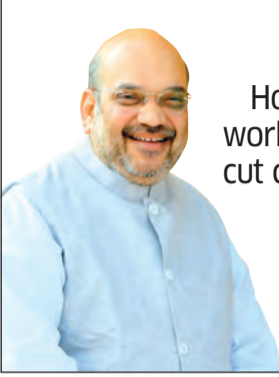


**PAGE 7
NATION**

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



**PAGE 10
LAW & JUSTICE**

SC refuses urgent hearing on NEET-UG pleas



PAGE 11: BUSINESS

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



**PAGE 13
GLOBAL**

Italy slams Trump over claims of Meloni begging for photo



**PAGE 16
SPORTS**

Vaibhav can revive Test cricket: Srikanth



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.

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

The controversy underscores the challenges faced by



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

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.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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 Technology Act to block an



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.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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 suspects

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.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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 to 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 Police, the promoters

created fake Indo-Pacific trade deal Indo - US trade deal worth ₹83,000 crore and "Q Clearance Bag", which is signed by US President from a printing Press in East Delhi. The cheated investors have alleged that the promoters who got bail recently conducted a Press conference in Delhi on June 5 and claimed that Delhi Police Commissioner has given them clean chit. Meanwhile, cheated investors said that they will approach Kerala High Court seeking CBI probe.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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.

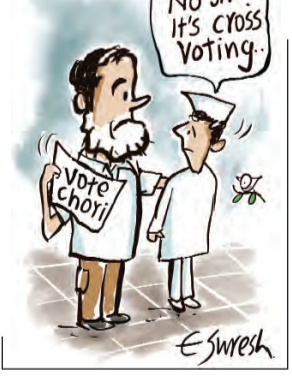
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office did not immediately comment. Military spokesman Brig Gen. Effie Defrin said the military has not received different instructions from the Government. He said Israeli forces were operating in a "forward defence zone" and will continue doing so.

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.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander

Jharkhand: NDA-backed Nathwani won the RS seat.



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 submitting 20



TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee addressing the media in New Delhi

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.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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

GREATER BENGALURU AUTHORITY

CONTINUED ON >> P4

THE OTHER SIDE

Suicidal greed- the new model?



Paritosh Kimothi

One often considers focusing on 'positivity' but the things that should not be, remain overwhelming with grander plans for Uttarakhand. Some time ago, incidents involving tourists from Haryana resulted in some disturbance and much ado especially on social media. This was followed more recently by the altercation between locals and Sikh visitors in Karnprayag with the visitors using swords on the locals. This has again led to heightened differences in opinion among people of the States with opinions being thrown about as usual on social media. No doubt, the visitors are guilty of misconduct in many instances but then are the locals blameless? For example, vehicles from some States are notorious for violating the rules especially on mountain roads. But then overtaking from the wrong side and

driving improperly in violation of the rules is common in Dehradun and other parts of the State. It is not uncommon for native road users to treat traffic with disdain for the rules. In the north eastern States, from where clips of traffic discipline and civic sense go viral on social media, it is the locals who strictly follow the rules and civic sense they expect the visitors to follow. Can the same be said about us?

However, strictly implementing the law and hammering civic sense into the minds of citizens even in the so-called education hub of Dehradun is something that requires thoughtful effort. It is much easier to cut trees, excavate the mountainsides and build more roads so that the scope for exacerbating the problem is enhanced. This way, one can continue the endless rounds of meetings and workshops, drafting of proposals for new projects to solve the problems which the earlier projects could not tackle and of course seek more funds for much needed development. The NITI Aayog has already pointed at increasing evidence that springs are drying up or their discharge is reducing throughout the Indian Himalayan region. Studies estimate that nearly half of the perennial springs have

already dried up or have become seasonal and tens of thousands of villages are currently facing acute shortage of water for drinking and domestic use. Interestingly, Uttarakhand wants to stall migration from the mountains and also increase tourist numbers but appears to be indulging in activities that are not exactly bolstering the water resources. Amidst growing climatic uncertainties raising insecurities and scope for disasters, one would have considered it common sense to preserve and nourish the State's main resource- the environment. The ground reality is different. For a person from the NCR or some metro city, the mountains of Uttarakhand may appear beautiful and environmentally rich- which they still are. However, anyone who has lived or even frequented these mountains for even a few decades will tell the difference made by actions like unplanned, unnecessary construction and environmental degradation. It is almost as if after substantial damage to the provisional capital Dehradun, the authorities are focusing on turning the mountain towns into cities as seen in the plains, albeit with different weather and bigger challenges. We are working to change the

character of the State for bringing in more tourists instead of providing a refreshing change to tourists.

Amid the abundance of things which challenge hope, the State government should be credited when it deserves it. The Uttarakhand Science, Technology and Innovation Policy recently introduced by the State government could be a gamechanger. One thinks that if this policy had been implemented even a decade ago, many of the changes and developments visible or planned in the State at present would have been rejected at the proposal stage or would have been shaped in a different manner. The policy brings some hope along with the challenges of reorienting the attitude and work of a rigid government machinery. However, the most viable option for dealing with the serious challenges that face us lies in the practical use of traditional knowledge along with modern science and technology. In the continued absence of such an approach, the suicidal greed for so-called development is only likely to fuel the downward spiral. It is not too late yet but concrete action cannot be delayed further.

Vending zone scheme in abeyance: Vendors play cat & mouse with MCD

ANJALI YADAV ■ Dehradun

The Municipal Corporation of Dehradun (MCD) continues to conduct anti-encroachment drives twice or thrice a week across the busy market areas, targeting roadside vendors, cobblers and shopkeepers who extend their setups onto footpaths and roads. During these regular drives, municipal teams remove encroachments and impose penalties of around Rs 500 on each encroacher. If the vendors are unable to pay the fine immediately, their carts, stalls and goods are seized and taken to the municipal premises. The items are later released once the Challan is cleared.

