

## Ashtalakshmi witnessing rapid development

Meghalaya, Mizoram and Manipur Connected to the Rail Network for the First Time

Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh Get Air Connectivity for the First Time

12 **Vishwas ke, Vikas ke, Jan-Kalyan ke**



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## Yogi seeks to ease temple tensions

CM invokes the 500-year wait, urging devotees and critics alike to allow time for investigations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ Ayodhya/Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed confidence that the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe will reveal the truth into the alleged irregularities surrounding alleged misappropriation of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. He urged all parties to refrain from making unfounded comments that could harm devotees' sentiments.

"We waited for 500 years; now wait another 15 days," he stated. The CM's words carry historical significance, referencing the longstanding legal and social efforts preceding the temple's construction. The public's patience in awaiting the temple's completion is now being invoked to support a brief pause during the investigation.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offers prayers at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir, in Ayodhya

The SIT is expected to thoroughly examine financial records and operational procedures to validate the allegations.

The controversy underscores the challenges faced by religious organisations in large-scale public contributions. The episode highlights the necessity of ongoing vigilance and the adaptation of management systems to contemporary standards.

As developments unfold, cooperation between temple authorities and investigators will be crucial. The CM's appeal for restraint emphasises the importance of safeguarding devotees' sentiments from unfounded speculation.

With the investigation underway, there is hope that clarity will emerge soon, allowing focus to return to the spiritual core of the Ram Temple.

## Delhi HC backs Telegram block

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Friday rejected Telegram app's plea challenging the Union Government's order to temporarily block access to it ahead of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate) (NEET-UG) 2026 re-examination. The HC upheld the Government's decision saying the step was not disproportionate and that the order was well-founded because the app can facilitate automated dissemination of large amounts of content.

An HC vacation bench of Justice Tejas Karia dealt with two questions. First, whether the Government order to block the app was vitiated by non-application of mind and whether blocking of the platform satisfied the requirement of proportionality.

Dismissing the petition, the HC answered both the questions in favour of the Union Government. The court, in its 39-page verdict, upheld the decision of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) under Section 69A of the Information of



FILE PHOTO

## MISHRA CALLS FOR TEMPLE MANAGEMENT OVERHAUL

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ Ayodhya/Lucknow

In light of the controversy surrounding alleged misappropriation of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Ram Janmabhoomi Temple Construction Committee chairman Nripendra Mishra has advocated for a complete overhaul of the temple's management system. He asserted that the incident has revealed significant deficiencies in supervision, accountability, and adherence to established procedures.



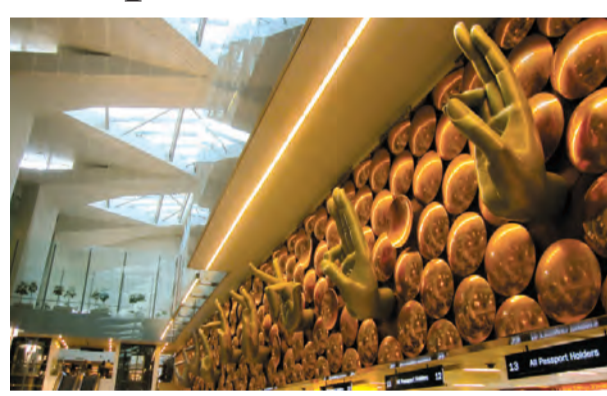
Construction Committee chairman Nripendra Mishra has advocated for a complete overhaul of the temple's management system.

## Punjab police deports Khalistani terror suspects

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 ■ New Delhi/Chandigarh

Punjab Police, working closely with Central agencies and the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), has successfully secured the deportation of two wanted operatives linked to the banned Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) from Malaysia. The suspects were detained at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport upon arrival and transported to Punjab for investigation.

Gurwinder Singh of Ambala and Manjeet Singh of Patiala emerged as crucial nodes and financial conduits for a terror network based in Malaysia. According to



Suspects were detained at Delhi's IGI Airport upon arrival

Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav, these individuals played a vital role in funneling terror funds through offshore accounts to support operatives in Punjab, aiming to target vital infrastructure and stir unrest. Both sus-

pects appeared before a Patiala court on Thursday and were remanded to police custody for further interrogation.

This success follows a series of relentless efforts earlier this year to dismantle the same terror network. On 23 January 2026, an IED blast struck the Railway Freight Corridor near Sirhind in Fatehgarh Sahib district. Another attack was attempted on 27 April 2026, near Shambhu in Patiala. In a major crackdown, authorities arrested four suspects and seized a cache of weapons, including an RPG launcher, IEDs, RDX, grenades, and high-end pistols.

## Multi-State fraud network of VPVV Techno under scrutiny after FBI tip

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ New Delhi / Kochi

Cheated investors of Delhi head-quartered VPVV Techno Construction Pvt. Ltd has filed complaint to Delhi Police Commissioner to probe against the company for creating fake contracts with United States Government. The fraud by the VPVV and its promoters was tipped off by Indian agencies by FBI. The FBI found that the Nagpur registered company has printed "Q Clearance Bag", which is signed by US President from a printing Press in East Delhi area, along with many US documents. Kerala Police has identified Delhi-based businessmen Vijay Kasa and Venkita Venkat in fooling investors and printing fake US documents.

The Nagpur registered company VPVV Techno is working in many States and has allegedly duped over ₹700 crores from investors by showing fake US contracts to export weapons to Federal Army and Navy.

They even created fake documents about Indo-US trade agreement and US President's orders on



Picture of an event hosted by VPVV Techno Construction

weapon exports from India.

Kerala Police had recently registered four FIRs and arrested around 22 persons from Nagpur and Delhi including Vasant Vihar head-quartered company's promoters Venkita Venkat, Aqeel Ahammed and Rajan Malik. Recently, few accused got bail from Kerala High Court and another absconding promoter Hitesh Kumar known as "Doctor Sahib" is facing a new case for using fake identity documents to get anticipatory bail from the High Court.

According to Kerala

## US-IRAN TALKS HALT AS ISRAEL BURNS LEBANON

ERIN CUNNINGHAM/JON GAMBRELL/AAMER MADHANI  
 ■ Jerusalem

Talks between the US and Iran were called off Friday after intense fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, officials said, raising questions about an initial agreement to end the war in Iran.

Israel and the militant group later agreed to a ceasefire, three officials said.

Word of the ceasefire came from two regional officials and a US official. The truce was mediated by Qatar, the US and Iran, the regional officials said. The three officials were not authorised to comment publicly and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

A Hezbollah official said mediators attempted to implement a new ceasefire and



An LNG carrier reaches Dahej Port in Ahmedabad, Gujarat

that an agreement could be announced soon, but he stopped short of confirming it was in place. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to comment publicly on the matter.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office did not immediately comment. Military spokesman Brig Gen. Effie Defrin said the military has not received different instructions from the Government. He said Israeli forces were operating in a "forward defence zone" and will continue doing so.

Iranian officials did not travel as planned to Switzerland, insisting that the fighting in Lebanon must stop before the talks can take place, according to three regional officials and a fourth person familiar with the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive conversations behind the scenes.

### The Bystander

Jharkhand: NDA-backed Nathwani won the RS seat.

No sir... it's cross voting.

Vote Choy

## TMC seeks disqualification of rebel MPs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ New Delhi

Seeking strong action against its rebels, the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress on Friday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to disqualify 20 of its MPs for revolting against the party and trying to "merge" with a lesser-known political party.

TMC general secretary and its Lok Sabha leader Abhishek Banerjee placed the demand before Birla by



TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee addressing the media in New Delhi

submitting 20 separate petitions against the 20 rebels seeking their disqualification after the breakaway faction sought recognition as

a separate block in the Lower House and announced their plans to merge with the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI), a registered unrecognised political party headquartered in Howrah in West Bengal.

Banerjee was called by the Speaker after the 20 TMC rebel MPs met him and conveyed their decision of forming a separate block.

Altogether, 29 MPs got elected to the Lok Sabha on TMC tickets in the 2024 general elections.

## PIONEER IN SHORT

### UDDHAV SIGNALS EXIT AS REBEL ROW GROWS

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Friday said he was ready to step down from party leadership if there was a lack of trust in him, amid a rebellion by six of his party's Lok Sabha MPs.

Addressing the party's 60th foundation day event in Mumbai, Thackeray said he had led the organisation for over a decade and faced repeated political challenges and personal attacks. He, however, stressed he was not "hungry for power" and would be willing to relinquish the top post, provided the party did not fall into the hands of "traitors". "I would be happy if someone from within the party becomes president, but I will not allow it to go to thieves," he said, adding that he would not tolerate allegations against him.

## SC declares right to walk on footpath a fundamental right

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ New Delhi

The right to walk on a demarcated footpath is a fundamental right, the Supreme Court on Thursday ruled.

In a significant verdict, the top court held that this right shall have priority over motorised vehicles on demarcated paths and it forms part of the right to movement guaranteed under Article 19 (1) (d) and other fundamental rights including Article 21 (right to life and liberty).

A bench of justices PS Narasimha and AS Chandurkar held that a citizen's fundamental right to walk on a demarcated

footpath is primary and shall have priority over movement by motorised vehicles.

The declaration by the top court came in an unfortunate motor accident compensation case where a father lost his five-year-old son while taking him to school.

"The right to walk is a fundamental right under Part III of the Constitution. It is integral to the right to movement guaranteed under Article 19(1)(d), read with Article 19(1)(a), Article 19(1)(b), Article 19(1)(c) and Article 21 of the Constitution of India. The fundamental right to walk will take within its sweep the right to demarcated footpaths. These rights



Representative image

are primary and shall have priority over movement by motorised vehicles," the bench ruled.

It held that the fundamental right to walk on demarcated footpaths has a correlative duty and "if the road exists, there is a duty to ensure that there are demarcated and well-maintained footpaths for walkers".

The bench said the duty bearers are the urban development authorities, municipal corporations, municipalities and even panchayats, who must endeavour to demarcate, construct, maintain, and safeguard footpaths and other necessary pedestrian infrastructure, as walking is integral to life.

## 38-km Dhussi Bund Road to Double as Flood Shield, Connectivity Lifeline for Sutlej Belt

PNS ■ Shahkot (Jalandhar)

For thousands of families living along the flood-prone Sutlej belt, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday unveiled what could become both a protective barrier against recurring floods and a major infrastructure lifeline by laying the foundation stone of the Dhussi Bund Link Road in Shahkot. Designed to strengthen the embankment while dramatically improving connectivity across the region, the project aims to provide a long-term solution to a decades-old problem that has repeatedly disrupted lives during the monsoon.

Built at an estimated cost of Rs 61.82 crore, the nearly 38-km-long road along the Sutlej River will connect the Shahkot-Moga-Rampur Road with the Gidderpindi Dhussi Bund, linking around 15 villages and benefiting nearly 15,000-16,000 residents. The project is expected to reinforce the embankment against flood threats while ensuring uninterrupted movement for villagers, farmers, school buses, and emergency services even during heavy rains.

Recalling the devastating floods of 2023, when the Dhussi Bund near Mandala Chhanna breached and inundated vast areas, Rajya Sabha MP Sant Balbir Singh Seechewal said that the demand for strengthening the embankment and constructing a permanent road had gained momentum after the disaster. Describing the project as the fulfilment of a long-pending public demand, he said that it would make travel easier while adding strength to the



flood protection structure.

Mann, addressing the gathering, said that the people of the Shahkot and Lohian region had lived under the constant fear of floods for decades as previous governments failed to address the area's basic infrastructure needs despite repeated promises. He said the new road would serve as a strong protective shield against flood risks while transforming connectivity in the region.

Besides protecting villages from seasonal flooding, the Chief Minister said the road would function as a bypass connecting the Shahkot-Moga Road with the Lohian-Makhu Road, significantly reducing traffic congestion on existing routes and boosting economic activity across the area. He termed the project an investment not merely in infrastructure but also in safety, economic growth, and an improved quality of life.

Mann also announced that construction of a bridge over the Chitti Bein would begin soon, providing direct connectivity to dozens of additional villages and further strengthening the transport network in the region.

Highlighting his government's rural

infrastructure push, the Chief Minister said that Punjab was rapidly expanding its road network to world-class standards while simultaneously undertaking major irrigation reforms. He claimed that 96 percent of canal water had been utilised this year through an improved irrigation system, preventing wastage and benefiting farmers across the state.

He said that nearly 14,000 kilometres of pipelines and watercourses had been laid to carry irrigation water to remote areas, with around 21,000 cusecs released through the network to meet farmers' irrigation needs. According to Mann, the volume of water supplied through these channels is equivalent to that carried by two Bhakra canals.

The Chief Minister further said recharge points had been created in canals and rivers to replenish groundwater, resulting in water levels rising by two to four metres in several areas. Emphasizing prudent use of public funds, he asserted that taxpayers' money was being channelled back into development through investments in roads, schools, hospitals, and public welfare projects.

## CM Saini calls for 'Yoga-Yukt, Nasha-Mukt Haryana'

PNS ■ Sirsa

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, while addressing a yoga practice programme ahead of International Yoga Day at the Main Dham of Baba Bhuman Shah located at village Baba Bhuman Shah (Sangar Sarista) in Sirsa on Friday, said that yoga is an invaluable gift of India's Sanatan culture, bestowed upon humanity by the country's sages for the welfare of the entire world. The journey of yoga, which began thousands of years ago, has today assumed a global dimension. Yoga is not merely a physical practice, it is a complete way of life that connects the body, mind, soul and society, he said.

In his address, Saini said that Yogasana has been accorded the status of a sport and included in the Khelo India Youth Games. The Prime Minister's messages like 'Khelega Bharat to Khilega Bharatand 'Yoga Ki Dose, Aadha Ghanta Roz' have become a source of inspiration for people across



the country. The journey of these 12 years of development and the global spread of yoga reflects the growing strength and global leadership of New India.

Saini urged people to take a pledge that they will neither consume intoxicants nor allow others to do so. He also appealed to society to make efforts to bring back young people who have fallen into the grip of addiction. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resolve of making India a developed nation by 2047 can be realised only when the

country's citizens are healthy, aware and free from substance abuse. The Haryana Government is continuously working on the theme of 'Yoga-Yukt, Nasha-Mukt Haryana'.

He said that Yoga education has been introduced as a compulsory subject from Classes I to X. Yoga training is being imparted in schools, colleges and universities, and yoga clubs have been established. To promote yoga and Ayurveda, Shri Krishna AYUSH University has been established in Kurukshetra.

## Punjab to Build Largest Govt Working Women's Hostel in Mohali

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Providing a major boost to women pursuing careers and higher education away from their hometowns, the Punjab Government has launched the construction of the state's largest government-run Working Women's Hostel in Mohali. The seven-storey, Rs 70-crore project in Sector 66 will accommodate 484 women and offer secure, modern, and affordable housing, marking a significant step towards strengthening women's safety and economic empowerment.

The foundation stone for the ambitious project was laid by Social Security, Women and Child Development Minister Dr Baljit Kaur, who said the hostel would provide accommodation at nominal rent, easing the financial burden on women relocating for jobs or studies while ensuring a dignified and secure living environment.

Designed as a state-of-the-art residential facility, the hostel will feature single rooms, double-occupancy rooms and dormitories to cater to diverse needs. It will also include a crèche for children accompanying working women and indoor recreational facilities, creating

a supportive ecosystem for residents balancing professional and family responsibilities.

The Minister said that the project forms part of a wider initiative under which the department is constructing five Working Women's Hostels across Mohali, Jalandhar, and Amritsar. Besides the new 484-bed facility, Mohali already has two hostels under development — a 150-capacity hostel at NIFT Phase-I costing Rs 25.26 crore and another 100-capacity hostel in Sector 79 with an estimated cost of Rs 12.57 crore.

and laid foundation stones of various projects in Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla on Friday. He inaugurated multi faculty building phase-III constructed at a cost of Rs. 10.09 crore. This building would have three academic floors and Computer-cum-CBT Lab besides a parking facility. He also inaugurated the newly established CBT Lab. It would also go a long way in expanding teaching capacity and supporting digital learning initiatives. Sukhu also laid the foundation stone of a new academic block to be constructed at a cost of Rs. 8.25 crore. It will have five storeys with parking and new class rooms and academic space accommodating the increased student intake. He also reviewed various schemes and projects of Himachal Pradesh University and said that the state government was providing every possible support to strengthen the University and is granting aid of Rs. 150 crore annually for its development.

## BRIEFS

### SKM PUNJAB SUBMITS MEMORANDUM TO PUNJAB GOVERNOR ON FARMERS' ISSUES

**Chandigarh:** A delegation of the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (Punjab) on Friday called on the Governor of Punjab and Administrator, Union Territory Chandigarh, Gulab Chand Kataria and submitted a memorandum highlighting various issues and demands concerning the farming community. The delegation raised several key issues, including a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price (MSP), debt relief for farmers and agricultural labourers, conservation of water resources, crop insurance, land acquisition matters, withdrawal of cases related to farmers' agitations, and other important concerns affecting the agricultural sector. Kataria assured the delegation that he would personally take up all the issues and demands raised by the farmers with both the Punjab Government and the Government of India and make every possible effort towards their resolution. He stated that matters relating to Punjab's agriculture, water resources and the livelihood of farmers are of utmost importance and deserve serious consideration. The Governor urged the SKM to submit a detailed proposal outlining not only their demands but also practical and long-term solutions so that the issues could be effectively presented before the governments concerned.

### HIMACHAL GOVT TO PROVIDE NON-PRACTISING ALLOWANCE TO SUPER-SPECIALITY DOCTORS

**Shimla:** Super-speciality doctors in Himachal Pradesh will receive non-practising allowance (NPA) from the government to further strengthen healthcare services in the state, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu has said. Presiding over a review meeting of the health department on Thursday evening, he said his government was committed to providing quality healthcare services to patients within the state. "There was no shortage of funds for modernising the health sector," he said. Sukhu directed the health department to categorise all community health centres (CHCs) based on population coverage so that staffing and infrastructure could be provided according to actual requirements. He said the government held several rounds of discussions with doctors regarding healthcare reforms. Non-practising allowance (NPA) would be given to super-speciality doctors to further strengthen healthcare services, Sukhu added.

### HIMACHAL CM INAUGURATES AND LAYS FOUNDATION STONES OF VARIOUS PROJECTS IN HPU

**Shimla:** Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu inaugurated and laid foundation stones of various projects in Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla on Friday. He inaugurated multi faculty building phase-III constructed at a cost of Rs. 10.09 crore. This building would have three academic floors and Computer-cum-CBT Lab besides a parking facility. He also inaugurated the newly established CBT Lab. It would also go a long way in expanding teaching capacity and supporting digital learning initiatives. Sukhu also laid the foundation stone of a new academic block to be constructed at a cost of Rs. 8.25 crore. It will have five storeys with parking and new class rooms and academic space accommodating the increased student intake. He also reviewed various schemes and projects of Himachal Pradesh University and said that the state government was providing every possible support to strengthen the University and is granting aid of Rs. 150 crore annually for its development.

# Classifieds

### BEDKHALI NOTICE

**I, Sapan Dass S/o** Unah Chandra Dass and Kalpana Dass W/o Sapan Dass, House No. 71, Sector 28-A, Chandigarh inform that our son Deepak Dass and his wife Shikha are out of our control. We disown them from our all moveable and Immoveable Properties. Anybody who deal with them will do at their own Risk.

**I Ashok Kumar Gupta S/o** Sh. Krishan Chand R/o H. No. 2007/B-2, Main Bazar Pinjore Kalka, Distt. Panchkula, Haryana, disinheret my son Shubham with his family from my life and my property.

**ਮੈਂ ਰਾਮ ਰਾਣੀ ਪੁਤਨੀ** ਰਾਜ ਕੁਮਾਰ ਵਾਸੀ ਮਕਾਨ ਨੰਬਰ 642, ਸ਼ੀਲਾ ਮਹਿੰਦਰ, ਹੁਸ਼ਿਆਰਪੁਰ ਜ਼ਿਲ੍ਹਾ ਨਗਰੀ ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਲੜਕੀ ਨੀਲਮ ਰਾਣੀ ਜੋ ਕਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਕਹਿਣ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਹਰ ਹੈ। ਮੈਂ ਉਸ ਨੂੰ ਆਪਣੀ ਚਲ ਅਤੇ ਅਚਲ ਜ਼ਾਇਦਾਦ ਤੋਂ ਬੇਬਖ਼ਲ ਕਰਦੀ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇਕਰ ਉਸ ਨਾਲ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਲੈਣ ਦੇਣ ਕਰੇਗਾ ਤਾਂ ਮੈਂ ਜਾਂ ਮੇਰਾ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਉਸ ਦੇ ਲੈਣ ਦੇਣ ਦੇ ਜ਼ਿੰਮੇਵਾਰ ਨਹੀਂ ਹੋਵਾਂਗੇ। ਸਬੰਧਤ ਨੋਟ ਕਰਨ।

### PUBLIC NOTICE

**We, Paramjit Singh Kohli S/o** Ajab Singh Kohli and Parminder Kaur Kohli W/o Paramjit Singh Kohli, R/o #1753, Phase 7, S.A.S. Nagar (Mohali), Punjab declares that Our son Mandeep Singh Kohli is now in our control. So we withdraw the disown notice which was given in The Pioneer dt. 29.04.2024. Now he will be the heir of our movable and immovable property.

### CHANGE OF NAME

**I, hitherto** known as HIMANSHI W/O AVKASH KADIAN R/O H.No. 189, SUBHASH NAGAR, OLD TALAO ROAD, JHAJJAR-124103, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as HIMANSHI KADIAN. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection. HIMANSHI.

**I Raman Kumar S/O** Rattan Lal Thakur #472 1st Floor Sector 41A Chandigarh Declare That I Have Changed My Name From Raman Kumar To Raman Kumar Thakur.

**I, Gopi Chand S/O** Brahma Nand R/o House Number 114 SBI, Aggarsain Colony, Sirsa, Haryana, 125055 has changed my name from Gopi Chand to Gopi Chand Modi

**I, SANTOSH W/O** SANDEEP R/O NEAR BABA PARSHAD GIRI MANDIR, MATA GATE, JHAJJAR, TEHSIL & DISTT JHAJJAR, HARYANA-124103, have changed the name of my minor Daughter SHAKSHI AGE 11 YEARS and She Shall hereafter be known as SAKSHI. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

**I MOHIT S/O HARI** PRAKASH R/O VPO. SASROLI, TEHSIL MATANHAIL, DISTRICT JHAJJAR, HARYANA, 124106 have changed the name of my minor son BABY FIRST OF SUSHILA AGE 05 YEARS and he Shall hereafter be known as TAKSHIV. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

**I, NARENDER KUMAR S/O UMED** SINGH R/O VPO BALIALI, TEHSIL BAWANI KHERA, DISTT BHIWANI-127032, HARYANA, have changed the name of my minor Son TUSHAR AGE 17 YEARS and he Shall hereafter be known as TUSHAR KAUSHIK. It is certified that I have complied with other legal requirements in this connection.

**I, Rahul Masih S/O** David Masih R/o Village Sultani, District Gurdaspur (Pb) hereby declare that I have changed my name to Masih Rahul. Masih is my surname and Rahul is my Given name.

**I Rashpal S/o** Bir Masih R/o Village Triza Nagar (Gurdaspur), Have changed my name Rashpal to Rashpal Masih Concerned note.

**I, Panchial Goyal F/O** ARMY NO-14447823P RANK-BHM Vijay Goyal Unit 346 FD REGT C/O 56 APO R/O- C-1 Shriram Chandra Height Abhibav Homes Fase-4 Behind Bank Of Barodha Ayodhya Buz Pass Road Tehsil Huzar Dist Bhopal Madhya Pradesh 462041 Declare that in my Army Service record of my son, my name wrongly written as Panchial Goyal. My correct name is Panchi Lal Goyal. Also my Date of birth wrongly written as 01-07-1952. My correct DOB IS 12-02-1960.

**I Rambette M/O** Army No. 14447823P Rank-BHM Vijay Goyal Unit 346 FD Regt C/O 56 APO R/O Dade Thok Gram/Post-Badakar Bhadkhar Bhand, Madhya Pradesh 477555 declare that in my Army service record of my son, my name written as Rambette. My correct name is Rambeti. Also my date of birth wrongly written as 01-07-1962. My correct DOB is 01-01-1965.

**I, Surjeet Kumar S/O** Jaswant Singh R/o Village Jhinjron, PO Hafizpur, Tehsil Radaur, District Yamuna Nagar, 135002, haryana have changed my minor son name from Varun to Varun Kashyap.

**I, Vinas W/O** Jogender Singh R/O House No-46, Professor Colony, Distt. Yamuna Nagar-135001, Haryana, India have Changed my name From Vinas To Venus For All Future Purposes.

