching centres face fire safety notices

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The Bhopal Fire Department has launched a city-wide inspection drive to assess safety arrangements at coaching institutes, uncovering significant violations of fire and emergency safety norms at several establishments.

The inspections, conducted under the supervision of Fire Officer Saurabh Patel, were initiated following recent incidents in coaching centres in different parts of the country that raised concerns over student safety.

Officials said the department has begun the process of issuing notices to more than 40 coaching centres found violating safety regulations. During inspections,

authorities identified shortcomings including inadequate ventilation, insufficient emergency exits and the absence of mandatory safety-related documents.

The department also found that large advertising hoardings installed outside some coaching centres were obstructing ventilation and could pose additional risks during emergencies by hindering evacuation and rescue efforts.

In a major action, the fire department has initiated proceedings to seal a branch of the coaching institute Physics Wallah after allegedly detecting serious deficiencies in fire safety compliance and required documentation. Officials indicated that similar action could be taken against other institutes if violations

are not rectified.

While many coaching centres were found to have installed fire-fighting equipment and operational fire safety systems, officials stressed that compliance cannot be limited to equipment alone. Adequate ventilation, clear evacuation routes and adherence to all prescribed safety standards are equally essential to ensure the safety of students and staff.

Fire Officer Saurabh Patel said a detailed inspection report is being prepared and further action will be decided based on the findings. He reiterated that student safety remains the department's top priority and warned that strict measures would be taken against institutions failing to comply with mandatory safety norms.

Four held for morphed video of minor girl, BLO among accused

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

Ujjain's Panwasa police have busted a gang accused of morphing a minor girl's photograph into obscene videos and circulating them on social media in an apparent attempt to defame her. Four people, including a woman Booth Level Officer (BLO), have been arrested, while one accused remains absconding.

The case came to light after the victim's father lodged a complaint on June 21, alleging that three objectionable videos carrying his daughter's image had been circulated in village and community WhatsApp groups. The videos triggered rumours that the girl featured in them was his daughter,

causing serious damage to her reputation.

During the investigation, police found that the girl shown in the original videos was not the victim. Instead, the accused had allegedly taken screenshots from obscene videos of another woman and digitally superimposed the minor's photograph onto them. Cyber cell investigations revealed that the victim's passport-size photograph had been obtained from documents submitted during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise in November 2025. Police alleged that BLO Fakhrunisha, also known as Baby, misused her official position and shared the photograph with co-accused Ehsan Patel through WhatsApp.



Members of Dawoodi Bohra community mourn during a holy procession on the occasion of Muharram, in Bhopal on Wednesday. Pioneer photo

Patel calls for timely completion of tribal welfare works

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Governor Mangubhai Patel on Wednesday emphasised the need for greater sensitivity in the implementation of welfare schemes and called for strict quality monitoring of infrastructure projects being executed in tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh.

Chairing a review meeting at Lok Bhawan, Patel said the success of government schemes depends not only on their intent but also on practical and effective implementation. He noted that the quality of construction work is primarily a technical matter and should not be assessed solely on the basis of beneficiary feedback. He directed officials to establish standard quality-monitoring parameters and conduct regular inspections and testing of construction materials and



completed works.

During the meeting, the Governor reviewed the progress of infrastructure and beneficiary-oriented schemes being implemented under the PM-JANMAN initiative and the Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan. Officials presented updates on various projects being executed by multiple departments in tribal-dominated regions. Patel said both schemes are

sickle cell eradication campaign, Patel said the target is likely to be achieved by 2026, a year ahead of the 2027 deadline. He congratulated the departments involved and called for special attention to the health management of sickle cell patients and carriers up to the age of 15 years.

The Governor also stressed the need to ensure uninterrupted availability of medicines and advocated greater public awareness about the use of Ayurvedic remedies alongside allopathic treatment. He further called for the preparation of tehsil-wise maps of basic facilities in tribal regions, participation of tribal youth in Jan Aushadhi Kendras and separate toilet facilities for girls and boys in schools.

He urged officials to adopt a mission-mode approach for accelerating development in tribal-dominated regions of the state.

Katara Hills murder solved, accused arrested in Bhopal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Police have solved the murder of a young man whose decomposed body was found near a culvert in the Katara Hills area last month, arresting the accused who allegedly killed the victim after a dispute stemming from an attempted sexual assault.

According to Katara Hills police, the victim's body was discovered on May 24 near Ecological Park. Due to the advanced state of decomposition, identification took time. The deceased was later identified as a Bhopal resident employed at a factory in Mandideep.

A post-mortem examination revealed severe head injuries, prompting police to register a murder case and launch an investigation. During the probe, officers found that the victim's mobile phone was missing. Tracking the device led police to a person who claimed to have purchased it from Ajay Maina.

Based on this lead, police detained Maina for questioning. During interrogation, the

accused allegedly confessed to the crime.

Police said Maina told investigators that on the night of the incident he was roaming in search of a companion and encountered the victim, who was reportedly under the influence of intoxicants. He allegedly offered the victim food and later took him beneath a culvert near the crime scene.

Investigators said the accused attempted to force himself on the victim. When the victim resisted, Maina allegedly attacked him with a stone, causing fatal head injuries. The victim died on the spot. The accused then fled after taking the victim's mobile phone.

During questioning, Maina also revealed that he had spent time in New Market and VIP Road areas before the incident. Police said he has a prior criminal record and had earlier been jailed in connection with a similar offence.

The accused has been arrested and medically examined. Police are collecting further evidence and continuing the investigation before producing him in court.

BHEL honours retiring employees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), Bhopal, organised a farewell ceremony for its retiring employees at the Administrative Building on Tuesday. Executive Director Pradeep Kumar Upadhyay felicitated the employees and appreciated their dedicated service and contribution to the organisation.

The employees who retired from service include Raghendra Shukla, General Manager (Medical); Pradeep Kumar Naik, General Manager (Finance); J. Rajagopal, Additional General Manager (SYX); D.K. Toppo, Manager (TCL); S.K. Borse, Officer; Makris Kerketta, Engineer; along with five supervisors.

Addressing the gathering, Upadhyay extended his best wishes to the retirees and encouraged them to make the second innings of their lives meaningful and fulfilling. He urged them to focus on good health, remain active and enjoy life with their families.

General Manager (Human Resources) T.U. Singh was also present on the occasion.

Bhind Police launches 15-day cyber safety awareness drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhind

In a bid to curb the rising menace of cybercrime and promote digital safety awareness, Bhind Police on Wednesday launched a 15-day special campaign titled "Safe Click 2.0 (SAFE CLICK-2026)". The initiative, being conducted under the direction of Superintendent of Police Suraj Kumar Verma, will run from June 24 to July 8 across both urban and rural areas of the district.

Launched in accordance with directives issued by the Madhya Pradesh government and Police Headquarters, the campaign aims to educate citizens about the safe use of the internet, smartphones and other digital platforms. Police officials said developing the habit of "cyber hygiene" among citizens is a key objective of the drive, given the increasing incidence of online fraud and cyber-related offences.

During the campaign, police teams will conduct awareness programmes, seminars and outreach activities at schools, colleges, coaching institutes, banks, gram pan-

chayats, marketplaces and government offices. Citizens will be informed about emerging cyber threats and preventive measures.

The campaign will focus on creating awareness about cybercrimes such as OTP fraud, SIM swapping, sextortion, mule accounts, digital arrest scams, hacking, identity theft, phishing, cyberstalking, cyberbullying, privacy breaches, child exploitation, circulation of obscene content, data theft, fake job and loan scams, investment fraud and website defacement.

Additional Superintendent of Police Pradeep Patel has been appointed the district nodal officer for the campaign, while all sub-divisional police officers and station house officers will oversee activities in their respective jurisdictions.

Police also highlighted the importance of the "golden hour" in cases of online financial fraud. Officials said immediate reporting within the first hour significantly increases the chances of freezing fraudulent transactions before the money is withdrawn or transferred further.

Eshan bags AIR 15 in CA Inter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Indore

Eshan Mangal of Bhopal has brought laurels to Madhya Pradesh by securing All India Rank (AIR) 15 in the Chartered Accountancy (CA) Intermediate Examination.

Following the announcement of the results, Eshan attributed his success to disciplined preparation, a well-planned strategy and consistent effort. He said he had charted out a clear study plan soon after clearing the CA Foundation examination and divided the nine-month preparation period into different phases.

According to Eshan, he spent the first four months completing all Group-II subjects along with Taxation. He then shifted focus to Group-I subjects while simultaneously beginning revision. The final two-and-a-half months were dedicated exclusively to intensive revision and practice. Eshan said Taxation initially appeared challenging, but repeated study of provisions helped him gain confidence in the subject. He added that he used mnemonic techniques taught by his teachers to simplify Audit and improve retention.

Traders warn of growing illicit trade in digital retail market

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Retailers, trader associations and policymakers gathered in Bhopal on Tuesday to discuss the growing challenges posed by illicit trade and unfair market practices, with participants expressing concern over the increasing circulation of counterfeit products and the impact of aggressive pricing strategies by quick commerce and e-commerce platforms.

The seminar, titled "Confronting Illicit Trade in Modern Markets", was organised by the Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRAI), Madhya Pradesh State Chapter. Participants said counterfeit goods, illegal distribution channels and non-compliant products are causing significant damage to genuine businesses, government revenues and consumer trust.

The event was attended by BJP Bhopal district president Ravindra Yati, Bhopal Management Association vice-president Ram Girish Dwivedi, Bhopal Municipal Corporation MIC member R.K. Baghel, advocate and legal consul-

tant Umesh Dwivedi, along with representatives of various trader and retail bodies from across the state.

Speakers highlighted that the rapid expansion of quick commerce and e-commerce platforms has transformed retail by making products readily accessible to consumers. However, they warned that deep discounting, flash sales and aggressive pricing models have also created opportunities for counterfeit and illicit products to enter the market.

Retailers noted that a wide range of products, including groceries, personal care items, electronics and premium mobile phones, are now delivered within minutes. While convenient for consumers, they argued that the race for lower prices and faster deliveries has made it difficult to distinguish genuine products from counterfeit ones.

Ratnesh Upadhyay, president of Path Vikreta Ekta Sangh Madhya Pradesh, said small retailers and kirana stores form the backbone of local economies but are increasingly struggling against unfair competition and predatory pricing practices.

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Rain lashes MP as delayed monsoon finally arrives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

The southwest monsoon finally entered Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, ending a prolonged wait and bringing much-needed relief from scorching temperatures and humidity across several parts of the state. The monsoon arrived nine days later than its normal onset date of June 15 and advanced into Balaghat, Chhindwara, Betul, Khandwa and Burhanpur districts.

With the monsoon's arrival, rainfall activity intensified across many regions, while the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued alerts for thunderstorms, lightning, strong winds and rain in 42 districts. Meteorologists have predicted that the monsoon will cover the entire state within

the next three to four days. According to weather scientist Arun Sharma, favourable atmospheric conditions have accelerated the monsoon's progress after a delayed onset. He said the system is expected to move rapidly and spread across all districts in the coming days.

During the past 24 hours, rain and thunderstorm activity was recorded in 39 districts. Indore, Jhabua, Alirajpur, Dhar, Burhanpur, Barwani, Khandwa, Khargone, Ujjain, Neemuch, Mandsaur, Ratlam, Agar-Malwa, Shajapur, Dewas, Bhopal, Raisen, Sehore, Rajgarh, Vidisha, Gwalior, Morena, Datia, Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar, Jabalpur, Katni, Chhindwara, Pandhurna, Seoni, Balaghat, Mandla, Sagar, Niwari, Tikamgarh, Satna and

Anuppur witnessed varying degrees of rainfall and gusty winds. Hailstorms were also reported from parts of Balaghat district.

In Bhopal, weather conditions changed dramatically during the day, with heavy showers reported from Berasia Road, Lambkheda and several other localities. Water accumulated on roads in low-lying areas, while dense cloud cover and cooler winds brought significant relief from the heat. The rainfall also led to a drop in temperatures across the capital.

Indore experienced intense rainfall during the afternoon as dark clouds engulfed the city. Several areas received heavy showers, leading to water-logging on roads and slower traffic movement. Residents welcomed the change in weather after days of uncom-

fortable humidity.

The monsoon's arrival has been particularly encouraging for farmers. In Harda district, rainfall accompanied by thunder and lightning signalled the beginning of the kharif season. Farmers have started preparations for sowing soybean, maize and other crops, although agricultural experts noted that more widespread and sustained rainfall is needed before large-scale sowing begins.

In Shajapur, the delayed arrival of the monsoon transformed the weather, with overcast skies and intermittent showers throughout the day. Weather experts estimate that continuous and heavy monsoon rainfall in the district may begin within the next five to seven days.

However, not all districts have received the monsoon

yet. Damoh continues to wait for substantial rainfall despite increasing cloud cover. Farmers and residents remain concerned as June draws to a close without significant precipitation. Meteorologists, however, expect the monsoon to reach the district soon.

The weather department has forecast continued rain and thunderstorm activity in Bhopal, Sanchi, Bhimbetka, Ujjain, Indore, Dewas, Sehore, Shajapur, Khargone, Harda, Pachmarhi, Sagar, Damoh, Jabalpur, Katni, Neemuch, Mandsaur, Ratlam, Rewa, Mauganj and Singrauli, among other districts, over the coming days.

With the monsoon now active in the state, both farmers and residents are hoping for a season of timely and adequate rainfall after the delayed start.



Students cross a road amid monsoon rain in Bhopal on Wednesday.

Pioneer photo



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav pays tributes at the Rani Durgavati Samadhi site in Narrai Nala, Jabalpur on Wednesday.

CM seeks Rani Durgavati's name for Jabalpur airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Jabalpur

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday paid tribute to Gondwana queen Rani Durgavati on her 463rd martyrdom day and announced that the state government will send a proposal to the Union Civil Aviation Ministry to rename Jabalpur Airport after the legendary warrior queen.

Addressing a state-level programme at Rani Durgavati's memorial site at Narrai Nala near Jabalpur, Yadav described her as a symbol of indomitable courage, valour and sacrifice. He said Rani Durgavati's legacy continues to inspire generations and remains a source of pride for Madhya

Pradesh and the nation.

The Chief Minister recalled that after the death of her husband, Rani Durgavati assumed responsibility for the Gondwana kingdom, placing her five-year-old son on the throne and dedicating herself to protecting the region and serving her people for 15 years. He noted that she successfully defended her kingdom against Mughal forces and remains one of India's most revered warrior queens.

Yadav said a dedicated institution in honour of Rani Durgavati is being developed near Madan Mahal in Jabalpur at a cost of Rs 100 crore and will be inaugurated soon. He added that a zoo and wildlife rescue centre named after the queen are also being developed in

Jabalpur, while the 35th Battalion in Mandla has already been named in her honour.

Highlighting her contributions beyond warfare, the Chief Minister said Rani Durgavati's reign represented the golden age of the Gond kingdom. He credited her with promoting water conservation, crop rotation, seed preservation and agricultural development, which helped ensure prosperity and food security in the region.

Yadav also outlined several farmer-centric initiatives of the state government, including flexible timelines for repayment of interest-free agricultural loans, enhanced compensation for land acquisition and continued support

through welfare schemes. He said the government remains committed to tribal welfare, agricultural development and inclusive growth.

Public Works Minister Rakesh Singh and several other leaders present at the event also praised Rani Durgavati's contribution to governance, water management and the protection of self-respect and sovereignty. Earlier, the Chief Minister paid floral tributes at the queen's memorial and offered prayers at sites associated with the Gond community's cultural heritage.

Yadav said the state government is committed to preserving and promoting the legacy of tribal heroes through dedicated institutions, memorials and public awareness initiatives.

CM remembers Rani Durgavati

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav paid tribute to warrior queen Rani Durgavati on her martyrdom day, describing her courage, valour and military leadership as a golden chapter in India's glorious history.

In a message issued on the occasion, Yadav said Rani Durgavati displayed extraordinary bravery in defending her motherland and successfully challenged Mughal forces through her determination and battlefield skills. He said her supreme sacrifice for the nation continues to inspire generations and remains etched in history as a symbol of patriotism, courage and selfless devotion to the country.

Police launch cyber safety drive

Dewas: Dewas Police has launched a 14-day cyber awareness campaign, "Safe Click 2.0," to combat the growing threat of online fraud, digital arrest scams and fake investment schemes. The district-level campaign is part of a statewide initiative of Madhya Pradesh Police and was inaugurated at the Superintendent of Police office in Dewas.

Superintendent of Police Puneet Gehlot, CSP Sumit Agrawal and other senior police officials were present at the launch. The campaign has been introduced following the success of the earlier Safe Click drive, which signif-

icantly improved public awareness about cybercrime.

According to police, the previous campaign led to a sharp rise in cybercrime reporting, with monthly complaints increasing from around 54 to between 150 and 200. Timely action on these complaints helped authorities facilitate the recovery of approximately Rs 3.60 crore lost in cyber fraud cases, benefiting nearly 710 citizens. Police officials also stated that around 230 people were prevented from becoming victims of digital arrest scams and other forms of cyber fraud during the earlier campaign.

Farmhouse drug lab unearthed in Mandsaur

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mandsaur

In a major crackdown on illegal narcotics manufacturing, Mandsaur Police unearthed a clandestine MD (Mephedrone) drugs factory operating from a farmhouse near Bajkhedi village and seized synthetic drugs and chemicals valued at around Rs 14 crore in the international market.

During the raid, police recovered approximately 13.85 kg of MD drugs along with 9 kg of chemical substances used in the manufacturing process. Two accused, identified as

Sadak and Arif, were arrested from the spot, while another suspect managed to escape. Several other individuals are being questioned for their possible involvement in the racket.

According to police officials, the illegal unit was being run from a house located amid agricultural fields in a secluded area under the New Abadi police station limits. Acting on a tip-off, a police team conducted the operation and exposed what is believed to be a large-scale synthetic narcotics manufacturing setup.

Preliminary investigations

revealed that the accused sourced raw materials from outside the district and supplied the finished drugs both within Mandsaur and to other regions.

Police also seized machinery and equipment allegedly used in the production process, including large steel containers, a centrifugal machine, electric induction units, an electronic weighing scale, plastic drums, buckets, halogen lights and other materials. Investigators believe the equipment was used for processing, manufacturing and drying the synthetic drug.

BMC cracks down on property defacement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bhopal

The Bhopal Municipal Corporation (BMC) has intensified its drive against property defacement and littering, imposing penalties worth Rs 2.51 lakh in seven cases across the city and removing unauthorised publicity material from public places.

Acting on the directions of Municipal Commissioner Sanskriti Jain, civic teams conducted inspections in various areas and took action against individuals and organisations found displaying posters, banners, pamphlets and advertisement boards without permission on public property, including walls, electric poles and other public spaces.

The largest penalty of Rs 2 lakh was imposed on the operators of coaching institute Physics Wallah for allegedly installing advertisement boards without permission in

the MP Nagar area and other locations under Ward 45. Municipal teams also removed the unauthorised publicity material.

In another action, BMC officials penalised scrap dealers operating on 80 Feet Mandi Road under Ward 73 and Ward 80 for creating unhygienic conditions and defacing public property. Fines of Rs 40,000 and Rs 10,000 were imposed in the two cases.

Under Zone 9, municipal staff also took action in Ward 38 against a person found pasting handbills on walls without permission. A penalty of Rs 1,000 was imposed and the handbills were removed.

Officials said the campaign is aimed at maintaining the city's cleanliness and preventing unauthorised advertisements from damaging public property and urban aesthetics. The civic body has reiterated that permission is mandatory for displaying promotional material in public spaces.

Cab fares surge on Bhopal airport routes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhopal

Air travellers in Bhopal will now have to pay more for app-based cab services from Raja Bhoj Airport after ride-hailing platform Uber revised its fare structure following sustained demands from taxi drivers' associations.

The increase marks the first major revision in airport cab fares in nearly a decade. According to taxi union representatives, the minimum airport ride fare has increased from around Rs 50-60 to Rs 120-150, while overall airport ride charges have risen significantly across categories.

A trip from the airport to MP Nagar or DB Mall, which earlier cost around Rs 220-230 in the economy category, now costs approximately Rs 270-280.

Similarly, fares for longer routes have also gone up. A ride from the airport to Awadhपुरi, located around 24 km away, which previously cost about Rs 350, is now priced at around Rs 440-450 in the premium category.

Officials of the Bhopal Taxi Drivers' Association said Uber has implemented a partial fare revision, while changes in city ride fares are yet to be fully introduced. The association claimed that both Ola and Rapido have also agreed in principle to revise fares, with Rapido seeking time until June 25 to finalise the changes.

Taxi operators have argued that rising fuel costs, including petrol, diesel and CNG prices, have severely impacted drivers' earnings and made existing fare structures unsustainable. They maintain that

the revision is necessary to ensure a viable livelihood for drivers.

The association has issued an ultimatum to app-based cab companies, demanding implementation of revised fare structures by June 25. It has warned that failure to do so could trigger a boycott and protest by taxi and auto-rickshaw unions across the city.

Union representatives described the fare hike as a long-overdue relief measure, though they added that further revisions, particularly for city rides, are still required to address drivers' concerns adequately.

The fare revision is expected to provide some relief to drivers grappling with rising operational costs and shrinking earnings.

Singhar targets BJP over OBC quota

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mandla

Leader of Opposition Umang Singh on Wednesday intensified his attack on the Bharatiya Janata Party over allegations related to a purported land deal involving Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and his family, while also raising questions over the implementation of 27 per cent reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) in Madhya Pradesh.

Speaking during his visit to Mandla, Singhar alleged that the BJP was attempting to shield the Chief Minister by projecting him as an OBC leader. He questioned why the state government had failed to implement 27 per cent OBC reservation despite repeatedly claiming to

support the interests of backward communities.

Referring to former Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Singhar remarked that BJP leaders have long identified themselves as OBC representatives, yet the reservation issue remains unresolved.

The Congress leader also reacted to remarks made by Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, who had defended Mohan Yadav over the land controversy. Singhar dismissed the support, describing it as "Yadav solidarity."

The controversy relates to allegations that members of the Chief Minister's family purchased land in areas linked to development projects in Ujjain after he assumed office.

Villages near Gandhi Sagar put on flood alert

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mandsaur

Ahead of the 2026 monsoon season, the Water Resources Department has issued detailed flood preparedness guidelines for villages located along the Gandhi Sagar Reservoir, aiming to ensure public safety and minimise risks arising from potential flooding.

According to officials, all concerned officers and field staff have been directed to remain on high alert and strictly follow their assigned responsibilities throughout the monsoon period. The Executive Engineer of the Gandhi Sagar Dam Division said continuous monitoring of reservoir water levels and rainfall in the catchment area will be undertaken to

facilitate timely action. The Sub-Divisional Officer of Gandhi Sagar Sub-Division No. 1 has been instructed to submit water level and rainfall reports every four hours. These updates will be shared with the district administrations of Mandsaur and Neemuch, the Water Resources Department and the Flood Control Cell through multiple communication channels.

Authorities have also been directed to immediately alert district administrations if the reservoir level reaches 1,300 feet or if forecasts indicate heavy rainfall or storms. Flood management operations at the dam will be carried out in accordance with the approved operational rule curve and dam management manual, while

the Flood Control Cell will remain functional round the clock during the monsoon season.

Officials have been asked to warn farmers and residents carrying out activities in submergence-prone areas to shift to safer locations before heavy rainfall. Residents of villages likely to be affected when reservoir levels rise between 1,312 and 1,320 feet have been advised to stay vigilant and closely follow official advisories.

The administration said evacuation measures will begin if the reservoir level reaches 1,310 feet. Control rooms at tehsil, district and divisional levels will be activated to coordinate rescue and relief operations in the event of flooding.

Mahakal temple records Rs 142 crore income in FY26

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ujjain

The Shri Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain has recorded its highest donation collection in six years, with the temple management committee reporting total income of Rs 142 crore during the financial year 2025-26. Of this, Rs 78 crore was received through donations alone, reflecting the growing faith of devotees and a sharp rise in footfall following the development of the Mahakal Lok corridor.

According to temple authorities, donations increased by nearly Rs 27 crore compared to the previous financial year. The temple received around Rs 62 crore through donation boxes, Rs 5.5 crore through cash counters, Rs 3.6 crore via online donations, Rs 3.38 crore through the Annakshetra, Rs 4.65 crore as anonymous donations and

over Rs 1.23 lakh through money orders. Devotees also donated gold and silver ornaments worth several crores of rupees.

The temple earned an additional Rs 65 crore from the sale of laddu prasadi, making it one of the major sources of revenue for the shrine.

Officials attribute the sharp increase in donations and income to the inauguration of Mahakal Lok by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on October 11, 2022. Since then, the number of devotees visiting the temple has reportedly tripled. While the temple earlier received around 40,000 to 50,000 devotees daily, the average footfall has now risen to between 1.5 lakh and 2 lakh visitors per day.

Amid recent debates surrounding temple donations in the country, Assistant Administrator Ashish Palwadia said the Mahakaleshwar Temple

follows a transparent and well-defined protocol for handling donations. The temple has 95 donation boxes installed across the premises, while devotees also contribute through QR code-based digital payments.

Donation boxes are opened every week under strict security arrangements and transported to a counting room. The counting process takes place in the presence of designated officials, including inspectors and assistant administrators, and is monitored through CCTV cameras. Photography of the counting process is also carried out to ensure transparency.

Temple employees involved in counting donations are required to follow strict guidelines. They are permitted to enter the counting room only after wearing clothing without pockets or with sealed pockets to eliminate any possibility of

irregularities.

The transformation brought about by Mahakal Lok has significantly expanded the temple complex. Before the corridor project, the temple covered an area of 2.82 hectares. Following expansion, the campus now spans 47 hectares. The temple committee currently employs 306 staff members.

Temple officials said the growing income supports a wide range of activities, including staff salaries, security arrangements, cleanliness and maintenance, infrastructure development, religious events, accommodation facilities, the Annakshetra, the Mahakaleshwar Vedic Research Institute, the gaushala and cultural programmes. Additional expenditure is also incurred during major festivals such as Mahashivratri, Shrawan and Nag Panchami to provide improved

facilities for devotees.

As a result of the expansion and increased visitor numbers, the temple's monthly expenditure has also risen significantly, from around Rs 2.5 crore earlier to more than Rs 5 crore per month at present. Despite the higher operational costs, officials said the steady growth in donations and revenue has enabled the temple to enhance services and facilities for the millions of devotees who visit the shrine every year.

Temple officials said the increase in donations reflects the growing spiritual significance of Mahakal Lok as a major religious and cultural destination in the country.

The committee plans to utilise the funds for improving pilgrim amenities, strengthening infrastructure and enhancing facilities for devotees visiting the shrine throughout the year.

HINDUJA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
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Regional Office - 101-B, 1st Floor, NRK Business Park, Vijaynagar, Indore(MP) - 452010 Email - auction@hindujahousingfinance.com

Appendix IV - Possession NOTICE (for Immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Hinduja Housing Finance Limited (HHFL) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of power conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, Demand Notice (s) issued by 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 here by given to the Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described here in 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 change of HHFL for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon.

Name of Borrower/ Guarantor / Co-Borrower	Demand Notice Date Amount Due	Description of Secured asset (Immovable Property)	Date & Type of Possession
MP/KTN/SHDL/A000000295 Mr. NIKHIL SINGH Mr. NITIN SINGH THAKUR Mrs. SANGEETA SINGH	14-11-2024 Rs. 12,44,016/-	Mauja - Khirahani N.B No. 407 Patwari Halika No. 40 Murawra - 1 Ram Janki Ward No. -18 Tehsil & District Area - 1500 Sqft or 139.40 Sqrmt Boundaries - East - House of Sharam Ji, West - House of Seller, North - Road, South - Solid Araz of Co-Owners	22/06/2026 Physical
MP/JBR/STNA/A000000137 Mr. ASHWANI SINGH Mrs. RENU SINGH Mr. SHRAMIT KUMAR SINGH	11-07-2024 Rs. 40,86,579/-	Mauja Gram Badkhar PHN 95 Ward NO 12 Abdul kalam Azad Ward Vikash Khand Sohwal Kharsa No. 314/1, Tehsil Raghrajnagar Distt Satna (M.P) Total Area- 2187 Sq.ft. Boundaries - East - 20ft proposed Road & Nala, West - Ruchi Mishra Plot, North - Remaining Land of seller, South - Rekha Bharti Plot	18/06/2026 Physical
MP/MAN/MASR/A000000996 Mr. OMPRAKASH Gurjar Mrs. Nirmala Bai	14-06-2025 Rs. 431393/-	H No 15, W. No 15, PHN No 78, Drone Survey PNo 142, Village - Amadkhedhi, Nearby Shitla Mata Mandir, Neemuch, Madhya Pradesh, 458116	23/06/2026 Physical

Borrower(s)/Guarantor(s) are hereby put to caution that the property may be sold at any time herein after by way of public auction/tenders and as such this may also be treated as a notice under Rule 6, 8 & 9 of Security (interest) Enforcement Rules, 2002. Authorized Officer Mobile No. - Vaibhav Shrivastava - 7987969803, Rajesh Chakotiya (RRM) - 84355 71111, Sachin Bhalekar (ZRM) - 8779984037, Dharamveer Yadav - 8269420174, Divyank Shrivastava - 831 822 5992, Devanshu Tripathi - 84456 34447

Date: 25.06.2026 Authorised Officer, Hinduja Housing Finance Limited



IN FOCUS



People light 'diyas', earthen lamps, as they offer prayers on the occasion of 'Ganga Dussehra' festival, at the Durgiana Temple, also known as Sri Laxmi Narayan Mandir in Amritsar, Punjab on Wednesday. (PTI)

New storm in Punjab: CM Mann under fire over purported video

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi/Chandigarh

A fresh political storm has engulfed Punjab after allegations surrounding a purported video involving Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann triggered sharp reactions from political parties and Sikh religious bodies, with the BJP intensifying demands for his resignation and the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) rejecting the allegations as politically motivated.