However, vendors, undaunted, return to the same locations shortly after the enforcement action, often the same day, resuming their business as usual. This recurring cycle has raised questions about the effectiveness of the ongoing enforcement operation.

In February, the Municipal Corporation had announced plans to develop designated vending zones for street vendors, identifying land for around 25 such zones. The proposal also included allocating nearly 50 per cent of the space for parking to help reduce traffic congestion.

Work on the project reportedly began earlier this year, but the vending zones have yet to become operational.

Commenting on the concerns over repeated encroachments proving ineffectual, Dehradun municipal commissioner Alok Kumar Pandey said that the corporation is reviewing the progress of the vending zone project and working towards a permanent solution. "I have sought the file related to the vending zones today to review the remaining work. We are looking into the issue

and will ensure that a permanent solution is implemented at the earliest," Pandey said. He maintained that the opening of the vending zones would provide a long-term solution to the repeated encroachment issue and help streamline street-vending activities across the city.



STF arrests Muzaffarnagar pharma store operator in Tramadol smuggling case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Uttarakhand police's Special Task Force has arrested a pharmacy operator of Muzaffarnagar (Uttar Pradesh) for supplying banned Tramadol capsules in the State. The arrested individual has been identified as Sachin Manihail, the son of Suresh and a resident of Janakpuri, Muzaffarnagar, UP. He operates the Shri Siddhbal Pharma Store. This arrest represents a significant development in a case initiated at the Manglaur police station in Haridwar on May 11, 2026, after a joint operation by the STF/ANTF team and local police, which recovered 18,000 prohibited Tramadol capsules. A FIR was subsequently registered.

Senior superintendent of police, STF, Ajai Singh, stated

that the investigation, supervised by Deputy SP Parvez Ali and conducted by inspector Yadendra Singh Bajwa, revealed that Manihail was procuring banned Tramadol capsules from various pharmaceutical companies and supplying them throughout Uttarakhand via local contacts in Dehradun and Haridwar. The accused acquired the banned Tramadol capsules from different sources and sold them at significantly inflated prices, generating illegal profits.

Documents obtained during the investigation indicated that



between January and May 2026, Manihail spent approximately Rs 35 lakh on purchasing Tramadol capsules from a single pharmaceutical company.

During questioning, Manihail confessed to purchasing and distributing the banned capsules. He was arrested following

proper legal procedures. Authorities are now investigating his illegally acquired assets and gathering information about his connections and networks involved in this case. Singh added that the role of other individuals associated with this operation is also under investigation. Singh urged the public to avoid drugs and refrain from engaging in narcotics smuggling out of greed. He encouraged anyone with information about drug trafficking to contact the nearest police station or reach out to the STF/ANTF Uttarakhand at 0135-2656202 or 9412029536.

IN BRIEF

UCO Bank's Doon office hosts awareness camp

DEHRADUN: A public awareness camp was organised by the UCO Bank zonal office, Dehradun under the aegis of Reserve Bank of India at UCO Bank branch, Doiwala on Friday to inform the general public about the KYC and other Government social security schemes. More than 60 people participated in this camp. During the event, the regional director, RBI, Arvind Kumar shared important information about Re-KYC with all the attendees. He said that with the completion of almost 10 years of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, it is now imperative to complete the re-KYC process in all the accounts opened in all the banks. "The process is absolutely free of cost," he informed. Senior officers of several banks were present at the camp.

UPES hosts 'Champions League' for specially abled athletes

DEHRADUN: The two-day tournament involving specially abled sportspersons concluded at the Bidholi Campus Cricket Ground of UPES. The organisers said that the tournament served as a platform to celebrate the abilities, aspirations, and achievements of specially abled sportspersons while encouraging greater participation in competitive sports. The team Mountain Strikers emerged as champions following a closely contested finish with the Himalayan Fighters. The pro vice chancellor (Operations and Growth Initiatives) and registrar, UPES, Manish Madan said that through such initiatives, they aim not only to provide a platform for specially abled athletes to showcase their abilities, but also to support their personal and professional growth. The tournament was organised by the UPES CSR team with support from the university's sports department, administration, infirmary team, ground staff, volunteers and members of the UPES community.

Dehradun reports 21 dengue cases till June 18

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Dehradun district has reported 21 dengue cases so far this year till June 18, with zero fatalities. Additional chief medical officer and district surveillance officer Dr Avinash Khanna said 12 of these cases are from Dehradun district, while nine patients belong to other States/districts. Of the 21 cases, 16 have recovered and five remain active. Three active patients are admitted at Himalayan Hospital, one at Graphic Era Hospital and one at Shri Mahant Indires Hospital.

Khanna said dengue cases are usually reported from July onwards, but seeing cases in June this year is a matter of concern. The district Health department has stepped up to prevent dengue cases.

To combat this, the Health department has deployed 100 volunteers in Dehradun and 40 in Rishikesh. These volunteers are conducting dengue awareness surveys and source reduction activities in designated wards. Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) workers are also engaged in these activities. They inspect homes to check for any larvae in collected water and if larvae are found, they immediately dispose of the water while raising awareness about dengue prevention measures among residents.

Khanna said that if volunteers or ASHA workers

identify areas with a high number of dengue cases, a major intervention plan will be implemented. This includes inspecting other homes in the vicinity to ensure that no individuals are exhibiting symptoms of dengue. Additionally, the municipal corporation of Dehradun will be notified so that larvicide treatment and fogging activities can take place in neighbouring houses and surroundings.