**I, Joginder S/o** Nathlu Singh R/o House No 46, Professor colony, Distt. Yamuna Nagar-135001, Haryana, India have changed my name from Joginder to Jogender singh for all future purposes.

**I, Ajay Kumar S/o** Jeet Ram R/o Village Janjhara, PO Bhambol, Tehsil Saraswati Nagar, Distt. Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, India, have changed my minor daughter name from Baby of Kalpna devi to Devaanshey.

**I, Ajay Kumar Dabra S/o** Daulat Ram Dabra R/o H.No. 24, Tagore Garden, Yamuna Nagar, P.O. Yamuna Nagar, Distt. Yamuna Nagar, have changed my name from Ajay Kumar Dabra to Ajay Dabra.

**I, Deepika W/o** Rohan Oberoi R/o 474, Joginder Nagar, Yamuna Nagar, have changed my name from Deepika to Deepika Oberoi.

**I Anush Devi D/o** Subedar Surjeet Singh Army No. JC473121X, R/o village Dingar Majra, Tehsil Gharandua, Distt. Karnal, declare that my name is Anush Devi in my father's Army records, whereas my real name is Anush, which is correct and true.

**I, Balbir Kaur W/o** Kandhara Singh R/o House Number 365, Saiya Dera, Uplana (78), Karnal, Haryana 132039. have changed my name from Balbir Kaur to Jasbir Kaur.

**I, Prithvi Pal Singh S/O** Santokh Singh R/o House No 87, Adarsh Nagar, Near Head Post Office, Panipat Haryana 132103. have changed my name from Prithvi Pal Singh to Prithi Paul Singh.

**I Himani D/o** Jinder Pal Singh and W/o Sagar Wadhawan R/o 903 Huda, Sector -12, Near Huda Dav School, DIST- Panipat, Haryana-132103 have changed my name to Himani Wadhawan.

**I, Vishal S/o** Late Sh. Ashok R/o H.No. 265, VPO. Fazilpur Tehsil & District Sonapat, Haryana declare that Vishal & Vishal Rana both names are same and one person I shell be known as Vishal.

**I, Satyawan S/o** Tek Ram R/o Village Ahulana, Tehsil Gohana, Sonipat (131301) declare that My son, Rahul Malik (Indian Army, 6 RAJ RIF, Service No. 16028080F), has my name recorded incorrectly as Satyawan Malik in his service records. whereas my correct name is Satyawan I request that this be rectified.

**I, Neelam Rani w/o** Sh. Satyawan S/o Tek Ram R/o Village Ahulana, Tehsil Gohana, Sonipat (131301) declare that My son, Rahul Malik (Indian Army, 6 RAJ RIF, Service No. 16028080F), has my name recorded incorrectly as Neelam in his service records, whereas my correct name is Neelam Rani. I request that this be rectified.

**I, Pooja D/o** Guralp Masih R/o H. No. 192/12, Gobind Nagar, Batala Chungi, Gurdaspur (Pb) have changed my name from Pooja to Pooja Gill. Concerned note.

**I, Charanjit Kaur M/o** Service No. 2495012X EX-SEP- Gurmeet Singh Resident of Village-Indranwal, PO-Dhariwal, Tehsil and Distt-Gurdaspur, Punjab That I declare change my name from Charanjeet Kaur to Charanjit Kaur and date of birth from 01/07/1953 to 01/01/1952 in my son army record.

**I, Lovely Khurana (Aadhar No. 200648786563) S/o** Ghanshyam Dass R/o House No. A297, 2nd Floor, Shiva Enclave, Suncity, Kaithal, Distt. Kaithal (Haryana) declares that I have changed my minor son's name from Arjun to Arjun Khurana. In future, he will be known by the name of Arjun Khurana. All concerned please note.

**I, Laxman S/o** Ramjeet R/o House No. 809, Khuda Alisher, Chandigarh have changed my name from Laxman to Lakshman Chaudhary.

**I, Thirupathi Rajaiah** legally father of No.15247622H NK Thirupathi Yella Swamy presently residing at 12-58, Thokalappally, Chelpur, PO: Chelpur, Distt. Karimnagar State-Telangana- 505122 declare That I have changed my DOB from 18.08.1966 to 01.01.1966 as per my Adhaar Card, vide Affidavit No. IN-PB467326894683Y dated 15.06.2026 before the court of Bathinda.

**I, Lakshman Chaudhary S/o** Ramjeet R/o House No. 809, Khuda Alisher, Chandigarh have changed my minor son's name from Sunny to Yash Chaudhary.

**I, Lakshman Chaudhary S/o** Ramjeet R/o House No. 809, Khuda Alisher, Chandigarh have changed my minor son's name from Kundan to Kyrav Chaudhary.

**I Gagandeep Kaur W/o** kamaljit Singh R/o H.no.85 Sewak Enclave Rajpura, Distt Patiala have changed my name from Ramandip kaur to Gagandeep Kaur.

**I, Suraj,** son of Mohinder Kumar, resident of 4085, Ward No. 9, Janglat BHIBAG, Rajpura District Patiala, have changed my name from Suraj to Suraj Kumar.

**I, Raj Bala W/o** Sh. Ashok Kumar resident of H.No. 464-A/30, Dev Colony, Rohtak-124001 (Haryana) declare that I have changed my name from Rajbala Balhra to Raj Bala. In future I will be known as Raj Bala for all purposes.

**I, Tejshavi Darne W/o** Sh. Shivkiran Prakash Darne Resident of Flat No.607-B, Tower, Nagla Road, Zirakpur, Distt SAS Nagar declare that my spouse/husband name is Shivkiran Prakash Darne.

**I ANGORI DEVI** (existing name) Wd/o No. 1173147K Ex Sepoy Balwan Singh S/o Tuhi Ram resident of VPO Nilauthi, Tehsil Bahadurgarh, Distt. Jhajjar (Haryana) declare that I have changed/amend my name in my husband Army Discharge Book from Angori Devi (existing name) to Angoori Devi

**I, Ram Darsh Sharma S/o** Nanu Lal Sharma, House No. 3872, Sector 56, Chandigarh inform that Ram Darsh Sharma, Ram Darsh and Ramdarsh Sharma is the names of one and the same person.

**I, Neelam Sharma W/o** Hanuman Sharma, House NO. 13-14, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh have changed my name from Neelam Sharma to Neelam

**I, Poonam Devi W/o** Hukam Singh, R/o House No. 50, Kishangarh, Chandigarh have changed my name to Punam Devi

**I, Jnardan Pal S/o** Hari Ram, House No. 602, Sector 8-B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Jnardan Pal to Janardan Pal

**I, Kushawah Pradip S/o** Asharam Kushwaha, House NO. 1139/1, Gobindpura, Manimajra Chandigarh have changed my name to Pradeep Kumar

**I, Jitender S/o** Rameshwar, House No. 3732, Maloya Colony, Chandigarh have changed my name from Jitender to Jitendra Singh.

**I, Shivkiran Prakash Darne S/o** Sh. Prakash Gujabrao Darne Resi., of Flat No.607-B, Tower, Nagla Road, Zirakpur, Distt SAS Nagar declare that Shivkiran Darne and Shivkiran Prakash Darne both name refer to oneand same person. In future known me as Shivkiran Prakash Darne.

**I, Rajni W/o** Ranjithbhai Abhabhai, House No. 840, Sector 45-A, Burail Chandigarh have changed my name to Rajniben

**I, Ranjit S/o** Abh Ram, House No. 840, Sector 45-A, Burail Chandigarh have changed my name to Ranjithbhai Abhabhai

**I, Sonia Thapa W/o** Mohinder Kumar, House No. 216, Phase-1, Bapudham Colony, Sector 26, Chandigarh have changed my name from Sonia Thapa to Nitika

**I, Ram Darsh Sharma S/o** Nanu Lal Sharma, House No. 3872, Sector 56, Chandigarh inform that Ram Darsh Sharma, Ram Darsh and Ramdarsh Sharma is the names of one and the same person.

**I, Neelam Sharma W/o** Hanuman Sharma, House NO. 13-14, Sector 22-C, Chandigarh have changed my name from Neelam Sharma to Neelam

**I, Poonam Devi W/o** Hukam Singh, R/o House No. 50, Kishangarh, Chandigarh have changed my name to Punam Devi

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**I, Shivkiran Prakash Darne S/o** Sh. Prakash Gujabrao Darne Resi., of Flat No.607-B, Tower, Nagla Road, Zirakpur, Distt SAS Nagar declare that Shivkiran Darne and Shivkiran Prakash Darne both name refer to oneand same person. In future known me as Shivkiran Prakash Darne.

Continuity Pg. No. 04

## Punjab Gears Up for NEET Re-Exam with CAPF Security, 4 Special Trains, Free Bus Travel

MONIKA MALIK ■ Chandigarh

Punjab has put in place an extensive administrative and security mechanism for the NEET re-examination on June 21 (Sunday), with the state and Centre jointly enforcing a multi-layered strategy aimed at ensuring a smooth, transparent, and stress-free examination process for nearly 25,000 candidates. From deploying Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) to operating multiple special examination trains and free government bus travel, authorities have launched an unprecedented state-wide exercise to facilitate students while safeguarding the integrity of the examination.

Deputy Commissioners designated as nodal officers in every district and strict Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) issued for every stage of the examination, officials have been directed to leave no room for lapses. Review meetings involving all departments have been ordered to assess preparedness, while strict adherence to Central Government guidelines has been made mandatory across Punjab.

One of the biggest highlights of the preparations is the enhanced security surrounding examination material. From the custodian bank to examination centres, question papers and answer sheets will remain under the protection of Punjab Police and CAPF personnel. Armed CAPF

jawans will escort examination material in specially secured vehicles directly to centres, with authorities warning that any negligence in handling confidential material will invite strict action.

Every examination centre will have two armed CAPF personnel stationed for security, while police escorts will accompany vehicles carrying question papers and answer sheets. In urban areas, Police Commissioners will supervise security arrangements, while Senior Superintendents of Police (SSPs) will oversee rural regions.

To ensure seamless movement of candidates across the state, Northern Railway has decided to operate four special trains exclusively for NEET aspirants in Punjab, significantly expanding travel options on the examination day.

The services include Bathinda-Chandigarh-Bathinda Special Train; Amritsar-Ludhiana-Amritsar Special Train, Ludhiana-Amritsar-Ludhiana Special Train; and Ferozepur Cantonment-Ludhiana-Ferozepur Cantonment Special Train.

The special service will run with 14 coaches, including 12 general compartments, allowing students and accompanying parents to travel conveniently even without prior reservation.

Besides these dedicated examination trains, Northern Railway is also temporarily augmenting several intercity and express trains operating on Punjab,

Haryana, and Delhi routes with additional general and sleeper coaches to accommodate the expected rush and provide seats or berths to long-distance candidates.

Complementing railway arrangements, the Punjab Government has already announced free travel in Punjab Roadways and PUNBUS buses for NEET candidates and one accompanying parent. Students will only need to produce their NEET admit card and a valid government identity proof to avail the facility.

Examination centres have been established across 16 districts, with candidates allotted centres according to their preferences wherever possible. Authorities have also issued specific directions to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply during the examination, with PSPCL instructed to enforce a complete no-power-cut

policy. Medical teams equipped with first-aid kits and essential medicines will remain stationed outside examination centres, while fire brigade units have been placed on alert to respond swiftly to any emergency.

Special monitoring cells will also keep a close watch on social media platforms before and on the examination day, with Deputy Commissioners directed to initiate immediate action against anyone spreading rumours or misinformation.

Security protocols at examination centres have been tightened considerably. Biometric verification will be mandatory at entry points and inside examination halls to prevent impersonation, while candidates will undergo intensive screening through metal detectors.

Only admit cards, a valid identity card, a transparent water bottle, and a simple

### NEET Re-Exam: Key Exam-Day Preparations

- CAPF and Punjab Police to secure question papers
- Armed escort for vehicles carrying exam material
- Two CAPF jawans deployed at every exam centre
- Northern Railways to run four special trains for NEET candidates
- Extra coaches added to several trains on key routes
- Free Punjab Roadways, PUNBUS travel for candidates and any one accompanying them
- PSPCL directed to ensure no power cuts during exam hours
- Live CCTV surveillance and high-power jammers at centres
- Mandatory biometric verification to prevent impersonation
- Metal detector screening at entry gates
- Strict dress code and prohibited-items policy to be enforced
- Special monitoring of social media from a day before to curb rumours and misinformation

transparent ballpoint pen will be permitted inside examination halls. Candidates must adhere to a strict dress code permitting only light clothing with half sleeves, low-heeled sandals or slippers and prohibiting jewellery, metal accessories, thick-soled shoes, and garments with large buttons,

hoods or multiple pockets. Electronic gadgets, calculators, smart watches, Bluetooth devices, written material, handbags, wallets, belts, caps, and other prohibited items will remain banned, with limited exemptions only for diabetic candidates carrying essential food items.

### Punjab Begins Auctioning Tax Defaulters' Properties, Signals End of Leniency on Pending Dues

PNS ■ Chandigarh

Punjab Government has launched an aggressive crackdown on chronic VAT and GST defaulters by auctioning their properties to recover long-pending government dues, with the first auctions in Mohali and Jalandhar yielding major returns. The move comes alongside a final extension of the One Time Settlement (OTS) Scheme till July 31, as the government warns that nearly 20 more property auctions are lined up across the state against habitual tax evaders who ignored repeated opportunities to clear their liabilities.

Stepping up efforts to recover public revenue, Finance, Planning, Excise and Taxation Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Friday announced that the Excise and Taxation Department has formally begun auctioning properties of persistent tax defaulters after they failed to respond to legal notices and declined to avail themselves of the OTS Scheme.

The biggest auction was conducted in Mohali, where the property of M/s Sumit Engineering was sold for Rs

13.22 crore on June 19, while another auction in Shakkot, Jalandhar, involving M/s MR Rice Mills fetched Rs 1.11 crore. Of the total amount, Rs 3.58 crore has already been deposited into the government treasury by successful bidders, with the remaining balance expected to be recovered in accordance with legal provisions within the next week. Cheema said the enforcement drive reflects the government's commitment to ensuring tax compliance without discrimination and protecting honest taxpayers from unfair competition created by wilful defaulters. He maintained that the government's primary objective is the recovery of legitimate public money rather than punitive action. With nearly 20 more property auctions already scheduled across Punjab, the government has signalled that prolonged tax defaults will now invite direct recovery measures. The Finance Minister said the crackdown is intended to protect public funds and create a level playing field for compliant businesses by ensuring that wilful tax evaders no longer escape their legal obligations.

## Five-day Int'l Gita Mahotsav begins in Japan

PNS ■ Chandigarh

A five-day International Gita Mahotsav (IGM) began in Japan's capital Tokyo on Friday. The event will emerge as a significant milestone in promoting India's eternal cultural heritage and the universal message of Shrimad Bhagavad Gita on the global stage, a Government spokesperson said on Friday.

IGM-2026 is being held in Japan from June 19 to June 23. The event commenced with the presentation of copies of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita to members of Japan's National Parliament (Diet), leading political figures, scholars and supporters of India-Japan friendship in connection with the festival's international edition being held in the country this year. It made the event a vibrant symbol of the growing cultural, spiritual and humanitarian ties between India and Japan, the spokesperson said.

A copy of the Gita was presented to Yasutoshi Nishimura, senior leader of Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), at the inauguration of the IGM-2026. Copies of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita were also presented to Yoshio Mochizuki, who played a key role in establishing the Gita in Japan's House of Councillors (Upper House), and Atlantic Flat, who supported its establishment in the House of Representatives (Lower House), in recognition of their contributions, the statement said.

Renowned scholar and spiritual leader Swami Gyananand Maharaj delivered a detailed exposition on the wisdom of the Bhagavad Gita. A symposium organised on the occasion featured meaningful discussions on the global relevance of the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, the role of spiritual values in world peace and human welfare, and ways to further strengthen India-Japan friendship.

Addressing the gathering, Swami Gyananand said the Shrimad Bhagavad Gita is a timeless guide to life management for all humanity. It inspires individuals to embrace

duty, self-discipline, leadership, moral values and a balanced way of life.

Responding to a question from Japanese parliamentarian Yoshio Mochizuki regarding ways to cope with growing workload and stress in modern life, Swami Gyananand explained the spiritual and practical significance of three important verses from the Bhagavad Gita. He emphasised that the Gita's message of selfless action, equanimity and self-restraint remains as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago.

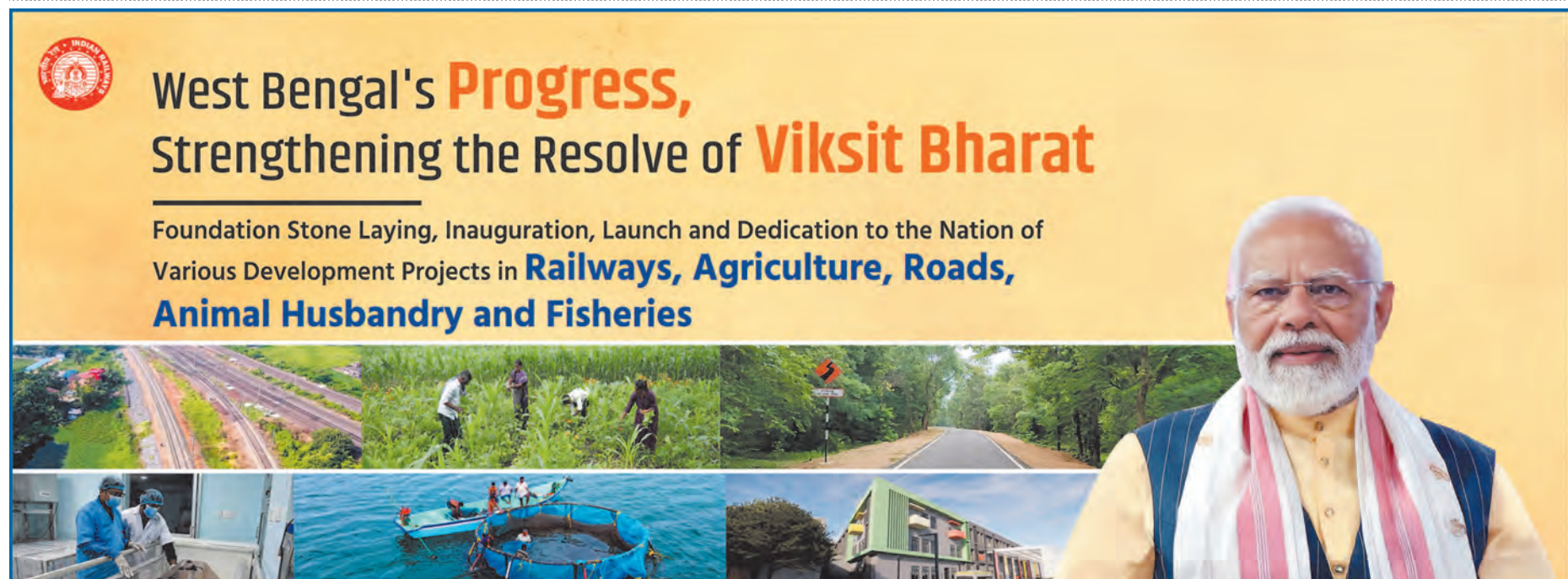
He further said that cultural, economic and spiritual relations between India and Japan are continuously reaching new heights.

Kurukshetra Development Board Member Secretary Amit Kumar Agrawal said that the International Gita Mahotsav has today become a global symbol of India's cultural identity. There has been a significant rise worldwide in interest toward Gita studies, research, cultural dialogue and Indian philosophy through this platform.

New opportunities for academic research, translation projects and cultural collaboration based on the Gita have emerged in Japan and several other countries, he said.


Agrawal also noted that Japan is an important investment partner for Haryana, and the state government is actively encouraging Japanese investments in manufacturing, automobiles, technology, logistics, innovation and advanced industries. As a result, economic and industrial cooperation between the two sides continues to strengthen, he added.

Kurukshetra Development Board Honorary Secretary Upendar Singhal said that the International Gita Mahotsav has evolved into a global cultural movement since its inception in 2016. The Haryana government has successfully organised International Gita Mahotsav events since 2019 in several countries, including Mauritius, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Sri Lanka and Indonesia.



## West Bengal's Progress, Strengthening the Resolve of Viksit Bharat

Foundation Stone Laying, Inauguration, Launch and Dedication to the Nation of Various Development Projects in **Railways, Agriculture, Roads, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries**



### Laying of Foundation Stone for

- New Divisional Railway Hospital, Howrah, West Bengal
- Road Over Bridge between Haur & Radhamohanpur, Purba Medinipur, West Bengal

### Inauguration of

- 315.22 km of Rural Roads under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY-III) in Various Districts of West Bengal constructed at a sanctioned cost of ₹213.12 Crore
- Goat Semen Production Laboratory & Semen Bank at Haringhata in Nadia district of West Bengal
- Modern, Capacity Expanded Fishing Harbour, Frasergunj
- Modern Fish Market, Sainthia, Birbhum, West Bengal

### Launch of

- Digital Agriculture Mission in West Bengal
- Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana/Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme
- National Mission on Natural Farming in West Bengal
- Prime Minister Dhan Dhaanya Krishi Yojana

### Dedication to the Nation of

- Rail link line between Sankrail & Santragachi in Howrah, West Bengal

### Release of

- 23rd instalment of PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi worth more than ₹ 18,880 crore to more than 9.44 Crore farmers

by

# Narendra Modi

→ Prime Minister ←

Better Connectivity • Stronger Agriculture • Enhanced Livelihoods • Inclusive Development

#### Railway Infrastructure & Connectivity

- Railway Infrastructure projects worth ₹591 crore
- New modern hospital in Howrah with over 300 beds
- Better connectivity through the Sankrail-Santragachi rail link
- Enhanced safety and smoother movement through the Haur-Radhamohanpur Road Over Bridge

#### Farmers' Welfare & Agricultural Development

- Crores of farmers to be benefited
- Crop protection through PM crop insurance schemes
- Promotion of digital agriculture through AgriStack
- Increased farmer income through the PM Dhan-Dhaanya Scheme

#### Fisheries & Livelihood Improvement

- Modernization of Frasergunj Fishing Harbour
- New modern fish market at Sainthia
- Better income and livelihood opportunities for fishermen

#### Rural Development & Connectivity

- Launch of 49 road projects under PMGSY-III
- Improved rural connectivity and access to essential services
- Boost to rural development through a stronger transport network

#### Animal Husbandry & Dairy Development

- Eastern India's first Regional Semen Production Laboratory and Semen Bank for Black Bengal Goats established at Haringhata, Nadia
- A major milestone to preserve and promote the germplasm of Black Bengal Goat, a pride of West Bengal
- Accessing germplasm at low cost by the farmers

In the august presence of

R.N. Ravi

Governor, West Bengal

Suvendu Adhikari

Chief Minister, West Bengal

Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Union Minister of Rural Development, Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

Rajiv Ranjan Singh

Union Minister of Panchayati Raj, Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying

Ashwini Vaishnav

Union Minister for Railways, Information & Broadcasting and Electronics & Information Technology

Shantanu Thakur

Union MoS for Ports, Shipping and Waterways


Dr. Sukanta Majumdar

Union MoS for Education and Development of North Eastern Region

Samik Bhattacharya


Member of Parliament

Saturday, 20<sup>th</sup> June, 2026 03:15 PM Hooghly, West Bengal



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Public Notice THAT IS FOR NOTICE OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC I Venka Ramji w/o Rajesh Sachdeva, R/o Village Kachwa, Tehsil and District Karnal, declared that My Previous Regd. Sale deed No.1771 dated 24/05/1972, has been LOST at Panipat on dated 02/02/26, at somewhere in Sector -12, Karnal Regd. Office. A DOR No.123105260104, ALSO REGISTERED AT Civil Lines, Police Station, Karnal. That I am the Present Owner of the Property in question and is getting Loan from Axis Bank and declare that I never mortgage it anywhere in all over India. If there is any Negligence apart on my Part, then civil/criminal liability will arise upon me. That if anybody found or have any objection or if the same found, then kindly contact within 7 days. Ph:-9996873226.

COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF Ms. Manpreet Kaur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Sangrur RANDHIR SINGH Vs. GENERAL PUBLIC SUCC/17/2025 CNR No. PBSG02-001740-2025 Next Date:-25-08-2026 PUBLICATION ISSUED TO: GENERAL PUBLIC :- Sangrur In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 25-08-2026 at 10:00 a.m. For details login to https://highcourthd.gov.in/?mod=district\_notice&district=Sangrur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division) Sangrur Dated, this day of 16-06-2026

COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF Ms. Manpreet Kaur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Sangrur UNION BANK OF INDIA Vs. SUKHWINDER SINGH AND JAGJEET CS/1155/2022 CNR No. PBSG02-001501-2022 Next Date: 12-08-2026 PUBLICATION ISSUED TO: SUKHWINDER SINGH AND JAGJEET son of Tehal Singh r/o ward no. 7, vill Takipur VPO Mander Kalan Sub Tehsil Longowal Teh and dist sangrur In above titled case, the defendant(s)/respondent(s) could not be served. It is ordered that defendant(s)/respondent(s) should appear in person or through counsel on 12-08-2026 at 10:00 a.m. For details login to https://highcourthd.gov.in/?mod=district\_notice&district=Sangrur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division) Sangrur Dated, this day of 16-06-2026

COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF Ms. Manpreet Kaur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Sangrur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division) Sangrur Dated, this day of 16-06-2026

COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF Ms. Manpreet Kaur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Sangrur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division) Sangrur Dated, this day of 16-06-2026

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COURT NOTICE (U/o 5 Rule 20 CPC) IN THE COURT OF Ms. Manpreet Kaur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division), Sangrur Additional Civil Judge (Senior Division) Sangrur Dated, this day of 16-06-2026

KIRORIMAL COLLEGE OF EDUCATION Jain Minority College App. By NCTE & Aff. to MDU Rohtak Baghat Road, Khewra, Sonapat Admission Notice 2026-28 B.Ed. / M.Ed. Application are invited for Jain's and others for admission in above mentioned courses on merit basis. Last date of Application: 24/06/2026 Online Application form available on Website: www.kmce.org

Government of Punjab TENDER / RFP FOR WORKS TENDER NOTICE REFERENCE NO. MCJ/OM/2026-27/ 29 AND 109/ CBMS/G Dated 17-06-2026 THE DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL CORPORATION JALANDHAR INVITES ONLINE BIDS FOR:- 03 Works related to O&M branch for P/I of Tube wells Falling under various areas under MC Limit (Detailed of work as mentioned in website) Closing date & time:- Availability of Tender:- FOR Sr. No.1 - 03 20-06-2026, 14:00 PM Last date for Submission of Tender:- 06-07-2026, 14:00 PM Pre bid meeting will be held at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Complex, Municipal Corporation Jalandhar 2nd Floor in O/o Superintending Engg (O&M) Room No.62 on 30-06-2026 at 12:00 PM For details log onto:- eproc.punjab.gov.in Note:- Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender / RFP Notice shall be published on the above website only. As per Govt. letter Refer. No. JDDL/PRU/DLG/2021/1018-23 Dt. 13-05-2021 Corporation Engg. Corporation Engineer (O&M) Water Supply & Sewerage Dept. Municipal Corporation, Jalandhar 1911/2026-27/12513 Dated CHD :- 19/06/2026

ICICI Bank Regd. Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Landmark, Race Course Circle, Vadodara - 390007 Corporate Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 400051 Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd Sahi Towers, Plot No. 23, New Rohtak Road Karol Bagh, Delhi, PIN. 110005. Notice for Disclosure of Legal Heirs of Deceased Borrower PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given that Home Loan No. TBNTN00007108518/TBNTN00007108519/LBNTN00007111862. (Credit facility) was granted to BINDER SINGH along with the deceased JASWINDER KAUR by ICICI Bank Ltd. We would like to inform you that the demise of JASWINDER KAUR has come to our knowledge during field visits conducted by the Bank officials and by telephonic communications on the registered contact numbers. In this regard, letter dated June 17, 2026 was previously sent to the registered addresses of the Borrowers and the deceased JASWINDER KAUR for providing information about the Legal Heirs of the deceased Borrower. Therefore, this Notice is hereby given for sharing details of the Legal Heirs of the deceased JASWINDER KAUR with supporting documents for updating the Bank's records, within 15 days of publication of this Notice. You may submit the above-mentioned details to PANKAJ KUMAR by visiting ICICI BANK LTD., SCF 07 & 08 URBAN ESTATE PHASE 3 PART 2, BATHINDA, PUNJAB-151001. Date : June 20, 2026 SD Authorized Officer For ICICI Bank Ltd. Place : Bathinda & Faridkot

ICICI Bank Regd. Office: ICICI Bank Limited, Landmark, Race Course Circle, Vadodara - 390007 Corporate Office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 400051 Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd Sahi Towers, Plot No. 23, New Rohtak Road Karol Bagh, Delhi, PIN. 110005. Notice for Disclosure of Legal Heirs of Deceased Borrower PUBLIC NOTICE Notice is hereby given that Home Loan No. TBHPR00006638130 (Credit facility) was granted to MANDEEP SINGH along with the deceased JASWINDER SINGH by ICICI Bank Ltd. We would like to inform you that the demise of JASWINDER SINGH has come to our knowledge during field visits conducted by the Bank officials and by telephonic communications on the registered contact numbers. In this regard, letter dated June 17, 2026 was previously sent to the registered addresses of the Borrowers and the deceased JASWINDER SINGH for providing information about the Legal Heirs of the deceased Borrower. Therefore, this Notice is hereby given for sharing details of the Legal Heirs of the deceased JASWINDER SINGH with supporting documents for updating the Bank's records, within 15 days of publication of this Notice. You may submit the above-mentioned details to SAHIL KHULLAR by visiting ICICI BANK LTD 155, SUTHERI ROAD, HOSHIARPUR, PUNJAB-146001. Date : June 20, 2026 SD Authorized Officer For ICICI Bank Ltd. Place : Hoshiarpur & Umrar

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd., First Floor, Mc International, The Mall, Mall Road Amritsar- 143001 PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET [See proviso to Rule 8(i)] Notice for sale of immovable asset(s) E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (i) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. This 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/charged to the Secured Creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is where is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder.

ICICI Bank Branch Office: ICICI Bank Ltd., First Floor, Mc International, The Mall, Mall Road Amritsar- 143001 PUBLIC NOTICE-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION FOR SALE OF SECURED ASSET [See proviso to Rule 8(i)] Notice for sale of immovable asset(s) E-Auction Sale Notice for the sale of immovable asset(s) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (i) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. This 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/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Constructive possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of ICICI Bank Limited will be sold on 'As is where is', 'As is what is' and 'Whatever there is' as per the brief particulars given hereunder.

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot Ph: 01639-256232, 256236 Advt. No.BFU-26/23 VACANCIES Online applications are invited w.e.f 22-06-2026 to 12-07-2026 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfufs.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of Radiographer and Operation Theatre Assistant for Civil Hospital, Jalalabad, Civil Hospital Badal and Civil Hospital, Khadoor Sahib under Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. For Application form, fee, Category wise distribution and other terms & conditions, visit University website: www.bfufs.ac.in Sd/- REGISTRAR 3108/12/2026-27/12501 Dated CHD :- 19/06/2026

Baba Farid University of Health Science Sadiq Road, Faridkot-151203 Ph. 01639-256232, 256236 E-Tender Notice Online bids are invited through the e-tendering process for procurement of the following services/items through the E-Procurement portal of the Government of Punjab. Last date for submission of online bids of following tender/s is 08-07-2026 1) Procurement of High End Noiseless Aspirator System (Suction Machine) for Modular OT 2) Procurement of Plasma Sterilizer Machine Modular OT. Note:- Tender Document can be downloaded from http://eproc.punjab.gov.in and www.bfufs.ac.in Sd/- REGISTRAR 3108/12/2026-27/12521 Dated CHD :- 19/06/2026

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot Ph: 01639-256232, 256236 Advt. No.BFU-26/22 VACANCIES Online applications are invited w.e.f 20-06-2026 to 10-07-2026 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfufs.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of Assistant Controller (F&A)-01 and Audit Officer-01 under Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. For Application form, fee, specially wise detail of posts, Category wise distribution and other terms & conditions, visit University website: www.bfufs.ac.in Sd/- REGISTRAR 3108/12/2026-27/12404 Dated CHD :- 19/06/2026

REGIONAL OFFICE: 24 VIJAY NAGAR, NEAR FOOTBALL GROUND, JALANDHAR - 146001 NOTICE TO THE LOCKER HOLDERS: BANK OF BARODA DEFAULTERS IN PAYMENT OF RENT OF LOCKERS This is for the information of our valued patrons who have taken lockers on rent at the branches mentioned below and have committed breach of the agreement. Despite of our Termination publication dated 03-12-2025 and 11-03-2026 wherein it was requested to remove and surrender the Locker together with Keys of Locker, it is observed that you have not surrendered and vacated the locker in prescribed timeline. Please note that in terms of Safe Deposit Locker agreement dated Bank has right to break open the Locker and deals with the content in accordance with the Bank's internal Policy and procedure and applicable Law and Regulation. Even after expiry of 3 Months from date of Termination notice you have failed to surrender of locker in terms of Safe Deposit Locker agreement, we hereby exercise our rights to break open the capion locker. We, therefore, hereby give you notice that if within 3 months from the date of this notice if the locker is not surrendered and the key of the locker is not returned, we will proceed to break open your locker after 25-09-2026 when you may remain present to witness the inventory of the contents of the locker that we may make. Please note that we will proceed with the inventory in your absence, if you fail to remain present at the appointed date. In making the inventory, we will have a right to keep the contents, if any, in such other locker or place as we may deem fit and hold you responsible and liable to pay not only for the rent, but also for the costs of opening the locker, replacing the lost key, changing the lock etc to the Bank. Please be note that Content of the Locker shall be dealt appropriately in accordance with the Law and Banks internal Policies at your cost, liabilities and further consequences.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Locker Holder, Address of Locker Holder, Locker Number, Branch name. Rows include Brig A S Parmar, Manpreet Singh, Santosh Syal, Avtar Singh, Anoop Kaur, Ashok Kumar Sharma, S. Anwar Singh, Sunita Rani, Kamaljit Singh, Parminder Singh, Kamal die, Mani Ram, Gagan bir singh, Balkar singh, Dara singh & Simar Kaur.

Table with 7 columns: Sr. No., Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No., Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any, Amount Outstanding, Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit, Date and Time of Property Inspection, Date & Time of E-Auction. Row 1: Muni (Applicant), Poonam, Pawan Kumar Buba (Co-Applicant), Loan No. TBPTK00006942821, TBPTK00006942822.

Table with 7 columns: Sr. No., Name of Borrower(s)/Co-Borrowers/ Guarantors/ Loan Account No., Details of the Secured asset(s) with known encumbrances, if any, Amount Outstanding, Reserve Price Earnest Money Deposit, Date and Time of Property Inspection, Date & Time of E-Auction. Row 1: M/s. Ashirwad Steel & Agro Industries (Applicant), Ranjana Jain, Saveraj Jain, Usho Jain (Co-Applicant and Guarantor), Ashok Kumar (Guarantor) Loan No. 659851200003.

Chola CHOLAMANDALAM INVESTMENT AND FINANCE COMPANY LIMITED Corporate Office: Chola Crest, Super B, C54 & C55, 4, Thiru Vi Ka Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600 032, T. N. DEMAND NOTICE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules")

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name & Address of the Borrower/s & Co-Borrower/s, Loan Amt., Dt. of Demand Notice & O/s. Amt., Description of the Property / Secured Asset. Row 1: Loan A/C. No.(s) :- HL24CHA000141245, 1. Hardeep Singh 2. Sarbjit Kaur Add For Sr. No. 1 to 2 :- 379 Village Dadhari, Doodher Fatehgarh Sahib, Market, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab-147 301.

SMFG Grahshakti Corporate Office: 503 & 504, 5th Floor, G-Block, Inspire BKC, BKC Main Road, Bandra Kurla Complex, Bandra (E), Mumbai - 400051. Regd. Off.: Commerzone IT Park, Tower B, 1st Floor, No. 111, Mount Poonamallee Road, Porur, Chennai - 600116, TN. SMFG INDIA HOME FINANCE CO. LTD. DEMAND NOTICE UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE SECURITIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002 ("the Act") AND THE SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002 ("the Rules")

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 615339511426875, 1. Gurpreet Singh 2. Gurbir Kaur W/o. Gurpreet Singh 3. Manjit Kaur W/o. Gurcharan Singh.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 625139512046988, 1. Jagseer Singh 2. Parvinder Kaur C/O Jagseer Singh.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 610139511260592, 1. Manish Kumar Sharma 2. Manju Manesh Kumar Sharma W/o. Manish Kumar Sharma.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 61014011611594, 1. Mr Imran 2. Nabila W/o. Imran.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 615338011810591, 1. Paramjit Singh 2. Harpreet Kaur W/O Paramjit Singh.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 609939211423307, 1. Parmod Kumar 2. Kajal Rani C/O Parmod Kumar 3. Raj Kumar S/O Parmod Kumar.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 617539511648708, 1. Sharanjit Singh 2. Manu Sharma W/O Sharanjit Singh.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 610038011880247, 1. Sunil Kumar 2. Rajni Sunil Kumar C/O Sunil Kumar.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Loan Account No. & Name of the Borrower / Co-Borrowers Property Holders as the case may be, Description Of Secured Assets / Mortgage Property, Date of Demand Notice U/s. 13 (2) & Total O/s. Row 1: Lan: 615339211780640, 1. Vijay Sukhankar 2. Sita Anil W/O Vijay.



## Home ministry working with SC to cut case pendency: Amit Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said his ministry is "actively engaged" with the Supreme Court to work out a new system for reducing the pendency of cases in the apex court and high courts, and ensure timely justice for people.

Speaking at the inauguration of the All India Fingerprint Conference-2026, organised by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), Shah stressed that police and forensic experts should accurately collect evidence from the crime scene and ensure that these are "not contaminated" to secure a fast and correct conviction. He also spoke about the three new criminal laws introduced



by the Modi Government to ensure timely justice.

"We identified the loopholes (in the old criminal laws), and 90 per cent of the law-based ones have been addressed. The Union home ministry is actively engaged with the Supreme Court for creating a new system to address volume-based delays in the high courts and the

Supreme Court," Shah said. He said the Government is "determined" to prevent delays in the criminal justice system.

Addressing police and forensic experts from across the country, the minister told them to file timely charge sheets, follow up with the prosecution, and pursue cases before the courts to ensure timely decisions.

Shah said converting information or data into intelligence is important and cited the example of the Mahabharata, where Lord Krishna played this role and ensured victory for the Pandavas against the numerically superior Kauravas.

He said all the data gathered from crime scenes should be analysed with the help of artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning tools to find crime patterns so that not only can crimes be pre-empted, but criminals are also caught quickly.

The minister said that a modus operandi bureau, which he suggested creating within the NCRB four years ago, should now start working to study crime patterns, repeat offenders, and interstate and international criminal networks.

## Govt to deploy area officers for VB-GRAM G rollout

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Rural Development will deploy more than 100 area officers across the country to assist states and Union territories ahead of the implementation of the VB-GRAM G Act from July 1, a statement said on Friday.

The officers will act as facilitators and resource persons during the rollout phase, working with State Governments, district administrations and field-level functionaries to support implementation, strengthen capacities, share best practices and address operational challenges, the ministry said. The move comes as preparations for the new rural employment framework gather pace. The ministry said an interim allocation of ₹95,692 crore has been approved as the



Centre's share for 2026-27, while 27 states and Union territories have already made budgetary provisions for implementing the Act.

Six states/UTs have notified their state schemes under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-GRAM G) framework, it added. The area officers were briefed through an orientation programme covering the Act's key features, implementation framework, institutional arrangements,

technology-enabled governance systems and support mechanisms available for states and districts. The programme was chaired by Rural Development Secretary Rohit Kansal, while Joint Secretary Rohini R Bhajbhakare conducted the orientation.

The ministry said the VB-GRAM G Act seeks to transform rural employment by linking guaranteed wage employment with livelihood promotion, climate resilience, rural infrastruc-

ture creation and technology-based governance.

It will also use tools such as Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans (VGPPs) and GIS-based planning to support the vision of Viksit Bharat in 2047. As part of preparations, all states and UTs have been onboarded onto the DBT-SPARSH platform, nearly 93 per cent of active workers have completed e-KYC, and a face authentication-based attendance system has been rolled out nationwide, according to the ministry.

## Minister Bhupender Yadav lauds Gujarat's Vidya Samiksha Kendra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Gandhinagar

Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupender Yadav visited the Vidya Samiksha Kendra (Integrated Command and Control Centre for Schools) in Gandhinagar on Friday, describing the technology-driven education monitoring system as a model that could guide education reforms across India.

During his visit, Yadav reviewed the centre's large video wall and real-time data monitoring platform, which tracks the functioning of thousands of Government schools across Gujarat. Education Department officials demonstrated how the system monitors student attendance, teacher attendance, academic performance, midday meal implementation and other key indicators to support informed decision-making.

The minister said technology-backed monitoring can



play a significant role in improving the quality of education by providing accurate data for policy formulation. He noted that the platform can help identify the reasons behind student dropouts, enabling authorities to design targeted interventions to improve retention and learning outcomes.

Yadav also praised the centre's integrated dashboard, saying the Gujarat model has emerged as an example for other states seeking to modernise school governance. He expressed confidence that the Vidya Samiksha Kendra has the potential to become a

leading hub for technology-enabled education management in the country. The Union Minister also interacted with senior officials of the Education Department on initiatives such as Atal Tinkering Labs, STEM education and library development. He emphasised the need for scientific and technology-based assessment methods to strengthen students' reading skills, pronunciation and overall learning.

Bhupender Yadav Lauds Gujarat's Vidya Samiksha Kendra, Calls It a National Model for Technology-Driven School Education.

## Chhattisgarh push to connect families with welfare schemes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Raipur

The Chhattisgarh government has decided to launch a campaign aimed at taking good governance to every household and ensuring that all eligible families receive the benefits of welfare schemes, officials said on Friday.

The campaign, 'Sugghar Chhattisgarh' (Beautiful Chhattisgarh), will be a large-scale saturation drive covering 31 major beneficiary-oriented schemes across 23 districts of the state, with the objective of strengthening their reach, effectiveness and transparency, an official statement said.

Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai said the foundation of a developed Chhattisgarh relies not only on infrastructure development, but also in ensuring effective and timely delivery of Government schemes to every family. "The Government's objective is



Chhattisgarh CM Vishnu Deo Sai

not merely to implement schemes, but to ensure that their positive outcomes are visible in the lives of all families," Sai said in the statement.

The government aims to establish a governance system in which citizens do not have to run from office to office to access benefits, but instead the administration proactively reaches out to eligible recipients and connects them with welfare programmes, he emphasised.

## Gujarat clears ₹1,567-crore projects to create 1,200 jobs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Rajkot

The Gujarat Government has approved incentive assistance for 15 large-scale industrial projects involving a combined investment of ₹1,567.18 crore under its Industrial Policy-2015. The approved projects are expected to generate around 1,238 employment opportunities across the State.

The approvals were granted during a meeting of the committee responsible for issuing Final Eligibility Certificates to large industries under the State's Incentive to Industries Scheme. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Chief Minister and Industries Minister Harsh Sanghavi.

The Industrial Policy-2015 was introduced to strengthen Gujarat's position as one of India's most preferred investment destinations while enhancing its competitiveness on the global



Gujarat Deputy Chief Minister and Industries Minister Harsh Sanghavi

industrial map through targeted incentives for new investments.

According to the State Government, the scheme has so far attracted investments worth ₹1,48,336.35 crore, resulting in nearly 1,65,053 direct jobs. Officials also noted that the policy has encouraged the growth of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), contributing to the development of a stronger industrial ecosystem across Gujarat.

Among the projects approved in the latest meeting, the largest investment is a ₹999.82-crore chemical manufacturing project in Bharuch district. Other proposals include an automobile project worth ₹75.72 crore in Ahmedabad district, an automobile investment of ₹44.56 crore in Surendranagar district, and a ₹13-crore textile project in Gandhinagar district.

## Govt attempting to create manufactured mandates: Pilot

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Jaipur

Congress leader Sachin Pilot on Friday accused the Centre of attempting to create a "manufactured mandate" to push its political agenda, saying that such efforts were an insult to people's verdict and contrary to democratic values. Pilot, a Congress general secretary and former Rajasthan deputy chief minister, said the BJP had received a mandate to govern but not a two-thirds majority.

"People gave the BJP a mandate to run the Government, but not a two-thirds majority. Attempting to artificially create such a mandate is against democratic values," he said in a statement. He alleged that efforts were being made to reintroduce the Delimitation Bill.

"Trying to bring back a Bill that had already fallen, through a 'manufactured mandate', is an attempt to fulfill a political agenda that the people have not endorsed," Pilot said.



He claimed that attempts to influence constitutional processes by "breaking political parties and shifting MPs" would not be accepted by people. Raising concerns over the delimitation process, Pilot said it must follow a defined constitutional framework.

"There is a laid-down constitutional process for delimitation. First, a census should be conducted, then a commission constituted, and only thereafter should the process move forward," he said.

Carrying out delimitation without following due procedure would be "unlawful, unethical and unconstitutional," he said, alleging that such moves were aimed at achieving political objectives.

## CPI(M) demands reduction of fuel prices following US-Iran pact

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Friday urged the Central Government to take immediate steps to slash the prices of petrol, diesel, and gas, citing a drop in global oil prices following the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United States and Iran. In a press statement, the CPI(M) noted the

diplomatic breakthrough with optimism, stating that the agreement is expected to bring much-needed economic relief globally after the "unwarranted US-Israel aggression against Iran."

The party emphasised that with the US removing its blockade on Iranian vessels in the Strait of Hormuz and Iran allowing the safe passage of ships, global pressure on energy and fertiliser supplies would ease significantly. "Oil prices in the



energy markets have already seen a decline, and the Government of India should take immediate steps to

reduce the increased prices of gas, petrol, and diesel," the statement issued by the CPI(M) Central Committee

Office noted.

The party also demanded urgent measures to secure the availability of essential agricultural inputs, particularly urea, for domestic farmers. Slamming Western foreign policy, the left party asserted that the development demonstrates the "limits of imperialist aggression," pointing out that the US was compelled to lift sanctions, unfreeze assets, and agree to pay reparations due to growing global

public anger and widespread protests.

The CPI(M) further called on Israel to adhere to the UN Charter and desist from attacking Lebanon.

Turning its focus back to domestic foreign policy, the Polit Bureau stated that New Delhi must recognise the global public sentiment against Washington and Tel Aviv, demanding that the Indian Government immediately desist from aligning with them.

## NCW asks states to make annual POSH audits mandatory

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The National Commission for Women (NCW) on Friday issued an advisory to all states and Union Territories, recommending mandatory annual POSH audits, and a host of measures to strengthen workplace safety and effective implementation of guidelines under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention,



Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013. The advisory has been sent to chief secretaries and directors general

of police of all states and UTs and has also been disseminated to district magistrates, senior superintendents of police and commissioners of police across the country for grassroots-level enforcement and accountability.

"A woman should never have to choose between her dignity and her livelihood. Every workplace must be a space of safety, respect and equal opportunity," NCW chairperson Vijaya Rahatkar

said. "Effective implementation of the POSH Act is not merely a legal obligation but a collective responsibility towards ensuring women's empowerment and participation in nation-building," she said.

In a statement, the commission said that the advisory seeks to ensure that every workplace, whether in the Government, private, organised or unorganised sector, strictly complies with provi-

sions of the Prevention of Sexual Harassment (of Women at Workplace) (POSH) Act and fosters a safe, inclusive and gender-sensitive working environment for women.

In a major step towards institutional accountability, the commission has advised all states and UTs to establish dedicated POSH monitoring cells or digital compliance dashboards to track implementation of the POSH Act,

the statement said.

The states have also been urged to conduct periodic reviews at senior administrative levels, facilitate capacity-building, issue necessary guidance to establishments and district authorities, and ensure adherence to statutory obligations and judicial directions. The advisory recommends mandatory annual POSH audits for all establishments employing 10 or more persons.

## Stop State-backed corporate land grab: Bhumi Adhikar Andolan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Bhumi Adhikar Andolan (BAA) on Friday strongly condemned what it termed a "State-backed corporate land grab" unfolding across the country under the guise of development. The front alleged that crucial legal safeguards are being systematically diluted and bypassed to facilitate corporate accumulation at the cost of working-class settlements and indigenous communities.

According to data compiled by the collective, India is currently witnessing 1,092 ongoing land conflicts, impacting nearly 1.42 crore people and covering 47.7 lakh hectares of land. Over the past year alone, the BAA



recorded nearly 300 cases of aggressive land acquisition, evictions, demolitions, and displacement-related conflicts. "Bulldozer-led eviction drives across states have displaced at least 6,500 families, demolished more than 5,000 homes, and cleared at least 1,700 acres of land. 'Anti-

encroachment' has become a language to erase the poor, landless, forest dwellers, and minorities," the BAA statement signed by leaders including Hannan Mollah, Ulka Mahajan, and Prafulla Samantara noted.

The organisation highlighted massive land monetisa-

tion across sectors, noting that the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) spent ₹16,476.83 crore on land acquisition in FY 2025-26 up to February 2026, while real estate developers acquired 3,093 acres across 149 transactions worth ₹54,818 crore in 2025.