Leading the attack, Delhi Minister and BJP leader Manjinder Singh Sirsa demanded action against the Punjab chief minister. Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra and former Delhi Minister Arvinder Singh Lovely also slammed Mann for disrespecting Sikh maryada and then misleading the Sikh community and the country by allegedly getting a false report prepared through payment, and sought his resignation. The latest escalation followed action by Gurugram Police, which registered an FIR and arrested two men in connection with an alleged conspiracy to obtain favourable forensic reports linked to the video.

The case stems from a complaint by a Haryana-based forensic and cyber investigation professional who alleged



that individuals claiming to represent senior Punjab Government officials attempted to influence forensic findings. Amid the video row, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann in Chandigarh rejected allegations that the forensic reports that gave a clean chit to him were fabricated and lashed out at the Opposition parties, alleging that they have joined hands to defame him.

In a video message, the AAP leader said that for the past several days, his fake videos were being released. "When they could not find anything, they tried to defame me on the religious front," he said, targeting the Congress, the BJP and the Akali Dal. He reiterated his stance that it was not him in the purported objectionable video, claiming that the person who is seen in the clip does not match his height

and physique. "By making that video viral, I was declared guilty," he said.

Addressing a press conference, Sirsa alleged that Punjab Police officers and persons linked to a private forensic laboratory colluded to produce a report declaring the video fake in an attempt to undermine the authority of the Akal Takht.

Earlier this month, the Akal Takht declared Mann "guru dokhi" (anti-guru) and "Khalsa panth virodhi" (anti-Khalsa panth) over the video purportedly showing a man resembling him indulging in objectionable activities with pictures of Sikh gurus and slain militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

Sirsa alleged that AAP leaders sought to discredit the findings of the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs instead of expressing remorse. "Instead of repenting for this sin he committed, their minister Harpal Cheema held a press conference on June 18 and said that this video is fake," Sirsa alleged. He claimed that Cheema had cited a forensic report based on the examination of 1,191 frames of the video and argued that it was not authentic. The BJP leader alleged that inquiries pointed to the involvement of Ludhiana Commissioner Swapna Sharma and SP Jashandeep Singh in getting the forensic reports changed.

CJP protest continues at Jantar Mantar over NEET paper leak



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

On the fifth day of the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) protest at Jantar Mantar, one of Delhi's best-known sites for public demonstrations, people, including student activists, police, CJP party members, and locals, gathered in the morning. They continued the protest with the same courage as in the previous four days, raising their voice against the NEET-UG exams and demanding justice for the 21 students who lost their lives due to the negligence of the authorities.

The protest also highlighted students' concerns that unfair means in examinations can seriously undermine their future and hard work, and they demanded the resignation of Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

At the venue, a significant police presence and several barricades were in place to maintain law and order. Despite the heavy security arrangements, the atmosphere remained peaceful and organised. Protesters carried banners with messages and slogans calling for transparency and fairness in the education system. Some participants also addressed the crowd and explained the reason behind the protest.

When people were asked about the protest's duration and whether it would succeed, they said they were confident it would succeed

and hoped it would end soon. When others were asked why they were participating, they said they were there to support the youth, as they are the country's future, and that it is their duty to support students and stand with them in this situation. Many protesters questioned the examination authorities, saying this paper leak has been ongoing for the past few years.

Many said that conditions in Government schools are compromised, and even basic facilities like washrooms and clean drinking water are hard to provide. Vacancies are very low compared to the number of students appearing for the exams. They also mentioned that private schools are unaffordable for everyone. Thus, concerns remain about the quality of education in the country.

The protest included participation from the Kisan Union and the AISF (All India Students Federation). It provided basic facilities such as food, water, and an open library service to participating students. The members of CJP raised slogans like "Inquilab Zindabad", "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", and calls for the minister's resignation.

Several students at the CJP protest alleged that they faced pressure from parents to discourage them from participating in the demonstration at Jantar Mantar, citing concerns about their safety.

Karnataka State Data Centre to remain shut for two days: Priyank Kharge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bengaluru

Karnataka's State Data Centre, which hosts a wide range of Government digital services, will remain temporarily shut down for two days to facilitate critical maintenance, infrastructure upgrades and security enhancement works, Minister Priyank Kharge said on Wednesday.

The temporary suspension is expected to affect the availability of some online Government services, including departmental web portals, citizen service systems, certificate-related online services, e-Office platforms and digital databases operated by various departments, according to an official release issued by the Information Technology and Biotechnology Minister's office. "This is only a temporary inconvenience. However, once the work is completed, the state's e-governance system



will be further strengthened," Kharge said.

The minister said the maintenance exercise was aimed at making Karnataka's digital governance infrastructure more robust, secure and capable of handling higher volumes of data and services.

"The Government is continuously investing in technology to provide better services to the public," he said.

Kharge noted that the usage of digital services in the state had increased significantly in recent years, necessitating improvements in data-processing capacity, cyber security, server performance and service reliability.

DDA issues fresh eviction notices in Kashmere Gate's Yamuna Bazar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) issued fresh eviction notices to residents of Yamuna Bazar in Kashmere Gate area, officials said on Wednesday.

The notice has been given to residents of the Ghats between 2 to 32 in the area to vacate the area voluntarily, failing which, a demolition drive will be undertaken to clear the "encroachment", the notice said.

"The residents of Yamuna Bazar Ghat No 2 to 32 are informed that as per the directions given by the National Green Tribunal to the Delhi Development Authority the floodplain area of River Yamuna falling under



the jurisdiction of DDA is to be freed from all types of encroachments," the notice dated June 23 said.

According to an earlier order of the Delhi High Court the affected families can avail the temporary

shelter (night shelter) of Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB).

The notice further lists out night shelters in nearby areas where the ones displaced can take shelter.

"If homes of the poor are

demolished in the name of development, families and children are forced to live on the streets, and children fall victim to exploitation, violence, or sexual crimes due to homelessness, would this be called development?," Sunil Aledia, member of Centre for Holistic Development (CHD), a social organisation working in the field said.

Last month also DDA and Delhi Disaster Management Authority, both had pasted similar eviction notices in the area.

The authorities have identified this area as 'O-Zone' along the Yamuna, which is designated as a protected, no-construction floodplain which is under the management of DDA.

FROM PAGE - 1

towards AAR, took a left turn and crossed the International Border (IB), resulting in a brief entry into Pakistani airspace. The aircraft was unable to follow ATC instructions during the manoeuvre and subsequently crossed the border.

Sources said the Airbus A321 departed Delhi at approximately 9.18 pm and, instead of landing at Amritsar's Sri Guru Ramdas Ji International Airport, drifted toward the international border into Pakistani airspace. Upon detection, Lahore ATC alerted the pilot, after which the aircraft executed a U-turn.

Instead of landing at Amritsar, the flight was diverted back to Delhi due to heavy air traffic. It later departed again from Delhi and landed in Amritsar at around 2.10 am on June 24.

The incident occurred because of heavy congestion at Amritsar airport. Multiple aircraft were asked to remain in a holding pattern before landing, prompting AI479 to execute a go-around after its approach. During the manoeuvre, the aircraft briefly entered Pakistani airspace before immediately returning to Indian airspace, sources said.

The development comes a month after a Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight briefly entered Indian airspace due to adverse weather before being guided back to its designated route by Indian air traffic controllers. While military tensions have eased between the two neighbouring countries, diplomatic relations remain strained, with both sides continuing with retaliatory measures introduced during the crisis.

ED probes LeT funding link in Mundra drug haul

The ED started a case under the PMLA soon after the heroin was seized. Since then, investigators have focused on following the money linked to the drug shipment. The latest searches are based on evidence that some of the proceeds from the sale were allegedly diverted to Delhi nightclubs run by Talwar and his associates. Investigators believe these investments helped launder illegal funds and may have generated money used for terror financing.

In its chargesheet, the NIA said that money from this heroin network was used to fund LeT's activities. The agency described the Mundra shipment as a trial run to see if large amounts of heroin could be smuggled into India using commercial routes. The NIA believes that if such shipments succeed, Pakistan-based terror groups could raise large, untraceable sums for recruitment, training, and buying weapons. This case shows how organised crime and terrorism can overlap. Drug trafficking gives groups like LeT a way to get money that is harder to track than hawala or foreign donations. By moving the money through businesses like Delhi nightclubs, the network allegedly tried to make illegal funds look legitimate while supporting terrorist operations abroad.

The ED's operation on Wednesday aims to locate documents and digital evidence related to these money flows. Officials are checking

bank records, property documents, and business transactions linked to the raided sites to see how the drug money was moved and mixed in. Security agencies have long seen the Mundra case as a worrying example of how Pakistan-based groups use drug trafficking to fund their activities.

Using commercial shipping routes and hiding heroin as industrial raw material shows how advanced these criminal networks are. Now that the ED is looking into the suspected investment of this money in Delhi's nightlife businesses, the investigation has reached an important stage focused on the financial systems behind terrorist activities.

More searches and questioning are expected soon as agencies try to trace the full path from the Mundra shipment to its final recipients. The investigation is ongoing and involves several agencies, with both the ED and NIA following leads about terror financing through drug trafficking.

3 cab apps under Delhi Police lens

Her family raised the alarm right away. Police filed a case under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for kidnapping, rape, and murder, as well as under the POCSO Act.

Within six hours, a team led by Mehrauli SHO Ritesh Sharma found and arrested Bishu in West Delhi while he was dropping off a passenger. Police used CCTV footage, local tips, and digital data, including GPS from cab apps, to find him. He was put to sustained interrogation and reportedly confessed to his crime and showed the police where the body was. The body was recovered and sent for a post-mortem at Safdarjung Hospital.

Registered in Bihar, including multiple charges of sexual assault and attempt to murder. Despite this record, he continued driving for ride-hailing apps. His cab was linked to at least two major aggregators, and police suspect he may not have undergone mandatory police verification. This raises further questions about oversight.

The notices sent to the three companies will ask for documents detailing how Bishu was hired, what checks were conducted, and why warnings about his criminal history were overlooked. Senior officers said the companies will be asked about their background check process for drivers with criminal records. Now, the focus is on how these companies check their drivers internally.

On Tuesday, while police took Bishu to the crime scene for reconstruction, he allegedly tried to escape by grabbing a policeman's pistol and firing it. Police shot back in self-defence and injured his leg. He was treated at Madan Mohan Malviya Hospital and is still in custody. This incident added another twist to the case. It has once again spotlighted vulnerabilities in app-based cab services, particularly regarding passenger and public safety when drivers with serious criminal antecedents are allowed to operate. With

forensic samples collected from the crime scenes and the post-mortem report awaited, the investigation continues to focus on both the crime and systemic lapses that enabled the accused to remain on the road.

"Delhi Police's action against the cab companies shows a push for stricter rules in an industry that moves millions of people every day. As the investigation continues, these notices could set an example for requiring real-time criminal background checks for all drivers on every platform", a police official said.

PM takes stock of cybercrime cases, flags...

He especially urged states to accelerate the adoption of e-Zero FIR systems so cyber fraud cases can be registered more quickly.

He said citizens must not be made to run from one office to another in their hour of distress. Digital arrest scams have emerged as one of the most vicious forms of cyber fraud. Impersonating police, CBI or other agencies, fraudsters trap victims in prolonged video calls, fabricate charges, and coerce them into transferring money under threat of arrest or asset seizure. Losses have run into hundreds of crores, hitting middle-class families, senior citizens and even educated professionals. The psychological trauma is often as devastating as the financial loss.

He called for stronger public awareness campaigns to educate citizens about the tactics used by such fraudsters and the steps they must take to protect themselves. The directives come at a time when cyber frauds continue to surge across the country, with digital platforms increasingly being misused by organised gangs operating from within and outside India.

The key takeaway is that awareness must keep pace with rising fraud. Because of this, the Prime Minister has called for stronger and ongoing awareness campaigns across the country. He also wants complaints to be handled quickly so victims get help without long delays.

The Prime Minister wants better coordination and clear responsibility to remove delays and confusion in handling complaints. Officials say e-Zero FIRs will help shorten the time between filing a complaint and starting an investigation.

When states implement this system, cyber financial fraud complaints made through the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal or the helpline 1930 will automatically be treated as FIRs. This will let law enforcement act right away. The review shows the Government is serious about making changes to fight cybercrime.

By focusing on prevention, quick responses, and putting citizens first, the Prime Minister has made his expectations clear for all agencies fighting digital fraud. With clear roles and deadlines now in place, the goal is a unified and efficient system that reduces losses and delivers justice faster.

NIA takes over Manipur ambush probe

The deceased, all from the Kuki community, have been identified as TBAI president Rev Dr Vumthang Sithhou (also former General Secretary of the Manipur Baptist Convention), TBAI finance secretary Rev Kaigoullun Lhouvum, and Pastor Paogoullun Sithhou. Four other occupants sustained bullet injuries in the attack, which occurred around 10 am and involved automatic weapons fired by around 10 armed men.

The Manipur Police had already registered a case on the day of the incident. The NIA's takeover comes amid demands from community organisations for a central agency probe into the targeted killing of prominent Christian leaders returning from a peace and reconciliation conference, or a Baptist convention, aimed at easing inter-community tensions.

In its order to the NIA, the Ministry stated that the case involved "ambush by armed miscreants to cause damage to the life and property of civilians and to create fear and terror in the society." It emphasised the gravity of the offence, its national ramifications, and the imperative to investigate any larger conspiracy. Against this backdrop, the NIA, India's premier counter-terrorism agency, has increasingly been tasked with probing serious incidents in Manipur's protracted ethnic conflict. Context of the ongoing violence

Since May 3, 2023, Manipur has faced ongoing ethnic violence between the Meitei community, mostly in the Imphal Valley, and the Kuki-Zo communities in the hills. The conflict began after a High Court order regarding the Scheduled Tribe status of the Meiteis. So far, at least 260 people have died, and more than 60,000 have been displaced.

Hundreds of villages have been burned, and both churches and temples have been damaged. Thousands of people have had to move into relief camps. Despite the presence of central paramilitary forces, the state still sees ambushes, retaliatory attacks, and abductions. The May 13 attack on church leaders from the Thadou tribe, a Kuki group, was especially shocking because it targeted people returning from reconciliation efforts.

By handing the case to the NIA, the Centre has shown it sees the ambush as more than just a local crime. It may be part of a larger pattern involving organised armed groups with wider connections. The agency will review forensic evidence, witness statements, and potential links to militant groups in the area. Leaders from the Thadou and Kuki-Zo communities have welcomed the NIA's involvement, hoping it will help identify and arrest those responsible.

The violence has put a strain on Manipur's social fabric. Churches, usually seen as neutral places, have also been targeted. Both communities accuse each other of ethnic cleansing and sheltering armed groups. As the NIA starts its investigation, many are watching to see if it can uncover the larger conspiracy mentioned in the Home Ministry's directive and help bring peace and accountability to the State.

Shiv Sena (UBT) to loose Parliament office

Under Parliamentary norms, separate office space within the Parliament House complex is allotted only to parties with five or more MPs.

According to sources, once the Lok Sabha Speaker formally recognises the merger of the six rebel MPs with the ruling Shinde faction, Thackeray's Sena will be left with only four Parliamentarians.

After meeting Birla, Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs Anil Desai and Arvind Sawant briefed the media that they requested the Speaker to "uphold the provisions of the Constitution" and sought a copy of the demands submitted by the rebels. "We asked him if he had received any appeal from the rebels." Sawant said, adding that the Speaker told them they had not received anything in writing from the rebel MPs.

Desai said they underlined before the Speaker that the Tenth Schedule is clear: "Any group of a legislature party cannot merge into some other party on its own, even if they have a two-thirds majority". He added that the Speaker would update them after checking details with his office if the rebel MPs had submitted anything in writing.

Sawant, Desai and Rajbhau Waje remains with the Thackeray's party, while Lok Sabha MPs Nagesh Aashitkar, Sanjay Deshmukh, Sanjay Jadhav, Sanjay Dina Patil, Omprakash Rajee Nimbalkar and Bhausaheb Wamchaure have shifted to Shinde's Shiv Sena with the claim to be the real Shiv Sena based on the principles and ideals of late Balasaheb Thackeray.

The Election Commission had recognised the Shinde-led faction as the real Shiv Sena. Shinde was the principal architect of the split in the undivided Shiv Sena in 2022 that brought down the Maha Vikas Aghadi Government.

AI flight enters Pak airspace on go-around...

"On 22.06.2026, Air India Airbus 321 Aircraft VT PPV operating flight AI 479 (Delhi - Amritsar) during approach was asked to hold due to runway inspection post a bird strike incident. After the aircraft commenced approach during radar vectoring, the aircraft briefly entered the Pakistan airspace. The event was coordinated with the Pakistan ATC Authorities. The aircraft finally diverted back to Delhi and safely landed at Delhi," the regulator said in a statement.

Earlier, in a statement, Air India said the crew operating flight AI479 from Delhi to Amritsar on 22 June had marginally infringed on the Pakistan airspace while manoeuvring a go-around at Amritsar airport. "The incident has been reported to the regulatory authorities and is being investigated internally. At Air India, the safety of passengers and crew remains top priority," the airline said.

According to preliminary information, the aircraft was initially instructed by Air Traffic Control (ATC) to hold over 13 DME (Distance Measuring Equipment). However, it continued



Congress targets MP CM over land scam, seeks judicial probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Congress on Wednesday demanded a judicial probe by a sitting Supreme Court judge into the charges of land purchase by family members of Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and questioned the silence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing a Press conference Congress spokesperson and Chairman of the AICC Media and Publicity Department Pawan Khera along with MP Congress president Jitu Patwari alleged that land purchases by Yadav's family members had taken place under the patronage of the BJP and the RSS.

"Sangham Sharnam Gachchhami", remarked Khera, suggesting that those involved in the alleged land-

grabbing had the protection of the Sangh (the RSS).

He also referred to the RSS not registering itself, saying it wanted all the authority but no responsibility or accountability.

Khera alleged that the BJP has betrayed the religious faith of people, pointing out that not only had family members of the MP CM purchased land in the sacred city of Ujjain but also accused those managing the Ram temple in Ayodhya of "looting" donations.

The Congress spokesperson equated the land purchase by the CM's family with "inside (insider) trading" in the stock market, pointing out that his family obviously had prior knowledge that particular areas would be developed and they had bought land in advance. He alleged that the chief minister had knowledge of upcom-



Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera

ing projects and he "grossly misused" his influence and power.

Questioning the BJP's silence on the matter, Khera compared it with the Congress' decision to remove Ashok Chavan as Maharashtra chief minister after allegations that his mother-in-law owned an apartment in Adarsh Housing Society in Mumbai.

"In this matter, no action is expected from Prime Minister Narendra Modi. He'll feast on 'melody' abroad and 'jhal muri' at home, his chief minister will swallow land and the donated gold-silver,"

he alleged. MP Congress Committee (MPCC) president Jitu Patwari criticised MP BJP president Hemant Khandelwal for seeking to divert attention from the issue by saying that Yadav was being targeted as he belonged to the OBC community.

"Such big allegations have been made; who is stopping them (agencies and the Yadav Government) from filing an FIR against the media house which has released the report?" he asked. Patwari said the BJP is talking about caste to divert attention from Yadav's alleged land scam issue.

"It is unfortunate that the media is also printing such headlines, whereas it should say that just because the chief minister is OBC, it doesn't mean corruption gets a free pass," he said.

Patwari posed several

questions to Yadav, asking him to provide straight answers. He asked if everything is transparent, then can the BJP order a judicial probe and can Yadav issue a white paper detailing the land his family has owned since 2023.

"Chief Minister Mohan Yadav should explain: Which companies of your family have directly benefited from the development projects? Will the Government make public the changes made in the master plan of the relevant area?"

"Were the relevant farmers there, who already own land there, aware of these transfers? Will you take the initiative to pursue a judicial inquiry into this matter yourself?" he asked, reiterating why full details of land purchased by the chief minister's family be brought before the public.

Nation Focus



Coordination helped NEET-UG re-exam go smoothly: PM Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday stressed on coordination between various departments during a Union Cabinet meeting and lauded such efforts for the smooth conduct of the NEET-UG re-exam, sources said.

The prime minister cited the example of the NEET retest and stressed on coordination between various ministries while adopting a "whole of Government approach" in resolving issues, they said. Modi is learnt to have said that the seamless and coordinated action between ministries is the guarantee of overcoming any challenge. During the West Asia crisis too, the prime minister had stressed on the importance of coordination between various ministries to ensure that the shortage of energy should not affect the common people. (PNS)



NDMA conducts exercise in Pahalgam before Amarnath Yatra

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) in collaboration with Anantnag district administration conducted a table-top exercise on Wednesday in Pahalgam ahead of the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra. The yatra will begin on July 3 and conclude on August 28. The exercise was part of the ongoing preparedness measures for the upcoming Amarnath Yatra aimed at ensuring seamless coordination among all key stakeholders involved in the management of the annual pilgrimage, an official spokesman said.

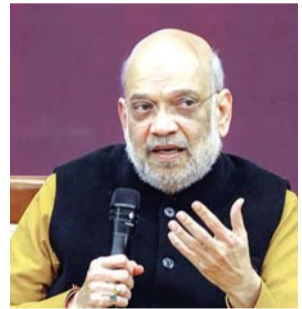
He said senior officers from the NDMA, Department of Disaster Management, Relief, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction; the district administration, ADC Defence Forces, Security Forces, Fire and Emergency Services, SDRF, Camp Directors and Additional Camp Directors, and other concerned officials participated in the exercise. (PTI)

Shah to chair NCORD meeting, unveil drug-free India vision document

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair the 10th apex-level meeting of the Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) on Friday, focusing on synthetic drugs, darknet-enabled trafficking, and rehabilitation infrastructure over the next three years. The meeting will bring together stakeholders from 44 central ministries and departments, along with 108 representatives from state Governments and drug law enforcement agencies. It will be held in a hybrid format to ensure wide participation and coordinated action.

Shah is also scheduled to release a vision document on narcotics control for 2026-2029. Prepared through consultations with central Government departments, drug law enforcement agencies, and other stakeholders, the document sets a national roadmap built on demand reduction, supply reduction, and harm reduction. It defines responsibilities, timelines, and measurable targets, and links enforcement to rehabilitation, public awareness, capacity building, and inter-agency coordination. "This vision document will serve as a guiding framework for policy formulation, implementation and institutional strengthening across the country to curb the menace of drugs," a Government statement said.



drug abuse effectively. The high-level gathering will also review the progress of the ongoing Drug Disposal Fortnight Campaign. Under this initiative, central and state law enforcement agencies are expected to destroy approximately 2,09,500 kg of seized drugs valued at around Rs 6,000 crore nationwide. Friday's meeting is expected to reinforce the Government's "Zero Tolerance Policy" against drug trafficking, as emphasised by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Officials said the apex-level review will assess collective efforts so far and chart a clear course for the next three years. Emphasis will be placed on strengthening rehabilitation centres, enhancing awareness among youth, improving intelligence sharing, and leveraging technology to disrupt darknet networks and synthetic drug supply chains. The vision document is seen as a significant step towards institutionalising a long-term, result-oriented strategy.

By setting clear targets and accountability mechanisms, the Government aims to move closer to its goal of a drug-free India. With participation from both central and state stakeholders, the meeting is expected to produce actionable decisions that tighten the noose around drug cartels while expanding support systems for those affected by substance abuse.

India maintains travel advisory for Iran despite US-Iran ceasefire agreement

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Even as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at ending hostilities between the United States and Iran has raised hopes for de-escalation, the Indian Government has urged its citizens to refrain from all non-essential travel to Iran for the time being.

The Indian Embassy in Tehran issued a fresh advisory on Wednesday, acknowledging recent positive developments in the security environment while stopping short of lifting restrictions. Officials said the mission continues to closely track the situation on the ground following the landmark agreement signed last week between US President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian.

"Notwithstanding the recent improvements, Indian



nationals are advised to continue avoiding all non-essential travel to Iran until further notice," the embassy stated. The updated guidance was also shared on the mission's social media.

For Indian nationals already living in Iran or those who must travel for compelling reasons, the embassy called for "a high degree of caution" at all times. It urged them to stay alert, monitor

credible local news sources, and strictly follow directives from Iranian authorities.

The mission also renewed its longstanding request for all Indian citizens in the country — including new arrivals — to register their details with the embassy at the earliest opportunity. Travelers were encouraged to regularly check the embassy's official website and social media platforms for the latest updates.

Emergency assistance is available through the embassy's 24-hour helplines: +98-912-810-9115, +98-912-810-9109, +98-912-810-9102, and +98-993-217-9359. Queries can also be sent to cons.tehran@mea.gov.in.

India began issuing travel warnings for Iran on February 28, shortly after the outbreak of conflict in West Asia triggered by joint US-Israeli strikes on Iranian targets and subsequent retaliatory actions. Wednesday's advisory marks the first update since technical-level discussions commenced in the wake of the US-Iran MoU.

The Indian Government has consistently prioritised the safety of its large diaspora in the region and continues to review the situation in light of ongoing diplomatic efforts.

CRPF suspends DIG for sharing messages opposing CAPF bill

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The CRPF has suspended a senior DIG-level officer for allegedly sharing content critical of the Government during the passage of the CAPF bill. Cadre officers have called the bill discriminatory.

This is the first reported case of such action among the approximately 15,000 cadre officers in leadership roles within the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), which collectively have about one million personnel.

Officials identified the officer as Deputy Inspector General (DIG) B C Patra, who is currently posted at the Tripura Sector headquarters in Agartala.

Patra, a 1994-batch CRPF cadre officer, rejoined the Central Reserve Police Force in April following a deputation with the National

Security Guard (NSG). Officials stated that Patra was suspended under Sub-Rule (1) of Rule 10 of the CCS (CCA) Rules, 1965, and that a preliminary enquiry is ongoing.

Officials expressed concerns about audiovisual and pictorial content on social media that allegedly called for the change of the country's lawfully elected Government during the passage of the Central Armed Police Forces (General Administration) Bill 2026.

The bill became an Act after receiving presidential assent in April.

CRPF Director General (DG) GP Singh confirmed the suspension.

"The rules and statutes and the oath taken bind all serving and uniformed officers of the CRPF.

"Any word(s)- written or spoken or action contravening the same would be dealt



appropriately in consonance with the law of the land," the DG said.

Patra was not available for comment.

Officers familiar with the case described the action against the DIG as unjustified and in bad faith.

They stated that Patra is

being targeted because he was the lead petitioner among CAPF cadre officers in cases regarding promotions and service parity with the IPS, which the Supreme Court heard.

"The DIG is being unfairly treated and punished by CRPF headquarters because he led the legal battle for the rightful claims of cadre officers, seeking parity with Indian Police Service (IPS) officers who join the CAPFs on deputation," a senior officer said on condition of anonymity.

He claimed that about two dozen other officers who had actively pursued court cases were recently given hastily posted orders.

An association of former CAPF officers has scheduled a press conference on July 2 to oppose the DIG's suspension and actions against CAPF personnel whose families protested the CAPF Bill at Raighat in April.

"DIG Patra is an outstanding officer who has been commended with multiple awards," said Ranbir Singh, general secretary of the Alliance of All Ex-Paramilitary Forces Welfare Association (AAPW).

In their representations to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), serving cadre officers described the Bill's provisions as "oppressive" and "discriminatory."

They warned they would continue to stagnate in their current ranks if IPS deputations were not limited as the Supreme Court directed last year. The Centre appealed against this order, but the apex court rejected the appeal.