He noted that last year, there were 15 to 20 hotspot areas where dengue cases were prevalent and the health department is currently focusing more on these areas. Khanna urged residents to prevent dengue outbreaks by ensuring that no water accumulates in their surroundings, maintaining hygiene in any coolers and avoiding the collection of water in open containers.

He added that common symptoms of dengue include fever (with or without rashes), body pain and eye pain. People should consult qualified doctors immediately if they notice any of these symptoms. Furthermore, Khanna said that mosquito nets and dengue testing kits have been supplied to government hospitals in Dehradun district and necessary directions have been issued to private hospitals, government hospitals and blood banks.

The Pioneer CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

I have changed my wife name from GEETA RAANI to GEETA DEVI for all purposes. IC/ARMY No-14557596H RANK - HAY JITNEDRA SINGH Resident of Mangal Vihar (near Vidya Vihar Academy) Pandawala, Jwalapur, Haridwar (Uttarakhand)

I, Santoshi Devi, spouse of No 4089566Y Rank Hav Name Yogendra Singh resident of Villi-Sugi, PO- Karchhuna, Teh- Pokhri, Distt- Chamoli, Uttarakhand, PIN-246429 have changed my name from SANTOSHI DEVI to SANTOSHI NEGI vide affidavit dated 19 Jun 2026 before court Dehradun

The general public is hereby informed that I Rajesh Nainwal, Karbarigrant, Dehradun, Ukd, intend to cancel the birth certificate of my son Priyanshu Nainwal, issued by Nagar Nigam Dehradun vide Registration No. B20050705864, due to personal reasons. If any person has any objection regarding above, the same may be submitted in writing to Nagar Nigam Dehradun within seven days of this publication.

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भारतीय स्टेट बैंक State Bank of India Branch : RASMECCC, Haldwani (Code No. 17631)

NOTICE TO BORROWER Registered Post with A/D

To,
1. Mr. Naresh Singh Rautela
S/o Mr Govind Singh Rautela B-S/4, Deendayal Upadhaya Complex Harinagar Clock Tower New Delhi 110064
2. Mr. Naresh Singh Rautela
S/O Mr Govind Singh Rautela Flat 102, 1st Floor M Cube Apartment Mahananda Tower Royal Enclave Kamalaganja Narsingh Talla, Girja Vihar Kaladhungi Road, Haldwani 263139

Date: 02.05.2026

Sub: Notice u/s 13(2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (hereinafter called 'Act')

Dear Sir(s),
At your request, you have been granted by the Bank, through its Kaladhungi Road Branch from time to time, various credit facilities by way of financial assistance against various assets creating security interest in favour of the Bank. The relevant particulars of the said credit facilities and the security agreement(s)/document(s) executed by you are stated in Schedule 'A' and 'B' respectively excluding pledge of movables. You have availed the financial assistance with an undertaking for repayment of the said financial assistance in terms of the said agreement(s)/document(s).
2. You have also created hypothecation creating security interest in favour of the Bank. The documents relating to such hypothecation are also stated in Schedule 'B'.
3. The relevant particulars of the secured assets are specifically stated in Schedule 'C'.
4. You have also acknowledged subsistence of the liability in respect of the aforesaid credit facilities by executing confirmation of balances and revival letters and other documents from time to time. The operation of and conduct of the above said financial assistance/credit facilities have become irregular and the debt has been classified as Non-Performing Assets on 30.04.2026 in accordance with the directives/guidelines relating to asset classifications issued by the Reserve Bank of India consequent to the default committed by you in repayment of principal debt and interest thereon.
5. The said financial assistance is also secured by the personal guarantee/NA. Despite repeated requests, you have failed and neglected to repay the said dues / outstanding liabilities.
6. Therefore, the Bank hereby calls upon you u/s 13(2) of the said Act by issuing this notice to discharge in full your liabilities stated hereunder to the Bank within 60 days from the date of this notice. Your outstanding liabilities (in aggregate) due and owing to the Banks is the sum of **Rs. 28,91,752.98/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakhs Ninety One Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty two and Paise Ninety eight only)** as on 02.05.2026. You are also liable to pay future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, costs, charges, etc.
7. If you fail to repay to the Bank the aforesaid sum **Rs. 28,91,752.98/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakhs Ninety One Thousand Seven Hundred Fifty two and Paise Ninety eight only)** as on 02.05.2026 with further interest and incidental expenses, costs as stated above in terms of this notice u/s 13(2) of the Act, the Bank will exercise all or any of the rights detailed under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 and under other applicable provisions of the said Act.
8. You are also put on notice that in terms of Sub-Section 13 of Section 13 you shall not transfer by sale, lease or otherwise the said secured assets detailed in Schedule 'C' of this notice without obtaining written consent of the Bank.
9. We invite your attention to the provisions of sub section (8) of section 13 of the SARFAESI Act which speaks about the time available to borrower/guarantor to redeem the secured assets.
10. The Bank reserves its rights to call upon you to repay the liabilities that may arise under the outstanding Bills Discounted, Bank Guarantees and Letter of Credit issued and established on your behalf as well as—other contingent liabilities.
11. This notice is without prejudice to the Bank's right to initiate such other actions or legal proceedings as it deems necessary under any other applicable provisions of Law.

SCHEDULE 'A'

S. No.	Nature of Facility	Outstanding inclusive of interest as on 02.05.2026	Unapplied/ Accrued interest wft dt of irregularity	Penal Interest (Simple) wft dt of irregularity	Cost/ Charges incurred by Bank
1.	HOME LOAN ACC NO 38186728741	26,24,052.72/-	73,231/-	12/-	Recovery Charges due for Resolution Agent to be advised separately.
2.	SURAKSHA ACC NO 38235484630	1,03,918.26/-	962/-	0/-	Recovery Charges due for Resolution Agent to be advised separately.
3.	INSTA HOME TOP UP ACC NO 40289133045	88,144/-	1,433/-	0/-	Recovery Charges due for Resolution Agent to be advised separately.
Total. Amt in Rs.		28,16,114.98/-	75,626/-	12/-	Recovery Charges due for Resolution Agent to be advised separately.