Expressing grave concern over the Great Nicobar mega project, the BAA demanded an immediate halt to the plan. The project requires the diversion of over 130 sq km of rain-forest and Tribal Reserve land, threatening the Shompen PVTG and Nicobarese communities while risking the release of 4.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. The front further flagged extensive ecological and community disruptions across several states. In

Odisha, concerns were raised over the scale of the Jindal-POSCO steel project in Keonjhar, where the larger plan reportedly aims to acquire nearly 11,000 acres of multi-crop agricultural land against the publicly projected 2,024.66 acres. Meanwhile, in Assam and the wider North East, the BAA recorded 14 major cases of displacement, including the Goalpara eviction affecting 667 families and the corporate transfer of 1.53 lakh bighas in Karbi Anglong.

Unchecked resource extraction was also highlighted in Central India, where the proposed Kente Extension Coal Block in Chhattisgarh's Hasdeo Aranya involves the diversion of 1,742.6 hectares and

the felling of 4.5 lakh trees, while neighbouring Madhya Pradesh has seen over 60,000 acres of forest land diverted over five years. Additionally, agricultural lands are being rapidly urbanised in Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, with Gurugram facing the procurement of 17,358 acres from 36 villages, and Andhra Pradesh witnessing major restructuring for projects like the 601-acre Adani-Google AI Data Centre near Visakhapatnam.

The BAA further alarmed that the weakening of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) has left millions vulnerable. By May 2025, out of approximately 51 lakh FRA claims filed, 18.6 lakh claims were rejected and 7.5 lakh remained pending.

## RPF DG reviews security for Amarnath Yatra in J&K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Jammu

Ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra, Director General of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) Sonali Mishra on Friday reviewed security arrangements at railway stations in Jammu and Kashmir's Kathua and stressed the need for enhanced coordination among all agencies.

The pilgrimage is scheduled to commence on July 3 via the twin routes -- the traditional 48-km Nunwan-Pahalgal track in Anantnag district and the shorter 14-km Baltal route in Ganderbal district -- and will conclude



on August 28 on the occasion of Raksha Bandhan. Mishra visited the railway station at Kathua and assessed preparedness for the forthcoming pilgrimage, which is scheduled to commence on July 3, the officials said.

Speaking to reporters, Mishra said a review of the security measures had been conducted, and arrangements were being further strengthened to ensure the safe movement of pilgrims.



## Editor's TAKE

### Rebuilding student trust after the paper leak crisis

Trust cannot be rebuilt overnight; it returns only when students see institutions acknowledge their failures and correct them transparently

For a generation that has grown up under the relentless pressure of competitive examinations, the recent spate of paper leaks has fractured something fragile: the belief that merit, not manipulation, decides who gets to become a doctor, an engineer or a civil servant.

When lakhs of students who have spent years preparing discover that a result can be bought or stolen, the damage extends beyond one exam cycle. It corrodes faith in the entire system of public examinations.

The pattern across recent controversies is depressingly familiar. Question papers have been printed and transported through poorly secured logistics chains, sometimes via private vendors with minimal accountability. Centres in remote towns have weak digital infrastructure, making real-time monitoring difficult. There is often a troubling gap between when a paper is finalised and when it is administered – a window long enough for leaks to occur and circulate on messaging apps.

Investigations, when they happen, are slow, fragmented across state and central agencies, and rarely result in swift, visible punishment. Most damagingly, the bodies conducting these exams have repeatedly responded with denial rather than transparency, eroding credibility further with every defensive press statement.

Gen Z's fury is not simply about a single exam gone wrong. It reflects a generation that has watched coaching-centre economics balloon, that has poured family savings into preparation, and that increasingly experiences exams as the only ladder of social mobility available to them. When that ladder appears rigged, the betrayal feels personal and systemic at once – amplified and accelerated by social media, which turns local grievances into national outrage within hours.

Rebuilding trust requires structural change, not just reassurance. First, examination bodies must adopt secure, encrypted digital question-delivery systems with decentralised, randomised paper sets, reducing the value of any single leak.

Second, an independent statutory authority – insulated from political and administrative pressure – should oversee high-stakes national exams, with clear accountability separate from the ministries that benefit politically from smooth exam conduct.

Third, the chain of custody for papers, from the printing press to the exam hall, needs forensic-level tracking, audited by external agencies, not self-certified.

Equally important is the speed and visibility of justice. Leak investigations must run on fixed timelines with public reporting, and those responsible – whether vendors, officials or examination staff – must face consequences that are seen, not just announced. Finally, students deserve a credible grievance and re-examination mechanism. Anything less leaves an entire generation rightly unconvinced.

## When rules fail and lives perish

The tragic loss of lives in Delhi's Malviya Nagar fire demands a deeper examination of weakening accountability, persistent impunity for violations, and the urgent need to restore integrity, vigilance and commitment to public service

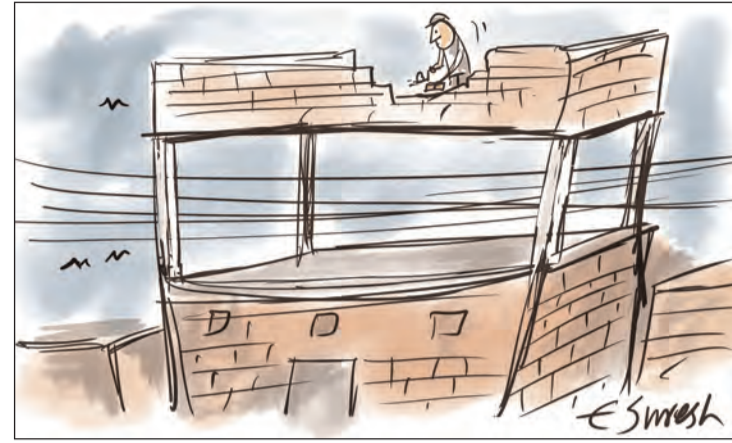


JS RAJPUT

A devastating fire broke out in the Malviya Nagar locality of South Delhi on June 3, 2026, claiming the lives of 21 people. The tragedy was not merely an accident; it was the consequence of a chain of failures by those entrusted with enforcing the law. Reports indicated that both the construction and the business operating there were unauthorised and illegal. It is difficult to believe that such an establishment could have functioned without the knowledge of the authorities responsible for approving constructions and issuing licences for hotels, restaurants and bed-and-breakfast facilities. Yet, as is often the case, no senior official responsible for monitoring and enforcement appears to have been suspended or arrested. Public confidence in official assurances has eroded to such an extent that many people are convinced that little will change. A few minor violators may face action, some illegal structures may be demolished, and then the status quo is likely to return. The mechanisms through which violations continue to flourish are, unfortunately, well understood by the public.

Occasionally, voices are raised lamenting the decline of the values once preached and practised by the freedom fighters under the leadership of Gandhi. These values—humility, honesty, integrity, compassion and accountability—were expected to guide governance after independence. Sadly, for many citizens, routine interactions with public institutions often reveal a different reality. Whether in municipal offices, revenue departments or police stations, people frequently encounter indifference, inefficiency and a lack of accountability. Can anyone entirely avoid attributing this situation to corruption? Citizens are familiar with the manner in which elected representatives and local authorities are often perceived on matters relating to illegal constructions and regulatory violations.

Reports from different parts of the country concerning commissions, cut-money practices and rent-seeking behaviour have further weakened public faith in governance and justice. The Malviya Nagar tragedy occurred at a time when the nation was already distressed by controversies surrounding examination systems, including the NEET paper leak, difficulties associated with Class XII examinations, technical glitches in CUET and other administrative failures. Although these incidents belong to different sectors, they often stem from similar causes: incompetence, negligence, lack of accountability and insufficient commitment to public welfare.



A HEALTHY DEMOCRACY CAN PROVIDE A BETTER LIFE FOR ALL CITIZENS, PARTICULARLY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT. HOWEVER, DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS MUST FUNCTION SINCERELY IN BOTH LETTER AND SPIRIT. DEFICIENCIES IN GOVERNANCE, WHETHER ARISING FROM POLICY FAILURES OR ADMINISTRATIVE SHORTCOMINGS, MUST BE IDENTIFIED, STUDIED AND CORRECTED BY THOSE ENTRUSTED WITH PUBLIC AUTHORITY

The author is an educationist, a Padma Shri awardee, and works in religious unity and social cohesion

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jagmohansrajput  
prof-j-s-rajput-7b99999

Whenever major fire accidents occur, investigations commonly reveal that mandatory safety equipment was either absent, outdated or non-functional. In many cases, fire safety certificates had expired long before the accident. Yet one rarely hears of meaningful penalties being imposed before tragedies occur. Preventive enforcement remains weak, while corrective action usually follows only after lives have been lost. The deeper concern is the gradual erosion of our moral and civic consciousness. Rampant lethargy, inefficiency and corruption reflect a declining sensitivity towards fellow citizens and the larger national interest. Public institutions exist to protect life and dignity, but their effectiveness ultimately depends on the character and commitment of those who operate them.

The demolition drives initiated after the Malviya Nagar incident appeared relatively orderly and considerate in their execution. They inevitably invite comparison with similar actions undertaken elsewhere, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Regardless of one's opinion on such measures, they have generated intense public debate about the enforcement of law, unauthorised constructions, land encroachments and the role of government in protecting public interests.

Meaningful reform demands leaders with imagination, courage and a commitment to public welfare over personal gain. Equally vital is whether official training truly instils responsibility towards the weakest and most vulnerable. Where accountability is weak, illegal occupations of land and unauthorised constructions inevitably flourish. One does not need to look far to find examples of such violations. These structures are often visible reminders of administrative failure and the abdication of responsibility by those entrusted with enforcing the law. The Malviya Nagar fire is only one among many such tragedies that have occurred over the years. Yet meaningful reforms and lasting accountability remain elusive.

The public debate surrounding bulldozer action in Uttar Pradesh illustrates another

dimension of governance. Such actions attracted both strong support and sharp criticism. Supporters viewed them as decisive measures against land grabbers, criminal networks and illegal encroachments, while critics questioned their legality, fairness and implications for due process. Whatever one's position, the debate underscores the importance of ensuring that all enforcement actions remain firmly within constitutional and legal frameworks.

A healthy democracy can provide a better life for all citizens, particularly for young people pursuing education and employment. However, democratic institutions must function sincerely in both letter and spirit. Deficiencies in governance, whether arising from policy failures or administrative shortcomings, must be identified, studied and corrected by those entrusted with public authority. The wisdom expressed by Rajendra Prasad, President of the Constituent Assembly, remains profoundly relevant. Addressing the nation on November 26, 1949, he observed that the welfare of the country would ultimately depend not merely on the Constitution but on those who administer it. He warned that even the best Constitution could not succeed if those entrusted with implementing it lacked character and integrity. Conversely, capable and honest individuals could make even an imperfect system function effectively. They could innovate, inspire, learn more and be more pragmatic. The basic factors responsible for the Malviya Nagar tragedy and the NEET and CBE failures are not much different, nor really distant. Essentially, these failures are rampant in public services across sectors. It creates a general impression among common

people that they can get away with the violation of any sanction, permission or approval. Recent systemic failures that have inflicted avoidable suffering on young students and their parents, or the fire that extinguished lives mercilessly, must necessarily serve as stern reminders that education must focus on nurturing empathy, integrity, responsibility, compassion and the spirit of respecting others. A value-based work culture could help develop men and women of character who would not blindly become slaves to 'maximum accumulation anyhow', but who recognise the limits of material accumulation and the importance of serving society.

Ultimately, institutions derive their strength and reputation from the character and commitment of the functionaries who lead and operate them. If India seeks to prevent tragedies such as the Malviya Nagar fire and strengthen public trust in governance, it must invest not only in better laws and regulations but also in nurturing honesty, accountability and ethical leadership. These values have long been central to India's civilisational ethos. Strengthening them remains one of the nation's most urgent tasks.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

## PICTALK



A woman looks at Foxglove flowers blooming along a highway, in Bharderwah district, Jammu and Kashmir. PHOTO: PTI

## Yoga: A lifelong companion on the journey of ageing



SHARMILA DAS

### 2ND OPINION

As the world prepares to celebrate International Day of Yoga, this year's theme, "Yoga for Healthy Ageing", has sparked important conversations about wellness in later life. Images of elderly practitioners performing yoga postures with grace and confidence are inspiring, highlighting how the practice can help maintain strength, mobility and independence. Yet the theme also offers an opportunity to rethink a common misconception: ageing is not something that begins in old age.

It starts the moment life begins. From birth onwards, the human body is constantly changing. It grows, adapts, repairs itself and gradually moves through the different stages of life. Ageing is not a sudden event that arrives after retirement; it is a continuous process. The real challenge, therefore, is not avoiding ageing but learning how to support

our bodies and minds throughout that journey.

This is where yoga becomes truly valuable. Many people view yoga as a remedy for stress, stiffness, poor posture or declining health. While it certainly helps address these concerns, its deeper purpose lies in prevention. Yoga encourages us to care for our physical and mental well-being long before problems arise.

Movement is essential to healthy living. Children naturally bend, stretch, squat and balance without conscious effort. As adulthood progresses, however, modern lifestyles often replace movement with prolonged sitting, screen time and repetitive routines. Gradually, flexibility decreases, muscles weaken, posture suffers and balance becomes less reliable. These changes occur so slowly that they often go unnoticed until discomfort or fatigue begins affecting daily life. Yoga offers a simple yet effective way to counter this decline. Stretching practices help preserve flexibility, while mobility exercises keep joints healthy and functional. Strength-building postures support muscles and bones, allowing the body to remain capable and resilient over time. Balance-focused practices improve coordination and stability, reducing the likelihood of injuries as we age. Importantly, these benefits are not limited to senior citizens. A young professional spending hours at a desk may need them just as much as an older adult.

Breathing is another crucial element of healthy ageing. Though it accompanies us throughout life, we rarely pay

attention to it. The demands of modern living often encourage shallow, hurried breathing, which can contribute to stress, poor sleep and reduced energy. Yogic breathing techniques restore awareness to this vital process. A slow, steady breath helps calm the nervous system, supports mental clarity and promotes recovery and relaxation. The ability to regulate one's breath is a skill that benefits people at every age. Equally important is yoga's impact on mental well-being. Many fears associated with ageing stem from concerns about loss-loss of strength, appearance, independence or certainty. Yoga shifts the focus towards qualities that can continue to grow throughout life: awareness, patience, resilience, gratitude and inner balance. It teaches acceptance without passivity and growth without constant struggle. Ultimately, yoga is not merely a practice for old age; it is a practice for life. It requires no expensive equipment, exceptional flexibility or large amounts of time. Even a few minutes of mindful movement and conscious breathing each day can create lasting benefits. Like any worthwhile investment,

small and consistent efforts accumulate over time. This International Yoga Day, let us see yoga not as a response to ageing, but as a lifelong companion that helps us move, breathe and live with greater balance. Ageing begins at birth, but so do strength and wisdom.

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The writer is a trained Sivananda Yoga teacher

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## QUANTUM PROGRESS NEEDS STRONGER NATIONAL COMMITMENT

India's recent progress in quantum technology is encouraging and timely. To remain competitive in the post-AGI world, India must take a quantum leap forward. Having lagged far behind the United States and China in AI foundational technology, quantum computing may well be the next major frontier where India can establish leadership.

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) has done commendable work in this field, and its ambition of making India self-reliant in quantum computing deserves recognition. Alongside the Central Government's National Quantum Mission, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu also deserves credit for his vision in collaborating with IBM, a global

leader in quantum technology, and TCS to create a "Quantum Valley", much like Silicon Valley, as an epicentre for quantum-based innovation.

However, unlike in the US, Canada, China and Europe, India's private sector has shown limited seriousness towards this transformative technology. Companies like Reliance, Adani, Mahindra and major banks must step up and invest heavily. While the Government faces restraints in budget allocations, the Indian private sector should take the lead in herding in a new age of technological innovation.

Otherwise, India risks repeating its AI experience – forever catching up instead of leading. The time for a quantum leap is now.

YASHI BAIRAGI | UJJAIN

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Challenges overshadow TVK's start

In its first month in power, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay's TVK government has faced criticism from both the public and opposition over key issues such as law-and-order failures, unannounced power cuts, diluted farm loan waivers and the delay in implementing its promise of ₹ 2,500 monthly assistance for women.

Among these, the most serious concern has been the rise in sexual violence against girls and women, which has deeply shaken the State's reputation for safety. Opposition parties and citizens alike have criticised TVK's handling of the crisis.

Political observers have also pointed to TVK's wafar-thin organisational structure and lack of administrative experience. Vijay may be a popular film star, but popularity alone cannot substitute governance. He does not yet appear to have a clear roadmap, while his close circle and ministerial team are not known for policy depth or administrative expertise.

This leaves him heavily dependent on bureaucracy, which is rarely ideal for an elected leader. One month may be too short for results, but it is enough to expect clarity and direction.

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

### Peace built on fragility

Calling this agreement a respite rather than a triumph is both honest and necessary. A fourteen-point memorandum, however detailed, cannot undo four months of devastation or erase years of mistrust. The provisions on down-blending enriched uranium under IAEA supervision and the sixty-day Hormuz passage are constructive steps. The retreat in oil prices from wartime highs to \$74-78 a barrel will also bring relief to energy-importing nations, including India.

What remains concerning is the structural fragility of the agreement. Reconstruction pledges worth \$300 billion remain, as rightly noted, a diplomatic abstraction until actual disbursement begins. Such pledges often lose momentum once initial enthusiasm fades.

More worrying is Netanyahu's admission that Israel does not fully align with Washington's approach, while reserving the right to continue military operations in Lebanon, Gaza and Syria. A framework that excludes Israel's core security concerns is incomplete by design.

The sixty-day negotiation period will be the real test. Markets have celebrated; now institutions and diplomats must turn this pause into lasting stability.

SWATHI SENTHILKUMAR | COIMBATORE

### Blending teaching with technology

The article 'The silent burden of modern educators' rightly highlights the immense pressures borne by teachers. They are expected to meet the demands of parents, administrators, regulators and society while nurturing students and delivering measurable outcomes. Supporting teachers is essential if educational standards are to improve. However, the discussion overlooks the growing role of digital education. YouTube educators and EdTech platforms have become powerful tools that complement classroom teaching.

Millions of students now access lessons from excellent teachers, learn difficult concepts at their own pace and revisit topics whenever needed. This has been especially valuable for students in smaller towns and underserved regions. Ironically, online education is often dismissed or mocked.

Such criticism ignores the fact that technology has widened access to quality education far beyond conventional classrooms. Digital platforms cannot replace the mentorship, emotional support and human connection that teachers provide, but they can significantly improve learning outcomes. The real challenge is not choosing between teachers and technology, but creating a system where both work together.

HARSH PAWARIA | ROHTAK



## The Aravalli green shield: India's living defence against the desert

The Aravalli Green Wall Project represents one of the country's most ambitious environmental projects. It seeks to revive an ancient ecological system that has protected north-western India for centuries. Its success, however, will depend on ensuring strong legal protection, scientific planning and active community participation



VIVEK SAXENA

Every year on 17 June, the world observes the UN Day to Combat Desertification and Drought under the UNCCD Convention - a reminder that healthy land is the quiet foundation of our food, our water, our biodiversity and our resilience to a changing climate. This year's theme, "Restore the Land. Unlock.", carries a hopeful message: restoring degraded landscapes is not merely an ecological duty but an investment in livelihoods, water security and a sustainable future.

The challenge is sobering. Nearly 40 per cent of the Earth's land is now degraded, affecting billions of lives and threatening economic and ecological stability. India faces its own pressures - declining groundwater, biodiversity loss, expanding aridity and growing climate variability. Yet India has also emerged as a global leader in land restoration, and one of its most ambitious efforts is unfolding along an ancient line of hills: the Aravalli Green Wall.

### A green wall, or a green shield?

The phrase "green wall" entered the global vocabulary through Africa. Launched in 2007 by the African Union, the Great Green Wall set out to restore degraded land across the full width of the continent, stretching some 8,000 kilometres from Senegal on the Atlantic to Djibouti on the Horn of Africa. Originally conceived across eleven core Sahel countries and since expanded to many more, it aims to restore 100 million hectares of land, sequester 250 million tonnes of carbon and create 10 million green jobs by 2030.

Africa's experience taught the world an important lesson. A rigid line of planted trees marching across deserts could not survive on its own; the most enduring insight from the Sahel is that the initiative evolved from a tree-planting drive into a mosaic of activities - a comprehensive effort blending water harvesting, soil conservation, grasslands and community livelihoods. The "wall" was never really a wall.

This is why, in spirit, we should understand these initiatives not as walls but as shields. The Aravalli Green Wall, properly understood, is India's green shield against the advancing desert - not a barrier of bricks, but a breathing, regenerating landscape.

### Reviving an ancient ecological shield

Stretching across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi, the Aravalli Range is among the oldest mountain systems on Earth. For millennia, it has shielded the subcontinent from the eastward march of the Thar Desert while recharging aquifers, regulating local climate and sheltering rich biodiversity. Decades of deforestation, mining, encroachment and unsustainable land use have worn this shield thin - and the consequences reach far beyond the hills.

Recognising this, Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Bhupendra Yadav launched the Aravalli Green Wall Project in 2023, one of India's most ambitious landscape-restoration programmes, blending afforestation, watershed development, groundwater recharge, the revival of water bodies, dust-storm mitigation, carbon sequestration and community livelihoods.

The Aravalli Green Wall is the on-ground expression of a commitment India has made repeatedly at the highest global forums. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has placed land restoration at the centre of its climate diplomacy. When India hosted the 14th Conference of Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP14) in 2019, the Prime Minister raised India's ambition to restore degraded land from 21 million to 26 million hectares by 2030 - a pledge carried forward in the Delhi Declaration adopted at the close of that conference.

This sits within a wider arc of leadership: India's commitment to Land Degradation Neutrality and the Bonn Challenge; its pledge of net-zero emissions by 2070, announced at Glasgow; and Mission LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment), which the Prime Minister has championed from the G20 to the United Nations as a model for sustainable living. The Aravalli Green Wall translates these global commitments into restored watersheds, regenerated forests and revived water bodies on Indian soil.

If restoration rebuilds the shield, the law defends it - and here the judiciary has been a steadfast guardian of



THE ARAVALLI GREEN WALL STANDS AS A POWERFUL SYMBOL OF INDIA'S RESOLVE — A RESOLVE THAT MUST NOW BE MATCHED BY A DEFINITION STRONG ENOUGH TO HOLD THE LINE. REVIVING THE ARAVALLIS IS NOT ABOUT BUILDING A WALL OF TREES; IT IS ABOUT RESTORING, AND DEFENDING, AN ANCIENT LIVING SHIELD FOR THE GENERATIONS TO COME

The writer is an Indian Forest Service officer and former Country Representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature

dailypioneer @dailypioneer The Pioneer

the Aravallis. The Supreme Court banned mining in Gurugram, Faridabad and Nuh as far back as 2009, and has intervened repeatedly against illegal mining and encroachment across the range. Yet a deeper problem persisted: the four Aravalli states followed inconsistent criteria for what even counts as an "Aravalli", leaving regulatory gaps that illegal mining exploited. To close those gaps, the Court constituted a committee in May 2024 to recommend a uniform definition. In November 2025, it accepted that committee's formulation - defining an Aravalli hill as a landform rising 100 metres or more above the local relief, and a range as two or more such hills within 500 metres - froze new mining leases and mandated a plan for sustainable mining.

The definition, however, drew sharp criticism: ecologists and citizen groups warned that a purely height-based threshold could exclude vast tracts of the range from protection, endangering groundwater recharge, biodiversity and the very desertification control the Aravallis exist to provide.

Responding to these concerns, the Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance, kept its November judgment and the committee's report in abeyance, and ordered a fresh, independent expert review. In June 2026, it constituted a high-powered committee headed by the Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) to re-examine the definition and demarcation, resolve the "critical ambiguities" in the earlier findings, and submit a comprehensive report by 31 August 2026. Much now rests on this committee. A definition is not a technicality; it draws the line between what is protected and what may be quarried. The expectation - shared by conservationists, scientists and administrators alike - is for a definition that is scientifically rigorous and map-verifiable, yet ecologically precautionary: one that protects not merely the tallest peaks but the connected system of foothills, valleys, recharge zones and ridgelines that make the Aravallis a functioning ecological barrier. Where the science is uncertain, the definition must err on the side of protection. Crucially, the legal boundary of the Aravallis and the restoration ambition of the Green Wall must speak to each other - for it makes little sense to plant a shield on one hand while leaving it legally exposed on the other.

The stakes are highest, and most immediate, for the National Capital Region. The Aravallis are the single most significant natural barrier shielding the NCR from the dust and aridity of the Thar. A healthy Aravalli landscape means cleaner air and fewer dust storms over Delhi and its satellite cities, recharged aquifers beneath one of the world's most water-stressed urban regions, and a cooler, more stable microclimate for tens of millions of residents. The environmental fate of the capital region is, quite literally, tied to the health of these ancient hills.