The Government stated that the bill aims to establish a unified legal framework for service conditions across the CAPFs, replacing the current separate rules for cadre officers and those deputed from the Indian Police Service (IPS).

MHA officers have said that deputing IPS officers to CAPFs is a "valid requirement" because they are an all-India service and play a supervisory role in state police organisations.

Season's first rains disrupt road, rail traffic in Mumbai; Opposition slams BMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

The season's first rainfall disrupted both road and rail traffic in Mumbai on Wednesday morning, flooding low-lying areas and leaving commuters stranded during rush hours.

Some parts of the city received over 300 mm of rainfall in 24 hours ending at 8 am, officials said.

There was a moment of embarrassment for the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) when its supervisor fell into an open drain while Mayor Ritu Tawde was inspecting waterlogged Gandhi Market in King's Circle. He was quickly pulled out, but a video of the incident went viral in no time.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MLA and former minister Aaditya Thackeray said that several flights were cancelled and subways were flooded.

The BJP controlled the BMC for four years through an administrator (when elections were pending) and the present mayor is from the saffron party, he said.

"But she is more concerned about what is happening in Bangladesh. She does not know what is happening in Mumbai. We need a mayor who serves Mumbai but they (the BJP) are busy serving Delhi," Thackeray said, taking a swipe at Tawde over her past statements about illegal Bangladeshis.

Congress MP Varsha Gaikwad shared a video of the BMC supervisor falling into a drain on X, targeting the mayor. "This man has fallen into the pit of your inaction and corruption. This is not an accident, your corruption has been caught red-handed," said the city Congress chief.

Manisha Kayande, a leader of the ruling ally Shiv Sena and a state legislative council member, urged Tawde to intensify drain-cleaning to prevent waterlogging and traffic disruptions during the monsoon.

"It is not about politics but about solving people's problems," she told reporters. The BMC is controlled by the BJP and Shiv Sena alliance.

Municipal Commissioner



Commuters wade through a waterlogged road amid heavy rainfall in Mumbai, Maharashtra on Wednesday PTI

Ashwini Bhide appealed to people to follow weather advisories and contact civic control rooms in case of emergencies. She said all departments had been directed to remain vigilant as heavy rainfall was likely to persist.

Mayor Tawde and former mayor Kishori Pednekar visited some waterlogged areas. The IMD has issued an

'orange' alert for Mumbai and neighbouring Thane and Palghar districts, predicting 'heavy to very heavy rainfall' and thunderstorms over the next 24 hours.

The observatory at Colaba in south Mumbai recorded 248 mm rainfall, while the suburban observatory at Santacruz logged 225 mm in the 24 hours ending at 8 am

on Wednesday, the BMC said. Among the areas that received exceptionally heavy rains, Malvani in the western suburbs recorded 340 mm, while Parel in central Mumbai received 334 mm rainfall during the period.

The intensity reduced later as the island city, eastern and western suburbs recorded 13 mm, 6 mm and 7 mm

MAN KILLED ON MUMBAI LOCAL OVER DOOR ROW AMID RAIN, ACCUSED ARRESTED

Mumbai: A 22-year-old man was allegedly stabbed to death by a co-passenger on a Mumbai local train during an argument over whether the doors should be kept open amid the rains, in the second such incident this year, officials said on Wednesday. The accused, subsequently identified as Sachin Ramesh Suvarna (30), was arrested hours later following a massive manhunt, which included the scanning of footage from nearly 400 CCTV cameras, an official said.

Victim Mayank Lohar was fatally assaulted by Suvarna inside a first-class compartment on Tuesday, which also marked the arrival of monsoon in the city, between Andheri and Borivali railway stations in the western suburbs, he said.

Officials said Lohar and Suvarna got into an altercation as the train, a Churchgate-Nallasopara fast local, pulled into the Andheri station at 10.42 pm. One of them wanted the doors to be kept open, while the other objected, citing the rains. During the argument, Suvarna, who works at the Sahar Cargo complex of the Mumbai airport, pulled out "sattu" (a sharp weapon) from his possession and allegedly stabbed Lohar in the abdomen and chest, he said. (PTI)

plained of delayed services and overcrowded local trains during the morning peak hours, particularly on Central Railway corridors.

The heavy rain also affected Central Railway's Trans-Harbour line services between Thane and Vashi/Panvel in neighbouring Navi Mumbai following a track cave-in between Turbhe and Koparkhairane stations, officials said.

A Central Railway spokesperson said the up line on the Thane-Vashi section was declared unsafe at 5.06 am, while the down line was declared unsafe at 5.50 am, affecting train operations. The up line was restored at 7.27 am with a speed restriction of 10 kmph, while the down line was declared safe at 7.35 am with trains permitted to run at 30 kmph. "Track cave-in occurred because of excess water flow," the official said.

As per a spokesperson of the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport (BEST), buses on more than 24 routes were diverted due to heavy rains in the morning.

subway, Hindmata and King's Circle in the morning, affecting vehicular movement and leading to traffic congestion on key roads.

Suburban railway services were also affected as rainwater accumulated on tracks at some locations, though officials said the level remained below the danger mark.

Several commuters com-



States Focus

5 dead, 17 hospitalised in Kolkata warehouse collapse



EXPANDING BASIC INFRA PRIORITY, SAYS RAJASTHAN CM SHARMA

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Wednesday said the state Government is prioritising the expansion of basic infrastructure and citizen services across the state, as he announced development projects worth ₹631 crore in Jaipur's Sanganer.

Addressing a function for inauguration, foundation-laying and distribution of land pattas, Sharma said the Government is committed to ensuring easy access to electricity, water and other essential services, particularly for people at the last mile.

He said a total of 1,538 development projects have been undertaken, which will strengthen and upgrade basic facilities such as roads, power and water supply, ensuring better quality of life for residents. (PTI)

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata

Five people died and 17 others were hospitalised after a three-storey under-construction warehouse in the Taratala area of west Kolkata collapsed on Wednesday afternoon, trapping several people underneath the rubble, a senior West Bengal health department officer said.

Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, who visited the disaster site where rescue operations were underway, stated that about 18 others remained trapped under the rubble where coordinated rescue efforts were being made by state and central agencies, including the army.

The collapsed warehouse is a lease-hold property under the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in the city, an official said.

"So far, 21 people have been rescued; three of whom have perished. The others have been admitted to SSKM Hospital where all efforts are being made to provide them with adequate medical attention," the CM had said earlier, following



Officials with a sniffer dog conduct a rescue operation after a three-storey under-construction warehouse collapsed at Taratala area in Kolkata, West Bengal

which the death toll increased.

Till reports last received, all the rescued people, believed to be workers at the construction site, were admitted to the Trauma Care Centre of the state-run SSKM Hospital, the condition of several of them was stated to be critical. A multi-disciplinary team of doctors, involving neurologists, orthopaedics and general medicine experts, has been set up to attend to the injured patients who have suffered severe trauma, they added.

"The roof of the warehouse located on the Transport Depot Road near

Brace Bridge in the Taratala area collapsed around noon. Some people were working at the site at the time of the incident," a Kolkata Police officer said.

Massive chunks of iron beams and concrete crumbled during the construction, where several workers were engaged. Eyewitnesses

at the site said they heard trapped victims crying for help from beneath the debris. "Construction activities were taking place on the ground floor while the RCC structure for the first and second floors had been completed. The entire structure came crashing down," an eyewitness said.

"The Army has already established contact with those who still remain trapped," Adhikari said, amid estimates that, given the large blocks of concrete that still have to be removed, the rescue operations could continue for a formidable period of time.

According to a fire department official, the roof of the three-storey under-construction warehouse collapsed during casting work.

He also alleged that sub-standard materials were being used.

Personnel of the Kolkata Police, disaster management teams, civil defence, and fire and emergency services personnel were carrying out rescue operations at the site on a war footing.

Army officials also aided rescue operations, while cranes and heavy equip-

ment lifting machinery were deployed at the site to remove the collapsed iron beams.

Gas cutters were being used to cut through the iron and concrete, and rescue workers were trying to reach the trapped victims by means of vertical drilling.

Sniffer dogs and overhead drones were deployed by the NDRF team to detect possible signs of life underneath the debris.

"We are following the cries for help coming from under the debris. At the same time, we are assuring the trapped people that they will be rescued soon," a Kolkata Police official said.

"Deploying immediately after a distress call from the civil administration, a specialised team of Army rescue personnel, specialist engineers and medical personnel are assisting in rescue efforts," the army posted on X.

Stating that in coordination with NDRF, SDRF and Kolkata Police, the Indian Army said that its personnel were sparing no effort to find several people believed to be trapped under heavy concrete debris.



SENIOR IPS OFFICER ANAND JAIN TAKES CHARGE AS LADAKH DGP

Senior IPS officer Anand Jain on Wednesday assumed charge as the director general of police (DGP) of the Union territory of Ladakh.

Jain, a 1999-batch IPS officer of the AGMUT cadre, was recently transferred from Jammu and Kashmir to Ladakh by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and appointed as the head of the Ladakh Police. Before taking over his new assignment, he was serving as additional director general of police (ADGP), Armed Police, Jammu and Kashmir.

He succeeds Mukesh Singh, a 1996-batch IPS officer, who had taken over as Ladakh DGP on January 16 and has now been transferred to Manipur. (PTI)

ABVP meets Vice President, raises Panjab University issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

An Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) delegation met Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Tuesday and discussed youth empowerment, higher education and student welfare, while also flagging a range of issues related to Panjab University.

The delegation, led by ABVP national president Raghuraj Kishore Tiwari and national general secretary Virendra Singh Solanki, placed several issues related to Panjab University before



the Vice President, including representation for elected student representatives in the university senate, expansion of hostel infrastructure in proportion to the growing student population, and regular and time-bound appointments to

vacant faculty positions, it said in a statement. It also highlighted the need for establishing a state-of-the-art centre dedicated to artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, and advocated setting up yoga and mind-

fulness centres along with a student welfare and mental health support centre staffed by permanent counsellors, the statement said.

During the meeting, detailed and constructive discussions were held on the role of youth in nation-building, contemporary issues related to higher education, and various initiatives and campaigns being undertaken by ABVP across the country. According to the statement, the ABVP informed the Vice President that the organisation's flagship programme, Students' Experience in Interstate

living (SEIL), is completing 60 years of service and has worked towards strengthening emotional integration, cultural dialogue and national harmony among students from different regions, particularly between the Northeast and the rest of the country.

The delegation also shared details of its "Screen Time to Activity Time" campaign, which seeks to encourage students to move beyond excessive screen usage and engage in sports, physical activities, social responsibility and other constructive pursuits.

Nehru was India's best PM; Modi master of falsehoods: Jairam Ramesh



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Jawaharlal Nehru is the best prime minister of India has had while Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is the best prime minister the country could not have, according to Congress leader Jairam Ramesh.

During an interview with PTI Videos, he also dismissed the RSS people as "fraudulent nationalists", while dubbing Prime Minister Narendra Modi "the master of falsehoods". Giving one-word answers during a segment of the wide-ranging interview, Ramesh described Home Minister Amit Shah as being about "bluff and bluster".

Asked about who he regards as the best prime minister India has had, Ramesh said, "undoubtedly Jawaharlal Nehru".

CHAMPAT RAI DECLINED TO PROVIDE TRUST DETAILS



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Ayodhya

Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust secretary Champat Rai declined to provide details regarding the trust's income, expenditure, donations, bank accounts, land transactions and assets, citing the ongoing SIT probe into allegations linked to the Ram temple project, officials said on Wednesday.

The issue came to light after a complaint submitted to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) by BJP leader Rajneesh Singh was forwarded to the Ayodhya district administration for necessary action.

In a letter dated June 23 addressed to Additional District Magistrate (Administration) Vishu Raja, Additional District Magistrate (Law and Order) Indrakant Dwivedi said he had contacted Rai to seek the information sought in the complaint.

Air India and IndiGo face-to-face on same runway

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

A potentially catastrophic runway incursion was narrowly averted on Wednesday evening at Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad, where an IndiGo aircraft taxiing for departure and an Air India flight on final approach came dangerously close on the same runway.

The incident occurred around 6.30 PM when the IndiGo flight was taxiing out for a departure to Mumbai, while the Air India aircraft (operating flight AI2493 from Mumbai to Ahmedabad) was landing.



Aviation sources told *The Pioneer* that the two aircraft came perilously close, raising serious safety concerns at the busy single-

runway airport. Prima facie assessment indicates that the Air India pilot appears to have made an error during the landing

and taxiing sequence. However, swift and professional intervention by Air Traffic Control (ATC) helped prevent a collision. No injuries were reported, and there was no damage to either aircraft.

A formal investigation has been initiated by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and Airports Authority of India (AAI) to establish the exact sequence of events, identify any communication lapses, and examine procedural failures.

Air India, in a statement to *The Pioneer*, confirmed the incident: "We are aware of an incident where our flight AI2493 operating from

Mumbai to Ahmedabad on 24 June, after landing, inadvertently took a wrong turn during taxiing. There was no compromise on the safety of passengers and crew. The aircraft was subsequently towed back to the parking bay.

The matter has been reported to the regulatory authorities and an investigation initiated." No official statement has been issued by IndiGo so far. The DGCA has taken cognisance of the matter and ordered a detailed probe.

This close call comes at a time when Indian aviation is under heightened scrutiny regarding safety standards.

Ahmedabad Airport, which operates with a single runway, has witnessed increased traffic in recent years, making precise coordination between arriving and departing flights critical.

Aviation experts emphasise that such incidents underscore the need for zero-tolerance protocols in runway management and stricter adherence to standard operating procedures.

Authorities have assured that passenger and crew safety remains paramount, and lessons from this and previous near-misses will be used to strengthen protocols at busy airports across the country.

AIKS backs July 1 protests against MGNREGA changes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) has announced its support for the nationwide protest actions scheduled for July 1, 2026, against the proposed replacement of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) with the VB-GRAMG Scheme.

In a statement issued on Wednesday, AIKS said it would join demonstrations being organised by the Joint Platform of Rural Workers'



Organisations to defend what it described as the rural population's right to employment and livelihood security.

The farmers' organisation argued that MGNREGA has played a crucial role in providing employment opportuni-

ties and income support to rural workers, poor peasants, women, Dalits, Adivasis and other economically vulnerable sections. According to AIKS, any move to weaken or replace the employment guarantee programme could adversely affect the livelihoods of millions of rural households and impact the rural economy.

AIKS expressed concern over the proposed introduction of the VB-GRAMG Scheme, claiming that it would mark a departure from the legal guarantee of

employment provided under MGNREGA. The organisation contended that instead of replacing the scheme, the Government should focus on strengthening it through higher budget allocations, timely wage payments, expanded employment opportunities and the removal of restrictions affecting workers.

The organisation further stated that the issue extends beyond agricultural labourers and directly affects small and marginal farmers whose livelihoods are linked to rural

employment, wage levels and public investment in village infrastructure. It warned that weakening the programme could aggravate rural distress and negatively affect the broader agrarian economy. Calling for wider participation in the protests, AIKS urged its state units to join agricultural workers and other democratic organisations in the July 1 demonstrations. The organisation emphasized the need for unity among peasants and rural workers to safeguard employment rights and rural livelihoods.

India assistive tech to hit ₹95,000 cr by 2023: Experts



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India has an addressable market of ₹75,000-95,000 crore for assistive technologies for persons with disabilities by 2030 with the right policy framework, and needs a National Assistive Technology Policy to address gaps in access and service delivery, experts said on Wednesday.

The remarks were made at the launch of a White Paper titled "Assistive Technology in India: A Systems and Investment Approach for Inclusion, Independence, and Economic Participation of Persons with Disabilities", prepared by the National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) in partnership with Mphasis.

A robust assistive technol-

ogy ecosystem can not only improve inclusion and independence for millions of Indians but also emerge as a major driver of innovation, entrepreneurship and job creation, the experts said.

They noted that the need for assistive technology extends far beyond persons with disabilities, with their estimated number likely to be 5-8 crore, according to NCPEDP, a cross-disability advocacy group.

"Millions of elderly people and those living with long-term health conditions such as diabetes, dementia, vision impairment and hearing loss also rely on products and services such as wheelchairs, hearing aids, spectacles, white canes and speech recognition software to live independently and participate fully in society," the NCPEDP said in a statement.

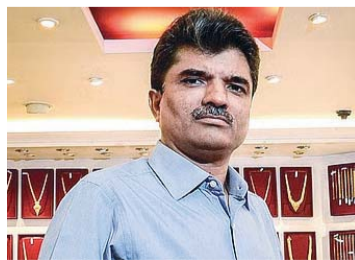
Rajesh Exports failed to produce records related to foreign transactions: ED

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday alleged that gold refining and jewellery manufacturing company Rajesh Exports' key business indicators showed "significant" departures from normal commercial practices, in addition to the non-availability of records related to foreign transactions.

The federal agency issued a statement after conducting searches against the Bengaluru-based company and persons linked to it on June 23 for suspected contravention of the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA).

The ED identified at least five issues against Rajesh Exports Ltd (REL) and recovered various "incrim-



inating" documents and digital devices during the searches.

The company has not yet responded to a PTI query regarding the ED action. The stock exchanges have also sought clarification from the company.

Founder and Chairman of the company, Rajesh Mehta, denied any fund diversion or wrongdoing during a recent interview with PTI.

He had said that the company will fully cooperate with the fresh forensic audit ordered by the SEBI and not challenge the market regulator's interim order against it.

According to the ED, Rajesh Exports "failed" to produce documentation regarding its foreign transactions, including its imports, exports, overseas investments and the settlement of foreign trade receivables and payables, which rendered verification of the genuineness of such transactions almost impossible.

"For example, contemporaneous records and documentation of the claimed investment of Rs 1,035 crore into African mines were neither found nor provided by the company as yet," it said.

The agency claimed that the

company's "key business indicators" showed "significant" departures from normal commercial practices. For instance, it said, the remuneration paid to senior management was "unusually low" compared to the scale of the company's operations.

The chief financial officer (CFO) has not received any salary since 2020, while the managing director was paid only about Rs 17,000 per month, despite the company reporting consolidated revenue of approximately Rs 7.7 lakh crore, the agency found. It said the probe found "suspicious" block trades in the REL scrip executed by certain individuals whose names also appear in leaks released by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), indicating possible

undisclosed offshore links that are under examination.

"Over Rs 600 crore were siphoned out of India through share manipulation using NRI benamidars," the ED alleged.

A benamidar is a person or entity in whose name a benami asset is transferred. The ED also said in the statement that the company was found to be engaged in setting off trade payables and trade receivables from suspicious foreign parties based in the UAE and other overseas jurisdictions.

It added that a physical verification of stock carried out during the search revealed a "difference" of about 40 per cent between the stock recorded in the factory registers and the actual goods found at the premises.



Army holds outreach programme for Veeranganas, kin at Amingaon

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Demonstrating its continued commitment to the welfare of military families, the Indian Army organised an outreach programme for Veeranganas and Next of Kin (NOKs) of soldiers categorised as physical casualties at Amingaon on Wednesday.

The programme was conducted under the aegis of Headquarters 51 Sub Area and organized by 236 Inland Water Transport (IWT) Unit in collaboration with the Rajya Sainik Board, Assam, and the Assam Regimental Centre (ARC) Records.

The initiative focused on resolving documentation-related issues and ensuring that beneficiaries receive their rightful financial entitlements and welfare benefits.

A total of 122 Veeranganas and NOKs from Kamrup (Rural), Nalbari, and adjoining districts participated in the event. Officials addressed a wide range of welfare concerns during the programme, including pension-related matters, one-time grant



claims, Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme (ECHS) card issues, and benefits pertaining to dependent children and specially abled family members.

Dedicated registration and grievance redressal cells were established to facilitate prompt resolution of beneficiaries' concerns.

To provide immediate assistance, ARC Records, Shillong, set up a Mini Records Office at the venue, enabling on-the-spot settlement of documen-

tation and records-related issues. A comprehensive data-sheet registration drive was also carried out to verify beneficiaries' entitlements and enhance awareness about the various welfare schemes available to them.

A key highlight of the programme was the one-on-one interaction sessions between Veeranganas, NOKs, and senior military and welfare officials. Representatives from Headquarters 51 Sub Area, the Family Welfare Organisation,

Rajya Sainik Board Assam, and the Zila Sainik Welfare Office directly engaged with participants to address individual grievances and provide guidance on welfare-related matters.

The outreach programme reinforced the Indian Army's dedication to supporting Veeranganas and the families of soldiers by ensuring timely assistance, transparent grievance redressal mechanisms, and greater awareness of welfare entitlements.

Indian Army and ITBP conclude joint training exercise in Arunachal Pradesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Itanagar

The Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) successfully concluded a joint training programme and Joint Coordinating Conference in Arunachal Pradesh on June 24, aimed at enhancing interoperability and operational readiness along the country's sensitive frontier regions.

The exercise was conducted by the Spearhead Division under the Spear Corps of the Indian Army in conjunction with ITBP personnel operating in the challenging mountainous terrain of Arunachal Pradesh. The initiative reaffirmed the spirit of jointness between the two forces and strengthened tactical-level coordination in border management operations.

The training programme focused on improving operational coordination, combat preparedness and mission-specific capabilities.

Personnel from both forces participated in a range of activities, including mountain warfare drills, route familiarisation exercises, communication procedures, casualty evacuation techniques and joint response mechanisms.

Operating in demanding terrain and weather conditions, troops rehearsed various operational contingencies and refined coordinated response strategies



considered essential for effective frontier security and border management.

According to defence officials, the exercise highlighted the seamless integration between the Indian Army and ITBP, fostering greater mutual understanding and enhancing their ability to operate together in complex operational environments.

The training also provided an opportunity for both forces to exchange best practices and strengthen cooperation in addressing emerging joint challenges.

The Joint Coordinating Conference held alongside the training pro-

gramme further facilitated discussions on operational coordination, information sharing and measures to improve joint preparedness in the region.

The successful culmination of the exercise reflects the continued commitment of the Indian Army and ITBP to safeguarding the nation's borders through teamwork, professionalism and a shared sense of purpose.

Both forces reiterated their resolve to maintain a high level of operational readiness while ensuring the security and integrity of India's frontiers.

ABSU warns of new Bodoland stir over accord delays

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU) has issued a stern warning to the Centre and the Assam Government over the lackadaisical implementation of the 2020 Bodo Peace Accord, cautioning that further delays could force the community to re-ignite its historic struggle for a separate State of Bodoland.

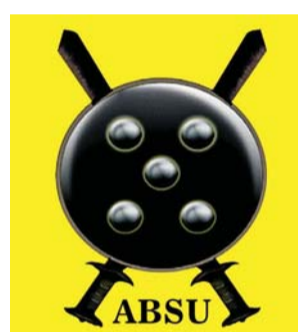
The warning follows the crucial Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) meeting held in New Delhi on Tuesday, which took place after being postponed four times since June 1. Expressing deep resentment over the slow progress, the key signatory organisation highlighted that over six years have elapsed since the tripartite agreement was signed on January 27, 2020, between the Government of India, the Assam Government, ABSU,

the United Bodo People's Organisation (UBPO), and four factions of the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB).

The ABSU leadership criticised both Governments for testing the patience of the Bodo people. A major point of contention remains the augmentation of the boundary of the Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR).

According to the union, the commission constituted under Paragraph 14 of the Sixth Schedule expired on March 31, 2025, after including only 60 claimed villages.

A total of 634 villages — comprising 198 revenue villages, 98 sub-villages, 24 forest villages, and 314 Forest Rights Act (FRA) villages spanning from Simuliguri in Lakhimpur to Biswanath and Sonitpur — remain excluded, alongside 94 disputed villages from the 2003 accord. "This Memorandum of



Settlement (MoS) is written with the sentiments, emotions, and the supreme sacrifice of over 5,000 martyrs who laid down their lives during the three-decade-long Bodoland agitation. It deserves dignity and implementation without further delay," stated ABSU President Kwrwmdao Wary and General Secretary Khanindra Basumatary in a joint statement.

The ABSU has placed a direct demand before the Central Government to table and pass

The Constitution (125th Amendment) Bill, 2019, during the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament. The passage of this bill is vital to fulfilling the structural provisions of the 2020 Bodo Accord.

The student body has outlined five key legislative requirements that must be addressed immediately, including the expansion of the legislature to increase the number of constituencies in the Bodoland Territorial Council Legislative Assembly to 60 members, the immediate devolution of new powers and functions as outlined in Annexure 1 of the MoS, and the introduction of anti-defection laws within the Sixth Schedule Council to ensure political accountability.

Furthermore, they are demanding independent elections conducted directly under the supervision of the State Election Commission, alongside financial autonomy

achieved by strengthening the financial mechanism of the council through an amendment to Article 280 of the Constitution.

Drawing parallels to historical precedents, the ABSU reminded the authorities that the collapse of the first Bodo Accord of 1993 led to a renewed, intensified armed and mass democratic agitation by 1996, which eventually culminated in the 2003 BTC Accord.

The ABSU leadership warned that if the State and Central Governments fail to deliver the promised "Freedom of Development" in the BTR, the democratic suspension of their movement will be revoked.

The union stated it would be bound by the collective sentiment of the Bodo people to bypass current arrangements and directly demand the creation of a separate State of Bodoland under Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of India.

Assault on human dignity: Rahul on atrocities against labourers in UP factory

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday termed the atrocities against labourers in a factory in Muzaffarnagar district of Uttar Pradesh as an "assault on human dignity" and sought justice for them and harshest possible punishment to the perpetrators.

Twelve bonded labourers, including minors, bearing visible torture marks and injuries on their bodies were rescued on Monday from a paper plate manufacturing factory in Mandi village in Muzaffarnagar district following a raid conducted by the police.

In a post on X in Hindi, Gandhi said when jobs dry up and safeguards like MGNREGA and labour laws for the vulnerable are weak-



ened, then desperation only mounts. "The case of bonded labour among workers in Muzaffarnagar is utterly shocking.

"In addition to forcing them to work without wages, the workers were bitten by dogs, stabbed with spears, whipped, and fed animal fodder. This is an assault on human dignity - victims must receive justice

along with rehabilitation, and the perpetrators the harshest possible punishment," Gandhi said.

"This is no ordinary criminal incident - it is the rubble of a crumbling economy," he said X. At the same time, he said, one must also ask why workers end up trapped in such dangerous situations due to dire compulsions.

"When jobs dry up, incomes stall, and safeguards like MGNREGA and labour laws meant for the most vulnerable sections are weakened, desperation only mounts. Those with no other options or protections become easy prey to such exploitation," he said.

During raids by the authorities, the labourers were allegedly kept in inhuman conditions and were not paid the promised monthly wages, officials said on Tuesday.



Ammonia gas leak toll rises to 10 in Tiruvallur; 68 still hospitalised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chennai

The death toll in an ammonia gas leak at a private seafood processing unit in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district has risen to 10, while 68 others remain hospitalised, the Health and Family Welfare Department said in a bulletin on Wednesday.

The industrial accident occurred during routine operations on June 21 in the Kannigaipair and Manjanganai area near Periyapalayam.

Of those killed, eight were women from Odisha and two were from Assam.

Two deaths were reported on the day of the incident, followed by six on June 22, and one each on June 23 and June 24. The mortal remains of five victims were airlifted to Odisha on Tuesday, and the remaining five will be transported once all legal formalities are completed.

A total of 83 individuals were affected by the leak, of whom 68 are currently undergoing treatment across four hospitals.

The majority are migrant workers-33 from Odisha, 16 from Assam, nine from Jharkhand, three from Kerala, one from West Bengal, and six from Tamil Nadu. Among those hospitalised, 65 are

women, and three are men. Five individuals have been discharged.

Those affected primarily presented with symptoms consistent with ammonia inhalation — breathlessness, coughing, chest discomfort, eye irritation, and varying degrees of respiratory distress. Of those hospitalised, 17 are on ventilator support, 21 are receiving nasal oxygen, and 30 are reported stable.

The patients are being treated at Vels Hospital, Venkateswara Hospital, Rajiv Gandhi Government General Hospital, and Stanley Hospital. Emergency medical response teams, police personnel, fire and rescue services, and district administration officials were mobilised to manage the incident and facilitate medical assistance.

Authorities have initiated an investigation to determine the cause of the leak.

The Health Department said it is closely monitoring the situation in coordination with district authorities.

The Government has recommended continuous surveillance of exposed workers for delayed respiratory complications, environmental monitoring of the affected premises, and occupational health and safety audits of similar facilities in the district.

CM Satheesan takes swipe at CPI(M)'s internal issues; Vijayan hits back

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Thiruvananthapuram

Chief Minister VD Satheesan and Leader of the Opposition Pinarayi Vijayan traded sharp political jibes in the Kerala Assembly on Wednesday, with the CM defending his elevation to the top post and taking a swipe at the CPI(M)'s internal dynamics.