SCHEDULE 'B'

List of Documents (Details of Security Documents including all supplementary documents & Documents evidencing creation of hypothecation)

S. No.	Name of the Document	Nature of Security	Date of Execution	Amount Secured (Rs.)
1.	MOST IMPORTANT TERMS AND CONDITIONS -ARRANGEMENT LETTER	-	14.01.2019	28,56,977/-
2.	AGREEMENT TO MORTGAGE	-	14.01.2019	28,56,977/-
3.	ARRANGEMENT LETTER	Online availed Loan	13.07.2021	1,37,000/-

SCHEDULE 'C'

Part-1
Hypothecation of stocks, receivables(stock) and machinery.
Part - II
(Equitable Mortgage of Immoveable properties)
Flat No 102, 1st Floor Khasra no 46/2 madhey registered in sale deed dated 14.01.2019, measuring total 1100 sq feet or 102.33 sq m situated at M Cube Apartments, Mahananda Tower, Royal Enclave, Kamalaganja Nar Singh Talla, Girja Vihar, Kaladhungi Road, Haldwani Nainital District, Uttarakhand.
The boundaries are as under:
East: Property of Seller
West: 25 feet road
North: Property of Seller
South: Property of Seller
Date: 02.05.2026.
Place: HALDWANI
(Authorized Officer)

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Haridwar land scam- Dhamai govt takes stern action on two IAS officers

Recommendation of termination made for IAS officer Varun Chaudhary, former DM Karmendra Singh faces major punishment

Charges framed against 10 persons including senior officers of MCH, following vigilance inquiry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

In one of the strictest actions against corruption in the history of the State, the Pushkar Singh Dhamai government has recommended immediate dismissal from service of Indian Administrative Services (IAS) officer and the then municipal

commissioner of Haridwar Municipal Corporation (MCH) Varun Chaudhary in the land purchase scam, 2024. The government has also recommended major punishment to the then dis-

trict magistrate of Haridwar Karmendra Singh for showing dereliction of duties in this case. The State government has made these recommendations on the order of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhamai against the two IAS officers to the de-

Instructions have also been given to register a censure entry against the then sub divisional magistrate (SDM) of Haridwar Ajayveer Singh and to stop his three annual salary increments.

In the land purchase scam of the MCH, the government has ordered filing of charges against 10 persons including the then municipal commissioner Varun Chaudhary. A detailed vigilance investigation has found prima facie evidence of criminal conspiracy and fraudulent land purchases, resulting in financial loss to the Municipal Corporation.

The charges have been framed on the recommendation of the State Vigilance Committee, chaired by the chief secretary and approved by CM Dhamai. Apart from IAS Chaudhary, charges have been registered against the then assistant municipal

commissioner Ravindra Kumar Dayal, the then tax superintendent Laxmikant Bhatt, the then assistant engineer Anand Singh Mishran, clerk Vedpal and cartographer Dinesh Kandpal. Cases have also been registered against the seller of the land and three others involved in the deal.

In his statement, CM Dhamai categorically stated that there will be no compromise at any level in corruption cases. He reiterated that transparency, accountability and public interest are paramount in governance and administration and added that the strictest action will continue to be taken against officials found guilty.

The scam

The scam involves purchase of a plot of land (2.3070 hectare) at an exorbi-

tant price of Rs 54 crore by MCH in the year 2024 which is said to be three to four times more than the actual price. It is alleged that the irregularities occurred in the purchase of land by the MCH and its land use was converted from agricultural to commercial days before its purchase by the MCH. It is alleged that the then additional district magistrate (ADM) Ajayvir Singh changed the land use of the land in question in October 2024 and after some days this land was purchased by the MCH at exorbitant price of Rs 54 crore causing loss to State exchequer. Following a complaint of large scale irregularity in purchase of the said land, CM Dhamai ordered an inquiry and officers and employees involved (including two IAS officers Chaudhary and Karmendra Singh) were suspended.

CM stresses modern facilities at railway stations to boost pilgrimage & tourism in U'khand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhamai emphasised the growing potential for pilgrimage and tourism in Uttarakhand, stating that it is essential to equip railway stations with modern facilities. He made these comments while a delegation led by Railway Board chairman Satish Kumar met him at the CM residence on Friday. The discussions focused on the expansion of railway infrastructure in the State, ongoing rail projects and future railway needs.

CM said that strengthening railway connectivity in Uttarakhand would provide new momentum for the State's overall development, tourism, pilgrimage, investment and local economy. He described the Rishikesh-Karnprayag Rail Project as an ambitious and strategically important initiative for the State and stressed the need for its completion within the stipulated time frame. This project aims to enhance transportation convenience, safety and modernity for pilgrims and tourists visiting the Char Dham Yatra, particularly Badrinath and Kedarnath Dham.

Additionally, the meeting covered the progress of the Tanakpur-Bageshwar rail project in detail. The Railway Board chairman in-

formed the CM that the project survey and Detailed Project Report (DPR) have been completed. CM expressed hope that tangible progress on this project would be apparent by November 2026. He also highlighted the Karnprayag-Bageshwar and Kichha-

ilities at Haridwar, Rishikesh and Roorkee railway stations, in light of the increasing number of passengers expected for the upcoming Kumbh and Kanwad Mela. He noted that coordinated efforts between the railways and the State government could enhance the



Khatima rail line projects as important for future needs and balanced regional development, urging further action on these initiatives.