At the landscape scale, the case is just as compelling. Restoration knits together a continuous ecological corridor from Gujarat through Rajasthan and Haryana to Delhi - reconnecting fragmented wildlife habitats, stabilising watersheds across the basin, and rebuilding the resilience of all north-western India.

### A people's shield

The Sahel's experience confirms a simple truth: where communities are excluded, walls crumble; where they are made stewards, shields endure. Through Mission LIFE, the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam campaign and the Amrit Sarovar Mission, restoration in India has become a people's movement - the work of citizens, schools, civil society and the private sector as much as of government. Every restored hectare, every revived pond, and every nurtured tree adds a fibre to the living shield that guards our water, our biodiversity and our climate. As the world marks World Desertification and Drought Day 2026, the Aravalli Green Wall stands as a powerful symbol of India's resolve - a resolve that must now be matched by a definition strong enough to hold the line. Reviving the Aravallis is not about building a wall of trees; it is about restoring, and defending, an ancient living shield for the generations to come. The time to act is now - for the land, for the climate, and for the future.

## Switzerland's ten million: What a ceiling cannot survive



ACHARYA PRASHANT

A referendum asks a society to do what a person is almost never asked about her own life: name a number and stop. Not a target, revised upward the moment reached, but a ceiling the system agrees in advance never to cross.

On June 14, Switzerland was asked to set one. The proposal, brought by the country's largest party, would have capped the permanent resident population at ten million by 2050, with tightening measures triggered earlier and the EU free movement agreement at risk if the cap

held too long. Turnout reached fifty-nine per cent. Nearly fifty-five per cent said no. It is easy to read this as a story about immigration, and at the level of posters and platforms that is what it was. Underneath sat a more interesting question, one the campaign never had to answer because the vote answered it by default: can a wealthy, secure nation set a limit for itself before crisis sets one for it? Switzerland was asked, and found it could not.

Switzerland's fertility rate sits around 1.5, below the 2.1 needed to hold a population steady. The population stood at about 9.1 million by end-2025, with the over-sixties now outnumbering the under-twenties; official projections put the figure at 10.5 million by 2055, almost all from migration. The number the proposal tried to hold was never the country's own; migration supplied nearly all the growth it was meant to stop.

Foreign nationals already make up twenty-seven per cent of residents, over a third of the workforce, with hundreds of thousands more crossing the border daily for work. The campaign cited gross arrival figures without mentioning the exits set against them; net migration, the figure that actually moves the population, is a fraction of that. A cap sounds simple, but in practice meant unwinding the agreement that lets Swiss firms hire across Europe, and with it the trade carrying nearly half of Swiss exports. The government itself had warned that holding to any fixed number would demand measures incompatible with the country's prosperity. It was an accurate description of the bill.

The housing pressure behind the campaign was real: Geneva's vacancy rate fell to 0.34 per cent, among the tightest in Europe. But the shortage is first a matter of construction, zoning and underinvestment, not headcount, and would have produced the same crisis at any population level.

So when Swiss voters said no, they were mostly voting against a specific trigger, attached to a party leaning on fear of outsiders, in a year when severing ties to its largest market looked like self-harm.

The no was local, contingent, reasonable on its own terms. But notice what the reasonableness conceals. The question of where a stop might fall was never put to a clean test, because by the time it reached the ballot it had already been wired into every artery that would have to be cut before the question could be answered. The ceiling lost not to greed but to interdependence; the system had arranged itself so growth was the only answer compatible with everything else the country had built. Switzerland had been here before: in 2014 it narrowly voted to cap immigration, then quietly declined to enforce it, because the same agreements made enforcement cost more than the country would pay. The vote can say stop. The structure keeps moving.

Here the deeper pattern shows itself, and it has nothing to do with Switzerland alone. A person never produces a stable figure for enough. Ask someone with savings what amount would let him stop checking, and the number retreats as it is approached. The referendum makes visible that the same movement runs at civilisational scale, without anyone wanting more of anything.

Switzerland holds roughly the third-highest income per head on earth, by any ordinary measure a society that has arrived. Yet holding a number, merely holding it, could not survive contact with the machinery of how the place runs. No voter had to be greedy for this: a national income figure has no terminal value past which a country may stop, neither does a trade relationship or a labour market, and together they form a structure with the exact signature of an ego that cannot say enough: permanent forward motion, no terminal state, no one whose task is to ask whether the motion still serves anyone.

The cruder reading says Switzerland is rich and wished to stay rich. The truer reading is stranger: the proposal could have been drafted by cleaner hands, and the verdict would likely have been the same, because it was laid down in decades of treaties and hiring practices, each rational alone, none asking what all of them together were for. A civilisation's reaching is dispersed across millions of decisions made by people not reaching for anything; it only loses anyone willing to own it. None of this makes the campaign innocent; trading in suspicion of outsiders answers for its own language. But the hostility to outsiders is a problem with an address. The inability to define enough has none, and that is why it outlives every election the louder problem loses. A Green parliamentarian, Sibel Arslan, observed that something shifted regardless of the result: capping a population now sits inside speakable policy in a way it did not before. A society can refuse a number and still be changed by having weighed one. A steadier-handed version of this vote might well pass. It would still not answer what this one raised, since passing a tighter mechanism is not the same as a system discovering a working sense of enough. Other wealthy nations should not mistake a different outcome for a different structure: not one keeps a stated population ceiling, and the absence of Switzerland's quarrel elsewhere is not evidence of a healthier relationship to limits. It only means the question has not yet been put plainly enough to compel one. The number Switzerland was asked to hold would have begun retreating the moment it was reached, the way it retreats from a man watching a balance. What the vote leaves behind is who, if anyone, still stands close enough to ask why the retreating never stops.



Acharya Prashant is a philosopher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life

acharya\_prashant\_ap @Advait\_Prashant prashantadvait

## Why India's youth deserve a seat at the decision-making table



ABHINAV NARAYAN JHA

By all demographic measures, India is a young nation. Nearly 65 per cent of its population is below the age of 35, and the country's median age hovers around 28 years. Political leaders across party lines proudly refer to India's youth as its greatest asset, its demographic dividend, and the driving force of a rising global power. Yet, there is an uncomfortable reality that rarely finds space in political speeches: while young Indians dominate the population, they remain conspicuously absent from the institutions that make decisions on their behalf. India may be one of the youngest democracies in terms of population, but its Parliament and Legislative Assemblies tell a completely different story. The contradiction is glaring. According to available data from the 18th Lok Sabha elected in 2024, fewer than one in ten Members of Parliament are between 25 and 40 years of age. The average age of the House is approximately 56 years - one of the highest in independent India's history.

The question, therefore, is straightforward: how can a democracy claim to represent its people when its largest demographic group remains significantly underrepresented in its highest decision-making bodies? It is a question of democratic legit-

imacy. Historically, the situation was far more encouraging. In the first Lok Sabha constituted in 1952, nearly 30 per cent of MPs were aged 40 years or below. Seven decades later, despite India's youthful population growing substantially, youth representation in Parliament has sharply declined to around 10 per cent. Instead of becoming more inclusive and accessible, Indian politics appears to have become increasingly exclusive. Political parties across the ideological spectrum frequently celebrate young voters. Election campaigns are designed around social media outreach, youth conventions, campus interactions, digital engagement and promises of employment and opportunity. Every political party understands the electoral value of young voters. However, when it comes to distributing party tickets, leadership responsibilities and positions of influence, the enthusiasm for youth participation suddenly diminishes. Young Indians are encouraged to vote. But they are rarely encouraged to lead.

The barriers are both visible and invisible. Electoral politics increasingly demands substantial financial resources, extensive organisational networks and years of political patronage. For first-generation aspirants, the path is extraordinarily difficult. This brings us to another uncomfortable truth: dynastic politics. A significant proportion of younger politicians entering Parliament and Assemblies today belong to established political families. While many of these leaders are capable and deserving in their own right, their presence highlights a deeper structural issue.



For every young leader with a political surname, thousands of equally talented young Indians without such advantages remain excluded from the system. The result is a political ecosystem where youth representation exists, but genuine youth inclusion remains limited. Representation should mean creating opportunities for talented young Indians from diverse social, economic and regional backgrounds to participate in governance.

The implications of this democratic deficit are profound. The twenty-first century presents challenges fundamentally different from those faced by previous generations. Artificial intelligence, cyber security, climate change, digital governance, start-up ecosystems, gig-economy employment, mental health concerns, educational reforms and technological disruptions are shaping the lives of millions of young Indians. Yet the voices most directly affected by these issues remain insufficiently represented in legislative

discussions. A Parliament that lacks youth perspectives risks creating policies that are disconnected from contemporary realities. This does not mean experience is unimportant. Governance requires wisdom that often comes with experience. But democracy functions best when experience and innovation coexist. The challenge becomes even more evident at the state level.

Youth wings exist within almost every major political party, but they often function as mobilisation platforms rather than genuine leadership pipelines. Many young leaders spend years organising events, managing campaigns and mobilising supporters without receiving meaningful opportunities to contest elections. This creates frustration, disengagement and cynicism. When politics appears inaccessible, talented individuals increasingly look elsewhere. Entrepreneurs build start-ups. Professionals join corporations. Scholars enter academia. Few see electoral politics as a realistic avenue for public service.

The solution is not symbolic tokenism. The solution lies in structural reform. Political parties should voluntarily allocate a meaningful percentage of tickets to candidates below the age of 40. Internal party elections must become more transparent and merit-based. Campaign finance reforms should reduce the overwhelming financial barriers that discourage young entrants. Structured mentorship programmes should connect experienced legislators with emerging leaders.

Equally important is the creation of institutional pathways. Youth Parliaments, student legislatures, public policy fellowships and civic leader-

ship initiatives should not remain ceremonial exercises. They must become genuine training grounds that connect young citizens with real political opportunities. India, despite possessing one of the youngest populations globally, risks lagging behind if it fails to address this imbalance.

The responsibility does not rest solely with political parties. Young Indians themselves must move beyond political spectatorship. Democracy cannot be strengthened merely through social media commentary. It requires active participation, organisational engagement, public service and leadership. However, participation can flourish only when opportunities exist. The real question is whether India's political establishment is ready to trust them with it. For decades, political leaders have referred to young people as the future of India. That statement is no longer sufficient. India's youth are not simply the future. They are the present. They are taxpayers, entrepreneurs, innovators, students, professionals, farmers, workers and voters. They are shaping the country's economy, society and global reputation every day. Surely they deserve a greater role in shaping its laws as well. If India truly believes that its youth are its greatest strength, then the time has come to offer them not just a voice in election campaigns, but a seat in Parliament and Legislative Assemblies where the nation's future is ultimately decided.

The writer is an advocate and columnist

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### Order Order

#### 'Yoga Day participation not must for public servants'



The Calcutta High Court on Friday disposed of a petition by an employees' union questioning a West Bengal government order on participation in the International Yoga Day function, noting that the state clarified it is a general appeal to all public servants and not mandatory. Claiming that a memo issued by West Bengal's chief secretary called for mandatory participation in the celebration by all employees, the State Coordination Committee of West Bengal Government Employees, a Left-leaning organisation, challenged his authority to issue the directive. Disposing of the petition after receiving the government's stand from additional advocate general Billwadal Bhattacharya, Justice Amrita Sinha verbally observed, "This litigation was not required." The court noted that the written instruction by the West Bengal government mentions that the chief secretary's order "is a general appeal to all public servants to participate in the official function on the occasion of International Day of Yoga."

It stated that the order is "not mandatory in nature and no punitive or coercive action was contemplated or incorporated in case of failure to attend due to personal reasons." (PTI)

#### Expedite decision on lawyer's plea on Bengal SIR: SC

The Supreme Court on Friday asked an appellate tribunal to expedite decision on an appeal filed by an advocate challenging the deletion of his name from the voters' list after the Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in West Bengal. A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana noted that the petitioner appeared to be a bona fide resident of West Bengal. The counsel appearing for the petitioner told the bench that the 75-year-old is an advocate for around five decades and he was a valid voter before the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise was carried out in the state. "You (petitioner) appear to be a bona fide resident of West Bengal. You know the mechanism which we have created," the bench said. The counsel said the petitioner had filed an appeal before the appellate tribunal against the deletion of his name, but it had not been decided yet. The bench noted that the petitioner is stated to be an advocate in Murshidabad since 1977 and his name was deleted from the electoral rolls in the SIR exercise. It disposed of the plea while requesting the appellate tribunal to decide his appeal expeditiously and preferably within two months. Approximately 700 judicial officers from West Bengal and neighbouring Odisha and Jharkhand were deployed to deal with around 60 lakh claims and objections of those whose names were deleted from the voters' list during the SIR exercise. Later, at the direction of the top court, the chief justice of the Calcutta High Court set up 19 appellate tribunals headed by former high court chief justices and judges to decide appeals against deletion of names from the voters' list. (PTI)

#### SC dismisses probe into May 13 trust vote in TN Assembly

The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea seeking probe into the alleged irregularities and corruption in the May 13 trust vote in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana refused to entertain the plea, observing it was based upon "vague, wild and casual allegations" without any reliable material on record to substantiate the claim. On May 13, the C Joseph Vijay-led TVK government in Tamil Nadu crossed a major hurdle by comfortably winning the trust vote with the support of 25 rebel AIADMK MLAs amid a walkout by the DMK. Although the TVK on its own did not secure the majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, Vijay managed to get support from the Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI (M) and IUML to gather 120 MLAs and cross the 118 mark to form the government, an act seen as a demonstration of his political adaptability beyond his image as a popular actor. The Opposition made allegations of horse-trading that were rejected by Vijay. (PTI)



# SC refuses urgent hearing on NEET-UG pleas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to accord urgent hearing on two separate pleas related to the NEET-UG 2026 re-test which is scheduled for June 21.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana said these petitions would be heard by a bench headed by Justice P S Narasimha in July when the apex court will resume normal functioning after the partial court working days.

"All NEET matters will go before Justice Narasimha's bench," the CJ said when one of the lawyers mentioned the matter for urgent listing.

On May 12, the National Testing Agency (NTA) had cancelled the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate), or NEET-UG, held on May 3 for medical admissions amid allegations of paper leak.

The CBI is currently investigating the matter, and a re-test is scheduled for June 21.

Advocate Adeel Ahmed men-



tioned a separate petition filed by students and NEET-UG aspirants before the bench and sought urgent listing.

The top court said the plea would be heard by Justice Narasimha-led bench, which is already seized of petitions related to the exam.

The plea has sought a direction to the Centre and others to reconsider the feasibility of conducting the examination on June 21 after

taking into account the representations of aspirants.

It said the petitioners have collected and placed on record a compilation of representations received from aspirants belonging to multiple states and Union Territories across the country.

"The representations disclose a remarkable uniformity of concerns, including mental trauma, severe anxiety, uncertainty arising from

cancellation of the original examination, inadequate preparation time, apprehensions concerning examination integrity, clashes with other examinations, logistical difficulties and adverse effects on mental health," the plea said.

It said the decision to conduct a fresh examination was not under challenge and the grievance of petitioners was confined to the "arbitrary and unreasonable fixation" of the re-test date without affording adequate preparation time to candidates.

The plea said abrupt cancellation of the original examination and the subsequent announcement of the re-test date resulted in widespread uncertainty and psychological distress amongst candidates.

It said the "atmosphere surrounding the re-examination has been marked by repeated circulation of alleged paper leak claims, purported leaked question papers, social media rumours and widespread misinformation, requiring repeated responses and clarifications from the authorities themselves".

"Public reports have highlighted

serious mental-health consequences amongst NEET aspirants following the cancellation and controversy surrounding the examination process, including reports of suicides by aspirants," the plea said. It has also sought a direction to the authorities to postpone and reschedule the re-NEET-UG 2026 examination after providing a reasonable preparation period to all affected candidates.

While hearing a batch of separate pleas related to NEET-UG 2026, the top court on May 29 stressed that the real problem relating to the medical entrance examination would not stop till "actual accountability arises".

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta had then told the apex court that the government was seriously concerned about the concerns of the youths and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was personally supervising the situation so that "there is no lacunae".

Mehta had also said that some new mechanisms have been put in place for the NEET-UG re-test scheduled for June 21.

## SC bats for creation of young lawyers assistance fund to prevent brain drain

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Noting that young and bright advocates are deserting the profession due to financial hardships, the Supreme Court on Friday said a "Young Lawyers' Professional Assistance Fund" must be created to stop the "brain drain".

The apex court also took note of problems faced by women lawyers and said when they are required to spend substantial portions of their day within the court premises, availability of basic infrastructure necessary for their comfort, privacy, safety and professional functioning assumes utmost significance.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana issued notice to the Centre, all states and Union Territories and others seeking their responses on a plea which highlighted the financial challenges faced by young lawyers during the formative years of practice.

The plea filed by a group of women advocates also raised issue concerning the accessibility, inclusiveness and long-term sustainability of women lawyers in the legal profession.

The bench said the issue



concerning financial challenges faced by young lawyers is gender-neutral and also merits serious consideration. It said a young first-generation lawyer entering the Bar does not immediately inherit an office, a library, a stable clientele or a predictable source of income.

It said during this formative period, many junior advocates remain dependent on modest stipends paid by their seniors or in some places, by the local Bar associations, which are often insufficient to meet even their basic living expenses.

The top court said absence of a steady stream of clients and the limited remuneration available during these years tends to create extreme financial hardship.

"It is this period of turmoil that often compels capable

and promising young lawyers to abandon practice at the Bar altogether. We apprehend that such attrition may produce a form of professional brain drain, diminishing the ability of the Bar to attract and retain the young and meritorious," the bench said.

It said the challenge was particularly acute for first-generation lawyers and those belonging to economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

"It thus seems to us that a Young Lawyers' Professional Assistance Fund must be created and should be established under the exclusive control of the jurisdictional high courts or an autonomous body constituted by the Union of India in consultation with the state governments," the bench said.

## House help murder case: Accused doctor sent to two-day police custody

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

A Delhi court on Friday sent a 50-year-old dermatologist, accused of killing his domestic help at his upscale south Delhi residence, to two days' police custody.

The doctor has admitted his guilt during interrogation, according to officials.

Judicial Magistrate Anurag Chhabra heard the Delhi Police plea seeking two-day custody of the accused and allowed it.

According to police, Dr Manish Gupta allegedly killed his domestic help, Meena, at his residence on Thursday morning by bludgeoning her with a cricket bat and stabbing her multiple times. He allegedly suspected her of practising black magic and held her responsible for persistent discord in his family. Delhi Police sought Dr Gupta's custody, contending that they need to investigate if other people were also involved and to find new facts in the case.

Opposing the plea, defence counsel submitted before the court that the accused has been in police custody for the past 24 hours. "Everything has been seized by the police; he has been in police custody for



the last 24 hours. He is already suffering from depression, and he is a well-reputed doctor," he argued.

According to police, the accused is on antidepressants and allegedly attacked his 45-year-old domestic help on his terrace. He was found standing near the blood-soaked body when police arrived and allegedly confessed to the killing.

Police said the exact motive behind the murder at the doctor's Mount Kailash house is yet to be conclusively established, and all angles, including disputes within his family and his mental state, are being examined.

Police received a PCR call at around 11.36 am from a resident who reported that a woman had been murdered on the terrace of a neighbouring building and

was lying in a pool of blood. The accused was immediately apprehended and taken into custody. During preliminary questioning, he allegedly admitted that he had first assaulted Meena with a bat and then stabbed her with a knife. Police have seized both the bat and the knife from the spot.

However, investigators said the accused has claimed during questioning that he believed Meena practised black magic and that her presence in the house had disturbed peace within the family.

According to sources, the doctor had wanted to remove Meena from employment for the past two to three years, but his wife was opposed to the move. This reportedly became a recurring source of tension within the family.

## Court issues summons to actor Allu Arjun, others

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Hyderabad

A city court has issued summons to top Telugu actor Allu Arjun and other accused to appear before it in person on June 22, in a case related to the death of a woman in a stampede during the premiere of 'Pushpa 2' at Sandhya theatre here.

The Hyderabad police had earlier filed a charge sheet against 23 persons in the court in connection with the case.

Following the charge sheet, filed on December 24, the court issued summons to all 23 accused, including Allu Arjun, directing them to appear before it on June 22. The theatre's owner, part-



ners, manager, lower-balcony in-charge and gatekeeper were named as accused No. 1 to 10 in the charge sheet, while Arjun has been named as accused No. 11.

Allu Arjun was arrested after the 35-year-old woman died and her eight-year-old

son was injured in the stampede during the screening of 'Pushpa 2' at the theatre on December 4, 2024.

The stampede occurred as fans gathered to catch a glimpse of the actor during the 'Pushpa 2' premiere. Following the incident, the

city police registered a case against Allu Arjun, his security team and the theatre management under different sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at the Chikkadpally station, based on a complaint lodged by the deceased woman's family.

Allu Arjun was arrested on December 13, 2024 in the case, and was released the next day after the Telangana High Court granted him interim bail. He was granted regular bail later.

Allu Arjun and the makers of 'Pushpa 2' had extended financial assistance to the family of the boy.

The Telangana government had also announced financial assistance to the family.

## MP HC vacates stay on SSE-2025 main exam



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Jabalpur

The Madhya Pradesh High Court has vacated its interim stay on holding the main exam of the MPPSC State Services Examination (SSE)-2025.

This ends the year-long wait for around 4,000 candidates aspiring to become deputy collectors, deputy superintendents of police, tehsildars and other state positions. An official said they will now be able to take the main exam after clearing the preliminary test.

A division bench comprising Acting Chief Justice Vivek Rana and Justice Pradeep Mittal passed the order on Thursday while hearing a clutch of petitions challenging certain provisions and procedures related to the examination process.

The court, on April 2, 2025, had directed that the main exam of the State Services Examination should not be conducted without its permission. Senior advocate Rameshwar Thakur, appearing for the petitioners, submitted that since their pleas were unlikely to be disposed of in the immediate

future, the stay on the main examination should be lifted and the remaining legal issues could be heard separately at a later date. Accepting the request, the division bench vacated the interim stay and permitted the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission (MPPSC) to conduct the main examination, Thakur said.

The petitioners also questioned the alleged non-selection of meritorious reserved category candidates against unreserved posts and the non-migration of candidates who availed age relaxation and other concessions to the unreserved category, Thakur said.

During the proceedings, the MPPSC submitted category-wise cut-off marks to the court in a sealed cover but did not specifically respond to the issues raised in the petitions, he said. The high court will next hear the matter on July 17.

## Create enabling conditions for women lawyers: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday stressed the need to create conditions that enable women advocates to discharge their professional responsibilities effectively, safely and on equal terms.

Taking note of issues raised in a plea that flagged the absence of adequately equipped ladies' Bar rooms and other essential facilities in most of the courts, tribunals and commissions across the country, the apex court said the concerns raised could not be brushed aside as a matter of mere convenience.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana said the legal profession has witnessed a steady and encouraging increase in the participation of women over the last few decades.



"However, the mere opening of doors alone cannot be a sufficient cause for celebration," the bench said.

"In order for their participation to be made meaningful, it must be accompanied by the creation of conditions that enable women advocates to discharge their professional responsibilities effectively, safely, and on equal terms," it said.

The top court said availability of adequately equipped

spaces for women professionals within the court complexes was one such indispensable condition.

The bench issued a notice to the Centre, all states and Union Territories and others, seeking their responses on the plea.

It said a court complex may simply appear to be a designated venue where legal proceedings are conducted, but those who live their lives in service of the law know it to be much more.

"It functions as a workplace where substantial portions of their professional lives are spent and, not infrequently, assumes the character of a second home," the bench said, while highlighting that most of the advocates spend long hours within these premises.

It said the absence of a designated area where such basic facilities are made available to women, disproportionately

impacts them and may, in certain cases, discourage them from continuing practice.

"The provision of such essential facilities prima facie bears a direct nexus with the fundamental guarantee of life and dignity under Article 21 of the Constitution," the bench said.

It said the expression 'life' under Article 21 has consistently received an expansive interpretation from the apex court and has been understood to encompass those conditions which enable an individual to live and work with dignity.

"When women advocates are required to spend substantial portions of their day within court premises, the availability of basic infrastructure necessary for their comfort, privacy, safety, and professional functioning assumes utmost significance," the bench said.

# Jio board approves draft papers for IPO

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Mumbai

The board of Jio Platforms Ltd, the digital and telecommunications arm of Reliance Industries, approved filing draft papers for an initial public offering involving a fresh issue of up to 27 crore equity shares, RIL said on Friday.

Addressing the 49th annual shareholder meeting of Reliance, chairman and managing director Mukesh Ambani said the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP), approved by the board of Jio Platforms, will be filed with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Friday. The proposed IPO

comprises a fresh issue of up to 27 crore shares with a face value of ₹10 each. The issue price will be determined through a book-building process in accordance with SEBI regulations.