Replying to the three-day debate on the Budget, Satheesan dismissed opposition criticism over his selection as chief minister, saying leadership choices were a normal part of democratic politics. "We are a democra-



Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan

tic party, and such things do happen. These are normal occurrences in democratic political parties. There are many capable people in the party—indeed, many who

may be more deserving than I am. I happened to be chosen for this position, and that is all," he said. Turning his attention to the Opposition benches,

Satheesan suggested that internal disagreements were not unique to the Congress-led UDF.

"At your party, the CPI(M), is everything always completely peaceful? What all happened after your internal elections? We have seen those developments too," he said. Responding to the remarks, Vijayan said the CPI(M) had long been accustomed to criticism from political rivals and sections of the media. "Some of you may be smiling now, but remember that our party has faced sustained attacks from sections of the media and political

opponents for years. We have dealt with all of that before," he said.

Satheesan maintained that he was entitled to respond to criticism directed at his party and alliance, noting that LDF members had also made remarks about the Congress leadership.

"If LDF members speak about our party, they should naturally expect a response. That is only fair," he said.

The chief minister added that responding to comments about the UDF and its leadership was part of his responsibility in the Assembly. "If comments are

made about my party or my political front, I will certainly respond. There should be no doubt about that," Satheesan said.

When the Opposition LDF accused the state Government of failing to criticise the Centre, the chief minister said it was not the UDF's policy to oppose the Union Government on every issue.

"If the Centre adopts a stand against cooperative federalism, we will certainly oppose it," he said, adding that the UDF Government's approach differed from that of the previous Left regime.

BJP accuses Congress president Kharge and son of land grab

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday alleged that Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and his son Priyank Kharge have grabbed land at various locations in Karnataka by misusing their "power and influence", and asked why Chief Minister DK Shivakumar doesn't take action against them.

Addressing a press conference at the BJP headquarters here, party spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari alleged that Kharge and his son, a minister in the Karnataka Government, are engaged in "land loot" in the Congress-ruled state through their Siddhartha Vihara Trust. "Their modus operandi is inspired by Robert Vadra and Rahul Gandhi family," he charged.

Hitting back, Priyank Kharge said the BJP is trying hard "to please the RSS".

"People are asking for the accounts of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, but the BJP is working overtime to demand the accountability of Lord Buddha in Kalaburagi," the Karnataka home minister charged in a post on social media.

"You had five BJP chief ministers in Karnataka. Why did none of

them act? Modi Sarkar has been in power for 12 years. If there was wrongdoing, why am I still roaming free and not in jail?" Priyank asked the BJP.

"My papers are publicly available and ready to discuss it on any platform," he said, asking Bhandari, "Now tell us, when will your political masters in the RSS show theirs?" The BJP's attack on Kharge and his son comes a day after the Congress questioned why central probe agencies are not investigating those behind the alleged "land scam" in Madhya Pradesh and cited media reports which claimed the involvement of family members of Chief Minister Mohan Yadav.

The BJP had dismissed the allegations against Yadav as "baseless". Bhandari on Wednesday alleged that the Congress Government gave 5-acre land, worth ₹100 crore, to Siddhartha Vihara Trust in Bengaluru for research and development in the aerospace and defence sector even though the Trust had no prior experience in such work.

The Congress Government in Karnataka gave 19 acres of land to the Siddhartha Vihara Trust in Gulbarga district in 2016 for a 30-year period, which was later converted into a permanent lease to make a "permanent property" of



BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari

Kharge's family, the BJP spokesperson claimed, alleging "corruption and impropriety" on the part of the Congress president and his son.

"Mallikarjun Kharge and his son Priyank Kharge, who is a minister in the Karnataka Government, have usurped various lands using their power and influence in the state, and tried to commit land loot in various places," Bhandari said.

"This is a violation of the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Samhita. It's a cognisable offence under the law," the BJP spokesperson charged, asking why the Karnataka chief minister

doesn't take action against Kharge and his son in the matter.

Bhandari said that a CAG report in 2018 flagged the issue, noting that transfer of the land benefited the Siddhartha Vihara Trust, not the Government, but no action was taken.

The BJP spokesperson also alleged that the Siddhartha Vihara Trust, in which Kharge, his wife and son are members, grabbed 7.18 acres of land in Gulbarga city by creating a fictitious seller, Kasturi Bai, "Nobody knows who Kasturi Bai is," he said.

Bhandari alleged that the Congress Government in Karnataka

also gave 8,125 sq mts of land to Kharge in 2010 when Siddaramaiah was the chief minister.

"Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) was pressured to give this land to Kharge. As the BDA didn't agree, he was transferred and the land was eventually given to him," the BJP spokesperson said. Bhandari said that the matter is already pending with an MP-MLA court in Karnataka.

"We are presenting hard evidence. If Mallikarjun Kharge does not clarify, it will be considered an admission of guilt," the BJP spokesperson added.

Referring to the reports alleging that Yadav's family had bought acres of land in Ujjain in zones benefiting from infrastructure projects, Congress general secretary, Organisation, KC Venugopal had said on Tuesday that people are now aware of the truth behind "Na khaonga, na khaane doonga" and said this "farce" must end now. Terming the land scam allegations against Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav as "baseless", state BJP president Hemant Khandelwal on Tuesday said that whenever the state has had a chief minister from the backward classes, the Congress has attempted to weaken him.



Editor's TAKE

Starmer's fall and the game of British musical chairs

Starmer's resignation marks yet another chapter in Britain's political instability, underscoring how quickly power can evaporate in Westminster.

Keir Starmer's resignation outside Downing Street this week landed less like a shock and more like a confirmation. In barely a decade, Britain has now watched six prime ministers walk out that same black door for the last time, with a seventh about to walk in. A man who won a commanding majority just two years ago has joined a list that increasingly looks less like a roll of national leaders and more like a casualty count.

The proximate cause was brutal but familiar: a battering in last month's local elections, an internal Labour revolt that had been simmering for months, and approval ratings that had sunk to historic lows. Voters, polling suggested, simply didn't feel the "change" Starmer promised after fourteen years of Conservative austerity.

A self-inflicted wound – appointing Peter Mandelson, a friend of the late Jeffrey Epstein, as ambassador to Washington – only deepened the sense of drift. Meanwhile 'Reform UK' kept climbing in the polls, eating into Labour's traditional strongholds and rattling backbenchers who could see their own seats disappearing.

When Andy Burnham engineered his return to Parliament via a decisive by-election win in Makerfield, the question stopped being whether Starmer would face a challenge and became simply when. Starmer's own account was almost clinical: his party had asked whether he was still the man to lead it into the next election, and he said he accepted their answer "with good grace."

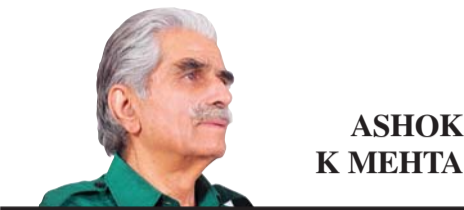
What follows is a curiously unhurried handover for a country famous for swift Westminster exits. Nominations open in early July, the contest is expected to wrap before Parliament breaks for summer, and Burnham – running effectively unopposed after a likely rival threw his support behind him – could be installed by late July. Opposition voices have already pounced on the gap, with Kemi Badenoch arguing the country can't afford to go ungoverned through summer, and Nigel Farage renewing calls for an early general election the law doesn't actually require until 2029.

That last point gets at why this keeps happening. Britain's parliamentary system means a prime minister needs only the confidence of their own MPs, not a fresh mandate from voters, to be removed. Cameron fell to a referendum he called himself; May to the Brexit deadlock that followed; Johnson to scandal; Truss to a market revolt that lasted weeks; Sunak to an election Labour won decisively; now Starmer to his own backbenches. The common thread is a fracturing electorate, the rise of an insurgent right squeezing both major parties, and a parliamentary culture with few brakes on regicide once a leader looks like a liability. But it is just not politics but Britain's economic woes that no prime minister has effectively addressed.

Can the new incumbent in the 10 Downing Street do it remains to be seen. Burnham, the self-styled "King of the North," inherits a party desperate for stability and a country wondering if he'll be different – or simply next.

India's strategic blind spots

Deep fault lines within India's security establishment—from the absence of a formal National Security Policy to concerns over defence modernisation and military politicisation—raise a critical question: Is India's national security architecture equipped to meet the increasingly complex challenges posed by China, Pakistan and the new global order?



ASHOK K MEHTA

At 92, Narendra Vohra is strapping fit in body and mind. He is the most experienced and versatile bureaucrat India has produced. What K Subrahmanyam, present Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's father, was to strategic thought, Vohra is to defence and security. I got to know both of them fairly well during my stint with Defence Planning Staff. Vohra has been organising seminars serially on national security for many decades, the last of which was held recently at IIC Delhi and was probably the most engaging and unusual as speakers contradicted one another over fundamental issues at a time when liberal expression has become so rare. A Service Chief, an Army Commander, two Defence Secretaries, a Foreign Secretary, all retired, constituted the panel. Former Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, not new to the theme, chaired the discussion.

Vohra began by enunciating the fraught state of civil-military relations, an unresolved malaise of growing intensity as civilian assertion of military control has become vital for the ruling establishment. Indian generalship has progressively allowed the diminution of its power, perks and prestige lately through the diversion of its intellectual resources towards shedding colonial legacy. Even the unprecedented politicisation of the military is being accomplished with the cooperation of higher military leadership principally by the Army. Compliance has become the pass word!

Vohra reminded ; that 'defence of India and every part thereof' is governed by Rules of Business 1961 under authority of MoD - inclusive of Defence Minister, Defence Secretary and lately Department of Military Affairs under CDS. Despite tinkering with the rules, the integrating armed forces still have separate Army, Navy and Air Force Acts. Further, CDS is not an appointment backed by legislation, neither is NSA's, made in 2019 and 1991. Though India's defence budget has grown 40 times since 1991 it is still below 2 per cent of GDP when targets for Nato and Indo Pacific are 3.5 per cent of GDP to be met by 2030. The recent resignation of UK Defence Secretary, John Healey was over 'insufficient funding' which had made Britain 'less safe'.

For long, Vohra, along with former NSA Shivshankar Menon and Shyam Saran have emphasised the a necessity for a national security policy. They said that at least six drafts of NSP are gathering dust with NSA Ajit Doval. Vohra pointed out that Lt Gen Hooda who was a panelist had recently authored an NSP paper for the Congress party. Another panelist, former Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra categorically rejected the requirement for NSP saying that India had



AFTER THE INCEPTION OF CDS THOUGH SINGLE SERVICE CHIEFS TECHNICALLY STILL HAVE ACCESS TO PM BY VIRTUE OF THEIR REMAINING OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE HEADS OF THEIR SERVICE, IT HAS NEVER BEEN USED

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

handled Doklam, Balakot, Galwan and Sinoor without one. This 'chalta hai' approach is supported by others too notably the retired CDS Gen Anil Chauhan who had publicly stated that an NSP was not required. The fiasco along the LAC in 2020 could have been avoided had we a documented national security strategy. Surprisingly the Integrated Defence Staff has produced several tri-service doctrines sans an NSP.

Incidentally one of the issues raised by IAF opposing the acquisition of its 'immaculate conception'. Adm Arun Prakash is a recognised voice of the military. He has not shied away from pointing to several anomalies in civil-military relations especially about progressive degradation of the military in civil services/police-military equation, the most glaring during periodic Pay revision Commissions.

Here again, silence on the part of the Generals is key to diminution which is self-inflicted. Prakash noted how delayed decision-making in acquisition of platforms has made India less safe. He dismissed the phantom of 'atma-nirbharta' saying India is unable to produce a jet engine for aircraft and gas turbines engines for warships. These are being imported from US and Russia as the indigenous Kaveri jet engine programme begun in 1987 has failed to take off. The Kaveri engine unfit for combat aircraft is likely to be used in drones and some non-military projects.

The second point made by Prakash related to lack of interface, leave alone rapport, between political and higher military leadership. In the past Service Chiefs could access the Prime Minister as and when required though this route was rarely followed. After the inception of CDS though single service Chiefs technically still have access to PM by virtue of their remaining operational and administrative heads of their service, it has never been used. The CDS though not in the operational chain of command is the principal military advisor to PM/RM. This has created

an unarticulated anomaly. Nevertheless, PM Narendra Modi has not made it convenient for himself to periodically interact with his Service Chiefs. He has made Services shift their annual days and parades to other states and cancelled the traditional receptions held at residence of Service Chiefs when the President, the Supreme Commander of the Services, Cabinet ministers and other dignitaries would attend.

It was a grand civil-military ceremonial occasion which cannot be replicated outside Delhi. The PM used to address and interact with Service Chiefs twice a year during single Service Commanders conference and combined Commanders' conferences. He now officially meets them once in two years at the Combined Commanders' Conference. Remote control of military leadership by political authority must be replaced with more frequent operational interactions.

Gen Hooda reinforced the issue of political leadership's lack of familiarity with military operations especially during crises like Sinoor and Balakot. Unlike in the West, especially UK and US, where politicians have done stints in Iraq, Vietnam and Afghanistan their Indian counterparts have barely read military history. Hooda said military crises with Pakistan and China will occur and escalate more frequently and called for institutionalising crisis management. The response during Op Sinoor took 14 days whereas institutionalised contingency gaming would have compressed the time frame.

Former Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra was not in sync with most of the ideas presented by other panelists, concluding that defence acquisition should be left to the military. The widely criticised Agniveer scheme prevails as neither CDS nor Service Chiefs have spoken out against it as it is the PM's pet project. Generals must keep national interest above their own and not fear to rock the boat.

PICTALK



Women transplant paddy seedlings in a waterlogged field during the monsoon season, in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh PHOTO: PTI



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION

A recent case of a young boy, high on methamphetamine ("ice"), gouging out his own eyes in a hospital emergency room shocked people everywhere. It forces an uncomfortable question: what pushes young people toward such destructive substance use?

The numbers are sobering. AIIMS Delhi's 2019 National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre survey, the most comprehensive of its kind in India, found that 14.6% of Indians use alcohol, with 19% of those users falling into dependence. Over 5.7 crore Indians use cannabis. Opioid use runs nearly three times the global average, and heroin has now overtaken opium as the country's dominant opioid for the first time.

Yet our instinct as a society is often to shun these young people rather than help them, treating addic-

tion as a moral failing instead of the medical and psychological crisis it actually is. Addiction rarely happens overnight. It begins as casual, recreational use, then slowly becomes a habit, then a physical dependence, where the body starts demanding the substance just to function normally. Tolerance builds, requiring larger doses for the same effect. Because most drugs are illegal, users are often pushed into crime to sustain their supply. Too many end up dying alone and in pain, having lost everything along the way.

Psychologists note that many people who become addicted carry insecurity and low confidence rooted in family or personal struggles. Strikingly, most know exactly what the drug is doing to their mind, memory, and relationships, yet knowing isn't enough to break free.

This is addiction's cruel paradox: the very thing destroying them is the thing they lean on to cope. Underneath, there is often deep shame. Many secretly want to quit but fear withdrawal, the emptiness it would leave behind, or losing the only social circle they have, other users.

This is where meditation deserves far more attention than it currently gets. Studies on incarcerated substance users found that those trained in meditation had lower relapse rates and better outcomes after release than those given only standard treatment. Meditation appears to rewire key brain pathways, building self-awareness and the mental space to pause before acting

on a craving, the difference between reaching for a cigarette and reaching for calm. Introducing meditation in schools as a regular subject, rather than an occasional workshop, could give children that tool early, before dependence ever takes root.

The government's Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan has made real progress on visibility, reaching over 25 crore people, with more than 14 crore individuals and 4 lakh educational institutions formally enrolled.

That scale matters. But awareness campaigns alone do not treat dependence. They need to be paired with accessible de-addiction centers, school-level intervention, and sustained family engagement, support systems that catch a habit while it is still just a habit and not yet a dependency.

In the long run, a culture that values inner stillness over instant pleasure is our strongest defense against substance abuse. We have a choice: invest in the mental and emotional well-being of our youth now, or pay for it later in broken families and wasted potential. To every young person reading this: choose the harder, quieter path. The peace you are searching for in a high was never really there to begin with; it was always something you had to build within yourself. Say no to drugs, and yes to meditation.

The writer is a popular columnist and a spiritual teacher

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THE UK GOVERNMENT IN A VORTEX AFTER KEIR STARMER'S RESIGNATION

The spectacle of six Prime Ministers in a decade reflects a deeper malaise within the United Kingdom's political system—a governing structure caught in a vortex of fractured consensus. The first fault line is institutional. Britain's parliamentary model allows a ruling party to replace its leader without seeking a fresh mandate from voters. While this flexibility enables swift action when a Prime Minister becomes an electoral liability, it also makes leadership changes relatively easy and increasingly frequent. The second fault line is political. Brexit splintered the Conservative Party into competing ideological camps, making stable leadership difficult to sustain. Disputes over immigration, trade, and Britain's future relationship with Europe triggered repeated rebellions and leadership contests, weakening

successive governments and eroding party unity. The third fault line is economic. Years of sluggish growth, post-pandemic inflation, rising living costs, and mounting fiscal pressures steadily undermined public confidence. As economic challenges intensified, parliamentary patience wore thin, and leaders found themselves struggling to maintain authority. Cabinet stability depends not only on constitutional arrangements but also on cohesive political parties, economic credibility, and a clear governing purpose. In recent years, leadership changes have too often served as substitutes for genuine policy renewal. The result is a cycle of political instability in which new faces arrive in Downing Street, but the underlying challenges remain unresolved.

R NARAYANAN | MUMBAI

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

Lucknow fire, make surprise fire audits

Apropos of "A country still failing its fire safety test yet again" (June 24). The recent tragedies in Lucknow and Delhi are painful reminders of how little has changed despite repeated warnings. Young students lost their lives in places that should have been safe. What stands out is not just the immediate causes—uninspected buildings, flammable materials, narrow exits—but the larger pattern of official indifference that allows such risks to persist.

We have the laws and guidelines on paper. What we lack is consistent enforcement. Municipal bodies and fire departments remain understaffed and overburdened. Commercial spaces continue to operate without proper clearances because inspections are rare and accountability is weak.

A practical way forward would be to mandate surprise fire audits by independent teams, with clear timelines and public reporting. Officials who approve unsafe buildings must face real consequences, not just routine transfers. At the same time, building owners and managers need simpler, affordable compliance processes so that following rules becomes the easier choice.

Stronger implementation, rather than new committees, is what citizens expect. Our cities deserve better protection for the people who live and work in them.

S.M. JEEVA | CHENNAI

Human rights abuse in Palestine

According to official figures, more than 9,600 Palestinians are currently being held in Israeli detention facilities. One of the most alarming aspects is that over 3,500 of them are being held under "administrative detention." Administrative detention is a controversial legal measure that allows Israeli authorities to imprison individuals for years without formal charges or a court trial. The documentary research film "Bodies of Evidence: Israel's Darkest Weapon," produced by Al Jazeera, has sparked global debate. Former Palestinian detainees from Gaza and the West Bank have described alleged abuses they experienced while in Israeli custody.

One victim claimed that military dogs were trained to attack detainees and sexually abuse them on command from soldiers. Incidents have also been reported in places such as Hebron in the West Bank, where families were allegedly forced to remain naked under the threat of military dogs after soldiers entered their homes. The film raises serious questions about Israel's administrative and detention systems. The Israeli human rights organisation BTselem, in its official report, has described the Israeli prison system as "torture camps." In such conflicts, sexual violence is no longer merely an individual crime; it is used as a weapon of war to force the opposing side into complete submission. DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

Back to origin of colours

India's ancient natural dyes have re-entered global discourse owing to the growing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly textiles.

Historically, these dyes shaped international trade and fashion. Indigo (Indikon), cultivated mainly in Bengal and Bihar, spread to Europe, Africa and the Americas, eventually lending its iconic shade to blue jeans.

Manjistha or Indian madder supplied a prized red dye and medicinal ingredient to West Asia and Europe. Lac dye, obtained from the Kerria lacca insect, coloured Kashmiri shawls and luxury fabrics. Turmeric imparted brilliant yellow hues to silk and cotton across Asia, besides its medicinal uses.

Chay root, grown along India's southeastern coast, became a favourite red dye in European fashion. Today, concerns over pollution from synthetic dyes, coupled with government support for handlooms and khadi, have revived interest in these traditional colours.

Their resurgence is preserving India's textile heritage, boosting artisan livelihoods and expanding export opportunities.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

Long live democracy: Why remembering freedom matters

Taken together, the components associated with the commemoration of Samvidhan Hatya Diwas remind us that democracy is not merely a political system; it is a living tradition. It is sustained by public participation, and protected by an informed and vigilant citizenry. Let us carry forward this spirit with renewed commitment!



GAJENDRA SINGH SHEKHAWAT

(Loktantra Amar Rahe) - is not merely to remember history, but to reflect on the enduring values that sustain our Republic.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar once remarked: "The Constitution is not a mere lawyer's document; it is a vehicle of life, and its spirit is always the spirit of the age."

Few statements capture the essence of our constitutional journey more powerfully than these words. The Constitution is not simply a legal framework that governs the affairs of the State. It is a living covenant between citizens and institutions, between rights and responsibilities, between liberty and accountability.

Democracy must be preserved

India's democratic ethos is deeply rooted in our civilisational traditions. For centuries, our society nurtured institutions of consultation, collective deliberation, and public participation. It is essential to recall that Bharat did not inherit democracy - it nurtured it. From ancient sabhas and samitis to the post-independence parliamentary system, we have always believed in the collective will of the people.

The Constitution transformed these traditions into a modern democratic framework while preserving the values that had sustained them through generations. The Preamble remains our constitutional compass. Justice. Liberty. Equality. Fraternity.

These are not merely constitutional ideals. They are national aspirations. They guide public policy, shape institutions, and define the relationship between the State and the citizen. At the same time, history reminds us that democracy can never be taken for granted.

The Emergency of 1975-77 remains one of the most significant tests faced by independent India. It demonstrated how democratic institutions can come under strain when constitutional safeguards are weakened, and public freedoms are curtailed. The impact of that period extended beyond political life. It touched the everyday experiences of citizens across the country.

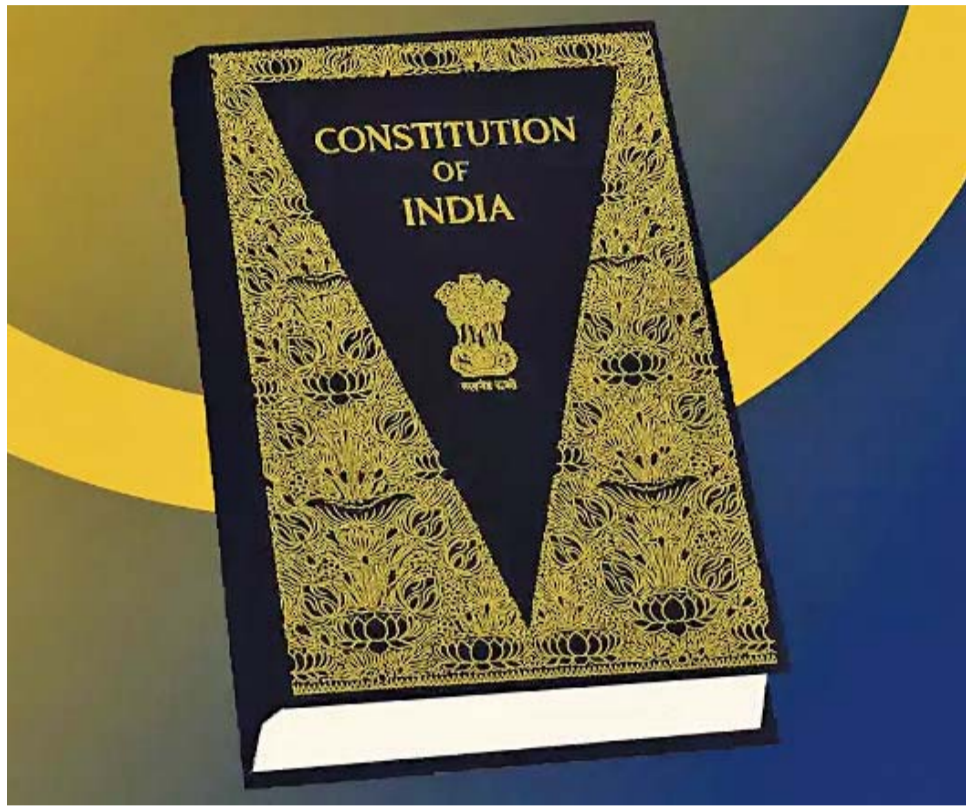
It carried a profound human cost. These experiences serve as a powerful reminder that constitutional rights are not abstract legal principles; they are safeguards that directly shape the dignity, liberty, and everyday lives of citizens. When these rights are curtailed, it is not merely institutions that suffer - it is ordinary people, families, and communities whose freedoms and aspirations are most deeply affected. Yet the enduring lesson of that period is one of democratic resilience.

The people of India demonstrated extraordinary faith in constitutional methods. Democratic processes ultimately corrected democratic distortions. Through peaceful participation and the ballot box, citizens reaffirmed the principle that sovereignty resides with the people. That remains one of the greatest strengths of Indian democracy - its ability to learn, adapt, self-correct, and emerge stronger from periods of challenge.

Marking this occasion, a curated exhibition forms an important segment of the commemoration. It serves as a visual journey through one of the most challenging times in Indian democracy - presenting archival material, stories of resistance, constitutional milestones and people's experiences during the Emergency. Another crucial element marking the occasion is a special memorial lecture by Padma Bhushan veteran journalist and author Shri Ram Bahadur Rai - one that lends contemporary relevance to the larger theme of constitutional vigilance and democratic renewal.

In contemporary times, nearly eight decades after

Fifty years since the imposition of the Emergency, the nation continues to reflect upon this period which is remembered as one of the darkest chapters in India's democratic history. The objective of observance of closing ceremony of the national commemoration of Samvidhan Hatya Diwas - Long Live Democracy



Independence, the meaning of democracy continues to evolve. Citizens increasingly seek not only representation, but participation. Not only rights, but responsive governance. Initiatives promoting financial inclusion, grassroots participation, and citizen-centric governance have widened the reach of democratic institutions.

At the same time, the responsibility of citizenship has become even more important. A strong democracy depends upon informed citizens. Today, when the world turns to India and calls her the "Mother of Democracy", it is a recognition of our long civilizational journey from the dharma of ancient kings to the will of modern voters.

The Living Legends of Freedom

The components comprising this closing ceremony reflect this broader understanding of democracy as a living and evolving national experience. The exhibition on Digital District Repository (DDR) - a pioneering initiative launched under the commemoration of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) in the year 2021 - aims to bring to the forefront hundreds of lesser-known stories of sacrifice, courage, and public participation from every corner of the country.

The Ministry of Culture has also created 10 short films pertaining to these lesser-known narratives from our freedom struggle. Together, these initiatives remind us that democracy is strengthened when constitutional values are reinforced by cultural memory, historical awareness, and a deep sense of national belonging. So far DDR has more than 19,500 narratives on the dedicated website section.

Among the institutions and departments that have contributed to the DDR initiative, the Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT) - an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture - has played an important role in documenting and curating a substantial number of stories that illuminate lesser-known dimensions of India's struggle for independence.

On this occasion, we are privileged to be joined by two living freedom fighters who stand before us as living embodiments of courage, sacrifice, and service - Shri Sheshrao Laxmanrao Khot of Maharashtra joined the Hyderabad Liberation Movement as a young student; and Shri Eddula Suryanarayana Reddy from Andhra Pradesh, who began supporting the freedom movement as a child and was

detained by the police at the age of eleven years. Their presence reminds us that freedom is not a distant history but a living memory.

Virasat and Cultural Continuity

Complementing this is 11th edition of Virasat - that celebrates the cultural traditions, artistic expressions, and shared heritage that have fostered dialogue, diversity, and social cohesion across generations. It honours the memory of Kamaladevi Chattopadhyay - freedom fighter, cultural visionary and institution-builder.

The classical presentations draw upon musical traditions that have evolved through centuries of dialogue between generations, regions, and schools of thought. Indian classical music itself is a testament to the values of continuity, diversity, discipline, and creative freedom - values that are equally essential to a vibrant democracy.

The presentation Enajori: Loknaad - Janjatiya Samrasta ka Swar-Sangam celebrates the rich cultural traditions of Assam and the North-East. Through its music and dance traditions representing diverse communities, it beautifully demonstrates the idea of unity in diversity, one of the foundational principles of our Republic. It reminds us that India's strength lies in its ability to accommodate multiple identities. Particularly meaningful is the special thematic presentation by the CCRT scholars, "From Silence to Voice, From Darkness to Dawn." Through the language of Indian classical music, it traces the journey from fear and suppression to courage, renewal, and democratic resurgence.