"Dehradun, Haridwar, Rishikesh and Roorkee in the Garhwal Division, as well as Haldwani, Kathgodam, Ramnagar and Tanakpur in the Kumaon Division, are major gateways to the State," the CM stated, emphasising the need to improve passenger amenities and modern facilities at these stations.

Dhamai stressed the necessity for developing special fa-

travel experience for pilgrims and travelers, making it safer and smoother.

Moreover, he underscored the importance of taking effective action towards doubling the Haridwar-Dehradun railway line. Dhamai stated that the expansion and modernisation of the railway network would create new opportunities for investment, trade, tourism, and employment in the State, ultimately providing long-term strength to Uttarakhand's economy.

20 K visit Gartang Gali & Nelang Valley in 2 months

SURENDRA PAL SINGH ■ Uttarkashi

Once the hubs of the Indo-Tibetan trade, Gartang Gali and Nelang Valley are rapidly emerging as new attractions for adventure tourism in Uttarakhand. Since the Char Dham Yatra commenced, over 20,000 tourists have visited the Gangotri National Park area, Gartang Gali and Nelang Valley generating revenue to the tune of Rs 56 lakh for the park administration. This region, rich in snowy mountain ranges, rare wildlife and historical heritage, is becoming

Rudragaira, Sundarbans, Nandanvan, Vasukital, and Kalindi Pass are also attracting adventure enthusiasts in large numbers. The increasing tourist influx is creating employment opportunities for local youth, porters, guides, hoteliers, and others involved in tourism, Negi added.

Located approximately 11,000 feet above sea level, Gartang Gali was once an important trade route connecting the Indian subcontinent with Tibet and Central Asia.

that glorious history.

This route was closed in the aftermath of the 1962 India-China War and remained deserted for nearly six decades. In 2015, recognising the potential for tourism, the administration and the Forest department reconstructed the wooden stairs and path using traditional techniques. After nearly 59 years, this historic route reopened to tourists in August 2021, and the number of visitors has been steadily increasing.

Nestled in the lap of the Himalayas, the Nelang Valley is also known as the 'Ladakh of Uttarakhand' for its stunning natural beauty and unique geographical conditions. Its rugged hills, deep gorges and serene atmosphere offer a unique experience for tourists. Gangotri National Park is also home to rare wildlife species such as the Himalayan Bharal, musk deer, Himalayan brown bear, black bear, leopard and Monal, the state bird.

Tourism experts believe that the development of Gartang Gali and the Nelang Valley is giving a new impetus to adventure and ecotourism in Uttarkashi district. With the growing popularity of these destinations, combined with the Char Dham Yatra, Uttarkashi is establishing itself as one of the country's leading nature and adventure tourism destinations.

Statewide mock drill on July 2 to check monsoon preparedness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

A mock drill will be held in all 13 districts on July 2 to check preparedness to undertake rescue and relief efforts during disaster scenarios likely during the monsoon. Disaster Management and Rehabilitation secretary Vinod Kumar Suman issued necessary instructions for this exercise during an orientation and coordination conference here on Friday. Stating that the drill is being undertaken on chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhamai's instructions, Suman said that it will be organised at about 70 locations across the State, excluding locations where it has already been done. The scenarios in the mock drill will include waterlogging in

departments will be tested during the exercise during which better coordination for search and rescue will also be practised. The mock exercise will also include a practice of setting up relief camps while facilitation of electricity, water, food, primary treatment, food for children and arrangements for pregnant women will also be tested in real time. Police and Home Guard personnel will also be posted in the relief camps for the safety of women and children. Suman said that special focus will be laid on community participation in the mock drill. With the locals being the first responders in disaster scenarios, it is necessary to



strengthen community-based disaster management, he said. The active participation of ex-servicemen, ex-personnel of Central Armed Police Forces, voluntary organisations, National Cadet Corps, National Service Scheme, Red Cross and other groups will also be ensured in the exercise. The secretary informed that various disaster management and emergency response agencies will exhibit equipment and resources along with a practice of using these during the table top exercise to be held before the mock drill.

Non-functional Auli ropeway causes loss in crores, tourist numbers drop

PRADEEP BHANDARI ■ Jyotirmath

The Jyotirmath-Auli ropeway has yet to resume operating three years after its functioning was stopped. While the Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam (GMVN) has suffered a loss of crores of rupees due to this, the local tourism business has also been affected negatively due to the ropeway not functioning.

The operation of the Auli ropeway was stopped in 2023 when land subsidence hit Jyotirmath. Since then, the authorities have conducted surveys for resuming operation of the ropeway but the status remains unclear so far.

During the Yatra season, a number of those travelling to or returning from Badrinath used to take the ropeway to Auli. However, such tourists have stopped coming here with the ropeway not functioning anymore. The locals involved in the tourism business have from time to time demanded resumption of the ropeway. Local tourism businessmen Ajay Bhatt, Anil Saklani and Nagendra Saklani said that the tourism business here has suffered considerably due to the stop of the ropeway operation. A technical team had arrived here regarding the ropeway but no

concrete progress has been seen in the matter so far. The ropeway manager Rajendra Prasad Dimri said that the discontinuation of the ropeway operations has caused a loss of about Rs 10 crores so far. Meanwhile, questions are being raised

about the reasons for the continued delay in resumption of the ropeway operations at a time when the State government has also announced the Auli winter carnival as one of its major events during the current financial year.



the first choice of tourists from India and abroad.