Jio Platforms is a subsidiary of Reliance Industries and houses the group's telecommunications, digital services and technology businesses.

The company did not disclose the price band or the total size of the offering, which will depend on the final issue price and regulatory approvals.

Ambani called the Jio IPO the company's most significant value-creation event of the year, saying the listing



Reliance Industries Chairman Mukesh Ambani addressing the 49th Annual General Meeting (post-IPO) of Reliance Industries Limited in Mumbai. PTI

would unlock value for Reliance shareholders while offering new investors an opportunity to participate

in the company's growth. He said the IPO process is being led by his children — Akash, Isha and Anant —

who will spearhead the next phase of growth and value creation at Jio.

"The proposed listing of Jio will demonstrate to the world that India can build technology companies of global scale, global capability, and global value," Ambani said. The Jio IPO is described as "the most important value creation milestone this year", one that will "unlock great value for Reliance shareholders and offer an attractive investment opportunity to others".

Alongside the IPO announcement, five strategic priorities for Jio's next phase of expansion were outlined. The company plans to

accelerate the adoption of its JioTrue5G network, targeting migration of its entire subscriber base to 5G by 2030, while advancing India's role in the development of 6G standards.

Jio also aims to expand high-speed broadband access through JioAirFiber, its fixed wireless access service.

The company will continue its efforts to digitise small and medium-sized businesses through products such as JioPC, a cloud computing service delivered via a set-top box, and expand the use of artificial intelligence across consumer services, network operations and customer support.

## Selloff in IT stocks; Sensex down 600 points



Stock market benchmark indices ended lower on Friday, snapping a five-day rally, with the Sensex declining 607 points and the Nifty falling to the 24,013.10 level, dragged by heavy selling in IT firms after global tech giant Accenture trimmed its full-year revenue growth guidance. Renewed geopolitical uncertainty over postponement of talks to finalise US-Iran peace deal in Switzerland also dampened investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 607.08 points, or 0.78 per cent, to settle at 76,802.90. During the day, it tanked 940.26 points, or 1.21 per cent, to 76,469.72. The 50-share NSE Nifty declined 154.90 points, or 0.64 per cent, to end at 24,013.10. The Sensex had jumped 3,577.43 points, or 4.84 per cent, in the last five trading sessions, and the Nifty climbed 1,006.4 points, or 4.34 per cent. Among the 30-share Sensex constituents, IT firms were the major losers. The BSE IT index dropped 3.57 per cent. Infosys dived 6.69 per cent, Tata Consultancy Services dropped 3.53 per cent, HCL Tech 2.74 per cent, and Tech Mahindra ended 2.45 per cent lower. HDFC Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, Reliance Industries and Hindustan Unilever were also among the laggards. However, Eternal, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid and NTPC were among the winners. US Vice President JD Vance has postponed his visit to Switzerland to meet Iranian negotiators, with the White House citing logistical issues. The negotiations, aimed at resolving the technical aspects of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed by the US and Iran, were scheduled to take place in Switzerland on Friday. "Indian equity markets retreated after five consecutive sessions of gains, as investors booked profits amid renewed geopolitical uncertainty and sharp selling in IT stocks. Sentiment weakened following Accenture's cautious earnings outlook, while the postponement of scheduled US-Iran negotiations undermined expectations of a smooth progression in the broader peace process," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said. (PTI)

## Mukesh Ambani urges engineers to build Indian AI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Reliance Industries' Chairman Mukesh Ambani on Friday placed the country's engineering talent at the centre of Jio's massive artificial intelligence push, calling on them to join forces to "build for India" as the Reliance Intelligence enters the next phase, of execution.

Asserting that India should not remain a mere consumer of AI built elsewhere, Ambani outlined Jio's next growth chapter that pivots heavily toward artificial intelligence. "I firmly believe that India should not be a mere consumer of AI created elsewhere. It must become a creator, adopter, and global leader in AI," Ambani said while speaking at Reliance Industries' 49th AGM.

He noted that Reliance Intelligence announced last year aimed to build a profitable AI infrastructure, platform, and services business serving consumers, enterprises, and governments at scale. "We set out with a clear vision, identified the focus areas, and



began building the right partnerships with Google, Meta, and NVIDIA. Now, we are entering the next phase — Execution," he said.

Jio delivered on its promise made a decade ago of providing broadband connectivity to everyone, everywhere, and Reliance Intelligence is now promising AI to everyone, everywhere, he said.

"And we shall deliver on this promise too," he added. Ambani attributed the success of the Jio revolution to courage, creativity, and commitment of thousands of young Indian

engineers who helped Jio in shattering the myth that the country could only import foreign technology.

"Before Jio, many believed that India could only import technology from the world. Our engineers proved otherwise. They built, tested, deployed, and operated technologies at an unprecedented scale," Ambani said.

Today, Jio is not just integrating technology, it is creating original technology. Reliance Intelligence offers an even bigger opportunity to young, promising engineers.

"They will get to work on problems of national scale and impact. They will build and deploy technology for 1.5 billion Indians.

They will create India-born innovation that the world can adopt," Ambani said. Inviting them to "come, build with us, and build for India," Ambani promised the scale, resources, and freedom to develop powerful, language-fluent, and affordable AI that empowers everyone from farmers to creators while actively driving productivity and job creation.

"...Come, build with us. And build for India. Build AI that serves humanity; AI that is powerful, trusted, yet affordable; AI that is fluent in every Indian language; AI that empowers farmers, students, doctors, shopkeepers, workers, creators, and families... We will give you the scale, the resources, the freedom, and the responsibility to solve some of the most important challenges of our age," Ambani added.

## Reliance eyes India's own satellite broadband network

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

After taking the lead in the telecom services segment on the ground, IPO-bound Jio is now looking to step up its game in connectivity from the skies with indigenous communications satellites, Jio Platforms managing director Akash Ambani said on Friday.

At present, the satellite communications segment is dominated by foreign companies like Elon Musk-led Starlink and French service provider Eutelsat.

"Jio connected India on the ground. Now, we must connect India from the skies. There are still remotest villages, island communities, and border outposts where the Jio network cannot reach. For them, satellite connectivity will be the bridge to the rest of India. Jio is evaluating the development of a



sovereign Low Earth Orbit satellite constellation for India," Ambani said. While speaking at the 49th Annual General Meeting of Reliance Industries Limited, he said Jio is also partnering with a global constellation for leasing satellite capacity.

"We are also partnering with the leading global constellation providers by leasing satellite capacity, so that we can accelerate service availability while building our own long-term sovereign capability.

This dual approach will enable Jio to meet India's connectivity needs faster, while laying the foundation for the Indian satellite broadband platform of global scale," Ambani said.

## Gold slumps ₹3,392 to ₹1.45 lakh on weak global trends

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Gold futures slumped ₹3,392 to ₹1.45 lakh per 10 grams on Friday, tracking weak global trends amid uncertainty over the implementation of a US-Iran peace agreement, which eroded demand for the precious metals.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the yellow metal for August delivery extended their losses for the second straight session, declining ₹3,392, or 2.27 per cent, to ₹1,45,917 per 10 grams in a business turnover of 9,099 lots. Analysts said the initial optimism over the US-Iran

peace agreement faded after high-level talks scheduled in Switzerland were called off, raising doubts over the implementation of measures aimed at ending hostilities and restoring oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz.

Switzerland's foreign ministry said talks scheduled for Friday to discuss the next phase of the agreement "have been postponed for the time being". According to reports, US Vice-President JD Vance had postponed a planned visit, while Iran's participation in discussions also remained uncertain.

These developments have left investors unconvinced



that the peace process will be implemented smoothly, analysts said. Gold prices faced downward pressure on Friday amid a stronger US dollar, which has contributed to this decline, Gaurav Garg,

Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said. In the global markets, Comex gold futures for August contract declined \$95, or 2.24 per cent, at \$4,150.90 per ounce in New York.

### SILVER FUTURES SINK 4 PERCENT

**New Delhi:** Silver futures tumbled by ₹8,766 to ₹2.28 lakh per kg on Friday as investors dumped precious metals amid uncertainty over the US-Iran peace agreement and a broader selloff in the global markets. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the white metal for July delivery slumped by ₹8,766, or 4 per cent, to ₹2,28,806 per kilogram in a business turnover of 11,080 lots. The metal had suffered a steep correction in the previous session, plunging ₹14,235, or 5.7 per cent, to close at ₹2.37 lakh per kg from Wednesday's closing level of ₹2.51 lakh per kg. Analysts said optimism surrounding the US-Iran peace process faded after high-level talks scheduled in Switzerland were called off, raising doubts over the implementation of measures aimed at ending hostilities. US Vice President JD Vance postponed his visit to Switzerland. According to reports, no Iranian delegation had been confirmed, raising fresh questions about the timeline for restoring oil flows through the Strait of Hormuz. (PTI)

## Bandhan Bank increases FCNR(B) deposit rates



Private sector lender Bandhan Bank on Friday said it has increased interest rates on Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank) [FCNR(B)] deposits for non-resident Indian customers. The bank will now offer an interest rate of 7.1 per cent on US dollar-denominated FCNR(B) deposits of USD 1 million and above for tenures ranging from 3 to 5 years, according to a company release. For deposits up to USD 1 million, the interest rate has increased to 7 per cent, the bank said in a release. "We are pleased to introduce this attractive FCNR(B) deposit offering for our NRI customers at a time when they are seeking stability and value in their overseas investments. This offering allows them to lock in competitive returns for a longer duration while effectively mitigating currency-related risks," said Rajinder Kumar Babbar, executive director and chief business officer of Bandhan Bank. The offering comes in the wake of the RBI's decision to introduce a USD-Rupee forex swap facility for banks on fresh FCNR(B) deposits mobilised for a minimum tenor of three years and up to five years. The central bank's move aims to encourage foreign currency inflows into the domestic banking system and ease pressure on liquidity. Bandhan Bank said the revised FCNR(B) rates provide NRIs an opportunity to lock in competitive returns over a medium- to long-term horizon while reducing exposure to currency fluctuations, particularly in the event of rupee depreciation. (PTI)

## Mahindra Lifespaces buys Mumbai land for project

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Realty firm Mahindra Lifespace Developers has acquired a 15-acre land parcel in Mumbai to develop a housing project with an estimated revenue of ₹5,600 crore. In a regulatory filing on Friday, the company said the land parcel is located at Kandivali East, Mumbai.

The project has an estimated revenue potential of ₹5,600 crore and development potential of around 1.8 million square feet. The land



has been acquired through a competitive bidding process, the company said, but did not disclose the bid value.

## India, Germany aim for energy independence

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

India and Germany share a common challenge of reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels and increasing energy independence, said German Ambassador to India Philipp Ackermann.

He was speaking at the tenth edition of the GSDP Conversation Series under the theme 'Energy Security through Renewable Energies' on Thursday.

"India has made significant progress in renewable energy deployment, with renewable sources now con-



tributing around 26 per cent of electricity generation," he added.

The Indo-German Partnership for Green and Sustainable Development

address, Ackermann said renewable energy is no longer just a climate imperative but also an economic and strategic necessity. Renewables create a powerful trinity of climate action, economic opportunity, and energy security, he opined.

The GSDP partnership is particularly significant as India and Germany mark 75 years of diplomatic relations.

The longstanding bilateral development cooperation has evolved into a partnership addressing climate action and sustainable development for resilient economic growth.

## India beauty market to hit \$39 billion by 2030: Report

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

India's beauty and personal care (BPC) products market is projected to reach \$39 billion by 2030, driven by a fundamental shift in consumer behaviour, according to a report by e-commerce major Flipkart.

Once an aspirational segment, beauty is increasingly being viewed as a daily essential for self-care and identity rather than an occasional indulgence, the report said.

According to the 'Flipkart GlamUp Annual Beauty Trends Report 2026', the Indian beauty market, currently valued at approximately \$27 billion, is identified by



industry experts as one of the most attractive growth markets globally.

"India's beauty market is at an inflexion point. What was once an aspirational category has become a daily expression of self-care, confidence, and identity. The opportuni-

ty is significant. India's beauty market is valued at \$27 billion today and is expected to reach \$39 billion by 2030, making it one of the world's most attractive growth markets," Priyanka Bhargava, Senior Director of Brand Strategy & Insights at Flipkart,

said. The leading e-commerce platform noted that consumers purchase 12 beauty products every second on its website.

During the first quarter of the financial year 2025-26, the platform's BPC business recorded a 1.5x year-on-year growth in Gross Merchandise Value (GMV), while both orders and units in the category grew by 1.6x.

A significant portion of this growth was attributed to Gen Z consumers, who now account for more than half of BPC buyers on the platform.

The report further highlights the democratisation of beauty across the country, noting that two out of every three beauty-related search-

es originate from non-metro markets. Furthermore, almost one-third of BPC sales on the platform now come from Tier-2 and smaller towns.

This has led to the emergence of 'PIN code Beauty', a trend in which demand is shaped by hyperlocal factors such as regional climate, pollution levels, and water quality. For example, consumers in Bengaluru have shown a distinct need for hard-water scalp care, while those in Rajasthan frequently seek barrier repair and hydration products.

With a registered user base of more than 500 million, Flipkart's marketplace offers over 150 million products across 80+ categories.

## India initiates anti-dumping probe against Chinese, Japanese chemicals

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

India has initiated an anti-dumping probe against imports of a chemical, used in tyre and rubber products, from China and Japan, a commerce ministry notification said.

The investigation followed a complaint in this regard by Atul Ltd to the Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR). The applicant has alleged that the cheap imports of 'Resorcinol' is significantly harming the domestic industry. "On the basis of the duly substanti-



ated application filed by the applicant and having satisfied itself, on the basis of the prima facie evidence submitted by the applicant, regarding dumping of the subject goods...the authority hereby initiates an anti-dumping

investigation," the DGTR's notification said.

In the probe, the directorate would determine the existence, degree and effect of the alleged dumping of the chemical exported from China and Japan.

## FROM THE WORLD

### NEPAL Zoo closed over Bird flu

The Central Zoo in Jawalakhel in Nepal's Lalitpur district, the only zoo in the country, has been closed for at least two weeks from Saturday after the detection of bird flu in several birds and animals. Ganesh Koirala, the zoo's spokesperson, said several birds and animals have died from avian influenza, the Kathmandu Post newspaper reported. The National Trust for Nature Conservation, which manages the Central Zoo, announced the closure of the zoo on Friday until further notice. The bird flu test conducted on the carcasses of crows and pigeons found inside the sanctuary confirmed the fowl infection. Koirala said the virus was detected in egrets, owls and vultures housed at the zoo. It has also been confirmed in civets and leopard cats. He said around eight to 10 birds and animals have died in the outbreak.

### SOUTH SUDAN Vietnamese sent home

A Vietnamese national deported to South Sudan by the Trump administration under its controversial third-country deportation program was repatriated to Vietnam on Friday after spending more than a year in detention. South Sudan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced the repatriation of 44-year-old Tuan Phan at a press briefing on Friday. "We are grateful that while in our custody Mr. Phan was very disciplined, joyful, and importantly, he remained healthy," said spokesperson Agok Anyar. Phan and seven other men were sent to Africa in May 2025, rerouted first to a US military base in Djibouti after a federal judge blocked their deportation to South Sudan midflight, citing procedural irregularities. They arrived in Juba, South Sudan's Capital, aboard a military aircraft in July 2025 after a Supreme Court ruling greenlit their removal.

# Israeli strikes kill 21 amid intense fighting in Lebanon

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Jerusalem

Talks between the US and Iran were called off on Friday after intense fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon, three officials said, raising questions about a nascent agreement to end the war in Iran. Iranian officials didn't travel as planned to Switzerland, insisting that the fighting in Lebanon must stop before the talks can take place, according to the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss the ongoing mediation to try to get the talks rescheduled. US Vice President JD Vance also cancelled his trip. Israel's military



Displaced family riding with their belongings in the back of a truck as they leaving southern Lebanon

struck targets in southern and eastern Lebanon overnight, and Hezbollah reported intense fighting. Lebanon's Health Ministry said at least 21 people were

killed, and Israel said four soldiers died. The conflict between Israel and Iran-backed Hezbollah is the most precarious part of the Iran deal. Neither Israel nor the

militant group signed the agreement - but it is supposed to end their fighting, and Iran has signaled its willingness to risk renewed war in the region for the sake of

its interests in Lebanon and its most important regional ally.

Mediators are now scrambling to reschedule the meetings, which were supposed to begin addressing how to restrict Iran's nuclear program - the core issue over which Israel and the US went to war on February 28.

The talks are also supposed to bring about a permanent end to the conflict. The interim deal has already reopened the Strait of Hormuz to international shipping, after Iranian attacks and threats all but stopped the flow of oil and natural gas through the waterway. A new Iranian authority charged with overseeing the strait issued guidance Friday calling

on ships to register with it even as transits are currently free - signalling Tehran's intent to likely start charging.

The Israeli military said strikes were ongoing on Friday after four of its soldiers, including a lieutenant colonel, were killed in an attack on a tank in a village near the southern Lebanese city of Nabatiyeh. An explosive drone attack wounded another five, it added.

Israel then launched multiple strikes against "Hezbollah infrastructure sites" in Nabatiyeh and other areas, according to a military statement, which accused the militant group of "blatant ceasefire violations."

Later, the military said it also struck targets in the

Beqaa Valley in eastern Lebanon, with Lebanese media saying the village of Douris was hit.

"Israel will not tolerate attacks on our soldiers or on our territory, and it will exact a very heavy price from Hezbollah for these attacks," Netanyahu said in a statement Friday.

Hezbollah acknowledged targeting Israeli tanks and said its attacks were in response to what it called Israel's own violation of the ceasefire. It said the attacks came after Israeli forces attempted to reach the northern side of Ali al-Taher hilltop, a strategic point that overlooks Nabatiyeh and that Israeli troops have been trying to capture.

## Pak delegation to attend funeral of Ali Khamenei

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
Islamabad

A Pakistani delegation will attend the funeral of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was assassinated in the US-Israeli strikes in February, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced on Friday. Addressing the National Assembly, Sharif said that he held a telephone call with Iranian President Masoud Peshkian on Thursday evening. During the call, Sharif said, the Iranian president repeatedly expressed his gratitude for standing by them in difficult times. Sharif said the Iranian president



asked him to attend the funeral of Ayatollah Khamenei on July 3-4. "I said, Pakistan's delegation will be present there, so we can tell the world how much respect we have for him in our hearts," Sharif told the lawmakers. He also boasted of Pakistan's role in the peace agreement signed between the US and Iran. (PTI)

## Iran signals intent to charge ships for Hormuz transit

AGENCIES  
Dubai/New Delhi

A new Iranian authority charged with overseeing the strait issued guidance Friday calling on ships to register with it even as transits are currently free - signalling Tehran's intent to likely start charging.

The notice came from the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, a new agency in the Islamic Republic. The reopening of the Strait of Hormuz marks the end of nearly four months of disruption that sent crude oil prices soaring and heightened concerns over global energy supplies.

The Strait opened after a Memorandum of Understanding, signed by US



President Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart Masoud Peshkian to end the war, came into effect.

The Strait of Hormuz, a narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman, handles roughly 20 per cent of global energy

supplies in normal times. Shipping through the waterway was severely disrupted since February 28, when the US and Israel launched joint attacks on Iran.

Before the conflict, around 138 ships used to pass through the strait every day,

according to the Joint Maritime Information Centre.

At the height of the disruption, the number fell to a single digit. Tehran moved to shut the waterway soon after the US-Israeli bombing began, and Washington responded weeks later with a naval blockade of Iranian ports. The reopening of the Strait is expected to bring relief well beyond the region.

Commodity data firm Kpler estimates that a reopened strait could release roughly 93 million barrels of stranded non-Iranian crude from the Gulf, with a further 72 million barrels of Iranian crude - currently stuck on tankers west of Chabahar - freed up if Washington eases sanctions further. The impact of

the reopening is being felt well beyond West Asia.

A reopened route would allow exports to Europe and Asia to flow again without the costly detours that have pushed up freight and transport costs in recent months. For India, one of the world's largest energy importers, the development offers significant relief, but experts caution that the underlying vulnerabilities exposed by the crisis are far from resolved.

The Strait of Hormuz is the principal export route for Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar. With this Gulf chokepoint blocked, large volumes of crude queued up on tankers waiting for the waterway to clear.

## Pak refutes Afghan Taliban's claim of targeting terrorist camps in border areas

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
Islamabad

Pakistan on Friday refuted the Afghan Taliban's claim of targeting terrorist camps of the Islamic State in the border areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan using rudimentary drones. "The claims are false as usual," the Ministry of Information said in a post on social media. "Terrorist camps, including that of Daesh (ISIS) and more than two dozen other terrorist organisations, are factually located, run and patronised from inside the territories under control of the Afghan Taliban regime," it added. The ministry, however, said



that one rudimentary drone of the Taliban regime intruded inside Pakistan airspace near Shinko, Khyber, which was "immediately identified and neutralised by the alert Air Defence system." Pakistan often blames

Afghanistan for allowing militants to use their soil for attacks against it. The development comes over a week after Pakistan carried out strikes on alleged terrorist hideouts along its border with Afghanistan. (PTI)

## EU leaders squabble over outreach to Moscow

SAM MCNEIL  
Brussels

European Union leaders have been unable to agree on setting up a back-channel with Moscow to ensure that the bloc's interests are protected should progress be made in negotiations to end Russia's war on Ukraine, some of them said on Friday.

European Council President Antonio Costa, who chaired their two-day summit, had directed his office to reach out to the Kremlin and proposed a senior official to make contact. Costa said his aim was not to mediate or set up a parallel negotiating track to the one led by the United States, which is making little progress. Debate has been swirling around Europe in



Antonio Costa

recent months about whether to appoint a mediator for talks with Russia to help get things moving again, but this has been largely rejected as many believe that Russian President Vladimir Putin would be unlikely to negotiate anyway.

Instead, the 27 EU countries have focused on concessions that Russia should make to secure peace.

Speaking to reporters, Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis said the leaders had failed to resolve their differences over the approach overnight. "Europe is unable to agree even on whether there will be negotiations or who will lead them," he said. Irish Prime Minister Micheal Martin said that "opening up a channel is not a mistake in our view, and I trust Antonio Costa."

"What was very clear last evening is that any negotiations would have to be first and foremost between Ukraine and Russia, but there are no indications that Russia is coming to the table at all," he said. Putin has tried to cut out Europe and Kyiv from its negotiations with the United States over

Ukraine's future. But the Kremlin said Friday that it would be open for talks with Europe if it abandons its desire to talk to Moscow from the position of force.

"We are ready for contact, we were not the ones who initiated cutting such contacts, terminating them completely," said spokesperson Dmitry Peskov. "If forces emerge that realize the need to resume dialogue with Russia, not to lecturing it or, worse, to issue ultimatums ... then President Putin and the Russian side would certainly be open to it."

As the leaders left their meeting overnight, Belgian Prime Minister Bart De Wever joked that Costa would be the envoy to Moscow. (AP)

## Nepal pushes diplomacy to restart tea exports

SHIISH B PRADHAN  
Kathmandu

Nepal has taken diplomatic measures to resume the export of Nepalese tea to India that has been halted for some time.

As Indian authorities imposed strict rules to import Nepalese tea, tea producers in Nepal have suspended their production since Wednesday asking the government to take measures to clear obstacles on way to the export Nepalese tea to India.

"We have already taken diplomatic initiatives to resume export of Nepalese tea to India," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lok Bahadur Paudel Chhetri said. "There has been continu-



ously coordinated between the bodies concerned of Nepal and India regarding the matter," he pointed out. "The talks are heading towards positive direction and we are hopeful for early resolution to the problem,"

he added. On Thursday, a delegation from the Federation of Nepalese Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FNCCI) met Minister for Foreign Affairs Sishir Khanal and requested him to take initiatives to resolve

the problems surfaced in the export of Nepalese tea to India through diplomatic channel. A team led by FNCCI President Anjan Shrestha met the foreign minister and drew his attention towards the problem facing the Nepalese tea industry.

Nepalese tea producers are facing problem due to the new arrangements introduced by the Tea Board of India. Minister for Foreign Affairs Sishir Khanal assured the FNCCI delegation that the government was serious towards obstruction surfaced in the export of Nepalese tea and diplomatic efforts were underway with Indian side regarding this matter. "We have already initiated talks with Indian authorities to resolve issue." (PTI)

## Congressman flags rising anti-India hate in US

SAGAR KULKARNI  
Washington

Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi has voiced concern on the increase in anti-India hate incidents in the US and urged Americans to stand against bigotry, prejudice and discrimination.

In a social media post on Thursday, the Democratic lawmaker cited an incident in Frisco city in Texas where a group of White supremacists shouted anti-India slogans and tore the Indian flag in front of City Hall.