Another milestone in connection with the commemoration relates to the laying of the foundation stone for the Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati Kala Gurukul & Kalagram, which is designed to establish centres where India's artistic heritage can be studied and practiced. This is inspired from the age-old tradition of the Gurukul system.

Just as democratic values must be passed from one generation to the next, cultural traditions too require institutions that sustain and renew them. In line with this principle, Seva Parv shows that cultural expressions still have an impact on people's consciousness and civic sense.

The author is Union Minister for Culture & Tourism, Government of India

The Emergency and Chandrashekhar's defiance



HN SHARMA

The Emergency of 1975-77 remains one of the darkest chapters in the history of independent India. Civil liberties were suspended, political opponents were imprisoned, the press was censored, and democratic institutions came under unprecedented pressure. Yet, amid the silence of fear and conformity, a few voices refused to bend. Among them stood Chandrashekhar, a leader whose commitment to democratic values transcended political convenience and personal safety.

Long before the Emergency was formally imposed on June 25, 1975, Chandrashekhar had sensed the dangers of concentrating excessive power in the hands of the executive. Though he belonged to the Congress Party at the time, he was known for speaking his mind and challenging authority whenever he believed democratic principles were at stake. He reportedly advised Prime Minister Indira Gandhi against taking any drastic and undemocratic step that could damage the Congress Party and leave a permanent scar on India's democratic legacy. His warning was prophetic. The Emergency would eventually become one of the most controversial decisions in modern Indian political history. The arrest of veteran socialist leader Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as JP, deeply disturbed Chandrashekhar. JP had emerged as the moral force behind a nationwide movement demanding accountability, transparency, and democratic reform. For Chandrashekhar, the imprisonment of such a towering national figure represented not merely the arrest of an individual but an assault on democratic dissent itself. When the crackdown began, Chandrashekhar openly protested. The Government attempted to soften his detention by offering special treatment. Haryana strongman Bansi Lal reportedly suggested that a Government guest house could be converted into a place of confinement for him. Chandrashekhar rejected the offer outright. He believed that accepting privileges while thousands of political workers and opposition leaders languished in ordinary prisons would amount to compromising his principles. Instead, he chose to be lodged in a regular jail in Punjab. His decision was both symbolic and courageous. It demonstrated that resistance to authoritarianism could not be selective. If democracy was under attack, the struggle had to be shared equally by leaders and ordinary citizens alike.

Before leaving for prison, Chandrashekhar informed his family of his conscious decision to oppose the Emergency. He understood the risks involved. The future was uncertain, and nobody knew how long the Emergency would last. In a poignant moment, he is remembered as telling his wife that he might not return soon. The statement reflected not fear but a realistic assessment of the political climate and the sacrifices that lay ahead.

His wife, Dooja Devi, responded with remarkable courage and patriotism. Rather than urging caution, she freed him of any concern for domestic obligations. Her message was clear: for the sake of the nation, he should consider himself released from family responsibilities and remain steadfast in defending democratic values. It was a powerful expression of sacrifice that mirrored the resolve of countless families whose loved ones were imprisoned during that turbulent period.

I vividly recall a deeply emotional telephonic conversation with Chandrashekhar ji while he was facing the heat of the administration, at that time, I was with his family members at Pinjore Gardens, Chandigarh. As he prepared for incarceration, he spoke about the uncertainty that awaited him and the need for someone to look after his family in his absence. The gravity of the moment was overwhelming. With tears in my eyes, I assured him that I would serve to the best of my capacity and stand by his family whenever needed. It was not merely a personal commitment; it was a tribute to a leader who had chosen principle over comfort and courage over compromise.

Throughout the Emergency, Chandrashekhar remained unwavering in his opposition to authoritarian rule. His imprisonment only strengthened his moral authority. Unlike many politicians who adjusted themselves to the prevailing winds of power, he stood firm in defence of constitutional freedoms, political pluralism, and the right to dissent. History eventually vindicated those who resisted. Public anger against the suspension of democratic rights grew steadily. When elections were finally held in 1977, the people of India delivered a decisive verdict.

The Emergency was withdrawn, and the Congress government suffered a historic defeat. Democracy, though bruised, emerged stronger. For Chandrashekhar, the struggle was never about personal ambition. It was about preserving the soul of the Republic. His conduct during the Emergency transformed him into one of the most respected democratic voices of his generation. The episode also demonstrated that genuine leadership is measured not by the offices one occupies but by the principles one refuses to surrender. The Emergency remains a cautionary tale for every generation of Indians. It reminds us that democracy survives not merely through institutions but through the courage of individuals willing to defend them. Chandrashekhar's resistance, sacrifice, and unwavering faith in democratic values ensured that when freedom was tested, he stood on the right side of history.

The Writer was political advisor to the former prime minister, Late Chandrashekhar



Development in transition: What NFHS-6 tells us about India



ANKITA GOYAL

SARTHI ACHARYA

India has committed itself to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which seek to improve the quality of life through progress across economic, social, demographic, environmental, and institutional dimensions. Achieving these goals requires more than economic expansion alone; it demands that growth be translated into improvements in health, education, nutrition, gender equality, and other indicators of human well-being. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS), while not capturing the entire spectrum of development, provides an important window into the extent to which economic growth has been accompanied by social and demographic progress.

The four rounds of the NFHS, spanning the period from 2005-06 to 2023-24, allow an assessment of India's progress in select demographic and social indicators. The latest round,

released this week, suggests that the country has undoubtedly moved forward. However, the pace of improvement has been uneven across sectors and regions, and in several dimensions remains slower than might be expected after nearly three decades of economic growth of over 6% annually. The experience of East and Southeast Asian countries provides a useful benchmark, as many of them combined economic growth with rapid gains in human development within a relatively short period.

The data point to important achievements. Health insurance coverage expanded dramatically from about 5% to nearly 60% of the population. Female educational attainment also improved substantially, with nearly half of women now having completed ten or more years of schooling. Fertility has declined to replacement level on aggregate and below replacement in large parts of the country, marking an important demographic transition. However, there is an underbelly: The southern states, much of the Northeast, and parts of northern India report substantially better outcomes than the large states of the Indo-Gangetic plains. Moreover, the survey pro-



vides little information on the quality of health or educational services, limiting conclusions about the effectiveness of these achievements.

Progress in reducing child marriage has also been noteworthy. The proportion of women aged 20-24 who were married before the age of 18 declined from 47.4 per cent to 20.1 per cent. Yet, the prevalence remains high by inter-

national standards. Countries such as China and Thailand have reduced child marriage to negligible levels, suggesting that considerable progress remains possible. Once again, regional differences are striking. Bihar and Jharkhand continue to report rates exceeding 30%, whereas Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Mizoram have reduced the incidence to around 10% or lower.

The most serious concern emerges from nutrition-related indicators. Child stunting declined from about 48 per cent to 29.3 per cent, a substantial improvement but still one of the highest levels among major economies. The proportion of underweight children fell more modestly, from 42.5 per cent to 31.8 per cent. Similarly, the share of women with below-normal body mass index declined until 2019-21 but has since shown a slight reversal. These trends suggest that nutritional deprivation remains deeply entrenched despite sustained economic growth. Here too, regional disparities persist, with states such as Bihar and Jharkhand continuing to perform poorly while much of southern and northeastern India fares considerably better.

A recent article in *Indian Express* (dt. June 2, 2026) finds that a number of indicators have been dropped in NFHS-6 compared to NFHS-5. This might not be a very serious issue as some of these variables do not change at short intervals. However, India's development record has been otherwise mixed. The country has made some progress in education, health insurance coverage, decline of child marriage, and TFR in some states, etc. Improvements in nutrition and other measures of human well-being, however, have been slower than expected, and large regional inequalities remain. Compared with the experience of East- and Southeast Asian economies during their periods of rapid growth, India's progress appears gradual rather than transformational.

Evidence from NFHS-6 suggests that while economic growth might have contributed to some social advancement, it has not consistently translated into equally rapid improvements in human development.

The challenge for the coming decades is therefore not merely to sustain growth, but to ensure that its benefits are converted more effectively into better health, nutrition, education, and quality of life for all sections of the population.

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Calcutta HC declines hearing on Abhishek's travel plea



The Calcutta High Court on Tuesday refused an urgent hearing to Trinamool Congress MP Abhishek Banerjee's plea seeking permission to travel abroad for medical treatment. Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya asked the parliamentarian's counsel to mention the matter before the court on Monday. Refusing an urgent hearing to Banerjee's plea to travel abroad for medical treatment, the judge made an oral observation that there are treatment facilities within the country. Justice Bhattacharyya had on May 21 granted Banerjee protection from coercive action till July 31 in an FIR over his comments at a public meeting during the assembly election campaign in April. He had then directed the TMC's national general secretary to cooperate with the probe and not travel abroad without the court's leave. The MP from Diamond Harbour had sought quashing of an FIR over his comments against the leaders and workers of a rival party at a public meeting on April 27 in the run-up to the second phase of West Bengal Assembly polls. (PTI)

Anticipatory bail granted to ex-TMC MLA Aditi Munshi



The Calcutta High Court on Wednesday granted conditional anticipatory bail to former TMC MLA and singer Aditi Munshi in a case related to the alleged acquisition of disproportionate assets, but refused similar relief to her husband, who is also an accused in the case. Justice Jay Sengupta granted anticipatory bail to Munshi, former MLA from Rajarhat Gopalpur, noting that she is a woman and is currently caring for a four-month-old infant. The prosecution claimed that unexplained assets worth more than Rs 100 crore connected to the couple have come to light during the investigation. The court, however, refused the anticipatory bail prayer of her husband, Debraj Chakraborty, who is a TMC councillor of Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation. After hearing their pre-arrest bail plea in connection with an FIR lodged at Baguiati police station following a complaint by BJP MLA Tarunjiyoti Tewari, Justice Sengupta directed the singer-politician to deposit her passport with the jurisdictional court forthwith and barred her from travelling abroad without prior permission of the court. She was also directed to stay outside the jurisdiction of Baguiati police station till the completion of the investigation and not influence or get in touch with the witnesses of this case. Seeking anticipatory bail for the politician couple, their lawyer stated that the allegation against them is of acquiring properties from undisclosed income and disposing of a bulk of such assets immediately before an affidavit was to be filed before the Election Commission. Munshi was a TMC candidate from Rajarhat Gopalpur for re-election, but lost the poll to Tewari. Claiming that transferring property is not illegal, their counsel, Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya, stated before the court that no case for organised crime has been made out because there is no allegation of extortion or land grabbing. He stated that the Income Tax authorities would be at liberty to take appropriate action if the issue is about penalising someone for not disclosing income. (PTI)

Goa Govt challenges Tejpal acquittal in Bombay HC

The Goa Government on Wednesday argued in the Bombay High Court that the acquittal of Tehelka magazine founder editor Tarun Tejpal by the trial court in a sexual assault case was based on an erroneous appreciation of evidence. Senior advocate Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Goa government, also urged the division bench of Justices Amit Borkar Jamsandekar and Neela Gokhale to carefully scrutinise the trial court's judgment. The Goa bench of the Bombay HC was hearing the state's appeal challenging Tejpal's acquittal. The case stems from allega-

tions made by a former female colleague of Tejpal, who accused him of sexually assaulting her inside a hotel elevator during an event organised by Tehelka magazine in Goa in November 2013. In 2021, a sessions court acquitted Tejpal of all charges, observing that the complainant "did not demonstrate any kind of normative behaviour" that a victim of sexual assault "might plausibly show". The trial court's judgment came under criticism from several quarters for its observations on the complainant's conduct and behaviour. Mehta contended that the trial court had misplaced reliance on evidence relating to the prosecutrix's social media activity and



POSH Act – A Personal Armour



SADHANA S DESAI

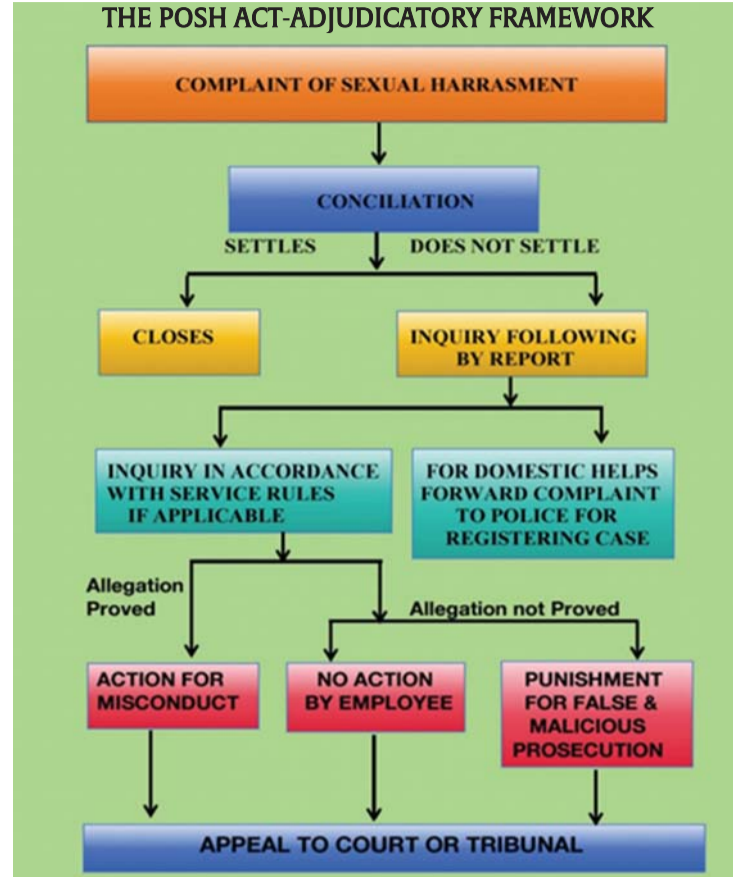
VERSATILITY, thy name is woman. Although the phenomenal playwright has voiced the line "Frailty thy name is woman", through Hamlet, there cannot be a second thought that Shakespeare, a singular in his genius, only portrayed a reflection of the Hamlet's wounded mind. However, the phrase "Frailty, thy name is woman" has too often been detached from its dramatic context and treated as timeless wisdom. Yet the irony is striking. The perception of women as frail did not arise in isolation; much of that supposed frailty was historically shaped by social systems largely designed and controlled by men. In many situations, men themselves contributed to the very frailty they later criticised by restricting women's choices, manipulating their dependence, or offering favours in exchange for compliance. Today, however, the narrative is shifting as Education, economic independence, social awareness along with supportive Legal Framework reveal a different reality. In order to provide women with the ability to navigate their professional roles without hindrance, the legal framework needed to be strengthened with women-centric provisions. Consequently, the **POSH Act** (Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act, 2013) was enacted to ensure safe and respectful work environments that combines preventive measures, training and internal enforcement.

Genesis of the legislation

History has glaring examples of people who have stood for a cause which has brought revolutionary change. One such tall standing example is Bhanwari Devi who lived in Bhatari village in Rajasthan. She was part of grassroots workers to Women's Development Project run by the Government of Rajasthan. In the year 1992 when the Government of Rajasthan launched a campaign against child marriage, she canvassed against child marriage and tried to prevent marriage of 9 month old baby from an upper caste family. This led to 5 men to gang rape her. This extraordinary struggle caught the attention of many women organisations who attributed her rape to the insecure working conditions. Thus, the doors of the Hon'ble Apex Court was knocked and in the most celebrated Vishaka and Ors Vs State of Rajasthan — AIR 1997 SUPREME COURT 3011, Apex Court filled the vacuum in the absence of any enactment laying down the guidelines after referring to various international conventions on protection and dignity of women and observed that "the international conventions and norms are to be read into them in the absence of enacted domestic law.". This judgement nudged the Government to enact "The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 commonly called as the "POSH Act".

Evolution of PoSH Law

Through a series of judicial pronouncements, Indian law has progressively evolved to adopt a more nuanced approach to sexual misconduct. In the case of **Apparel Export Promotion Council Vs AK Chopra** (1999) 1 SCC 759, the Respondent, AK Chopra, a senior



officer in the Apparel Export Promotion Council, was removed from service after being found guilty of sexual harassment to a female employee. Upon challenge, the Hon'ble Delhi High Court held that he had only "tried to molest" the employee and had not actually made physical contact. The Hon'ble Apex Court while reversing the Order reasoned that "The observations made by the High Court to the effect that since the respondent did not actually molest Miss X but only tried to molest her and therefore his removal from service was

not warranted rebel against realism and lose their sanctity and credibility. In the instant case, the behaviour of the respondent did not cease to be outrageous for want of an actual assault or touch by the superior officer". The Hon'ble Karnataka High Court, in the case of Miss (X) Vs Internal Complaints Committee; W. P. No. 8127/2019, was called upon to consider if Platform-based Drivers associated with OLA could fall within the definition of 'employees' so as to attract the liability under the POSH Act. His Lordship

Justice M G S Kamal, adopted a purposive and expansive interpretation of the PoSH Act by extending the applicability of PoSH Act even to Digital Collaboration Platforms.

The position of international law was exhaustively considered, such as the judgements rendered by the Courts of England, California and France where with regard to Uber a similar situation had arose and the Courts therein held that Uber retains power to monitor and control the services offered by its driver and also has retained power to terminate. Thus, the Hon'ble Karnataka High Court held that in the instant case the components of the definition 'employee' under section 2(f) of PoSH Act, 2013, leaves no doubt that the driver-subscriber is rendering his services directly in connection with the commercial activity of OLA for which it is established. In that view of the matter and more particularly for purposes of advancement of the intent and object of the PoSH Act, 2013 it is necessary and compelling that the meaning of the term 'employee' be extended to cover the persons like driver-subscriber.

CONCLUSION

While the PoSH Act is a major milestone in women's empowerment, true empowerment extends beyond legal protection. Lasting gender equality requires greater opportunities for women not only in the workplace but also in political leadership, religious institutions, and economic decision-making. When women are adequately represented in these spheres, they are better positioned to shape policies, challenge structural inequalities, and contribute to more inclusive development.

(The writer is practicing law in Bengaluru Senior Government Counsel)

Supreme Courts of India, Russia sign MoU on judicial cooperation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court has signed an MoU with the top court of the Russian Federation in the field of judicial cooperation. Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation Igor Krasnov signed the memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Moscow on Tuesday. Accompanied by a delegation from the apex court, CJI Kant met the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation.

"The meeting was convened in the Marble Hall of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation in Moscow, where the deliberations commenced with a particular emphasis on the historical and contemporary amicable relations that both nations share," a release said.

According to the release, discussions highlighted the necessity for mutual cooperation to address emerging challenges, the digital transformation undertaken by the judiciaries of both countries, particularly in the integration of technology and artificial intelligence into court procedures to enhance the justice delivery system and facilitate improved access to justice, and included a brief dis-



CJI Surya Kant during a meeting with his Russian counterpart Igor Krasnov, in Moscow

course on the significance of high-quality judicial education. "The discussion subsequently shifted towards exploring practical measures to enhance judicial cooperation between the judiciaries of the two States, grounded in the principles of sovereign equality and other recognised international instruments to which both States are parties. "Following extensive deliberations between the two Chief Justices and their respective delegations, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed, affirming the commitment of both sides to enhance cooperation through exchange visits, short- and long-term training programmes, and the organisation of joint seminars and conferences," the release said.

The petitioner had contended before the high court that the fee regulatory committee was duty-bound to frame a fee structure that was rational, equitable and commensurate with the financial constraints of the EWS candidates. The plea said the petitioner had appeared in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate)-2025 under the EWS category.

We need doctors, says SC; fee plea dismissed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

"We need doctors in this country," the Supreme Court said on Wednesday while refusing to entertain a petition which alleged that the fee structure in private medical colleges in Rajasthan was exorbitant.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Joymalya Bagchi was hearing a plea challenging an order of the Rajasthan High Court.

The high court had dismissed a petition filed by a medical aspirant who alleged



that the tuition fee in private medical colleges in Rajasthan ranges between Rs 18.90 lakh and Rs 25 lakh per annum, and it was wholly incompatible with the income ceiling of Rs 8 lakh for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) eligibility. During the hearing, the apex court said one cannot

say that self-financing institutions should charge the same fee as charged by the Government institutions.

The bench observed, "One person cannot say that it is exorbitant in private institutions and make it on par with Government institutions." The counsel appearing for the petitioner referred to the fee structure in Rajasthan and said it goes up to Rs 25 lakh. The bench observed that one has the option to avail a scholarship.

"We need doctors in this country," it said. "We don't find any reason to interfere

with the impugned order passed by the high court. The special leave petition is dismissed. Question of law, if any, is kept open," the bench said.

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Money laundering case: SC to hear Jacqueline Fernandez's plea today



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Thursday a plea of Bollywood actor Jacqueline Fernandez against a Delhi court order to frame charges against her in a ₹200-crore money laundering case.

According to the apex court cause list, a bench of justices BV Nagarathna and Joymalya Bagchi is likely to hear the matter.

Earlier, on June 11, Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra had recused himself from hearing the actor's plea.

A Delhi court, on May 30, ordered framing of charges against the actor, alleged conman Suresh Chandrashekhar and 15 others in the case.

The trial court had also directed that charges be framed against Chandrashekhar and 20 others for various offences, including under the stringent MCOCA provisions, in another case registered by the city police's special cell. The actor moved the top

court against the order. Jacqueline, whom the ED summoned several times in connection with the probe, was named an accused for the first time in a supplementary charge sheet filed by the agency.

The ED alleged in its second supplementary complaint against Jacqueline that she was in constant touch with Chandrashekhar and had received valuable gifts from him through his associate Pinky Irani.

According to the prosecution, Chandrashekhar was running an organised criminal network from inside jail and was impersonating senior government officials, including those from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), the Ministry of Home Affairs, and the Ministry of Law and Justice.

It claimed that by using spoofed calls, encrypted applications and fabricated identities, the accused induced complainant Aditi Singh and her family members to part with huge sums of money.

HC rejects Ariff's challenge to Venugopal's 2024 LS victory

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kochi

The Kerala High Court on Wednesday rejected an election petition filed by CPI(M) leader A M Ariff challenging the election of Congress leader K C Venugopal from the Alappuzha Lok Sabha constituency in the 2024 general elections.

Justice G Girish dismissed the petition at the threshold, holding that it did not disclose a legally sustainable cause of action under the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Venugopal had won the Alappuzha parliamentary seat by defeating Ariff, the



sitting MP and candidate of the CPI(M)-led Left Democratic Front. Ariff had sought to set aside Venugopal's election and also sought a declaration that he himself be declared the duly elected candidate. The petition alleged

corrupt practices under Sections 123(3), 123(3A) and 123(4) of the Representation of the People Act.

The court found that the petition failed on a more fundamental ground. It held that the alleged objectionable acts relied upon by Ariff were said to have been committed before Venugopal filed his nomination papers.

Citing settled law and Supreme Court precedents, the court said corrupt practices under Section 123 of the Representation of the People Act must relate to acts committed by a candidate or his agents after the filing of the nomination.



India's FY27 growth likely to slow down to 6.6%: S&P

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

S&P Global Ratings on Wednesday said energy stress, sub-par monsoon and slowing global growth will pull down India's GDP growth to 6.6 per cent in the current fiscal. The Indian economy recorded 7.7 per cent growth in the 2025-26 fiscal and 7.1 per cent in 2024-25.

"We project real GDP growth will slow to 6.6 per cent in the fiscal year ending in March 2027, compared with 7.7 per cent in fiscal 2026, amid the energy stress, expectations of a sub-par monsoon, and slowing global growth," S&P said in its report. S&P's FY27 growth projection is in line with the RBI estimate of 6.6 per cent.

The impact of El Nino has weakened monsoon rains, with the rainfall deficit widening to 43 per cent by June 22. To deal with deficient



monsoon, the government has drawn up state-wise contingency plans recommending alternative crops suited to deficient rainfall conditions.

India imports 88 per cent of its crude oil needs, and a rise in global prices increases its

import bill and stokes inflation. In its report titled 'Economic Outlook Asia-Pacific Q3 2026: AI-Exposed Markets To Outperform', S&P said the region's outlook is shaped by resilient global activity, energy market stress,

and an AI-driven tech export boom. S&P said the impact of energy stress arising from the West Asia conflict is visible, as the industry faces a substantial rise in input costs and suppliers' delivery time. Also, higher fertiliser prices weigh on food production and raise food prices.

Rising inflation is eroding purchasing power, thus depressing growth. Sharply higher fertiliser prices may weigh on food production and fuel food prices, S&P said. S&P said consumer inflation would be 0.5-0.6 percentage points higher in the third quarter in India, and it will rise to 5.1 per cent in the current fiscal year as manufacturers pass on higher energy costs to consumers, alongside recent increases in prices of petrol, diesel, and cooking gas.

"We expect a policy rate hike in the second half of this fiscal year," S&P said.

Gold futures sink to 3-month low



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Gold futures fell ₹1,834 to hit a three-month low of ₹1.44 lakh per 10 grams on Wednesday amid a rally in the greenback and growing expectations for elevated US interest rates kept investors away from precious metals.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the yellow metal decreased by ₹1,834, or 1.25 per cent, to ₹1,44,695 per 10 grams in a business turnover of 9,508 lots.

The precious metal was last seen around these levels on March 23, when it settled at ₹1,45,069 per 10 grams.

Analysts said domestic markets remained under pressure as traders increasingly priced in a tighter US monetary policy path, boosting the dollar and Treasury bond yields.

"Gold prices fell in the domestic market amid a strengthening in the US dollar and prevailing concerns over the Federal Reserve's policies, which have dampened the demand for bullion," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

Meanwhile, gold futures slipped below \$4,100 per ounce for the first time in nearly eight months in international markets.

The metal dropped by \$51.55, or 1.24 per cent, to \$4,097.85 per ounce on the Comex.

It had last quoted near these levels on October 28, 2025 when it was

traded at \$4,100.6 per ounce. According to analysts, a combination of global factors has accelerated the selloff in the precious metals.

"Gold prices in the global markets are extending their losing streak despite a temporary US-Iran peace deal, pressured by three concurrent forces," Renisha Chainani, Head of Research at Augmont, said.

A broad risk-off wave triggered by a sharp correction in AI-linked stocks has spilled over into precious metals, while increasingly hawkish signals from the Federal Reserve have pushed the probability of a December 2026 rate hike to 86 per cent.

The stronger rate outlook has lifted the dollar index above the 101-mark, further weighing on bullion prices.

Meanwhile, uncertainty continues to linger over the durability of the US-Iran understanding reached earlier this week.

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday said Iran had agreed to indefinite nuclear inspections, though Tehran quickly disputed the claim, raising fresh questions about the future of the agreement.

Market participants are now awaiting the US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) numbers, the Federal Reserve's preferred inflation gauge, due on Thursday for further clues on the trajectory of the monetary policy path and bullion prices, Chainani added.

Hindustan Copper Ltd gets green nod for Chandmari mine in Rajasthan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

State-owned Hindustan Copper Ltd (HCL) said it has received forest clearance from the Government of Rajasthan for mining at Chandmari copper mine in the State.

In a filing to the BSE, Hindustan Copper said the forest clearance is co-terminus with the lease period of the Chandmari mining lease. "It is informed that the Forest Department, Government of Rajasthan, vide its Letter dated 19.06.2026 (received on 23.06.2026), has granted forest clearance co-terminus to Chandmari copper mine lease period in District Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, of Hindustan Copper Ltd," the filing said. Hindustan Copper had earlier said that it has planned a capital expenditure of ₹7,188.90 crore over the next five years for the expansion of its mines.

The company is planning a

capex of ₹450.51 crore in the current year, followed by a spending of ₹1,421.73 crore in 2027, and ₹1,993.70 crore in 2028. Also, the company will spend ₹2,227.18 crore in 2029 and ₹1,095.48 crore in 2030.

The copper producer had said that it is also targeting to increase its production capacity, with total ore production projected to rise from 4.21 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) in 2025-26 to 12.20 MTPA by 2029-30, according to HCL's Corporate Plan - Vision 2030, a comprehensive road map designed to steer the company into its next phase of growth and transformation.

The company also expects its profit after tax (PAT) to go up from ₹589 crore in 2026 to ₹1,568 crore by 2030.

Dividend payouts are expected to increase in line with earnings growth over the same period, it had said.

HCL also launched its IT Vision Document 2026-2030, setting the foundation for a digitally integrated and



future-ready organisation.

Hindustan Copper is the only company in India engaged in copper ore mining and holds all the operating mining leases for copper ore in the country.