The deputy director of Gangotri National Park, Harish Negi said that the number of tourists is steadily increasing on the Gaumukh-Tapovan trek, Gartang Gali, and Nelang Valley. The high Himalayan treks like Kedar Tal,

Traders used this route to exchange goods. Besides, the cultural and social ties among the various regions would thrive through them. The approximately 500-meter-long, historic wooden staircase structure, known as the Gartang Gali, built along the cliffs, still bears testimony to

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SALE NOTICE

Sale of Immovable Property mortgaged to Bank under Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 read with provision to Rule 8(6) & Rule (9) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/ physical/symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised officer of the Bank/ Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on the date as mentioned in the table herein below, for recovery of dues due to the Bank/Secured creditor from the respective borrower(s), and Guarantor (s). The reserve price and the earnest money deposit will be as mentioned in the table below against the respective properties.

Lot No.	Name of The Branch Name of the Account Name & Addresses of The Borrower/Guarantor	Description of the Immovable Properties Mortgaged/Owner's Name (Mortgagers of Property (ies))	Dt. of Demand Notice u/s 13(2) of SARFAESI Act 2002		Reserve Price	DATE & TIME OF AUCTION	Details of The Encumbrances Known To The Secured Creditors
			Outstanding Amount as on Possession Date u/s 13(4) of SARFAESI Act. 2002	Nature of Possession Symbolic/Physical/Constructive			
This notice is also treated as 15 days statutory notice to under Rule 8(6) & Rule (9) Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002							
1	Branch: ARMB Haridwar (823800) M/s Anadiya Enterprises & M/s Regent Enterprises (Through Its Proprietor), Ms Aditi Tyagi D/o Sh. Ambrish Kumar Tyagi (Proprietor), Shop no-7, Mahavir Enclave Near Railway Station, Roorkee, Haridwar, Uttarakhand-247667. Ms Aditi Tyagi D/o Sh. Ambrish Kumar Tyagi (Proprietor), 718, Adarsh Nagar Roorkee Haridwar 247667. Ms. Keerti Tyagi D/o Sh. Surender Tyagi (Guarantor), Village- Sarkadi Deoband Shahranpur Ultra Pardesh- 247551.	All that Property area measuring 153 Sqyd i.e. 127.90 sq mt situated at Khasra no 143 Kha and 144 situated at Village Nangli Aajad Salempur Pargana Daurala Tehsil Sardana District Meerut. Bounded By: North- Property of Smt Manju W/o Anil, Side Measuring 34 Yard, South - Property of Santu S/o Hariya kumar, Side measuring 34 Yard, East - Common Road, Side Measuring 4.5 Yard, West- Property of Trust Samadhi, Side measuring 4.50 Yard., The Gift deed registered at Bahi No 1 at Serial No 18822 executed on 28/11/2018 at Sub registrar Sardana Meerut in favour of Ms Aditi Tyagi D/o Sh Ambrish Tyagi. Bank's charge on the above property is also extended with M/s Regent Enterprises A/c 762900JY00000050 at B/o BSM Chowk Roorkee.	26.07.2023	Rs. 44,03,705/- (Rupees Forty Four Lac Three Thousand Seven hundred Five and Paise Nine only) + plus interest and Charges - minus Recovery (if Any) thereon at contracted rate w.e.f. 01.07.2023 until payment in full.	Rs. 26,50,000/- Rs. 2,65,000/- 07.07.2026 up to 4 PM	07.07.2026 From 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM with unlimited extensions of 5 minutes	Not Known
2	Branch: Roorkee Cantt (094600) Borrower: M/s Jai Jai Ganesh Tent House (Through Its Proprietor). Sh. Naresh Kumar s/o Shiv Charan, 101, Milapnagar Dhandhera Roorkee Haridwar- 247667. Proprietor: Mr. Naresh Kumar S/o Shiv Charan, Shantipuram Dhandera Roorkee Haridwar- 247667. Guarantor: Sh Ashok Rana S/o Sh. Yashpal Singh, 123, Dhandhera Ashok Nagar PO Milap Nagar Roorkee 247667.	Residential property having plot of land measuring East- 55 feet, West- 55 feet, North- 40 Feet, South- 50Feet total area 2475 Sqft bearing Khasra No 291 situated in Village Dhandera Tehsil Roorkee district Haridwar. Sale deed Registered in Bahi no 1 Zild 2327 pages 181-198 Serial No 5585 executed on 04.07.2014 in favor of Sh Naresh Kumar S/o Shiv Charan registered in Sub-registrar Roorkee. bounded as: East-Plot of Doniyal, West- Plot of Shiv Charan, North- 18ft Wide Road, South- Property of Virender Pundeer.	14.09.2021	Rs. 57,27,852.08 (Rupees Fifty Seven Lakh Twenty Seven thousand Eight hundred Fifty Two and Paise Eight only) + interest and charges- minus Recovery (if any)	Rs. 34,83,088/- Rs. 3,48,309/- 07.07.2026 up to 4 PM	07.07.2026 From 11.00 AM to 04.00 PM with unlimited extensions of 5 minutes	Not Known

TERMS AND CONDITIONS : 1. The sale shall be subject to the Terms & Conditions prescribed in the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 and to the following further conditions. 2. The properties are being sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS" and "AS IS WHAT IS BASIS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" 3. The particulars of Secured Assets specified in the Schedule herein above have been stated to the best of the information of the Authorised Officer, but the Authorised Officer shall not be answerable for any error, misstatement or omission in this proclamation. 4. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the Website <https://www.baanknet.com>. 5. For detailed term and conditions of the sale, please refer <https://www.baanknet.com>.