"I want to sound the alarm on the rise of anti-Indian hate in the United States. Just a couple of weeks ago, in Frisco, Texas,



a group of white supremacists appeared in front of City Hall and said the following: they said, 'Go back to India, stop the Hindu takeover of Texas, and you will not replace us,'" said the Congressman from Illinois. He said hate has no place in the United States. (PTI)

## Freed Israeli hostage Guy Gilboa-Dalal recounts sexual abuse in Gaza

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Jerusalem

An Israeli man who said he was sexually abused while he was held hostage in the Gaza Strip is hoping to use his voice to help empower victims who have suffered similar assaults, including in conflict zones, he said in remarks ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Guy Gilboa-Dalal, 25, spent two years in captivity in Gaza after Palestinian militants abducted him and 250 others during the Hamas-led attacks in Israel on October 7, 2023.

"I feel like I have a mission to spread to the world, to use my voice and empower other victims of sexual assaults," he said Sunday in a conversation with Israel's first lady Michal Herzog in Jerusalem. "I want people who have been through those experiences to know that they're not alone."

The Associated Press does not typically identify people who say they have been sex-

ually assaulted unless they come forward publicly.

According to the United Nations, conflict-related sexual violence is on the rise worldwide, with cases more than doubling in 2025, as state and non-state actors increasingly use it as a tactic of war, torture and political repression.

In Israel and the Palestinian territories, the use of sexual violence as part of the conflict has become highly politicised since the October 7 attacks and the start of the war in Gaza.

Rights groups and the United Nations have investigated and documented cases beginning with allegations of widespread rape during the initial Hamas attacks. The UN also said last month that it has verified multiple incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, "including as a form of torture" perpetrated by Israeli military and security forces against Palestinian men and women in Gaza and the West Bank, charges Israel denies. (AP)



## Indian envoy to China shows facilities available for Manasarovar pilgrims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Beijing

Indian Ambassador to China Vikram Doraiswami, who recently visited Tibet to review arrangements for Indian pilgrims for Kailash Manasarovar Yatra, has posted a video explaining the facilities.

"Greetings, friends from India, pilgrims on the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. This is from the Embassy of India in Beijing. We wish you a warm welcome in Yadong County, China," he said in the video taken in Yadong County of Tibet posted on the Indian Embassy website on Friday.

He said the pilgrims will be received by the Chinese Customs and Immigration authorities at Nathulla Pass entrance. After immigration formalities, they will be



taken by bus to Yadong County, which is a journey of about 35 to 40 minutes. A special facility was built at Yadong County for the Border market, which is to start sometime soon, he said. Doraiswami explained the amenities, such as restaurants and foreign currency exchange, and cautioned pilgrims about the cold climate. He also promised to post more videos to highlight the facilities at different places.

Doraiswami went to Lhasa last week on his first visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region to jointly review arrangements made by local government authorities for Indian pilgrims on the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra.

The pilgrims are scheduled to arrive later this month. Doraiswami took over as ambas-

sador early last month and has been interacting with the senior Chinese foreign ministry officials on the bilateral issues.

The pilgrimage, organised by the Ministry of External Affairs, was suspended initially in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently because of the military standoff between the two sides on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. It resumed in June last year after the first batch of Indian pilgrims arrived at Manasarovar Lake in Tibet after a five-year hiatus.

Resumption of the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra was the first initiative taken by both countries last year after the resumption of ties following the meeting between PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping at Kazan in Russia in 2024.

## India calls Pakistan a Frankenstein state at UN

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
United Nations

India has slammed Pakistan at the United Nations, calling it a "Frankenstein State" that gets shocked when its "own monster bites back", as it accused Islamabad of "hosting, training and deploying" terrorists.

The remarks were made by Anupama Singh, First Secretary at India's Permanent Mission to the United Nations after Pakistan and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir during the Interactive Dialogue on the UN High Commissioner's annual report.

"India is compelled to exercise this right of reply in response to references made to it by Pakistan and the OIC. We categorically reject the baseless and malicious allegations made by Pakistan," Singh said.

The diplomat further said: "We also categorically reject



the references to Jammu and Kashmir made by the OIC... For the record, Jammu and Kashmir was, is, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India. The only unresolved issue is Pakistan's illegal occupation of Indian territories and their return." She also said that

Pakistan is a country whose sitting defence minister "boasts of hosting, training and deploying terrorists as state policy."

"This should surprise no one. An illegal and illegitimate occupation can be sustained only through force," Singh said. "This is the

country with the sitting Defence Minister boasts of hosting, training, and deploying terrorists and state policy, and yet Pakistan calls itself a victim of terrorism."

The diplomat further said: "Indeed, a paradox which only Pakistan could sustain. It is a living example of a

### PAK WRITES TO UNSC ON INDUS WATERS TREATY

Islamabad: Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has urged the UN Security Council to take notice of India's alleged violations of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).

The treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960, was suspended after the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025 that killed 26 civilians. The treaty has governed the distribution and use of the Indus River and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960. Pakistan's Permanent Representative

to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, said that he delivered a letter from Dar to UNSC president Leonor Zalabata Torres to highlight Islamabad's concerns. In a post on X, Asim said that the letter "draws urgent attention of the UNSC" to two Indian infrastructure projects linked to the Chenab River.

"I also briefed the president of the UNSC on the overall situation in South Asia..." he said.

Dar wrote a similar letter to the UNSC president in April. (PTI)

Frankenstein state, which is shocked when its own monster bites back," she said.

She also said that "denial of basic freedoms has brought matters to a point where even demand for bread, electricity, rights, and dignity are met with bullets and brutality." Singh also

mentioned the Indus Water Treaty with Pakistan, calling it "outdated".

"Our position on the Indus Water Treaty is well known. It defies logic that a state which exports terror as an instrument of policy continues to demand the privileges of cooperation predi-

cated on goodwill and friendship," Singh said.

The decades-old treaty was suspended after the Pahalgam terror attack in April 2025 that killed 26 civilians. "It is equally undeniable that the treaty is now outdated. No technical arrangement can remain frozen in time while the world around it is transformed," the diplomat said. Singh also said that a treaty negotiated in 1960 cannot be treated as a perpetual entitlement "insulated from accountability, detached from present-day realities and untouched by the profound changes of the past six decades".

The Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank, has governed the distribution and use of the Indus River and its tributaries between India and Pakistan since 1960. Singh added: "instead of coveting Indian territories, Pakistan would serve itself and its people far better by putting its own house in order."



### Police charge a third suspect in Melbourne synagogue arson

ROD MCGUIRK  
Melbourne

Police charged a third suspect on Friday with an arson attack on a Melbourne synagogue that was allegedly directed by Iran.

The 20-year-old man was one of three masked offenders who broke into the Adass Israel Synagogue, doused the interior with flammable liquid then set it alight in the early hours of December 6, 2024, a police statement alleged. The fire caused extensive damage to the synagogue and a worshipper sustained minor injuries.

The Victorian Joint Counter Terrorism Team, which brings together federal and state police with a spy agency, charged the man, who has not been named, with offenses including arson.

He was charged in a Melbourne jail where he was already being held in custody on unrelated offenses. Police declined to elaborate on those offences. His co-accused Giovanni Lallu, 21, was arrested in July last year and another suspect, Younes Ali Younes, 20, was arrested a month later. (AP)



### Burnham win sparks Labour leadership showdown fears

JILL LAWLESS  
London

Labour's Andy Burnham, the current mayor of Greater Manchester, has won a special election for a seat in Parliament that puts him in a position to challenge embattled Prime Minister Keir Starmer for leadership of the country. Burnham decisively won the seat of Makerfield in northwest England over Rob Kenyon of the anti-immigration party Reform UK.

The victory announced early Friday cements the status of Burnham, a 56-year-old politician nicknamed the King of the North, as the top contender to replace Starmer as leader of the Labour Party and the country.

Burnham won almost 55 per cent of the 45,510 votes cast for a field of more than a dozen candidates, over 9,000 more than runner-up Kenyon. Burnham's victory speech left

no doubt that he wants to lead the country, and not just be one of the more than 400 Labour lawmakers in the 650-seat House of Commons.

"Everyone knows that politics isn't working," he said. "Everyone can feel that the country isn't where it should be. Tonight could, just could, be the turning point."

Starmer congratulated Burnham, writing on X that voters "chose Labour's campaign of hope and optimism over division and hate."

But he insisted he would fight attempts to oust him.

"Yes, I will run, I will stand," if there is a Labour leadership contest, Starmer said. "I've said repeatedly I'm not going to walk away from that."

Burnham has led Manchester since 2017, overseeing rapid regeneration for the city where the Industrial Revolution was forged. (AP)

### Italy slams Trump over claims of Meloni begging for photo

NICOLE WINFIELD  
Rome

The Italian Government on Friday slammed US President Donald Trump's claim that Premier Giorgia Meloni had "begged" for a photo with him during the recent G7 summit, a push-back that suggested the longtime US ally had had enough of Trump's boasting.

Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani abruptly cancelled a planned trip to the United States this weekend, calling Trump's claims

"serious and offensive" toward Meloni and all of Italy.

For her part, Meloni posted a video calling Trump's claims "completely fabricated," which she concluded with: "Italy and I do not beg." Trump had made the comments in an interview broadcast Friday morning on the La7 network. The La7 correspondent had asked Trump about Ukraine, but Trump raised Meloni and the conversation turned to their meeting, caught on video, during the just-con-



cluded G7 meeting in Evianles-Bains, France. Meloni and Trump were filmed speaking at several points, including alone on a small sofa.

According to La7, Trump

said Meloni had "begged" him for a photo-op. Trump said he wasn't obliged to do it but that he felt sorry for her and agreed, La7 said. The broadcaster has a dubbed

version of the conversation online, not the original English audio.

In her video, Meloni said she was responding to Trump's claims because "certain things deserve an immediate response."

"Donald Trump's statements are completely fabricated. I am frankly stunned," she said. "I don't know why the president of the United States behaves this way toward his own allies. After all, this isn't the first time this has happened." (AP)



People take part in a yoga session during the 12th International Day of Yoga celebrations organised by Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, in New York, US

### Indian jurist elected as judge of ITLOS

YOSHITA SINGH  
United Nations

An eminent Indian jurist, Bimal Patel, has been elected as Judge of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS).

Patel is a Member of the UN International Law Commission, Chairman, Working Group Succession of States in respect of State Responsibility and Vice-Chancellor and Professor of Public International Law at Rashtriya Raksha University.

He is also a member of the National Security Advisory Board, National Security Council Secretariat, Prime Minister's Office



"Congratulations to Prof. Dr. Bimal N. Patel for being elected as Judge of the International Tribunal of the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) in New York today. His

election takes forward India's enduring commitment to multilateralism and the Law of the Sea," the Permanent Mission of India to the UN said. (PTI)

### India-UK FTA more than just about trade: Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

ADITI KHANNA  
Paris

The India-UK Free Trade Agreement (FTA) goes beyond just trade and technology to open many doors for the people in both countries, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri has said.

Addressing the media on Thursday, Misri highlighted trade, technology, regional and international security as the key pillars of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit across a range of bilateral discussions on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Evian. During a meeting with British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, both leaders announced July 15 as the

date for the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Partnership (CETA) to enter into force.

"The India-UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, which was signed last year in the presence of the two Prime Ministers in the UK, will enter into force from July 15. So, a major development so far as bilateral relations with a major trading partner are concerned," Misri said.

He went on to highlight that the impact of CETA, which is expected to significantly boost annual bilateral trade from the current annual estimate of 48 billion pounds, will be felt on the



wider India-UK relationship.

"Now that a date for entry into force has been announced, I am sure that businesses on both sides have been gearing up for

some time to get into this," he told PTI. "The UK is one of our largest trading partners, an important technology partner. And this agreement is about more than just trade

and technology. It speaks to mobility between the two countries as well. And I think it will open very important doors for people in both countries," he said.

The Foreign Secretary noted that businesses in both countries have been "quite eager" to have the agreement enter into force at an early date so that they can roll out their expansion and growth plans.

Trade talks with the European Union (EU) also progressed during this week's visit, where Prime Minister Modi met jointly with both European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and

European Council President Antonio Costa. The conclusion of negotiations towards an India-EU FTA took place earlier this year in New Delhi, with an agreement expected before the end of this year.

"This is something that came up in their meeting in Evian on the sidelines of the G7 meetings, and they once again reaffirmed their desire and instructed the respective teams to do whatever was necessary to make this signing happen before the end of the year," Misri told reporters. Prime Minister Modi concluded his tour of France on Thursday evening with an address to the Indian community in Paris. (PTI)

### Children, teachers evacuated after fire breaks out in Tokyo

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
Tokyo

A fire broke out at an elementary school in downtown Tokyo Friday, but all of about 300 students and teachers were evacuated or rescued, officials said.

The Tokyo Fire Department said the fire at the Takinogawa No. 3 Elementary School broke out near a music room on the top floor of the four-story building late morning Friday.

Firefighters rescued one teacher and several schoolchildren out of the building, with non-life-threatening injuries, the department said.

Television footage showed black smoke billowing out of windows on the fourth floor, as firefighters combated the



fire at the scene. Dozens of fire engines were deployed.

All others inside the building when the fire broke out had evacuated to a nearby park on their own and no one was left behind, officials said. The cause of the fire is still under investigation.

### Dragon Boat festival preserves ancient Chinese traditions

MARIA TERESA HERNANDEZ  
Beijing

The Dragon Boat Festival was celebrated Friday across mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan with colourful boat races, lion dances and other festivities.

The more than 2,000-year-old holiday is best known for its sporting events, but its origins are rooted in Chinese history and ancient beliefs about health, protection and harmony with nature.

"The Dragon Boat Festival is probably the richest and most diverse of all traditional Chinese festivals," said Tsinghua University's history professor Liu Xiaofeng.

"Across different regions, people developed a wide variety of traditions based



Competitors splash water on each other during the Aberdeen Dragon Boat Race to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival in Hong Kong

on ideas connected to the summer solstice and the balance of yin and yang.

The festival is widely associated with the ancient poet Qu Yuan, who according to legend drowned himself more than 2,000 years ago. The tradition of dragon boat races was born from the

story that people raced out in boats to search for the poet and threw rice into the river so fish would not eat his body.

A three-day race in Beijing features men's, women's and mixed dragon boat races over distances of 100, 200 and 500 meters. Teams

from Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi and Guangdong will compete throughout the holiday weekend.

Guided by the thunderous beat of their drummers, crews pulled their paddles through the water in unison, each boat surging toward the finish line as spectators cheered them on.

Others watched the races at home as they enjoyed a traditional sticky rice treat known as "zongzi" with their families. Beijing's 2026 celebrations will continue through June 21 at the capital's Grand Canal.

"The competition helped strengthen our team spirit," said Li Maoshan, a participant in Friday's races. "It also gave us an opportunity to demonstrate the spirit of perseverance and hard work." (AP)



### Cambodia's Supreme Court upholds Opposition leader's conviction, sparking outrage

SOPHENG CHEANG/DAVID RISING  
Phnom Penh

Cambodia's Supreme Court on Friday upheld the incitement conviction of a prominent opposition politician while suspending the remainder of his sentence, keeping him out of prison but unable to practice politics for years and renewing questions about the Government's efforts to quash criticism.

The decision against Rong Chhun, a top adviser to the Nation Power Party, was met with anger by some 300 supporters from around the country who had gathered outside the Supreme Court complex in Phnom Penh.

"Even though he is not in prison, I'm saddened that his freedom has been restricted and he has become a sub-citizen, meaning he has no right to vote or participate in politics," said Nek Ratha, a 55-year-old from the capital. "The verdict is hard for us to accept because he is not free, and he has done nothing wrong." The 56-year-old had been found guilty last year of

inciting social unrest after meeting with villagers displaced by Government construction projects, in what was widely seen as one of many legal moves taken by the Government of Prime Minister Hun Manet to stifle criticism.

Rong Chhun told his supporters the verdict was "completely unfair" and accused the court of following orders of the Government rather than the rule of law.

"If the powerful leader wants black, the court will paint it black for them," he said. "And if the powerful wants white, the court will paint it white for them."

Bryony Lau, deputy Asia director for Human Rights Watch, said the ruling demonstrates Cambodia's courts "lack of independence from the ruling party."

"Hun Manet's Government should stop using the courts to silence the political opposition and instead reopen space for parties and civil society groups to operate freely ahead of next year's election," she said. (AP)



## VIT University climbs to 597 in QS 2027



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Vellore

VIT University has achieved a notable milestone by securing the 597th position in the prestigious QS World University Rankings 2027.

The global higher education analysis firm, QS Quacquarelli Symonds, released the latest edition of its World University Rankings, evaluating more than 1,500 institutions worldwide across five key parameters: Research and Discovery, Learning Experience, Employability, International Engagement, and Sustainability.

This year, VIT has demonstrated strong progress, advancing 94 positions from its previous ranking of 691 in 2026.

Commenting on the achievement, VIT Chancellor Dr G Viswanathan said, "In an intensely competitive global environment, VIT University's significant improvement in the QS World University Rankings is a matter of great pride."

He added, "The university also excelled in the Sustainability category, securing the 352nd position worldwide and seventh place in India in the 2026 rankings. In the QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026 for Engineering and Technology, VIT is ranked 119th globally, and 6th rank among Indian institutions. Through innovation in teaching and groundbreaking advancements in research, VIT aims to break into the top 200 universities worldwide."

## Transformation along India's frontiers



**KIRTI MEHTA**

India's borders signify more than just geographical boundaries. They represent the front-line of the country's sovereignty and security and serve as the initial line of defence against external threats. In today's world, threats extend beyond conventional warfare and include illegal infiltration, transnational crime, and demographic shifts. Given these challenges, border management has emerged as an essential component of national security.

In the past, India's border architecture suffered from neglect. Difficult terrain, inadequate connectivity, and limited technological integration often hampered the effective functioning of the security forces. Large stretches of the border were prone to infiltration and smuggling, while security operations were more reactive.

However, over the last decade, there has been a funda-



mental shift in this approach. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah, border management has transformed into a central pillar of India's national security framework.

The emphasis has now moved from mere guarding to comprehensive border management. The Ministry of Home Affairs' approach combines infrastructure, technology, intelligence, and institutional coordination.

This shift has certainly been brought about by the government's political will and policies. Both Prime Minister Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah have repeatedly visited sensitive border regions. They have directly interacted with security personnel and the population.

A defining feature of this new doctrine has been the unprecedented focus on border infrastructure. Faster connectivity to remote frontier regions has improved troop deployment, logistics management, and surveillance capabilities.

Areas that were once difficult to access year-round are now increasingly integrated into the security grid.

Alongside physical infrastructure, technology has become a force multiplier. Building on this technological push, Shah recently announced the rollout of a nationwide 'Smart Border' project. The initiative aims to establish a comprehensive security grid across nearly 6,000 kilometres of India's international borders.

The objective is to detect threats before they materialise rather than respond after damage has been done.

Moreover, illegal infiltration holds long-term implications that go beyond immediate law-and-order concerns. Unchecked migration, when sustained over decades, alters local demographic patterns.

Shah has increasingly conveyed that every single illegal infiltrator living on India's soil will be identified, and those who compromise

the country's security will be shown the right path.

One region where this is becoming evident is India's eastern border region. The India-Bangladesh border remains one of the most sensitive and dynamic border regions in the country. It necessitates continuous surveillance and security measures. The recent efforts by the BSF to secure unsecured stretches with fencing are yet another important step towards strengthening border integrity.

Reflecting a broader understanding of national security and recognising the emerging realities, Shah announced the establishment of a 'High-Level Committee on Demographic Change.' The committee has been tasked to examine demographic trends through a strategic lens. Such an approach demonstrates a shift from crisis management to preventive governance.

Security preparedness has received a major boost in the strategically vital Siliguri Corridor (Chicken's Neck).

The recent transfer of approximately 120 acres of land to the BSF in this region by the West Bengal government will facilitate enhanced deployment and

infrastructure development, reinforcing security in the region.

The transformation of the borders is also about the people who live there, as they are stakeholders in national security. PM Modi has made it clear that the villages located on India's borders are not the 'last villages,' but the 'first villages.' Through improved connectivity and development initiatives, the government has transformed border villages into vibrant centres of economic and strategic importance.

Secure borders facilitate economic growth and legitimate movement while deterring unlawful activities. This is why border management is not just about securing India's territorial integrity but also about enabling its developmental aspirations.

India's borders are being viewed as strategic assets that link security and development. This transformation aims to enhance the country's long-term stability, and national resilience in a rapidly changing geopolitical environment.

(The writer is a columnist with diverse experience across leading national news organisations)

## PROSPECT



Pijush Hazarika, Minister for Agriculture, Govt of Assam, addressing a workshop on Natural Farming and Organic Farming organised by BJP Kisan Morcha, Assam Pradesh as part of the celebrations marking 12 years of transformative governance under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi

## Akshay Kumar, Karan Johar unveil ₹100 crore fashion startup hunt as pitch to get rich returns bigger than ever

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Mumbai

Following a successful debut season that helped emerging fashion brands unlock funding, mentorship, and accelerated growth, the Fashion Entrepreneur Fund (FEF) has officially opened registrations for Pitch To Get Rich Season 2, India's first fashion-focused business reality show.

In a newly launched campaign, Akshay Kumar and Karan Johar, as promoters of FEF, announced a massive ₹100 crore investment commitment for promising fashion businesses across India; marking a 150 per cent increase over Season 1 and making it one of the largest funding opportunities available to homegrown fashion entrepreneurs.

More than just a reality show, Pitch To Get Rich has emerged as a launchpad for fashion founders looking to scale their businesses



through capital, mentorship, industry access, and strategic guidance. Season 1 demonstrated the impact of FEF's venture studio model, proving that fashion founders need more than just capital to scale. Through a combination of funding, mentorship, strategic guidance and industry access, participating brands achieved remarkable growth. Menswear label Banana Club crossed ₹105 crore in net revenue. Love Kiki recorded 227.6 per cent revenue growth while expanding into more than 10 cities and securing international orders from

Saudi Arabia. House of Armuse nearly tripled its average order value while expanding into menswear. DMO Dot scaled its presence across multiple retail outlets and international markets. Furthermore Stylox more than doubled its retail footprint from 25 to 58 outlets across India. These success stories highlight how FEF's hands-on approach helps entrepreneurs build stronger, more scalable and future-ready fashion businesses. Building on these success stories, Akshay Kumar, Ravi Jaipuria, Naveen Jindal,

Karan Johar, Gaurav Dalmia, Sonali Dugar, Manju Yagnik and Chairman Vagish Pathak, are now inviting the next generation of fashion entrepreneurs to take their shot at building India's next breakout fashion brand.

From apparel, footwear, accessories and couture to sustainable fashion, D2C brands and emerging lifestyle businesses, founders with scalable ideas and strong growth potential are encouraged to apply.

Commenting on the launch of Pitch To Get Rich Season 2, Akshay Kumar, Promoter & Investor, Fashion Entrepreneur Fund (FEF), said: "India's fashion entrepreneurs have the talent and ambition to build world-class brands. Through Pitch To Get Rich, we're creating opportunities for founders to access the capital, mentorship and support they need to scale. This ₹100 crore commitment is our investment in the future of Indian fashion."

## SMPP partners with KNDS to manufacture advanced loitering munitions in India

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

India's defence self-reliance, SMPP has signed a strategic teaming agreement with European land defence leader KNDS to locally manufacture state-of-the-art loitering munitions in India.

The agreement, inked today at the Eurosatory Exhibition in Paris, combines technology transfer with indigenous production under the Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives.

It aims to meet the Indian Army's urgent requirement for advanced precision strike systems capable of addressing modern battlefield challenges.

been validated in recent conflicts and will significantly strengthen the Indian Armed Forces' deep strike and precision engagement capabilities," the companies stated in a joint release.

This latest collaboration builds on the teaming agreement signed in November 2025 for the KATANA@ 155 mm precision-guided artillery munition, reflecting growing Indo-European defence cooperation.

SMPP, a leading Indian defence technology firm, specialises in ballistic protection, precision strike systems, drones, counter-drone solutions, and advanced ammunition. The company is focused on indigenous inno-



STANDING BY OUR SOLDIERS WITH ADVANCED MISSION SOLUTIONS

The partnership will cover the VELOCE and RODEUR loitering munition systems along with the ISTAR family of drones. These battle-proven platforms deliver highly effective "search-and-destroy" capability, allowing operators to locate, track, and neutralise high-value targets with exceptional accuracy. Equipped with a hybrid guidance system integrating multi-constellation GNSS and INS, the munitions ensure reliable performance across diverse terrains and contested environments.

Their fire-and-forget mode further enhances operational flexibility in complex scenarios. "These systems have

valuation and world-class manufacturing to enhance national defence preparedness.