The company's current focus lies in exploration, mining and beneficiation of copper ore to produce and sell copper concentrate. HCL

operates copper mines at Malankhand (Madhya Pradesh), Khetri (Rajasthan) and Ghatsila (Jharkhand).

It has facilities of a primary smelter and refinery at Ghatsila (Jharkhand), secondary smelter and refining facilities at Jhagadia (Gujarat) and a continuous cast copper wire rod plant at Taloja (Maharashtra).

Dubai-based GEMS Education to invest \$30 mn in India, plans 30-plus schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

GEMS Education India on Wednesday announced plans to invest up to \$30 million (₹283.71 crore) in India over the next 3-5 years as it looks to expand its footprint through more than 30 schools, a network of 1,000 partner institutions and a dedicated teacher-training institute.

GEMS Education India, part of the Dubai-based Varkey Group that operates GEMS Education, is one of the world's largest K-12 private school operators. The group educates more than 200,000 students from over 176 nationalities across 10 countries through a network of schools offering multiple curriculum pathways.

GEMS, which has unveiled its India expansion strategy, said it will include the devel-



opment of over 30 GEMS-operated schools, creation of a nationwide network of more than 1,000 GEMS Partner Schools, and establishment of a school of education focused on teacher training, leadership development and educational research, as per a statement.

"Together, these initiatives aim to provide high-quality learning opportunities to more than three million learners, create

career pathways for over 200,000 educators, and support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047," the statement said. As part of its immediate growth roadmap, GEMS India has identified a pipeline of 21 GEMS-operated school projects.

The first five schools are slated to commence operations from the 2026 academic year across Greater Mumbai, Uttar Pradesh, Kerala and Rajasthan.

Industry must adopt emerging tech to boost productivity, remain competitive: Steel Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Wednesday urged the steel industry to adopt emerging technologies to remain globally competitive and boost productivity.

The minister made the remarks at Chintan Shivir 2026 on Digitalisation in the Steel Sector organised by Ministry of Steel in the national capital. The future of the steel sector will not be shaped by production capacity alone but also by intelligent ecosystems, the minister said addressing the gathering which included representatives from the public and private sectors.

He said technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), Machine Learning, Industrial IoT, Digital Twins, Robotics and Advanced Data



HD Kumaraswamy

Analytics are redefining steel manufacturing globally. Their adoption significantly improves productivity. Kumaraswamy said the government is aiming 300 million tonne (MT) steel capacity target by 2030, and 400 MT by 2035. This expansion is being driven by strong domestic fundamentals. These include large-scale infrastructure development, manufacturing growth

under Make in India, renewable energy expansion, and rapid urbanisation.

The growth outlook remains highly promising. But the sector must also proactively address key challenges related to raw material security, operational efficiency, decarbonisation, modernisation and export competitiveness.

"In this context, digitalisation is no longer a choice. It is the foundational cornerstone of long-term survival," he noted. The minister further said digitalisation and automation can also enable predictive maintenance, helping identify potential equipment breakdowns before they occur. This not only minimises unplanned downtime but also reduces human errors and the risk of workplace accidents, making steel plants safer for every worker.

Adani Group targets 10 GW nuclear power capacity by 2035

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Adani Group plans to build 10 gigawatts (GW) of nuclear power capacity by 2035, Chairman Gautam Adani said on Wednesday, marking the conglomerate's entry into atomic energy as it expands an integrated power platform spanning thermal, renewable, hydro, gas and transmission assets.

Addressing shareholders at the group's annual general meeting, Adani said land had been identified for the nuclear venture, Adani Atomic Energy, which he described as a key part of the group's strategy to support India's long-term energy security amid growing



geopolitical uncertainty and rising electricity demand. "Our entry into nuclear energy through Adani Atomic Energy is another confident step towards securing India's long-term energy future," Adani said. "With land identified and a 10 GW targeted capacity by 2035, we are positioning ourselves early to serve the growing national demand for clean, round-the-clock power," he said.

The announcement comes as the conglomerate accelerates investments across the energy value chain, seeking to position itself at the centre of India's evolving energy strategy at a time when energy security has re-emerged as a national priority. The billionaire industrialist said the group's integrated infrastructure model was designed to deliver reliable, affordable and round-the-clock power while reducing external dependencies and strengthening India's energy resilience. The comments

come as the conglomerate accelerates investments across the energy value chain, from mining and fuel supply to power generation, transmission, distribution and emerging clean-energy technologies. Adani said the group invested a record more

than ₹1.5 lakh crore in infrastructure during the 2025-26 fiscal year, accounting for more than 30 per cent of India's total new private-sector capital expenditure.

"FY 2025-26 was one such year," he said. "It was a year in which the world grew more fractured, complex energy security models returned to the centre of national strategy and technology became inseparable from sovereignty."

"At a time when some tried to create doubt, you answered with conviction," Adani said, referring to the group's ₹25,000 crore rights issue completed earlier this year, which he described as "a referendum on our credibility". The group's energy

expansion is being led by Adani Power, which is executing what Adani called India's largest private-sector power capital expenditure programme, involving investments of more than ₹2 lakh crore and a target to reach 45 gigawatts of generation capacity within five years.

At Adani Energy Solutions, the transmission order book rose to ₹72,000 crore during the year, supported by projects, including the Khavda-South Olpad high-voltage direct current transmission line. Adani said the company remains India's only private-sector player with proven HVDC capabilities.

The group is also expanding its presence in low-carbon energy.

FRAI urges Govt to crackdown on counterfeit products

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Federation of Retailers Association of India (FRAI) on Wednesday urged the Government to strengthen enforcement measures against illicit trade and counterfeit products, saying their proliferation poses risks to consumer safety and harms the livelihoods of millions of small retailers.

FRAI in a seminar held in the national Capital, submitted a representation to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, seeking stronger policy measures to curb illicit trade and counterfeit products.

The association called for stricter enforcement against illegal products, tougher penalties for repeat offenders, greater accountability of digital marketplaces, enhanced surveillance and market inspection mechanisms, and coordinated action among enforcement and regulatory agencies to protect consumers and promote fair market practices.

It highlighted "alarming rise" of counterfeit and non-compliant products across multiple categories, including food and beverages, groceries, personal care products, cosmetics, tobacco products.

Torrent Power issues NCDs worth ₹3,800 crore



Torrent Power on Wednesday announced raising ₹3,800 crore through issuance of non-convertible debentures (NCDs). The company has issued secured, rated, listed, taxable, non-cumulative, redeemable and non-convertible debentures on a private placement basis, Torrent Power said in an exchange filing. Torrent Power said it has issued and allotted "Series 15 - 3,80,000 secured, rated, listed, taxable, non-cumulative, redeemable and non-convertible debentures of ₹3,800 crore" in four tranches. The NCDs will be issued at a coupon rate of 8.10-8.20 per cent per annum, the company said. The company has proposed to list the NCDs on the Wholesale Debt Market Segment of the NSE. (PTI)

Equitas Small Finance Bank plans to raise up to ₹1,750 cr



Equitas Small Finance Bank on Wednesday said its board has approved a proposal for raising up to ₹1,750 crore from a mix of debt and equity to fund business growth. As per the proposal, the company would raise up to ₹500 crore by issuing Non-Convertible Debentures or other debt securities on a private placement basis. Moreover, up to ₹1,250 crore would be raised by via Qualified Institutions Placement (QIP) or through any other permissible mode, in one or more tranches, it said in a BSE filing. The board has also approved the re-appointment of Vasudevan P N as MD and CEO of three years with effect from July 23, 2026, it said. (PTI)

'Sony India eyes strong festive season, double-digit growth'



Sony India is optimistic about recovery in demand during the second half of the year and is gearing up for a strong festive season despite near-term challenges arising from global economic uncertainty and higher input costs among others, said its Managing Director Sunil Nayyar on Wednesday. The consumer electronics maker is banking on new product launches, premiumisation trends and rapid growth in its audio business, Nayyar said.

The company expects to maintain double-digit value growth, supported by strong demand for premium televisions, sound systems, gaming products and personal audio devices, despite volumes remaining under pressure due to a cautious consumer spending environment. "We are super excited about the festive season. Most of our new product lineup will be launched in the next couple of months and we expect to be in a very good position to deliver blockbuster sales during Diwali," he added. "There is pressure on input costs and some uncertainty globally, but we believe the situation should improve in the second half. We are holding strong and expect business conditions to normalise going forward," he said. On segments such as televisions, the largest contributor to Sony India's topline, Nayyar said there is "currently some pressure" on the business. (PTI)

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PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

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FROM THE WORLD

CONGO Ebola case found in France

A positive case of Ebola virus has been identified in France in a patient travelling back from Congo, the French Ministry of Health said on Wednesday. The individual, who has not been identified, returned from a humanitarian mission in one of the virus transmission zones in Congo and was taken into care at a specialised facility in France. The person is in stable condition, the ministry said. The Congolese health ministry said Wednesday there are 1,094 confirmed cases of Ebola, including 277 confirmed deaths. The Ebola outbreak caused by the rare Bundibugyo virus does not yet have any vaccines or treatment.

USA Life sentence for Army Sergeant

An Army sergeant was sentenced to life in a military prison for shootings last summer that wounded five people at a base in Georgia. A military judge at Fort Stewart sentenced Sgt. Quornelius Radford to life with a possibility of parole, local news outlets reported, after a court-martial last week in which the soldier was convicted of attempted murder. Army prosecutors accused Radford, 29, of targeting leaders of his supply unit when he opened fire with a personal handgun last August. He wounded four fellow soldiers and his fiancée, Raekwon Smith, who testified he was shot after following Radford onto Fort Stewart fearing the soldier was suicidal. Radford admitted to carrying out the shootings in March when he pleaded guilty to charges of aggravated assault and domestic violence. But he insisted he never intended to kill anyone as Army prosecutors pressed ahead with trying Radford on charges of attempted murder.

Russia, India working to boost bilateral trade

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi



Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov

Russia and India are actively working to significantly expand their bilateral trade, with both nations aiming to reach a target of \$100 billion by 2030, up from the current level of around \$60 billion, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday. Speaking on the sidelines of the 12th Primakov Readings international academic and expert forum, Peskov described the Russia-India relationship as a "privileged partnership" and highlighted the steady growth in trade volumes. "We are pleased to note that this volume is showing a steady uptrend. We will keep working along these lines," Peskov said, according to Russian state media. The ambitious \$100-billion trade target was jointly set

during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India in December 2025.

Peskov praised India's remarkable progress, calling it the world's most populous country and one of the fastest-growing major

economies with vast potential across multiple sectors. "Our relationship is further reinforced by our joint participation in various international organisations. We highly value this partnership and are dedicated to

enhancing our cooperation and exploring new horizons together," he added.

In a separate interview with Russia Today, Peskov lauded India's rapid development trajectory. "India is one of the biggest coun-

tries, which shows a very high development pace," he said. "The country which over the last 25 years has covered a big gap when it comes to economic and social development. And Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister, has been very successful." The comments underscore the strong momentum in Russia-India ties, which both countries view as strategically important amid shifting global economic dynamics. Trade between the two nations has grown substantially in recent years, driven by sectors such as energy, defence, pharmaceuticals, and technology.

Officials from both sides continue to explore new avenues to deepen economic cooperation and remove remaining barriers to achieve the 2030 goal.

UK, France and Germany alarm over China-Taiwan

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Taipei



Great Britain, France and Germany on Wednesday issued a rare joint statement expressing alarm over Chinese activities east of the self-ruled island of Taiwan, where China earlier this month deployed coast guard patrols.

The de-facto embassies of the three European nations in the Taiwanese capital Taipei said the "novel Chinese activity," which was not specifically identified, endangered regional stability.

China, which claims democratically governed Taiwan as its breakaway province and has not ruled out the use of force to annex the island, called the manoeuvres earlier this month a "maritime traffic enforcement and hydrographic survey operation." Chinese state media said the

activities were "sending a pointed warning" to Japan and the Philippines over an announcement that the countries would discuss their maritime boundaries in waters that Beijing views as its own.

China on Tuesday also sailed its newest and most powerful aircraft carrier through the Taiwan Strait, the body of water separating China from Taiwan, just hours after Taiwan began a five-day military exercise to practice its response to a possible Chinese attack.

IAEA chief confirms inspections of Iran nuclear sites

MARI YAMAGUCHI/
JON GAMBRELL ■ Tokyo



The head of the UN's nuclear agency signalled on Wednesday that Iranian nuclear enrichment sites would be visited by his inspectors, a key component in the interim deal between the United States and Iran to reach an end to the war.

The comment by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Rafael Mariano Grossi was the firmest yet from the United Nations agency, which is viewed as key in determining the status of Iran's nuclear stockpile.

Since Israel launched a 12-day war on Iran in 2025, the IAEA has been blocked by Tehran from visiting enrichment sites where the Islamic Republic is believed to store enough highly enriched uranium to potentially build as many as 10 nuclear weapons, should it choose to rush for the bomb.

Iran long has maintained that its programme is peaceful, though it is the only country in the world to have uranium enriched up to 60 per cent purity without a weapons program. The US and Iran offered contradictory remarks about whether those sites would be inspected. "I can understand political statements, they are part of the reality, but the fundamental thing I would like to remind you and draw your attention to is that there has been a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by

both presidents," Grossi told journalists at a news conference at the tsunami-hit Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant.

The accord "says explicitly that the nuclear activities that are going to be carried out with the regards to the nuclear material facilities will be supervised by the IAEA - in all letters," he said. Grossi added: "Obviously, to do that, we will have to inspect. Whether this happens the day after tomorrow or in one week or in 10 days, it's important, but not essential. This is going to happen."

Those inspections are key for the deal, which calls for Iran's stockpile of uranium to be "downblended" from highly enriched levels.

There was no immediate reaction from Iran.

On Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei told reporters in Tehran that UN inspectors were not scheduled to examine nuclear sites bombed by the US last year, rejecting comments made a day before by US Vice President JD Vance.

The IAEA has been allowed to visit other nuclear sites in Iran since the 12-day war in 2025, such as the Bushehr nuclear power plant.

But without accessing the enrichment sites, the IAEA says it is unable to verify the status of Iran's stockpile or check the cascades of centrifuges used to enrich uranium. Both Iran and the

IAEA say Tehran has not been enriching uranium, but non-proliferation experts worry that the Islamic Republic may be moving its stockpile to undeclared areas.

The US and Iran agreed to a deal last week that calls for Tehran to dilute its stockpile of enriched uranium and waives US-backed sanctions on the country while giving each side 60 days to hammer out broader agreements.

But the uneasy ceasefire already has been tested by Iran saying it closed the strait again over fighting between Israel and the Iranian-backed militia Hezbollah in Lebanon. Violence again broke out in Lebanon on Tuesday, but it did not escalate. (AP)

Pakistan assures Tehran of continued support for US-Iran peace process

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ■ Islamabad



Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has assured his Iranian counterpart Eskandar Momeni that Islamabad would continue its efforts for lasting peace between Washington and Tehran, according to an official statement issued on Wednesday.

Momeni arrived on Tuesday as part of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian's delegation on a one-day visit.

The US and Iran last week signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at restoring peace in west Asia. Earlier this week, they engaged in technical-level talks in Switzerland, in the presence of mediators Pakistan—which has signed the memorandum as a "guarantor"—and Qatar.

After the talks, the US and Iran agreed on a roadmap towards a final peace deal in 60 days. According to the statement issued on Wednesday by the Ministry of Interior in Islamabad, Naqvi and Momeni discussed Pakistan-Iran relations and the latest regional situation.

Naqvi congratulated Momeni on the joint communique signed in Switzerland, saying it would not have been possible without the sincere efforts of the Iranian government and Momeni's personal commitment. "Pakistan has always

sought peace and stability across the world," Naqvi said, adding that Islamabad would continue its efforts for lasting peace in the West Asia. He expressed hope that the joint communique would have far-reaching positive implications for the region, the statement said.

During the meeting, the two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in areas including security, counterterrorism, cybersecurity and immigration, it said. Momeni and Naqvi met several times in recent weeks as the Pakistani minister shuttled between the two countries as part of high-level diplomatic efforts. Momeni said: "I will soon undertake a detailed visit to Pakistan, aimed at further advancing cooperation between the interior ministries of the two countries."

He also thanked Pakistan for the warm reception accorded to the Iranian president and his delegation during their visit, according to the statement.

Pakistan's JF-17 Thunder

jets escorted Pezeshkian's plane when it entered the country's airspace on Tuesday. He met Pakistan's top civilian and military leadership and discussed regional developments and peace initiatives.

Separately, Pakistan on Wednesday welcomed what it described as positive recognition from the international community for its role in facilitating dialogue and de-escalation efforts between the US and Iran. Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said such recognition reflected the international community's trust in Pakistan and its commitment to promoting peace, security and stability.

Speaking at a weekly media briefing in Islamabad, Andrabi said the US and Iran have also agreed to set up communication channels to prevent misunderstandings, ensure the safe passage of commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz and create a deconfliction mechanism that would also involve Lebanon. (PTI)

NATO chief Mark Rutte to meet Trump ahead of annual summit

MICHELLE L. PRICE
■ Washington



trade through the shuttered Strait of Hormuz.

Trump has renewed his threats to leave the 77-year-old military alliance, raising the stakes ahead of the NATO leaders' summit in Turkey next month. But Rutte, who has become known as a Trump whisperer for his ability to charm the president, is expected to

use Wednesday's White House meeting to try to appease him.

The visit comes after US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth last week lashed out at allies during a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels. He announced a six-month Pentagon review of American forces in Europe.

Hegseth echoed some of Trump's critiques, faulting European allies for not letting the US use bases in Europe to attack Iran. NATO allies were not consulted about the war before the US launched it with Israel on February 28, and some have been openly critical of Trump's strategy. (AP)

Progressive candidate concedes Colombia election to Trump-backed outsider

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bogota



multiple armed groups under a plan known as "total peace."

Progressive candidate Ivan Cepeda on Wednesday conceded Colombia's presidential election to Abelerdo de la Esparilla, a conservative outsider who was endorsed by US President Donald Trump.

Election results showed de la Esparilla, a businessman and lawyer who had never run for office, defeated Cepeda, a lawmaker, by 1 percentage point, or nearly 251,000 votes.

"We assume with serenity, responsibility, and absolute resolve — and let there be no doubt about it — the role that circumstances demand of us," Cepeda said in an address to the nation. "We will exercise a democratic, vigilant and constructive opposition." The result effectively was an indictment of outgoing President Gustavo Petro's government, whose policies Cepeda had promised to continue, including a largely failed effort to establish dialogue with

Electoral authorities published all but a fraction of the vote count hours after polls closed Sunday. Petro and Cepeda did not accept those results, with the latter saying he would wait for a recount to do so.

Nirav must pay up over \$11 million to Bank of India, UK court rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi/ London

Court ruled in favour of Bank of India after a prolonged legal process, which was delayed by issues transferring paperwork within the UK prison system.

"Mr Modi was validly served with the October 2025 Modi Demand. That was a valid demand for a liability to the Bank under the Personal Guarantee," Justice Tinkler ruled. "The Personal Guarantee is not, as a matter of Indian law, void/unenforceable. Mr Modi is therefore liable under the Personal Guarantee to the Bank for the principal amount due of \$4,105,189.34," he said. The court noted that interest on the principal sum



brings Modi's total liability to an estimated \$11.5 million by March 2026, with additional interest accruing thereafter. Interest calculated on the basis set out by the bank is to be added to the principal sum in calculating the total

amount due," the judge concluded.

Bank of India, represented by Milan Kapadia of Fladgate LLP, has pursued the case since 2018, following the emergence of allegations involving companies linked to Modi. Coverage claim by Bank of India against Mr Modi as guarantor. It does not concern, and makes no findings in respect of, the wider fraud allegations against Mr Modi or the Punjab National Bank fraud," Fladgate clarified, following this week's judgment.

The court considered three main issues: whether Modi was validly served with a demand, whether the

demand related to a liability owed to the bank, and whether the personal guarantee was enforceable.

Justice Tinkler ruled in favour of the Bank of India on all points after hearing from Indian law experts. Modi represented himself in the proceedings.

Over the past year, Modi requested adjournments at several hearings, citing severe vision loss, clinical depression, and restrictions due to imprisonment.

The judgment notes significant disruption when Modi was transferred from HMP Thameside to HMP Pentonville in October, without his case papers

being moved. Pentonville authorities also failed twice to produce Modi in court despite valid orders.

"The (prison) governor provided a full statement that recognised and apologised for the errors made. It also identified changes to training and processes that the governor would put in place to ensure that these incidents were not repeated," Justice Tinkler's ruling notes.

Modi, meanwhile, remains behind bars, wanted in connection with three sets of criminal proceedings. Modi remains in custody, wanted in India for three criminal cases: the Central Bureau of Investigation's PNB fraud case.

Qatar Energy minister visits Indian Embassy

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Dubai

Qatar's Energy Minister Saad bin Sherida Al-Kaabi on Wednesday visited the Indian Embassy in Doha to offer condolences on the death of 12 Indian nationals in an explosion at the Barzan gas facility. The incident that took place on Sunday in the Ras Laffan Industrial City claimed 13 lives. One of them was a Pakistani national.

"The loss of innocent lives is a tragedy that touches all of us. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and loved ones of those who lost their lives during this tragic incident," Al-Kaabi was quoted as saying in a statement issued by QatarEnergy, which is headed by the minister. Al-Kaabi, who is the president and CEO of the state-owned national petroleum and natural gas company, met Indian Ambassador Vipul and conveyed condolences personally as well as on behalf of the Qatari energy sector. "We

pray for the speedy recovery for those who were injured," he added. Ambassador Vipul thanked the minister for the gesture and the support being provided by Qatari authorities to the individuals and families affected by the accident, the Indian Embassy said in a post on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said he received a phone call from Qatar's Amir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, who expressed grief over the death of Indian nationals in the incident.

The prime minister said he and the Amir of Qatar share the grief of the families who have lost their loved ones and pray for the speedy recovery of those injured.

At least 66 people were injured in the incident, according to Qatari authorities, which added that the incident was caused by a "technical malfunction" during operations at the facility, even as an investigation to determine the exact cause has commenced.



Qatar's Energy Minister Saad bin Sherida Al-Kaabi

Delhi, Seoul eye deeper strategic partnership ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Seoul

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Wednesday held talks with his South Korean counterpart Cho Hyun, focusing on bilateral cooperation and the rapidly changing global situation, the leaders said.

Jaishankar is currently in South Korea on a two-day visit — the second leg of an ongoing foreign tour - after having visited Mongolia.

"It is a great pleasure to be back in Seoul and to meet you and your team today for our discussions," Jaishankar said in his opening remarks, noting that the meeting was timely, given the state of the world and the importance of the bilateral relationship. The talks

focused on follow-up measures in the key areas of trade, investment and finance, agreed during South Korean President Lee Jae-myung's state visit to India in April.

Jaishankar emphasised that as foreign ministers, it was their responsibility to take the relationship forward and build a more forward-looking, contemporary partnership.

"The potential of our relationship remains to be realised, and from our side, there is a full commitment that we would strive to do that," Jaishankar said, acknowledging Cho's personal commitment to strengthening ties.

After the meeting, he posted on X: "We reviewed our cooperation across polit-



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with South Korea Foreign Affairs Minister Cho Hyun during a meeting in Seoul. PTI

ical, shipbuilding, trade, and people-to-people investments, defence, technology, clean energy, culture domains." Jaishankar also said the

two of them discussed opportunities in areas like startups, fintech and multilateral forums, and exchanged views on developments in their respective regions and around the world.

The discussions, held in Seoul, continued through lunch and went on for around three hours.

Cho said President Lee's visit to India in April marked a turning point for elevating Korea-India relations to a new dimension.

"We welcome swift follow-up progress in areas such as trade, investment and finance and discussed how to build on these achievements," he said in a post on X after the meeting.

Cho highlighted India's hosting of "Korea Week" this

week, and how it fulfilled Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment to directly address challenges faced by Korean businesses in India. "I am grateful for India's strong support, and Korea will soon host a similar dialogue for Indian companies in Korea," he said.

The two foreign ministers also had an in-depth discussion on the rapidly changing global landscape and agreed to maintain close communication in responding to economic implications stemming from developments in West Asia, said Cho.

Jaishankar and Cho are scheduled to meet again on Thursday at the Jeju Forum for Peace and Prosperity, where the former will deliver the keynote speech.

Philippine devotees wear mud and leaves for holy festival



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bibiclat

Hundreds of Catholic devotees wrapped themselves in dried banana leaves and covered their bodies with mud on Wednesday in the Philippine village of Bibiclat, taking part in a display of faith honouring St John the Baptist. The Taong Putik, or Mud People, festival is held annually in this village in Asia's largest Catholic nation as devotees thank the local patron saint for miracles and fulfil vows made in prayer.

Melencio Nenuda, a 39-year-old construction worker, said the mud-covered parishioners frightened him as a child and he used to hide when they passed by. But that changed when he fell seriously ill in the sixth grade and his mother prayed to St John the Baptist, vowing that he would join the tradition if he recovered. "I will continue

to go back to this tradition because it gives me a good future," said Nenuda, adding that his wife and son also participate. Devotees prepare for the observance before dawn. Heading into nearby fields around 4 am, they search for soft mud and smear it over their bodies before wrapping themselves in dried banana leaves. Once ready, they walk barefoot to St John the Baptist Church carrying only cellphones and lighted candles. As they wait for Mass to begin, hymns are sung near a small fire formed by the candle offerings.

Local church leaders say the practice began in the 1800s, when farmers smeared themselves with mud as an expression of humility, and covered themselves with the leaves to conceal their identities due to discrimination against the poor during that time.

Burnham inches closer to power in Britain



JILL LAWLESS ■ London

Andy Burnham took a step closer to becoming Britain's next prime minister without a contest on Wednesday when Cabinet minister Darren Jones, touted as a possible rival, said he would not run. Meanwhile Keir Starmer, seeking to secure a legacy before he leaves office, faces the weekly Prime Minister's Questions session in Parliament before flying to Berlin to meet European allies for talks on Ukraine and the West Asia.

Starmer announced his plan to resign on Monday and will be out of office within weeks once the governing Labour Party picks a new leader. Jones, a Starmer ally, had been encouraged to run so that Burnham faces a test of his ideas and policies in front of Labour lawmakers and members. Others argue that a leadership contest will only focus attention on the party's internal divisions and extend a period of political uncertainty.

Jones told Sky News that running for the leadership is "not something that I'm going to do". But he cautioned Burnham against veering too far to the left in economic policy, a concern of some in the business and financial worlds. Burnham is expected to choose a new Treasury chief to replace Starmer appointee Rachel Reeves.

Jones said it must be someone "that can reassure the markets, reassure the trade unions and reassure the parliamentary Labour Party, and by extension the public."

Burnham is expected to make a speech next week outlining some of his economic plans. Starmer is leaving after two years in office marred by missteps and judgment errors that eroded his standing with his party and the public.

Burnham, a former Cabinet minister who served since 2017 as mayor of Greater Manchester, won a special election last week for a seat in Parliament with the express aim of challenging Starmer for leadership of the Labour Party and the country. So far, he faces no challengers. Former Health Secretary Wes Streeting, who was considered his main rival, says he will back Burnham. Nominations for the Labour leadership will open on July 9 and close a week later. If Burnham is the only contender, he could be prime minister by July 17. If there is a contest, the winner should be in place by the time Parliament returns from its summer break on Sept 1.

Starmer told the weekly meeting of his Cabinet on Tuesday that he will try to oversee an "orderly transition" to his successor.

He is also keeping up a busy schedule, trying to cement a legacy for his shortened term in office. However, he is not allowed to make new major policy announcements or spending commitments during what remains of his premiership.

Starmer's trip to Berlin for a meeting of the "E5" - Germany, France, Italy, Poland and the UK - for talks on European defense, the war in Ukraine and conflict in the Middle East, underscores the role he has played on the world stage. He has appeared more sure-footed in working with allies to support Kyiv and deal with fallout from the Iran war than he has on the home front.

The British Government is expected to publish a long-awaited defence investment plan - which sparked the resignation of Defence Secretary John Healey on June 11 - before a NATO summit in Turkey on July 7 and 8 that Starmer is likely to attend. (AP)

Ukraine's strikes on Russia, hit major natural gas plant and satellite centres

ILLIA NOVIKOV ■ Kyiv

Ukrainian forces struck a major natural gas processing plant and two key satellite communications centres in their latest nighttime attack on Russia, Ukraine's General Staff said on Wednesday.

The operation was part of Ukraine's aerial campaign targeting energy facilities and military industries that has intensified as Kyiv builds bigger and better long-range weapons to defeat Russia's all-out invasion, now in its fifth year.