STATUTORY SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8(6) & RULE (9) OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Date: 19.06.2026 Place: Haridwar Authorised Officer



Shishir Priyadarshi, President of Chintan Research Foundation (CRF); Pranav Adani, Director at Adani Enterprises; Erik Solheim, Former Minister of International Development of Norway; and Lok Sabha MP Shashi Tharoor during the second foundation day celebration of Chintan Research Foundation in New Delhi on Friday. The event was attended by eminent personalities including people from diplomatic circles. PANKAJ KUMAR

Govt will punish corruption, says Suvendu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Friday appealed to people not to take the law into their own hands, asserting that his Government would act firmly against criminals and corrupt individuals.

Speaking to reporters at the state secretariat, he said public anger against corruption was understandable, but people should allow law enforcement agencies to perform their duties.

"I appeal to people not to barge into anyone's residence or take the law into their own hands. The administration is taking all necessary and strict



West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari flags off the Daud Se Dhyan event in Kolkata. PTI

measures against corruption," he said.

"The change in Government was brought about to establish the rule of law. People should have faith in the legal process,"

the chief minister added.

Adhikari's remarks came against the backdrop of the killing of BJP supporter Prasanta Dey in Howrah district's Bagnan area, where ten-

sions flared after villagers allegedly confronted local panchayat functionaries over corruption charges. Referring to the incident, the chief minister said an FIR had been lodged against the deputy head of a village panchayat and others on murder charges. Adhikari said the injured were undergoing treatment at SSKM Hospital and that eight people have been arrested based on a complaint lodged by Dey's wife. The panchayat is ruled by the TMC. "People had lodged a complaint against the deputy head of the panchayat over corruption charges. Police could have been given some more time to probe that."

"But people went to his house demanding the return

of money allegedly taken from them on the promise of securing benefits under various Government schemes, including a housing scheme. Thereafter, his associates and relatives allegedly attacked villagers, resulting in one death and serious injuries to five others," he said. The chief minister said the state Government handed over a cheque of Rs 4 lakh to the deceased's family on Friday.

"After formally lodging complaints against corrupt people and their activities, citizens can have faith in the police and the administration. We will take stringent action against the guilty in accordance with the law," Adhikari said.

Rahul Gandhi turns 56, wishes pour in from PM Modi, Congress leaders, allies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Birthday wishes poured in for Congress leader Rahul Gandhi as he turned 56 on Friday, with party chief Mallikarjun Kharge hailing him for consistently championing the cause of the most vulnerable and marginalised through engagement with people and his courage in speaking truth to power.

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi extended birthday greetings to Gandhi, wishing him good health and a long life. In a post on social media, Modi said, "Best wishes to the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Shri Rahul Gandhi ji, on his birthday. Praying for his good health and long life." Gandhi later thanked the prime minister for his wishes.

While a celebration was hosted at the Congress' 24, Akbar Road office with top

leaders of the party attending, workers in several other parts of the country organised community service activities and job fairs and also distributed fruits and sweets. Rahul Gandhi reached the Congress' 24, Akbar Road office, where he cut a birthday cake in the presence of Kharge and AICC general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and K C Venugopal, senior leaders, party workers and supporters. Senior



Mallikarjun Kharge being offered a piece of cake by Rahul Gandhi during the 56th birthday celebrations at AICC headquarters, in New Delhi. PTI

leaders such as Sachin Pilot and Shashi Tharoor also greeted Gandhi at the party office. The Indian Youth Congress organised a job fair at Talkatora stadium to mark his birthday.

Gandhi, who is a former Congress president and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, received warm greetings from leaders of many INDIA bloc constituents with Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav,

TMC's Abhishek Banerjee and NCP (SP)'s Supriya Sule, among others, extending wishes.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and TVK chief C Joseph Vijay also hailed Gandhi for raising his voice for the nation's progress, the preservation of democratic values and the welfare of people from all walks of life.

Greeting Gandhi on his birthday, Kharge said on social media, "Your unbridled dedication to the ideals

of the Constitution and your uncompromising fight for the unheard voices have inspired millions." "Through your tireless engagement with people and your courage in speaking truth to power, you have consistently championed the cause of the most vulnerable and marginalized. May you be blessed with good health, happiness, strength and a long life in service of the nation," the Congress president said.

Yogi seeks to ease temple tensions

The coming days will be pivotal as the SIT endeavours to uncover the facts. Meanwhile, the calls from Mishra and Adityanath reflect a shared commitment to the proper functioning of the temple administration and the preservation of its esteemed status in the public eye.

Mishra calls for temple management overhaul

Mishra also informed the media that these alleged irregularities pose not only a threat to devotees' faith but also an urgent warning regarding weaknesses within the temple's administrative framework. Mishra's remarks have refocused attention on the administrative aspects of the temple, which was established after a prolonged struggle and now functions as the centre of devotion.

The construction committee has overseen its development, and with the operational phase now underway, managing the influx of donations has become a critical responsibility. Failures in this area could undermine the institution's reputation among the faithful.

Devotees contribute to temples both as a religious duty and with the expectation that their offerings will be used for the upkeep of the temple and related charitable activities. Given the temple's popularity and the scale of contributions, ensuring transparency and integrity in handling funds is essential to maintaining public trust.

To manage contributions, religious institutions often employ a mix of traditional priests and administrative personnel. Balancing spiritual needs with fiscal responsibility requires clear guidelines and ongoing oversight.

The current controversy may lead to a reassessment of how these two aspects are integrated into the temple's management.

Delhi HC backs Telegram block

Referring to Section 69A of the IT Act, the HC said that the Union Government was empowered to block public access to any online information. "Section 69A of the IT Act empowers the Central Government, or any officer specially authorised by it in this behalf, to issue directions for blocking public access to any information generated, transmitted, received, stored, or hosted in any computer resource, where it is satisfied that such action is necessary or expedient in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating thereto," the court held.