KNDS, formed by the alliance of Nexter and Krauss-Maffei Wegmann, is a pan-European giant employing nearly 11,000 people with ₹4.4 billion revenue in 2025 and a ₹33.1 billion order backlog. The group is trusted by over 40 armies worldwide and excels in developing integrated manned-unmanned solutions and full life-cycle defence systems.

The partnership is expected to accelerate local production, reduce import dependence, and create a robust domestic supply chain for critical munitions.

## DAILY SUDOKU

7	8			9	5			
	3		8			1		
		2		5				8
				6	9	1		7
			3					
2		7	5	8				
1				9		8		
	9				5		2	
3	6						5	9

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 (19.6.26)

5	6	1	4	9	2	3	7	8
8	4	3	7	1	5	2	9	6
2	9	7	8	6	3	4	1	5
9	1	6	3	8	4	7	5	2
7	2	8	1	5	9	6	3	4
3	5	4	2	7	6	1	8	9
1	7	5	6	4	8	9	2	3
4	8	2	9	3	7	5	6	1
6	3	9	5	2	1	8	4	7

## DOUBLE CROSSWORD SATURDAY | JUNE 20, 2026

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		9					
10					11		
13	14					15	16
20	21				22		23
24					25		
		26					
27						28	
30							31

### ACROSS

- They're seen as a striking effect (5)
- Mammal, maybe a mule at the end of its tether (5)
- Choose one for mother - the best! (7)
- Hotel cabbage? (5)
- To see a short distance is not difficult (5)
- Step taken by one in prison? (5)
- Part with not a word about what happened (7)
- Sorry to have to dash back, breathless (3)
- Walked in for an introduction (4)
- Dan's silly to get Eva in a state (6)

### DOWN

- Sort of bullet that might get Carter? (6)
- Shouted support for that little bouncer Ted (6)
- Agent of intelligence? (3)
- Only part of a form? (5)
- Devilish old cigarette lighter! (7)
- A little of the mighty (4)
- Ready for a bath? (6)
- Took lots, perhaps, before finishing crime (5)
- It's difficult for a motherless dog! (5)
- Love to appear in something gripping, say (5)

- Blare noisily at Tony (5)
- Unreliable half-back in the line (6)
- Old Bill, showing a cool head on operations (4)
- An opponent, possibly of note (3)
- When there'll be no more need for longing? (7)
- Maybe it isn't bad? (5)
- Airman's awfully good fortune (5)
- Team needing a wing replacement? (5)
- A terrible overtaker! (7)
- Celebrated with a meal around opening time (5)
- Pond creatures caught in nets out West!

- Wooden boats possibly showing signs of wear (5)
- She is seen in a natural light (5)
- A late faller (5)
- In bed, a lot twisted and swollen (7)
- Tincture used in painting (6)
- Tom's bit of naval experience (6)
- The willow plant contains one (6)
- Poles always seem unimpressed! (5)
- Acoustic quality of a wrong note (4)
- Success in rowing (3)

### SOLUTION (19.6.26)

ACROSS	24, Merrited	DOWN	20, Weigh
3, M-adam	26, O-races	1, Noce	21, Fri-ar
8, Hazel	29, FO-e	2, Tenable	23, Re-entr
10, Lit up	31, Herod	4, A-jar	24, Medico
11, Con	32, Pin-nac-e	5, A-liday	25, Ton
12, Rails	34, MIMIC	6, Miser	27, Re-gal
13, Dream-e-r	35, Tit	7, Bulls	28, Co-mic
15, Dealt	36, Pa-nic	9, Zoc	30, Actor
18, Bag	37, Below	12, Reg-ales	32, P-ill
19, Par-ish	38, Could	16, Al-me-d	33, All
21, Flyaway		17, The-RL	
22, Ere		19, Pacific	
23, Rear			

## Ujjivan SFB reports 27% drop in call drop-offs post cloud shift

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (SFB) on Friday announced a strategic overhaul of its customer-engagement infrastructure, reporting a 27 per cent reduction in call drop-offs and customer-satisfaction scores above 90 per cent after migrating from legacy systems to a cloud-based contact centre.

The move signals a shift in the bank's approach to customer experience towards more integrated, data-driven engagement as banking increasingly adopts real-time, digital-first models. Serving more than 10

million customers across mass-market segments, Ujjivan has been scaling its engagement infrastructure to handle rising volumes and complexity.

The cloud platform will unify voice and outreach channels, introduce self-service and IVR-led automation at scale, centralise customer journeys, and reduce manual processes and operational friction.

The change mirrors a broader industry trend from on-premise and private-cloud setups to flexible cloud models.

Ujjivan is building an intelligent IVR system with automation on the Genesys Cloud™ platform.

## NHAI launches Rajasthan's 1st multi-lane, free flow tolling system at Daultapura toll plaza

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

State-owned NHAI on Friday said it has launched Rajasthan's first multi-lane free flow (MLFF)-based tolling system at the Daultapura toll plaza on the Delhi-Jaipur section of NH-48.

The MLFF framework introduces barrier-less tolling with minimal human intervention, enabling vehicles to pass through toll locations without stopping and ensuring seamless traffic flow.

Following the launch at Daultapura, the statement said NHAI is also planning to transit toll plazas at Shahjahanpur and Manoharpur to MLFF system, making commuting on the busy Delhi-Jaipur section



seamless and barrier-free.

The system integrates automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology with FASTag-based electronic toll collection to facilitate automated user fee collection with minimal human intervention.

Earlier, NHAI launched

MLFF-based tolling system at the Chorayasi Toll Plaza on the Surat-Bharuch section of NH-48 in Gujarat and at the Mundka-Bakkarwala Toll Plaza on the Urban Extension Road-II (UER-II) in Delhi.

By enabling zero waiting time and uninterrupted vehicular movement,

MLFF has helped commuters to save time, enhance fuel efficiency as well as reduce vehicular emission at the toll location, the statement said.

For a seamless MLFF experience, National Highway users are required to maintain sufficient balance in their FASTag accounts.

In case of scenarios such as insufficient FASTag balance, invalid or non-functional FASTag, users are issued an electronic notice (E-Notice) for non-payment of user fee. Such users are required to pay normal user fee within 72 hours of the E-Notice.

In case of non-compliance after 72 hours, the user fee will be charged at twice the normal rate of the vehicle category.



### BRIEFLY

#### Neymar ruled out of Brazil's second match due to injury



Neymar has been ruled out of Brazil's second World Cup match because of a lingering calf injury. The Brazilian soccer confederation said Thursday that Neymar wasn't going to travel with the rest of the squad for Friday's match against Haiti in Philadelphia.

"He will remain in New Jersey to optimise the final phase of his recovery process," the confederation said in a statement. The Brazilian confederation said the 34-year-old Santos player will continue his recovery at the facilities of the team's hotel. Neymar was back on the training field for the first time on Tuesday, doing physical conditioning exercises. He rejoined his teammates for parts of the session on Wednesday, being applauded by them after getting on the field. Neymar has yet to practice in full sessions with the rest of the team since reporting to Brazil's squad while nursing an injured right leg.

Looking to play in his fourth World Cup, Neymar had undergone tests on his right calf on Monday to determine the progress of the injury that he sustained while playing with Santos on May 17. The five-time World Cup champions began their tournament with a 1-1 draw against Morocco on Saturday in Group C. (AP)

#### South Africa keeps hopes alive with draw against Czech Republic



JAMES ROBSON ■ Atlanta

Teboho Mokoena started the game with tears in his eyes and finished it with a smile on his face after converting a second-half penalty in South Africa's 1-1 draw with the Czech Republic on Thursday at the World Cup.

Thapelo Maseko's long range shot late in the match caught the hand of Czech opponent Pavel Sulc in the area.

Mokoena, who was shown on camera with tears rolling down his cheeks during the pre-game national anthem, stepped up to the penalty spot and sent his shot low past Czech Republic goalkeeper Matej Kovar in the 83rd minute.

The South Africa midfielder said he was overwhelmed before kick off, thinking about his late grandfather.

"I know, wherever he is, he would be proud of me," Mokoena said. "I just felt his presence in that moment. I thought

if he was here, he would be proud of me because I know he believed in me when nobody believed in me." Michal Sadilek had given the Czechs the lead in the sixth minute at Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Alexandr Sojka played in Sadilek and he slid a shot past goalkeeper Ronwen Williams. Both teams lost their opening matches, and both knew another setback would seriously hinder their chances of reaching the round of 32.

South Africa faced some strong criticism following its 2-0 loss to co-host Mexico, which raised the prospect of the country extending its run of

never having advanced to the knockout phase of a World Cup - even as host in 2010.

"If we go on like that and if we can make another performance like today I think we have a chance to go in the second round,"

South Africa coach Hugo Broos said.

South Africa will next face South Korea on Wednesday in Group A, but will be without Mokoena, who is suspended after picking up his second yellow card of the tournament.

The Czechs lost to South Korea 2-1 in their opening match. (AP)

#### India eyes return of F1 by 2030: FMSCI president



Efforts are on to bring Formula 1 back to India by 2030, and a round of the World Rally Championship (WRC) and MotoGP by 2028, said FMSCI President Arindam Ghosh, after a meeting with the Sports Ministry in Delhi.

Earlier in March, Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya had made a push to revive Formula One in the country, holding a meeting with the Federation of Motor Sports Clubs of India (FMSCI) to discuss a framework that would create a "strong pipeline" of drivers and technicians.

Now, at the FMSCI Annual Awards function, Ghosh said "the meeting with Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Minister of State Raksha Khadse, senior officials and potential stakeholders in New Delhi, focused primarily on bringing F1, MotoGP and a round of the WRC to India." (PTI)



#### David propels Canada to its first World Cup win

ANNE M PETERSON ■ Vancouver

Jonathan David scored three goals and Canada won its first World Cup match while all but securing a spot in the knockout round with a 6-0 victory over Qatar on Thursday.

Qatar was reduced to nine players because of red cards in the chaotic match.

Cyle Larin scored his second goal of the tournament on a rebound in the 16th minute. David doubled the lead with a right-footed volley in the 29th, for his first goal in the run of play in more than a year.

Canada made it 3-0 in first-half stoppage time when David scored in a scramble in front of the net off a shot that caromed off the crossbar.

Nathan Saliba, who came in as a substitute for Kone, scored on a free kick in the 64th to make it 4-0. Mohamed Manai deflected a shot past his goalkeeper for an own goal in the 75th. David completed the



hat trick in stoppage time, joining Argentina's Lionel Messi as the only players with three goals in a match in this World Cup.

Qatar scored a stoppage-time goal to earn a surprising 1-1 draw with Group B favorite Switzerland in its opener. (AP)

#### Awer Mabil one of refugees playing in the World Cup



JANIE MCCAULEY ■ Alameda (US)

Awer Mabil's face quickly turned to pure joy. He beamed and fought his emotions, a reaction Australia's veteran forward hardly could have seen coming.

It had nothing to do with a soccer result, either. But rather a reflection that took him back to his tumultuous youth as a refugee and how some good fortune landed him in Australia for a new start in life.

Mabil looked into the audience during his media conference after training Tuesday and discovered a familiar face in David Basheer, the longtime commentator on Australia's SBS network who had just offered a question days ahead of the Soccerroos' World Cup matchup against the United States on Friday in Seattle.

"I grew up watching you," Mabil said, so taken aback that he asked Basheer to repeat himself. (AP)

#### Lionel Messi's family pleads for 'humanity'



DEBORA REY ■ Dallas

Lionel Messi's father is undergoing medical treatment for an undisclosed illness and his family asked the media for "humanity" on Thursday amid rumors about Jorge Messi's health while his son competes at the World Cup.

The family did not specify the illness that the 68-year-old Jorge Messi is suffering from.

"Jorge is going through a health situation," the Messi family said in a statement. "He is currently under medical observation, recovering and progressing favorably within his current condition." (AP)

#### Switzerland beats Bosnia-Herzegovina 4-1 at World Cup

GREG BEACHAM ■ Inglewood (US)

Substitute Johan Manzambi scored his first World Cup goal on an outstanding volley in the 74th minute, and Switzerland erupted late for a 4-1 victory over Bosnia-Herzegovina on Thursday

Ruben Vargas scored in the 84th minute for the Swiss shortly after Tarik Muharemovic was sent off for a dangerous tackle, leaving Bosnia with 10 men.

Manzambi scored again in the 90th on a pass from Vargas, and captain Granit Xhaka converted from the penalty spot with the final kick of the game in stoppage time.

Ermin Mahmic scored in second-half injury time for Bosnia, which still has a legitimate chance of reaching the knockout stage of only its second World Cup after hanging with higher-ranked Switzerland deep into the second half.



Switzerland followed up its disappointing 1-1 draw with Qatar last week by largely dominating play against the momentum-laden Dragons, who were unbeaten in

their last nine competitive matches. But the Swiss couldn't break through until a moment of brilliance from Manzambi, a 20-year-old Geneva native who plays for

German club Freiburg - and then Muharemovic's red card changed the match.

Manzambi scored three minutes after coming on for standout winger Dan Ndoye. Manzambi jumped and connected perfectly on Amar Memic's attempted clearing header, setting off a wild celebration in the nervous Swiss section of SoFi Stadium.

Bosnia was backed by a raucous cheering section with tens of thousands of fans in the crowd of 70,026 celebrating their nation's second World Cup appearance. The Dragons had less possession and fewer chances, yet every good moment was greeted by roars. (AP)

#### India to send 125-130 athletes to CWG: Iyer



PHILEM DIPAK SINGH ■ New Delhi

India will be represented by 125 to 130 athletes covering eight able-bodied and four para sports at the scaled-down Glasgow Commonwealth Games in July-August, Indian Olympic Association (IOA) CEO Raghuram Iyer said on Friday while asserting that the body would steer clear of any selection disputes.

The 2026 CWG - scheduled from July 23 to August 2 - will feature just 10 able-bodied and six para sports to ensure a cost-effective event. Glasgow stepped in as the host city after the Australian state of Victoria pulled out due to escalating costs.

"We will have a total of 125-130 participants, athletes. One third of the number of athletes will be the support staff," IOA CEO Raghuram Iyer told PTI.

"We will compete in eight able-bodied and four para sports," he said on the sidelines of the second edition of

the IOA Athletes Forum here.

The sports programme for the Glasgow CWG comprises athletics and para athletics, swimming and para swimming, 3x3 basketball and wheelchair 3x3 basketball, bowls and para bowls, boxing, track cycling and para track cycling, gymnastics, judo, netball, and weightlifting and para powerlifting.

The 2022 CWG in Birmingham had featured 19 able-bodied and eight para sports, and India had sent 208 athletes, winning 61 medals (22 gold, 16 silver, 23 bronze) to finish fourth in the final standings. The IOA is expected to announce the full contingent after June 23 which is the deadline for sending the list of participants to the Glasgow Games organisers.

"The teams have been selected. All the NSFs have sent us the names. The uniforms and the ceremonial dress (for the contingent members) are being planned. All the logistics are being planned," Iyer said. (PTI)

#### Macau Open: Ashmita storms into semifinals, Anmol out

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Macau

Indian shuttler Ashmita Chaliha continued her impressive comeback from injury, defeating Korea's Kim Min Sun in straight games to enter the women's singles semifinals, but compatriot Anmol Kharb bowed out after a quarterfinal defeat at the Macau Open Super 300 tournament here on Friday.

The 26-year-old from Assam, who returned to competition in May after a three-month injury layoff, took 37 minutes to see off world No.99 Kim 21-16 21-18 to continue her impressive run.

It is her first semifinal appearance in a BWF tour event this year. She had registered quarterfinal finishes at the China Masters Super 100 and Malaysia Masters super 500 events since returning to the court.

World No. 63 Ashmita, who had to undergo surgery and an extensive rehabilitation period after suffering



a medial meniscus tear in her right knee during the Korea Open, will now face Korea's Park Ga Eun for a place in the final.

In the other match, world No. 51 Anmol, however, failed to capitalise on a strong start, going down 21-14 15-21 13-21 to fourth seed Han Qian Xi, ranked 36th in the world, in a 60-minute clash.

#### Dominant Indian women eye Chile scalp en-route FIH Nations Cup final

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Auckland

Dominant so far in the tournament, a confident India will look to continue in the same vein and upstage a lower-ranked Chile in the semifinals of the FIH Nations Cup here on Saturday in their pursuit of reclaiming their place in the elite FIH Pro League.

India have literally muscled their way to the semifinals from Pool A with three wins from as many games, topping the group with nine points ahead of the USA. Hosts New Zealand, on the other hand, topped Pool B with an all-win record and will take on the USA in the other semifinal.

India are determined to win the FIH Nations Cup to earn their place back in next season's elite FIH Pro League, from which they were relegated last year. The Indian women's team was relegated from the elite FIH Pro League to the



second-tier FIH Hockey Nations Cup following its last-place finish in the 2024-25 season, after managing only 10 points from 16 matches.

The winner of the eight-nation FIH Nations Cup will progress to next year's FIH Pro League.

Going by rankings and current form, India will definitely start as favourites against Chile.

In red-hot form, India are currently ranked ninth in the world, while Chile are placed 13th, but rankings hardly matter in modern-day hockey. But going into the semifinal, India's chief coach Sjoerd Marjine should have a few concerns as his side had to dig deep to prevail over 17th-ranked Uruguay in their last pool match.



### West Indies beats Scotland by 7 runs to stay unbeaten: T20 WC

EDDIE PELLASAP ■ Leeds

The West Indies overcame Scotland by seven runs and stayed unbeaten at the Women's Twenty20 World Cup after a madcap match at Headingley. Scotland needed 154 to win, a record chase, and was in it at 132-5 with two overs left. Then medium-paceer Aaliyah Alleyne came to the West Indies' rescue.

She took three wickets in the 19th over, including Darcey Carter on 59. Scotland required 17 off the last over and was all out on the last ball for 146 on Thursday.

Only the West Indies and

Fraser and Carter then gave Scotland a brilliant flying start to the chase.



England were two for two in Group 2, with the top two making the semifinals. Scotland had the West Indies on the ropes in both innings. Tight bowling and fielding reduced the West Indies to 124-6 after 18

overs. But another veteran, Stafanie Taylor, who missed the West Indies' opening win over defending champion New Zealand, rescued the batting effort. Her unbeaten 47 off 19 balls with 34

runs in boundaries lifted her side to a competitive 153-6 total.

West Indies added 29 off the last two overs, 26 by Taylor. Katherine Fraser starred in the field for Scotland with two wickets, including bowling Hayley Matthews, a leaping catch on the boundary, and a run out of Shemaine Campbelle on 36. Fraser and Carter then gave Scotland a brilliant flying start to the chase. But West Indies fought back with four wickets in 13 balls into the eighth over, and Scotland's run rate dropped below the required run rate for the first time.



### Roadmap for 2027 World Cup is ongoing process: BCCI secretary

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ New Delhi

The deliberations on India's roadmap for the 2027 World Cup are "not meant for public consumption", BCCI secretary Devajit Saikia said in an interview to PTI, refusing to be drawn into any discussion on individual players and their much-speculated future in the team.

Veterans Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli dominate the chatter whenever there is any talk around the Indian team's 2027 global campaign but Saikia is categorical that "strategic discussions in the board room" are best left inside.

While both former skippers are determined to play the mega-event, chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar and head coach Gautam Gambhir have been non-committal on whether the squad will have space for the white-ball legends. Asked if the BCCI has had any internal conversations on the matter, Saikia said all stakeholders are aligned in their views in what is essentially an ongoing process.

"We have a very well-knit team and a lot of experts. All stakeholders are taken on board," Saikia told PTI during an exclusive interaction.

### India concede two goals against Germany in FIH Pro League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rotterdam

India inexplicably conceded two late goals to lose to reigning world champions Germany 1-2 in their FIH Pro League match here on Thursday. The two sides were goalless at the half time before Jugraj Singh struck from a penalty corner in the 38th minute to give India the lead. It looked like India would notch

a rare back-to-back win against the Germans who, however, equalised four minutes from the final hooter through a penalty corner conversion by Justus Weigand (56th). The world champions then snatched a win from the jaws of defeat with Jakob Brilla (60th) scoring from yet another penalty corner with just a few seconds left in the match.

The match, though, was dull and drab for most part. India earned three penalty

corners as against five by the Germans.

India had stunned Germany 3-1 on Wednesday in a memorable win that coincided with Manpreet Singh becoming the country's most-capped player. The midfield stalwart made his 413th appearance, surpassing former captain and current Hockey India president Dilip Tirkey's tally of 412 matches. India had lost to Olympic champions the Netherlands 2-3 on June 14.

### Vaibhav can revive Test cricket: Srikanth

SUMAN RAY ■ Chennai

Teenage batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi could trigger a "revival of Test cricket" if he fulfils his potential in the longest format, said former India captain Krishnamachari Srikanth, urging fans and experts to stop over-analysing the youngster's performances.

Riding on his IPL exploits, Sooryavanshi has earned his maiden call-up in the Indian T20 set-up. The teenager has been picked for the seven-match tour of Ireland and England, comprising two games against Ireland and five against England, beginning in Belfast on June 26.

Srikanth said the 15-year-old possesses a rare ability to attract audiences and should be allowed to develop naturally without being burdened by expectations.

"What I like about Vaibhav Sooryavanshi is he has an appetite to score runs and an appetite to dominate. At the same time, he could stay there and play also," Srikanth told PTI at his residence here.

"If he progresses beyond T20 cricket to one-day cricket, and then to Test cricket, and if he clicks in Test cricket, which he will, I am sure then you will see a revival of Test cricket. "You need that kind of cricketer today. People switch on the TV just to watch Sooryavanshi. I switch on the TV to watch Sooryavanshi. That is the aura he has created around himself. And he is something amazing."

Don't worry about what people talk, just play your natural game: Srikanth cautioned against "too much assessment, scrutiny and advice" after the youngster's modest returns on the recent India A tour of Sri Lanka. "Vaibhav, don't worry about what people talk about you, just play your



natural game," the former selection committee chairman said. "In one series, you don't judge a person. Come on. That happens. Poor boy. It doesn't matter. You just give him time. Don't be in a hurry. In the IPL, he was just amazing. In his second year in the IPL, he won all the awards beating all the top cricketers in the world. "I think he is amazing. He has amazing shot making capability, an amazing eye, and amazing reflexes. I think that boy is tremendous for India's future."

He is the future of Indian cricket, let's mould him beautifully: Srikanth said Sooryavanshi should be nurtured carefully rather than burdened with expectations. "That boy needs a lot of time. You give him lot of encouragement. He is a guy who can win matches single-handed. So, I believe that he should be given a very, very, very long rope," the former India opener said.

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**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
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Deputy Chief Materials Manager, N.R., Jagadhani Workshop-135002, for and on behalf of the President of India invites through e-procurement system for the supply of the following items:-

S.N.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Quantity	Closing Date
1.	61265237A	500 KVA, 750Volt, 3 Phase brushless Alternator	10 Nos.	16 July 2026

Note: -1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) for details.  
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1	SOLAN	BALBIR SINGH	7911742	2	10,15,727.13	99.63

For more details/account wise information borrowers/interested bidders may contact respective branches and for participating in the auction

HIMACHAL PRADESH | 20.06.2026

Sd/- Authorized Officer, CSB Bank

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
Open Tender Notice no. ETRU-T-07-2026-27

Open tender through E-tendering is invited by Sr. Divisional Electrical Engineer/TRD, Northern Railway, Ambala from the willing Contractors for following work on railway website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in) up to 15:00 hrs on the date of closing shown against the work and will be opened thereafter:

S. N.	Open Tender No.	Name of work	Date of Closing/Opening	Approx. Cost.	Earnest Money	Completion period	Validity period	Cost of tender form
1	ETRU-T-07-2026-27	Provision of 1600 Amp Single Pole Isolator in place of 800 Amp Single Pole Isolator in Hindon Cabin to Sanethwal section over Ambala division.	09.07.2026	₹ 1,33,68,240.40/-	₹ 2,67,400/-	08 Months	60 Days	NIL for downloading from IREPS portal, Rs. 5,000/- For obtaining hard copy from Sr. DEE/TRD/UMB office.

1. Tenderer(s) are required to upload scanned copies of all related eligibility documents including PAN/GSTIN as per conditions. 2. Tenderer(s) should have Class-III Digital Signature Certificate to participate in E-Tendering of Works Tenders. 3. All Taxes i.e. GST, BOCWW, Income tax etc. are applicable as per extant rule. 4. In the work, the condition of Similar Nature Work is applicable and is as, Design, supply, erection, testing & commissioning of 50Hz, single phase 25 KV AC OHE". 5. For details, please log on IREPS website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in). No. ETRU-T-07-2026-27 Dated : 17.06.2026

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Chief Minister, Haryana

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Health & Ayush Minister, Haryana

June 21, 2026 | 6 AM  
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