The overnight attack hit the Orenburg Gas Processing Plant, which is part of a complex that also houses the only helium



plant in Russia, the General Staff said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app. The attack set the complex on fire, it said.

Orenburg is located more than 1,200 kilometres behind the front line that snakes along eastern and southern Ukraine, it said. The plant is one of the

largest gas complexes in the world, according to the General Staff. It produces helium, used in liquid-fuel rocket engines and guidance systems, and ethane, a key component in producing solid rocket fuel and gunpowder, among other things, it added. It was not possible to independently

verify the General Staff's report, and Russian officials made no immediate comment. The Ukrainian statement did not say whether the military used drones or missiles in the assault, but drones have recently been used to strike Moscow and St Petersburg. Overnight attacks also struck two satellite communication centres used by the Russian military, according to the General Staff.

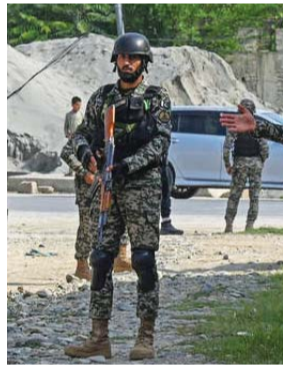
One was the Dubna Space Communications Centre near Moscow, which it described as the largest ground-based satellite communications complex in Russia, and the other was in the Vladimir region east of the Russian Capital. (AP)

Six terrorists killed in northwest Pakistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Peshawar

Six terrorists were killed on Wednesday in an operation in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in northwest Pakistan, police said. The operation was carried out by the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Lower Dir district of the province. According to the CTD, the terrorists killed in the operation were involved in a recent attack on a police check post and the killing of a police constable.

The CTD and district police received information about the presence of "a



group of Fitna-al-Khawarij terrorists" in the hilly areas of Lower Dir and tried to arrest them when they came out of their hideouts in the area, the CTD said.

"But, the terrorists opened indiscriminate fire on police parties," it said, adding that law enforcers fired back in retaliation. The fire exchange during the operation continued for a long time, and "six terrorists were found dead in the ensuing search operation."

Fitna al-Khawarij is a term that the state uses for the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) Pakistan.

The CTD said security personnel also recovered six Kalashnikov rifles and three hand grenades from their possession. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi praised the province's police

and the CTD for the successful operation. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General of Police Zulfiqar Hameed commended the district police and CTD and affirmed that these operations "will continue with full force until terrorism is eradicated from the province."

According to a monthly security assessment released by a think tank, Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies, Pakistan's security situation deteriorated sharply in May 2026, driven primarily by escalating terrorist violence in KP and Balochistan.

Singapore Government to help abandoned 400 workers from India, Bangladesh

GURDIP SINGH ■ Singapore

Around 400 migrant workers, mostly from India and Bangladesh, not paid wages by their employers for three to four months, will receive SGD 200 in cash and vouchers from the Singapore Government, it was announced on Wednesday.

The National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) secretary-general and labour chief Ng Chee Meng said the largest labour movement in Singapore and NGO Migrant



Workers' Centre (MWC) will give each worker SGD 100 in cash and SGD 100 in FairPrice (Supermarket) vouchers to help meet daily expenses.

The NTUC has also found 150 construction job vacancies from around 40

employers in the past two days, Ng added.

Speaking to the media at Tuas View Dormitory, where most of the workers are currently housed, Ng said the labour movement has also discussed with the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) on recovering the workers' salaries.

"The practice of abandoning the workers and not paying salaries is not something that NTUC will stand without acting upon," Channel News Asia quoted Ng as saying. (AP)

China detained 2 citizens suspected of smuggling banned items, says Japan

ARI YAMAGUCHI ■ Tokyo

China has detained two Japanese citizens suspected of smuggling items prohibited from import or export, a Japanese official said on Wednesday, in a case reportedly linked to rare earths, critical materials that are largely controlled by Beijing.

Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Minoru Kihara told reporters in Tokyo that Japanese consular offices in Shenyang and Dalian were notified by the Chinese



Minoru Kihara

customs authorities that the two Japanese nationals were detained, one on May 18 and another one a week later, "in the same alleged case."

Kihara said the two were in good health, but refused to give further details about

them or the case, on grounds of their privacy and the ongoing investigation.

In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun confirmed the detention of two Japanese citizens for violating Chinese laws, but did not give any details of the case. "What we would like to emphasise is that the Japanese side should educate and remind Japanese citizens and enterprises in China to abide by Chinese laws and regulations," Guo told a daily briefing. (AP)

Trump turns America 250 kickoff into campaign-style rally on National Mall

JOSH BOAK ■ Washington

President Donald Trump sees America's 250th anniversary as a chance to get the country excited again - about Donald Trump, he president is hosting a rally Wednesday on the National Mall in Washington.

He has said it will be replete with a military flyover by stealth bombers, military bands, singer Lee Greenwood of "God Bless the USA" fame and a speech by Trump.

It comes as Trump works to convince Americans ahead of critical November midterm elections that he's put the unpopular Iran war in the rearview mirror, with oil prices easing as the Strait of Hormuz has started to reopen in the wake of an interim deal to end the war with Tehran. The rally is designed to kick off weeks of celebrations about

America and its 1776 founding as part of "The Great American State Fair" on the mall, the national park that stretches from the US Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial.

But Trump's appearance onstage was only announced after several musicians - including Young MC, Martina McBride and the Commodores - cancelled their concerts because of concerns the event had become politicised. The president stepped into the void as he hyped his own ability to command a crowd.

"I am thinking about bringing the Number One Attraction anywhere in the World, the man who gets much larger audiences than Elvis in his prime, and he does so without a guitar, the man who loves our Country more than anyone else, and the



President Donald Trump walking out of the North Portico to get in his limousine at the White House. AP

man who some say is the Greatest President in History," Trump posted on social media about his plan to be the event's headliner.

In a video posted Monday night, he said the event would be "the biggest rally we've ever had," and

declared: "It's our music, our playlist. We don't have a lot of people boring you with songs you don't want to hear. We have the hottest people."

Tuesday afternoon, country singer Alexis Wilkins, the longtime girlfriend of FBI Director Kash Patel, posted on

X that she would be performing at Wednesday's event. Trump is pressing the case that he's made America better. Trump has struggled to deliver the presidency that he advertised to voters - causing his approval rating to dwell at a low 37 per cent, accord-

ing to the most recent Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research polling. Democrats say his botched repairs to the Lincoln Memorial reflecting pool and the resulting algae outbreak are a sign that he's spending taxpayer money on vanity projects instead of the nation's legacy.

Rep. Jared Huffman, D-Calif., said the Trump-affiliated group organising the 250th anniversary was selling access to special interests and redrafting the nation's founding to the president's liking, based on documents he presented at a congressional hearing earlier this year. "It should be about bringing us together," Huffman said. "He's trying to make this 250th celebration all about him."

Trump's fondness for

showmanship has not been a match for public anxiety about his presidency. Only 33 per cent of US adults approve of his economic leadership, with favourability at 40 per cent on immigration and 34 per cent on Iran. Inflation is still higher than what Trump inherited and it has been outpacing wage growth. The budget deficit remains on a path upward that keeps interest rates high.

Investments in artificial intelligence are driving growth, but they come with fears of middle-class job losses such that the construction of data centres needed for America's tech economy have become controversial politically.

Trump has fuelled dramas over tariffs, NATO, immigration, ownership of Greenland and his own renovations of

iconic buildings and monuments in Washington - generating a flood of controversy that has pushed things the administration sees as accomplishments - such as the capture of Venezuela's former leader Nicolas Maduro - off the public radar.

James Snyder, a Harvard University professor, has partnered on research showing that past rallies have helped Trump turn out his supporters to vote, in the short-term. But he noted that Wednesday's rally comes more than four months before the November midterm elections, and is unlikely to have a politically strategic benefit for Republicans. "I would not expect that the rally would have any clear effect on the 2026 midterm elections," Snyder said. (AP)



PROSPECT



Riniki Bhuyan Sharma, entrepreneur and wife of Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma, offering Anna Sewa to the pilgrims of Amubachi Mahayog 2026 in Guwahati

HCL, EIL ink pact for copper & critical minerals



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Building on their longstanding partnership, Hindustan Copper Limited (HCL) and Engineers India Limited (EIL) signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on Monday.

Under this agreement, HCL will engage EIL for comprehensive consultancy, engineering, project management, safety and integrity studies, sustainability frameworks, and advanced technical solutions. These

services will primarily focus on copper, critical minerals, and rare earth elements, supporting HCL's expansive, vertically integrated operations that span from mineral exploration and end-to-end mining to smelting, refining, and downstream extraction.

The MoA was formalised at EIL's corporate office in New Delhi in the presence of HCL Chairman and Managing Director Sanjiv Kumar Singh, alongside EIL's top management and senior officials from both organisations.

SAIL supplies 5,700 tonnes of steel for 3 Navy warships

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Steel, has yet again played a pivotal role in strengthening the nation's naval capabilities by supplying the entire 5,700 tonnes of special steel for three recently commissioned ships of the Indian Navy — advanced stealth frigate INS Dunagiri, the anti-submarine warfare shallow water craft INS Agray, and the survey vessel (large) INS Sanshodhak. The three advanced vessels were formally commissioned into the Indian Navy on Sunday by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during a landmark ceremony held at the Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port in Kolkata.



and supplied from SAIL's flagship facilities at Bokaro, Bhilai, and Rourkela Steel Plants, underscoring the Maharatna's robust technological capability in supporting India's maritime defence infrastructure.

SAIL continues to propel the nation's Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives. By producing specialised steel for critical naval platforms, SAIL has become an integral part of India's defence indigenisation. To meet the emerging requirements of the defence sector, SAIL has taken extra measures well in advance to enhance the production of DMR Grade plates for

defence requirements at its Plate-production facilities, specifically at the Special Plate Plant in the Rourkela Steel Plant. This strategic move is clearly reflected in India's growing import substitution in the field of defence-grade steel. Its stellar track record includes provisioning the landmark indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant, alongside the elite Project 17A stealth frigates-INS Nilgiri, INS Himgiri, and INS Udaygiri. Furthermore, SAIL's specialised steel forms the backbone of formidable vessels like INS Ajay, INS Nistar, and INS Anjdeep, among others. The successful induction of

these advanced warships marks a defining milestone in India's maritime capabilities and sovereignty.

SAIL CMD Dr Ashok Kumar Panda said, "As a key partner in India's defence sector, SAIL remains deeply committed to national self-reliance. To stay ahead in the defence sector's growing needs, the company boosted its manufacturing capacity for DMR Grade plates -focusing heavily on the Special Plate Plant at the Rourkela Steel Plant. Delivering these high-strength DMR 249A steel plates protects India's strategic independence while highlighting SAIL's cutting-edge technical expertise."



Army builds footbridge to restore Siliguri-Mirik link

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Responding to a requisition from District Administration, Indian Army established a 34-metre footbridge across the Balason River at Dudhia, restoring vital connectivity between Siliguri and Mirik and facilitating access to border crossing points such as Pashupati Phatak.

The intervention became necessary after the existing bridge was washed away due to incessant rains, disrupting movement across the river and causing inconvenience to local residents, commuters and travellers. The newly established footbridge will enable safe pedestrian movement. Based on the same requisition, the Army is also

working towards launching a wider Bailey Bridge in the near future, which will allow vehicular traffic to pass through. This will help restore tourist movement in the region, which is vital for local livelihoods.

Special care has been taken to secure the structure and implement all necessary safety measures to ensure its stability and safe usage.

An Army official stated, "The Indian Army remains committed to supporting civil administration and local communities whenever required. Restoration of this vital link will ease daily movement, support tourism and provide relief to the people of the region until a permanent solution is established."



Mahindra XUV 3XO for comfort, safety & value

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Recent interactions with Mahindra XUV 3XO owners indicate a high level of customer satisfaction with the compact SUV. Some said the vehicle stands out for its

modern styling, premium features, and strong value proposition in its segment. Others said the XUV 3XO delivers a refined driving experience, supported by responsive performance and impressive ride comfort. Several customers highlighted the SUV's spacious

cabin and advanced technology features, which enhance convenience for both city commuting and long-distance travel. Some said the safety package was a key factor in their purchase decision, while others praised the vehicle's road presence and overall

build quality. Owners generally agreed that the Mahindra XUV 3XO successfully combines comfort, performance, and practicality. The positive feedback reflects the model's growing popularity among buyers seeking a feature-rich and dependable compact SUV.

16th UN International Widows Day observed in New Delhi

BHAVYA KHURANA
New Delhi

The 16th United Nations International Widows Day was observed at the British Council in New Delhi on Tuesday in collaboration with the Loomba Foundation, the CII Foundation, and Sulabh International. The event brought together distinguished leaders, advocates, and beneficiaries to underscore the urgent need for dignity, justice, and empowerment for widows worldwide.

The occasion coincided with the International Widows' Rights Summit held at the House of Lords in London, where a Universal Declaration was adopted. The declaration emphasised



that no widow should lose her societal standing, home, livelihood, or dignity following the loss of her

spouse. It called for recognising widows not solely as recipients of aid but as equal members of society and



Lord Raj Loomba and his wife Lady Veena Loomba

agents of change.

At the New Delhi event, the opening address was delivered by Helen Silvester, Regional Director of the British Council South Asia, who reiterated the organisation's commitment to social inclusion. She also presented a brief documentary.

Kargil hero's native village gets development boost

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

As the nation marks the birth anniversary of Param Vir Chakra awardee Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey, his native village, Rudha, is witnessing a fresh wave of development and inspiration.

With funding from SBI Foundation, Mumbai, and implementation by Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra (SSK), Lucknow, several development initiatives have been carried out in the village under the SBI Sammaan - Hom(e)age to the National Heroes project.

A flagship initiative is the Captain Manoj Kumar Pandey Youth Training Centre, which has become a focal point for rural youth preparing for the Army, police, BSF, CISF and



other Government services. The centre offers both physical training and written exam preparation and features a running track, open gym, rope-climbing area, reading room and training ground to help aspirants prepare for recruitment tests.

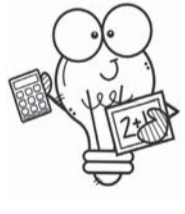
DAILY SUDOKU

6	3	2	5					
	4							
7	5	8				1	6	
4	9		2					
1	6					7	9	
		6				4	5	
3	5		9			8	4	
						9		
	8	7	1					5

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

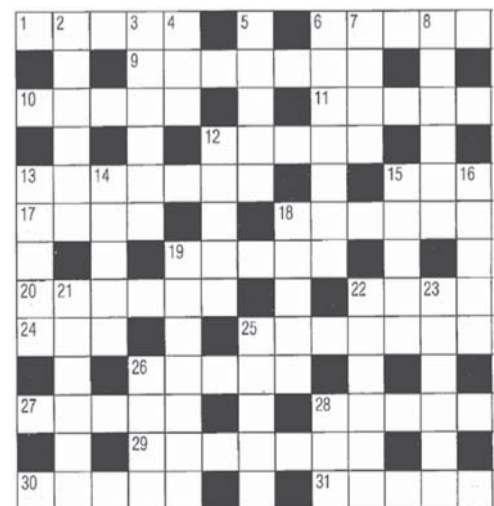
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.



SOLUTION (24.6.26)

7	2	5	3	6	4	8	9	1
6	8	4	7	1	9	2	3	5
1	3	9	5	2	8	4	7	6
2	1	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8	9	7	2	3	1	6	5	4
5	4	6	9	8	7	3	1	2
4	6	8	1	9	3	5	2	7
9	7	2	8	4	5	1	6	3
3	5	1	6	7	2	9	4	8

DOUBLE CROSSWORD THURSDAY | JUNE 25, 2026



- ACROSS**
- 1 Historic vessel just about wrecked (1-4)
 - 6 Spoon, in a big way, with Della (5)
 - 9 Benny's on record as a nice chap (7)
 - 10 Having taken the lead with an own goal, looked appreciative (5)
 - 11 Instrument that could be a collector's piece (5)
 - 12 A bolt possibly shot (5)
 - 13 Here's a fishy clue for you (7)
 - 15 Fixed the telly? (3)
 - 17 Apparently unpleasant! (4)
 - 18 Figures there's a quarter to share out (6)
 - 19 Reminder of past dereliction (5)
- DOWN**
- 2 VIP presumably having a large head? (6)
 - 3 Bureau specialising in mediation? (6)
 - 4 The solitary Mr Sloan (3)
 - 5 Are about to act in worship (5)
 - 6 Sententious, perhaps, but brief and to the point (7)
 - 7 Being infirm, wane again (4)
 - 8 The girl and boy had a certain rhythm (6)
 - 12 Strong resentment of strangers? (5)
 - 13 Barker junior (5)
 - 14 The rest of the night (5)
 - 15 A top performer holding one can make music (5)
 - 20 Choose quietly to make an allusion (6)
 - 22 Except for the road to the south (4)
 - 24 It can be said to be agreeable (3)
 - 25 In formal communications, the "F" word (7)
 - 26 Quality of a new mitre (5)
 - 27 Tobacco in a wrapper (5)
 - 28 A charmer with wit and a bit of charisma(5)
 - 29 Hairy description of a revolutionary leader (7)
 - 30 No thin scattering of seed around the end of the garden (5)
 - 31 Acts of documentation (5)
 - 16 An egghead, seemingly encamped, is dogmatic (5)
 - 18 On the surface, one knocked out (5)
 - 19 Is his office a "booking" one? (7)
 - 21 Accuse of being just about wicked? (6)
 - 22 Walk about a yard? (6)
 - 23 Uttered by a dove flying around, I see (6)
 - 25 To make a gift when out of breath, must be a struggle! (5)
 - 26 Wild rams defied in ancient Rome (4)
 - 28 What a packer might use, a soldier might eat (3)

SOLUTION (24.6.26)

- ACROSS**
- 3, March
 - 8, Putin
 - 10, Robot
 - 11, (H-)Tan(-ic)
 - 12, Arson
 - 13, Burg-ers
 - 15, We-ser
 - 18, Lab
 - 19, Nest(-le
 - 21, Retired
 - 22, Ones
 - 23, Gram
 - 24, Sea room
 - 26, Dagger
 - 29, Er-a
 - 31, Sonar
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Goyal meets exporters to boost trade, leverage FTAs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Wednesday met exporters to discuss ways to boost outbound shipments and leverage free trade agreements. "Discussed measures to strengthen support for MSMEs, maximise opportunities through FTAs, foster innovation and deep-tech capabilities, improve export facilitation, and expand India's role in global value chains," Goyal said in a social media post. Representatives of various Export Promotion Councils (EPCs) and Industry Associations participated in the deliberations.

The meeting reviewed strategies for advancing India's export ecosystem, accelerating market diversification and enhancing the country's global trade competitiveness. Several export promotion



councils presented their sector-specific export performance and KPI (key performance indicator) progress. The ministry's arm, the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), has proposed four KPI pillars - export performance, market diversification, exporter ecosystem, and policy facilitation.

An industry official said that the councils would have to inform the ministry about the number of new exporters onboarded by

them, the number of capacity-building programmes conducted, and participation in international engagements. India's exports climbed to a six-month high of 18 per cent to \$45.2 billion in May, while the trade deficit widened to \$28.21 billion. During April-May 2026-27, exports rose 16.09 per cent to \$88.91 billion and imports jumped 15.14 per cent to \$145.35 billion. The trade deficit stood at \$56.44 billion during the period.

Amrita University leads India in global sustainability list

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham on Wednesday achieved the number one position in India for Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure in the Times Higher Education Sustainability Impact Ratings 2026.

The recognition is based upon the University's contribution to the United Nations' 9th Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), which focuses on building



resilient infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialisation, and fostering innovation.

Amrita's overall global standing of 37th places the University among more than 1,500 institutions from over 115 countries and regions.

Mother, twins saved in high risk pregnancy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Artemis Hospitals successfully managed an exceptionally complex twin pregnancy, delivering healthy babies and ensuring the mother's recovery through expert multidisciplinary care.

The 33-week pregnant woman, referred after another centre declined her case, faced life-threatening risks: severe pre-eclampsia, insulin-dependent diabetes, morbid obesity with BMI 67, cardiac function at 30-35 per cent LVEF, fetal growth restriction in one twin, and IVF conception. Led by Dr Deepika Aggarwal, Dr Rajesh Misra and Dr Srishti Aggarwal, specialists in gynecology, anaesthesia, cardiology and surgery collaborated on a detailed treatment plan.

An elective Caesarean on lasted two hours, navigating risks of hemorrhage, heart failure, and embolism. "This case was one of our most difficult," said Dr. Aggarwal.

THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD.
SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66

Notice Inviting Tender

www.verka.coop

e-Tender is hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items:-

Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
For Verka Pattala Dairy Labour contract for providing of unskilled, semi skilled, skilled, highly skilled, A, B category workers and eligible labour for different posts through outsourcing.	01.08.2026 to 31.07.2027

NOTE:

- For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in.
- Contingendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

1018/12/2026-27/12678 General Manager (Purchase)



Munoz scores, Colombia edges Congo to reach knockout stage at World Cup

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Guadaluajara

Daniel Munoz helped Colombia break through Congo's stingy defense and advance to the knockout stage of the World Cup with a 1-0 win on Tuesday night.

Munoz scored in the 76th minute after the Colombians had been held back by a strong performance from Congo goalkeeper Lionel Mpsi, who made five difficult saves in the first 20 minutes.

Mpsi had no chance to stop Munoz's left-footed strike from inside the area after the ball deflected off a defender. It was Munoz's second goal in the tournament, and Crystal Palace fullback was named man of the match. "We played with intensity and aggression, and we stuck to our style," Munoz said. "We earned these three points as a team and for all the fans who came out to support us. This victory gives us a morale boost. We don't want to settle for this."

Congo twice came close to equalizing in stoppage time, with



Colombia goalkeeper Camilo Vargas making a superb save of a long-range strike by Nathanael Mbuku and then stopping a header by Chancel Mbemba off the ensuing corner kick.

Colombia coach Nestor Lorenzo said. "But I think we were the deserved winners."

Colombia star forward Luis Diaz had two goals called back in quick succession late in the second half, one for a foul in the 79th minute and another for offside in the 80th. Congo had opened its first World Cup in 52 years with a surprising 1-1 draw against Cristiano Ronaldo and Portugal.

Colombia has six points from two matches in Group K, two ahead of Portugal and five clear of Congo. Portugal routed Uzbekistan 5-0 behind a pair of goals by Ronaldo earlier Tuesday in Houston. Colombia needs at least a draw against Portugal on Saturday to win the group. That result would also be enough to send Portugal to knockout stage.



England, Ghana play to draw despite flurry-filled final minutes



KYLE HIGHTOWER ■ Foxborough (US)

England and Ghana coach Carlos Queiroz have met before at the World Cup, with the result being quite a bit different. This time, Queiroz's team earned a point that could end up being enough for a spot in the round of 32. England dominated possession on Tuesday but came up empty on several late scoring opportunities in a rain-filled 0-0 draw.

"Our plan was to block and frustrate them from the first minute," Queiroz said. "We did it." Four years ago at

the World Cup in Qatar, Queiroz was coaching Iran when his team faced England and lost 6-2.

England, which has not lost to an African country at the World Cup in nine meetings, outshot Ghana 19-1 but failed to capitalise on multiple chances in the closing minutes.

"Frustrated a little bit with how they defended, how they set up," England midfielder Jude Bellingham said. "They got exactly out of the game what they played for. Couldn't quite break them down, even with all comers, all the possession, all the shots on goal from distance." (AP)

Croatia stays alive for knockout round, eliminates Panama with 1-0 win

LEXIE LINDERMAN ■ Toronto

Josip Stanisic lifted a curving cross onto the boot of Ante Budimir, who tapped it into an open net in the 54th minute Tuesday, giving Croatia a 1-0 win over Panama in the World Cup.

Croatia remains in contention for the knockout round ahead of its third and final group-stage match against Ghana on Saturday. Panama was eliminated and is still seeking its first World Cup point in two appearances.

After a slow-moving first half at BMO Field, Croatia broke through Panama's strong back line after the break, with substitute Budimir finding the net just four minutes after coming on. The Vatreni nearly added another goal three minutes later when 40-year-old Luka Modric — making his 200th international appearance — passed ahead to Marco Pasalic on a breakaway, but Panama goalkeeper Orlando Mosquera blocked Pasalic's shot.

Belgium's Doku to rejoin team after travelling to London for son's birth



ANDREW DESTIN ■ Renton (US)

Belgium forward Jeremy Doku was expected to rejoin the team at its World Cup training facility on Tuesday following the birth of his first child, a boy named Praise. Doku missed Belgium's 0-0 World Cup draw against Iran on Sunday because of a respiratory illness, but was cleared to fly to London so he could be with his wife.

Ahead of Tuesday's training session, centre back Arthur Theate said Doku would join the team, but he was not present for the portion of practice that was open to the media. Doku missed training on Monday.

"We are very happy to have him (back), of course," Theate said. "He's an important player, important part of the group, also, in terms of everything. So, I hope he can help us the way for the next game." Belgium plays New Zealand on Friday at BC Place, a match that could determine whether the Red Devils advance into the knockout round. Belgium played to draws in each of its first two games.

On Tuesday, Doku posted on social media about his appreciation for the kind messages he and his family have received over the past few days. "Shireen and Praise are doing great, and my heart is full of gratitude," Doku said. "Welcoming my son into the world is one of the greatest blessings God has ever given me. Thank you to the team for the support, now it's time to get back to football and represent my country on the biggest stage." (AP)

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shobhnath Saket alias Shobhnath Choudhary S/o Kanchedi Lal R/o Gram Barikala, Post Sagmaniya, Satna, VTC: Baraj, PO: Sagmania, Sub District: Raghuraj Nagar, District: Satna, State: Madhya Pradesh-485114 have changed my name to Shobhnath Saket. PD(1474)C

M.P. STATE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LIMITED

Paryatan Bhawan, Bhadbhada Road, Bhopal-462003
 फोन: +91-755-4027100, 2774340, 42 www.mpstdc.com
 क्रमांक 305/यांत्रिकी/पत्रिनि/26 दिनंक: 24.06.2026

NOTICE INVITING TENDER 249/2026 STDC 517466_1

MPSTDC invites RFP for "Supply, installation, testing and commissioning of LED Screens including creation of immersive Dynamic 3D Anamorphic content 4K/8K (Operation and Maintenance) at Indore and Bhopal" PAC- 1343.37 lakhs

For any other information contact Mr. J.S. Bhardwaj, Mob. No. 9424796645 or E-mail at jbhwardwaj@mpstdc.com Last date and Time for Online RFP Purchase and submission last date is 29.07.2026 Time 05:00 PM. The detailed terms & conditions can be downloaded dt. 30.06.2026 from website <https://mptenders.gov.in>

M.P. Madhyam/126556/2026 EXECUTIVE ENGINEER

यूको बैंक UCO BANK
 (भारत सरकार का उद्यम) (A Govt. of India Undertaking)

Civic Centre Branch, Jabalpur

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) RULE 8 (1)

Whereas, The authorized officer of UCO Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of power conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the security interest (Enforcement) rules 2002, issued a demand notice dated 07/04/2026 calling upon the below mentioned borrowers & Guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notice and interest thereon within 60 days from the date receipt of the said notice.

The borrowers & / or guarantors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned, being the Authorized officer of Uco Bank has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of power conferred on him/her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the Said rules on this 19th day of June of the year 2026.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property will be subject to the charge of the UCO Bank Civic Centre Branch, Jabalpur for an amount mentioned below & interest & other charges thereon. The borrowers & / or guarantors 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 Borrower	Description of Property & Property Owner	Amount Outstanding
Borrower : Mr. Kaushal Kumar Yadav S/o Dhanpat Lal and Mrs. Nidhi Yadav W/o Kaushal Kumar Yadav	Residential house situated at LIG 154, Dhanwantri Nagar, Maharana Pratap Ward Jabalpur (M.P.) Plot Area- 581 Sq.ft. Property Owner - Mrs. Nidhi Yadav W/o Kaushal Kumar Yadav Boundaries: North: Road, South- LIG-161, East- LIG-155, West- LIG-153	₹ 11,76,320/- + Interest w.e.f. 31.03.2026 & other charges

Date & Place : Jabalpur, 19-06-2026 Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

बैंक ऑफ बरौदा Bank of Baroda

Bank of Baroda, Baradari Chouraha, Geruwala Bangla, Morar Gwalior - 474006 (M.P.) Ph. : 0751-2460501 Email : morar@bankofbaroda.com

DEMAND NOTICE

Notice issued under section 13(2) of Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Rule 3(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Whereas the undersigned has issued notice on dates mentioned below in table (sent by Speed Post) under section 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. r.w. Rule 3(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 to you and to repay the dues mentioned therein within 60 days from the receipt of the said notice, which were returned undelivered and I have reason to believe that you are avoiding service of demand notice on you. Now, therefore, notice is hereby given to you to repay the banks dues within 60 days from this Notice failing which the recovery shall be made as per rules and we, the secured creditor, shall be entitled to exercise all or any of the rights under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. r.w. Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The content of the notice is as under. Your attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the SARFAESI Act in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower/ Guarantor	Description of the Secured Assets	Amount Outstanding Demand Notice Date
Borrower : 1. Seema Gurjar Add: GH- 185, Deen Dayal Nagar, G-Sector, Gwalior	Property Owner - 1. Mrs. Rambeti W/o Jaswant Singh - Equitable Mortgage of Residential House No. GH-185 at Deen Dayal Nagar, Gwalior having area 2784.15 Sqft. Boundaries : East : 9 Mtr Wide Road, West : House No. GH-184, North : 12 Mtr Wide Road, South : House No. GH-186	Rs. 35,49,682.46/- + Future interest w.e.f. 17-06-2026. + Other cost charges and Expenses from the date of NPA till the Date of Realisation)
2. Mr. Hemant Singh Add: GH- 185, Deen Dayal Nagar, G-Sector, Gwalior	Property Owner - 2. Mrs. Rambeti W/o Jaswant Singh - Extension of Equitable Mortgage of Residential House No. GH-185 at DD Nagar, Gwalior having area 2784.15 Sqft. Boundaries : East : 9 Mtr Wide Road, West : House No. GH-184, North : 12 Mtr Wide Road, South : House No. GH-186	Demand Notice Date 16.06-2026 Account No. 38860600000618 38860600000819

Notice is hereby given to public not to transact/enter into any agreement and to mortgagors not to sell/transfer the above said secured assets without permission of the bank in terms of sec 13 (13) of the act.

Place: Gwalior Date: 24/06/2026 Authorised officer, Bank of Baroda

Aadhar Housing Finance Ltd.

Corporate Office: Office Nos. 501 & 503, 5th Floor, Lightbridge, Saki Vihar Road, Andheri East, Mumbai Suburban (District), MH-400072
 Sehere Branch: Office No. 05, 1st Floor, Tamrakar Mall, Commercial Plot No. 15, Sharda Nagar, Sehere 466001 (M.P.).

E-AUCTION - SALE NOTICE

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Properties under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged, possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" with no known encumbrances Particulars of which are given below:

S. N.	Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of the Immovable property	Reserve Price (₹)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) (10% of RP)	Nature of possession
1	(Loan Code No. 14210000117/ Sehere Branch) Sachin Chouhan (Borrower) Kajal C/o Sachin Chouhan (Co-Borrowers)	12-04-2025 & ₹ 8,65,697/-	All that piece and parcel of the property bearing, Khasra No. 495/13, Gram Amlaha, Tehsil Ichchawar, Dist Sehere. Boundaries: East: House of Arjun Chauhan, West: 15 Ft Wide Way, North: Land of Arjun Chauhan, South: House of Ashwapal Chauhan	₹ 14,94,000/-	₹ 1,49,400/-	Physical

1. Last Date of Submission of DD of Earnest Money Deposit along with KYC, Tender Form and accepted Terms and conditions (Tender Documents) is 29-07-2026 within 5:00 PM at the Branch Office address mentioned herein above or uploaded on <https://bankauctions.com>. Tenders documents received beyond last date will be considered as invalid tender and shall accordingly be rejected. No interest shall be paid on the EMD. 2. Date of Opening of the Bid/Offer (Auction Date) for Property is 30-07-2026 on <https://bankauctions.com> at 03:00 PM TO 04:00 PM. 3. AHFL is not responsible for any liabilities whatsoever pending upon the property as mentioned above. The Property shall be auctioned on "As is Where is Basis", "As is What is Basis" and "Whatever is There is Basis". 4. The Demand Draft Should be made in favor of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited Only. 5. Auction/bidding shall be only through "Online Electronic Bidding" through the website <https://bankauctions.com>. Bidders are advised to go through the website for detailed terms before taking part in the e-auction sale proceedings. 6. The intending bidders should register their names at portal M/s C 1 INDIA PVT LTD through the link <https://bankauctions.com/registration/signup>, and get their User ID and password free of cost. Prospective bidder may avail online training on E-auction from the service provider M/s C 1 INDIA PVT LTD through the website <https://bankauctions.com>. 7. For further details contact Authorized Officer of Aadhar Housing Finance Limited, Lokendra Rathore (Contact : 9977838990) OR the service provider M/s C 1 INDIA PVT LTD, Mr. Prabhakaran, Mobile No: +91-74182-81709, E-mail: tn@ctindia.com & support@bankauctions.com, Phone No. +917291981124 /25 /26 As on date, there is no order restraining and/or court injunction AHFL/the authorized officer of AHFL from selling, alienating and/or disposing of the above immovable properties/secured assets. 8. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in Aadhar Housing Finance Limited (AHFL), secured creditor's website i.e. www.aadharhousing.com. 9. The Bid incremental amount for auction is ₹s. 10,000/-. 10. This newspaper publication and the data contained herein is intended for general public dissemination. Any reproduction, distribution, transmission, or republication of this content, in whole or in part, in any form or by any means, whether print, digital, electronic publication in any form, e-mail or web publications, or otherwise through any mode is strictly prohibited. Any unauthorized use of the above content through any mode may result in appropriate legal action by AHFL.

Place : Madhya Pradesh Date : 25-06-2026

(Authorised Officer) For Aadhar Housing Finance Limited

CAN FIN HOMES LTD.

1st Floor, above central bank of India Gopalganj sagar-470001
 Ph: 07582-220450, 7625013262, E-mail-sagar@canfinhomes.com
 CIN No -L85110KA1987PLC008699

APPENDIX- IV A
 [See proviso to rule 9 (1)] Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002

NOTICE is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd SAGAR Branch, will be sold by holding E-auction on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 16-07-2026, for recovery of amount mentioned hereinafter due to Can Fin Homes Ltd. from respective Borrowers and Guarantors as on the respective dates, together with further interest and other charges thereon.

Sl No.	Name of the Borrowers and Guarantors	Liabilities	Reserve Price	Earnest Money Deposit	Type of Possession	Description of the property
1.	Mr. Ramnaresh Singh Thakur (Borrower) Mr. Bhagwan Singh Dangri (Co-Borrower) And Mrs. Chandrakumar Thakur (Co-Borrower)	as on 19-06-2026 ₹ 18,86,833/- (Rs. Eighteen Lakh Eighty Six Thousand Eight Hundred Thirty Three only) +2%Panel + other charges	₹ 44,90,000/- (Rs. Forty Four Lakh Ninety Thousand only)	₹ 4,49,000/- (Rs. Four Lakh Forty Nine Thousand only)	Constructive	KH. No. 323/2/2, PH. No. 70, Rani Durgawati Bai Ward, Ward No.1 Mouja Semra Bagh Makroniya Sagar M.P. 470004 Boundaries: North - Land of Saller, South - Land of Saller, East - 22 Ft Wide Road, West - Land of Mourya Encumbrances : Nil
2.	Parvati Choudhary (Borrower) And Gajadhar Choudhary (Co-Borrower)	as on 26-03-2026 ₹ 28,82,652/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Eighty Two Thousand Six Hundred Fifty Two Only) +SARFAESI + other charges	₹ 21,00,000/- (Rs. Twenty one Lakh only)	₹ 2,10,000/- (Rs. Two Lakh Ten thousand only)	Physical	Parvati Choudhary And Gajadhar Prasad Ahirwar Mouja Lalai Tori Ph.no. 79/67 Ward No.18 Tehsil And District Sagar Kh. No. 52/6, 52/78, 52/79, 52/80, 420 Sq. Ft. And Kh. No. 52/78, 52/79, 52/80, 196 Sq. Ft. And Kh. No. 45/2, 309 Sq. Ft. Total Area 925 Sq. Boundaries: North - Road, South - Road, East - Kuliya House of Other, West - House of Gupta Ji Encumbrances : Nil
3.	Kamlesh Kumar Raikwar (Borrower) Tina Raikwar (Co-Borrower)	as on 19-06-2026 ₹ 9,72,127/- (Rs. Nine Lakh Seventy Two Thousand One Hundred Twenty Seven Only) +2%Panel + other charges	₹ 16,80,000/- (Rs. Sixteen Lakhs Eighty Thousand only)	₹ 1,68,000/- (Rs. One Lakhs Sixty Eight Thousand only)	Constructive	House No. 321/240 And 320/240, Mouza Tulsi Nagar, Ward no. 19 Dist. Sagar M.P.470002 Boundaries: North - 6 Feet Wide Road, South - Plot of Pandit ji, East - House of Rajkumari Raikwar, West - House of Saini Ji Encumbrances : Nil
4.	Late. Heera Lal Dubey (Borrower) Lajjavati W/o Heera Lal Dubey (Co-Borrower)	as on 19-06-2026 ₹ 18,12,218/- (Rs. Eighteen Lakh Twelve Thousand Two Hundred Eighteen only) +2%Panel + other charges	₹ 43,80,000/- (Rs. Forty Three Lakhs Eighty Thousand only)	₹ 4,38,000/- (Rs. Four Lakh Thirty Eight Thousand only)	Constructive	Part of Khasra no. 56, Part of New Khasra No. 56/1/2, Plot no.77, 1500 Sq. Ft. Mouza Badhatwara, P. H. No. 75, R.I. Circle- Sagar Ward No.18, Shabari Ward Makroniya Sagar, Tehsil And Distt. Sagar M.P. 470004 Boundaries: East-Plot of Pandey Ji, West - Road, North - Shiv Mandir, South - Plot of Other Encumbrances : Nil
5.	Harishankar Patel (Borrower) Mrs. Mahima Patel (Co-Borrower) Sohan Patel (Co-Borrower)	as on 19-06-2026 ₹ 22,12,995/- (Rs. Twenty two Lakh Twelve Thousand Nine Hundred Ninety Five only) +2%Panel + other charges	₹ 18,10,000/- (Rs. Eighteen Lakh Ten Thousand only)	₹ 1,81,000/- (Rs. One Lakh Eighty One thousand only)	Constructive	Khasra No. 213/5 And 217/20 Mouza Tili Mafi, P. H. No. 63, Ri Circle Sagar-1, Ward No.46, 600 Sq Ft. Tili Ward Sagar M.P. Boundaries: North - Land of Govind Singh, South - Road, East- Land of Seller, West- Land of Seller Encumbrances : Nil

For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, provided in the official website of Can Fin Homes Ltd., (www.canfinhomes.com) please refer to the following link <https://www.canfinhomes.com/SearchAuction.aspx> Link for participating in e-auction : www.bankauctionwizard.com

Date: 24-06-2026 Place: Sagar

Sd/- Authorised Officer Can Fin Homes Ltd.

केनरा बैंक Canara Bank

Canara Bank, Specialised ARM Branch, Plot no. 4, PSP Area, Near AIIMS, Saket Nagar Bhopal Tel. : 9899014648

E-AUCTION (SALE NOTICE)

Appendix-IV-A [See proviso to rule 8(6) & 6(2)]
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

E-auction Sale Notice For Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rules 8(6) & 6(2) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) & Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable properties mortgaged / charged to the secured creditor, the Possession of which has been taken by the authorised officer of the Canara Bank (secured creditor) will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" & WHAT EVER THERE IS" on dates mentioned below for recovery of bank dues to the Canara Bank (secured creditor)

Name and address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Property	Demand Notice Dt. Possession Dt. Outstanding Amt.	Reserve Price EMD Amt. Bid Increment Amt
Borrower : M/s Golden Foods Prop. Shri Praveen Roadrey S/o Lt. Shri Nimbaji Patil House No. 125, Ward no. 03, Holi Mohalla Mandideep-462046	EMT of Residential House Situated at Ward No. 03, House No. 125 Holi Mohalla, Mandideep, Area- 950 Sq. Ft. Plinth Area: 765.47 sqft. Owned by Shri. Praveen Roadrey S/o Shri. Nimbaji Patil Boundaries: East- Warehouse, West-Road & House of Shri. Hukumsingh Pal, North-House of Badra maliya, South-House of Shalendra Shukla BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRB114526803 COORDINATES: 23.100011, 77.513433	14/08/2024 04/01/2025	₹ 11,97,000/-
Borrower : Mrs. Vaishali Singh Alias Mrs. Vaishali Taide W/o Rahul Singh	Flat no. S-2, 2nd Floor, constructed on Plot No. 133 & 134, situated at Arihant Tower, Amaltas GRIH Nirman Sakhari Sanstha Mydr, Swarn Kunj, Katara, P.H. No. 25/43, Ward No. 85, Bhopal. Area- 44.14 sq mt or 475 sq ft. Owner: Mrs. Vaishali Taide Boundaries: East- Flat No S-2, West-Road, North-Flat No S-01, South-Other Plot. Owner- Mrs. Vaishali Taide Symbolic Possession BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBVAISHALI LATITUDE: 23.187187, LONGITUDE: 77.489035	04.03.2025 08.05.2025	₹ 11,25,000/-
Borrower : M/s Maa Bhawani Bakri Farm, Proprietor/Mortgagor: Smt. Santosh Kanwar W/o Shri Bharat Singh	EMT of diverted land situated at khasra no. 170/172/2(s) village Kulhor Tehsil Berasia Dist Bhopal near Vidisha road area 4490.00 Sqmt. Boundaries As Per Deed : East : Land of Chhatar Singh, West : Land of Poojan Singh, North: Land of Toran Singh, South: Road Symbolic Possession BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBMAABHAWANI COORDINATES: 23.637725, 77.515518	07.10.2025 12.01.2026	₹ 28,50,000/-
Borrower : M/s Maa Bhawani Bakri Farm, Proprietor/Mortgagor: Smt. Santosh Kanwar W/o Shri Bharat Singh	EMT of diverted land situated at khasra no. 170/172/2(s) village Kulhor Tehsil Berasia Dist Bhopal near Vidisha road area 4490.00 Sqmt. Boundaries As Per Deed : East : Land of Chhatar Singh, West : Land of Poojan Singh, North: Land of Toran Singh, South: Road Symbolic Possession BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBMAABHAWANI COORDINATES: 23.637725, 77.515518	as on 24/06/2026	₹ 1,19,700/-
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Borrower : M/s Maa Bhawani Bakri Farm, Proprietor/Mortgagor: Smt. Santosh Kanwar W/o Shri Bharat Singh	EMT of diverted land situated at khasra no. 170/172/2(s) village Kulhor Tehsil Berasia Dist Bhopal near Vidisha road area 4490.00 Sqmt. Boundaries As Per Deed : East : Land of Chhatar Singh, West : Land of Poojan Singh, North: Land of Toran Singh, South: Road Symbolic Possession BAANKNET PROPERTY ID: CNRBMAABHAWANI COORDINATES: 23.637725, 77.515518	₹ 26,63,123.99/- + Interest & other charges	₹ 10,000/-

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 13/07/2026 upto 5.00 p.m. Date and Time of e-auction : 14/07/2026, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)

Last date for submission of online bids is on or before 15/07/2026 upto 5.00 p.m. Date and Time of e-auction : 16/07/2026, 12:00 PM to 2:00 PM (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each)

1) The intending bidders shall deposit above mentioned Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) being 10% of the Reserve Price in E-Wallet of M/s P3B Alliance Private Limited (banknet.com) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan on above mentioned date of bid submission. 2) The successful bidder shall deposit 25% of the sale price (inclusive of EMD already paid), immediately on the sale being knocked down in his/her favour and the balance within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale. If the successful bidder fails to pay the sale price as stated above, the deposit made by him shall be forfeited. 3) All charges for conveyance, stamp duty/GST registration charges etc, as applicable and any taxes, revenue/dues to any local authority etc shall be borne by the successful bidder only

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Date: 24-06-2026, Place: Bhopal AUTHORIZED OFFICER, CANARA BANK



India desperate to overcome woes against Bangladesh in T20WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Manchester

With middle-order batting woes and sloppy fielding threatening to derail their campaign, India will be desperate to address those concerns when they take on Bangladesh in a crucial Women's T20 World Cup Group A clash in Manchester on Thursday.

India entered the 12-team tournament with the form of their top order as a concern, but Smriti Mandhana and Shafali Verma have largely allayed those fears. Mandhana has scored 159 runs in three matches, while Shafali has contributed 92, with both batters striking at over 154 and consistently providing brisk starts. However, the inability of the middle order to build on those platforms has emerged as a fresh concern for the team management.

Skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (SR 109.09), Jemimah Rodrigues (94.11) and Yastika Bhatia (105.88) have each been unable to carry on the momentum provided by the openers, and their failure to accelerate invariably has left a lot



to do for the likes of Richa Ghosh and Deepti Sharma.

Having played three matches each, both Kaur and Rodrigues have managed just 11 boundaries between them without hitting a single six. Yastika, meanwhile, has struck only three fours in two innings, numbers that are likely to worry the Indian camp heading deeper into the tournament.

On their part, Richa (176.92) and Deepti (159.37) have responded well to the challenge but arriving

late in the innings with limited deliveries to face has increased pressure on the duo. Despite their lopsided batting, India (4 points in 3 matches, Net Run Rate of 2.511) are reaping the benefits of victories by big margins — by 64 runs against Pakistan and by 95 runs against the Netherlands — as they look to hold on to the second spot in Group A.

Australia beats Pakistan by 113 runs to stay unbeaten at Women's T20 WC

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Leeds

Australia swatted aside Pakistan by 113 runs and remained unbeaten in the Women's Twenty20 World Cup at Headingley.

Despite being four from four with one group game left, Australia has not secured a semifinals berth. Group rivals South Africa and India could yet wind up with four wins, too. Australia finishes against India at sold-out Lord's on Sunday. Australia has never missed the semifinals. Defending champion New Zealand and Sri Lanka held on to their slim semifinals hopes after winning their doubleheader in Bristol. New Zealand overcame Scotland by six wickets and Sri Lanka thumped Ireland by nine wickets.

Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu hit the eighth century in World Cup history, an unbeaten 106 of her side's 134 runs, just two days after saying she felt like "a failure as a captain" following a defeat to the West Indies.

Perry collects 71 and 2-9. Australia posted 199-7 and



bowled out Pakistan for 86 in the 14th over.

Australia lost Beth Mooney to the game's first ball but recovered with a 64-1 power-play — the highest of the tournament — as Ellyse Perry and Georgia Voll battered Pakistan. Their 100-run stand in 56

balls included 39 by Voll. Perry fell for 71 off 48 and cameos by Annabel Sutherland (27) and Nicola Carey (26) kept the rate up.

Mooney retired hurt on Saturday with a stiff back but kept wicket on Tuesday when she appeared to hurt her right wrist. But she brushed it off and took three catches. (AP)

'Harmanpreet needs to play her natural game'



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur needs to stop thinking about the wickets falling around her and focus on playing her natural attacking game, believes former pacer Shikha Pandey, who says the batter can transform into a completely different player once she gets settled at the crease.

India are in a tricky position ahead of their ICC Women's T20 World Cup clash against Bangladesh after suffering a defeat against South Africa in Manchester.

Speaking on JioStar's 'Game Plan', Shikha and Veda Krishnamurthy analysed Harmanpreet's strike rate, Jemimah Rodrigues' form and the possible changes India could make to their playing XI.

Shikha felt a tweak in the batting order could help Harmanpreet regain her rhythm, suggesting the skipper could move up to number four while Jemimah Rodrigues drops down the order.

"Harmanpreet Kaur's strike rate is a cause for concern for India's middle order. If a wicket falls early, we have seen Yastika Bhatia walk in, with Jemimah Rodrigues at number four. We might see Harman come in to bat at number four and Jemimah drop down to number five," she said. (PTI)



Gill at No 2 in ICC rankings for batters in ODIs; Henry joins Bumrah as top-ranked Test bowler

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dubai

India captain Shubman Gill rose three spots to move to the second spot in ICC ODI rankings for batters, while New Zealand pacer Matt Henry joined Jasprit Bumrah as the world's top ranked bowler in Test cricket here on Wednesday.

Gill is now behind New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell by only 24 rating points as the Indian skipper reaped the benefits of his big scores against Afghanistan in the recently-concluded three-match ODI series.

While he did not bat in the final ODI which India won by 9 wickets, Gill scored 84 and 154 in the first two matches of the series.

Ishan Kishan moved up 21 positions to reach 43rd rank among



batters while three Indian bowlers also made big gains in the latest rankings.

Arshdeep Singh moved up 16 positions to reach 22nd, Prasidh Krishna moved up 34 places to get to 58th while all-rounder Washington Sundar climbed 17 spots to reach joint 71st.

Virat Kohli slipped to the third position after missing the Afghanistan series due to a hamstring injury while Rohit Sharma remained at the

fourth position. Shreyas Iyer moved up a spot up to 14th but KL Rahul slipped a couple of positions to be ranked 11th.

Meanwhile, Henry, who took five wickets each in New Zealand's huge victory of 253 runs in the second Test against England, rose to the No. 1 slot to share the position with Bumrah.

It is after 36 long years that a New Zealand fast bowler has risen to the topmost ranking after Jack Cowie and Richard Hadlee.

"Pacer Matt Henry becomes just the third New Zealander to become the top ranked Test bowler as the 34-year-old joins Bumrah at the top of the bowler rankings following his 11-wicket haul during the second Test against England," the ICC said.

Iyer, Gill can help ease Suryansh into international cricket: Paranjape

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ New Delhi

It's a "lucky break" but Suryansh Shedge can turn his unexpected India call-up into a memorable learning experience by simply being observant inside an experienced dressing room with some help from young captains Shreyas Iyer and Shubman Gill, says his mentor and former national selector Jatin Paranjape.

Paranjape, also a former India player who has guided the Mumbai all-rounder over the last one-and-a-half years, said Iyer's T20 leadership could be particularly reassuring for the 23-year-old Shedge as the two have shared a successful association in Mumbai and Punjab Kings.

"Yeah, I think not only Shreyas but also (ODI



captain) Shubman. Because both of them are young captains. And both of them are captains with a lot of empathy," Paranjape told PTI after Shedge's maiden India call-up for the white-ball tour of Ireland and England following the injury-forced withdrawal of Nitish Kumar Reddy.

"And they will under-

stand the pressure Suryansh will be feeling, the nervousness that he will be feeling. Shreyas definitely, because they know each other, Suryansh has played under him. So, there will be a lot of comfort."

With both Pandya and Reddy out of the UK tour, Paranjape feels even in ODIs, Gill can guide Shedge. (PTI)

Vanshika, Narwal clinch 10m air pistol mixed team silver at Jr World C'ship



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Suhl (Germany)

The Indian pair of Vanshika Chaudhary and Shiva Narwal delivered a composed performance to clinch the 10m air pistol mixed team silver medal at the ISSF Junior World Championship here.

The Indian duo shot a total of 469.7 to finish behind Poland's Malgorzata Dabrowska and Ivan Rakitski, who combined for a winning total of 471.9. The bronze medal went to Chinese Taipei 1, represented by Cheng Yeh-Ching and Hsieh Hsiang-Chen, who posted 410.0 points. With Tuesday's silver finish, India continued to top the medal standings at the championship. The country's overall tally rose to 16 medals, including five gold, four silver and seven bronze medals.

India beat Sri Lanka by 11 runs in U-19 Women's T20



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Opener Tanishka Sharma's superb fifty was complemented by the bowling duo of Janhavi Veerkar and Maitri Maniar as India defeated Sri Lanka by 11 runs in their U-19 women's T20 game on Wednesday.

Opting to bat, India suffered an early setback losing Deeksha Katragadda (0) in the second over but Sharma made

a composed 56-ball 58 laced with eight fours to anchor the innings. She added 57 runs with Ira Jadhav (26 off 21) for second wicket, while Kumari Palak (21 off 18) and Kashvi Kandikuppa (12) also chipped in with useful contributions as India posted 134 for six.

Defending the total, Janhavi Veerkar (3/14) and Maitri Maniar (3/26) snared three wickets each as Sri Lanka could manage just 123 for 8 in the stipulated 20 overs.

Saud, Rizwan racing against time to be fit for WI Tests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

Pakistani selectors are waiting on the fitness reports of senior players, Saud Shakeel and Muhammad Rizwan, before they finalise the Test squad for the tours of West Indies and England between July-September.

Saud, who has remained vice-captain of the Test side to Shan Masood, is suffering from a hand injury while Rizwan has also been unable to take part in the red-ball training camp in Lahore due to an injury.

An insider close to the camp which commenced on June 10 said that both Saud and



Rizwan were unlikely to be fit in time for the tours.

"The selectors and team management are waiting until 4-5 July when their final medical reports will come in but the nature of their fitness issues is such it will take time for them to recover completely," he said.

'India could field same women's squad for WC, Asian Games'

SAUMJOYOTI S CHOUDHURY ■ New Delhi

The Indian women's hockey team is likely to field the same core group of players for both the upcoming World Cup and the Asian Games, with the two marquee events scheduled barely 20 days apart, chief coach Sjoerd Marijne indicated on Wednesday. The World Cup, both men and women, will be hosted by Belgium and the Netherlands from August 15 to 30, while Asian Games which is a qualifier for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics is scheduled to be held in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan from September 19 to October 4.

While there are speculations that India might field two different men's teams for the events, Marijne said he is taking the World Cup to prepare his side for the more important Asian Games.

"We have thought about this process. We have experience from 2018, it was the same. So what I see is one tournament is going to help the other one. The Asian Games is the most important for us as it is a direct qualifier for the Olympics," Marijne told PTI.

"But the World Cup in 2018 also



gave us a boost in confidence and that's the same way we are going to approach it now. The approach will be to focus on the World Cup and the learning from the World Cup, we take to the Asian Games and there is nothing better than playing matches under pressure at the World Cup and use that knowledge in the Asian Games.

"In World Cup we will have 20 players and in the Asian Games we will have 18 as only 18 are allowed," he added.

Dutch legend Taekema Taekema, a dragflick specialist who has worked with the Indian women's team on assignment basis, will be with the side in the World Cup and the Asian Games, said Marijne.

Taekema has been roped in by Hockey India to work with the Indian women's team till the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

"Yes he (Taekema) will be in both tournaments. Taekema is a specialist coach and we are very happy that we can have him in both World Cup

and the Asian Games.

"He has experience of working with the Chinese team. He is bigger than just a specialist coach for me, he is doing the PC attacking, PC defending and also guiding the defenders," Marijne said.

Taekema is a silver medalist at the Athens 2024 Olympics with the Netherlands, and has netted 170 goals in 94 appearances during his career.

Meanwhile, Indian women's team skipper Salima Tete lavished praise on Deepika, who returned to the side with a bang after recovering from a grade 3 hamstring tear sustained last year.

She netted six goals throughout the FIH Nations Cup campaign, sharing the highest goal scorer honour with USA's Ashley Sessa. "Deepika showed her performance after returning from injury. Deepika is a crucial player for us and very good dragflicker. We do believe that if we create a PC just a minute before the end of the game, Deepika will score. "We supported her a lot after her return from injury. She has a very good skills and speed and we will continue to support her," Salima said. (PTI)

Off-field issues add to Pakistan's WC woes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lahore

The Pakistan women's cricket team is going through a harrowing time on the field in the Women's T20 World Cup in England, and to make matters worse, reports have emerged about disagreements and a tense environment in the squad.

Although the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has neither denied nor confirmed them, several posts and reports on social and mainstream media suggest problems within the team.

Pakistan suffered its fourth straight defeat in the World Cup against Australia on Tuesday night at Leeds. Since landing in Ireland before the mega event, the team has yet to win a single match, and they were also winless in the triangular series they played against Ireland and West Indies prior to the tournament.

Last year also Pakistan finished at the bottom of the



points table in the ICC 50-overs World Cup in India and Sri Lanka where the team played all its games in Sri Lanka.

Reports say that the there was a big disagreement between team mentor and unofficial head coach, Wahab Riaz, and captain Fatima Sana over selection matters.

Before the match against Bangladesh, Sana objected to the husband of senior player, Aaliya Riaz, staying in her room in the team hotel.

"It was on Sana's insistence that Ali Younis was asked to vacate the room. Then, on the

day before the game against Bangladesh, Aaliya and her husband went out for sightseeing when there was a team practice scheduled," one report said.

Apparently, when the playing XI for the Bangladesh match was being finalized, Sana wanted Aaliya out, but Wahab insisted on her selection. After Pakistan lost the game and Aaliya failed, Sana pointedly told Wahab in front of everyone that he was responsible for the defeat, as he had not adhered to the necessary disciplinary protocols.