The bench referred to Section 69A of the IT Act and said that the Government was empowered to block public access to any online information. "Section 69A of the IT Act empowers the Central Government, or any officer specially authorised by it in this behalf, to issue directions for blocking public access to any information generated, transmitted, received, stored, or hosted in any computer resource, where it is satisfied that such action is necessary or expedient in the interest of the sovereignty and integrity of India, defence of India, security of the State, friendly relations with foreign States, public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating thereto," it said.

said that the Government was empowered to block public access to any online information.

The Government had directed that public access to Telegram app be blocked until June 22 and that the message-editing feature be disabled until June 30. It noted that Telegram permits the large-scale addition of users to channels and groups. "The platform architecture of Telegram is conducive to amplification and mass dissemination of content, enabling information to reach a substantial number of users within a short span of time. Consequently, any unlawful content, if circulated on Telegram, is capable

of being amplified rapidly and likely to give rise to a public order situation," the verdict said.

"Telegram also hosts an extensive bot ecosystem, which facilitates automated dissemination of content and other activities without human intervention. Further, the use of usernames in lieu of phone numbers enables concealment of user identifiers and facilitates the rapid dissemination of content, including content that may be illicit in nature," the court added.

Multi-State fraud network...

"During the Press conference, the above persons (promoters Venkat, Aqueel and Malik) stated that the Delhi Police Commissioner had given a clean chit to the company and that the allegations raised by victims and complainants were false. Such statements appear to be completely untrue, misleading, and calculated to create a false impression among investors and members of the public that the company has been officially exonerated by law enforcement authorities," alleged some investors who were cheated for more than ₹700 crore in investing in a shell firm VPVV Techno Construction.

"The materials available disclose allegations of a serious and organised fraud affecting a large number of investors across multiple States, involving the alleged misuse of the National Emblem of India, unauthorised use of symbols and insignia associated with Governmental authorities, and representations relating to defence and strategic projects purportedly connected with foreign Governments," said another investor in a detailed nine page complaint showing the fake claims of promoters photos with many Union Ministers and US Navy submarine training by the promoters.

The company's other directors Hitesh Kumar, known as Doctor Sahib and Rahul Rajeev Nair, Rajan Pradeep, Kumar Prabhakaran and Vinod Rama Warrior. Kumar is also in the police radar for cheating several investors by printing fake US documents.

The company promoters claimed that US Government has approved them as "principal developer" of defence equipment to be manufactured from India and exported to US. These directors have created a web of more than 15 benami companies, mostly registered in Nagpur, said Police, adding that these companies are operating in Jaypee Vasant Continental Hotel in Delhi.

US-Iran talks halt as Israel burns Lebanon

US Vice President JD Vance also postponed his trip.

Israel's military 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 the Iran-backed militant group 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 signalled its willingness to risk renewed war in the region for the sake of its interests in Lebanon and its most important regional ally.

The interim deal has halted hostilities in Iran and the Gulf and reopened the Strait of Hormuz, after Iranian attacks and threats all but stopped the flow of oil and natural gas through the waterway, creating a global energy crisis.

But future talks are supposed to bring about a permanent end to the conflict, including addressing how to restrict Iran's nuclear program - the core issue over which Israel and the US went to war on February 28.

The Israeli military said four 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,

FROM PAGE - 1

which accused the militant group of "blatant ceasefire violations."

Later, the military said it also struck targets in the Bekaa 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.

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.

In southern Lebanon, many were forced to flee their villages.

"The situation is lawless, we couldn't stay," said Mustafa Zain, who was with his six daughters in a pickup truck.

Beyond the fighting, Israel's occupation of large swaths of southern Lebanon is also a sticking point. Iran insists Israel must withdraw, but Netanyahu has said that forces would remain in a "security zone" of southern Lebanon as long as "Israel's security needs require it."

Israel's actions have created a rift between Israel and the US, with Trump becoming increasingly critical of his close ally Netanyahu, who is also facing increasing criticism at home. (AP)

SC declares right to walk on footpath a...

"The violation of the right to walk on demarcated footpaths will entitle the citizens to invoke constitutional and legal remedies against duty bearers for restitution and compensation. This remedy is independent of the remedies that are available under the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988," it said.

It directed the registry to send the judgement to the central ministries and law commission for initiating the necessary legal framework.

The top court said human beings have started walking long before wheels were put on the path and the primary right of movement under Article 19(1)(d) is the Fundamental Right to Walk, a right that precedes the right to move on wheels and this precious right must extend to guaranteeing access to safe and well demarcated footpath.

"The citizen's fundamental right to walk on a demarcated footpath is primary and shall have priority over movement by motorised vehicles," it said, adding that accidents like in the instant case continue to occur, perhaps they are inevitable till citizens restructure their rights regime as regards access to roads and recognise their correlative duties.

"Till then, we will continue to cope with these tragedies by routinely transforming them into FIRs and motor accidents claims," it said, while pointing out that it is rather strange that people failed to focus on recognizing and securing this "right to walk".

"It could also be elitism to start with, for machines with wheels were only for the rich, but as economies progressed and cheaper motor vehicles were introduced, the entire spectrum of motorised transportation dominated the roads, pushed aside the walkers to the extent that they are treated as a nuisance for the drivers who routinely run over the walkers and their footpaths. This should stop from now on as we declare the fundamental right to walk on demarcated footpaths alongside motorised roads," the bench underscored.

It further said that the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, was not and has never been the statute that recognises the fundamental right to walk and in fact, the law has been an impediment and, in many ways, undermined the precious rights of walkers.

"The absence of safe and comfortable footpaths to walk on, and even when they exist, their subjugation to motor transport, has been a civilizational problem," it said, adding that all that the fundamental right to walk demands was a comfortable space for an easy and carefree walk. It highlighted that the Motor Vehicles Act was

built upon "vehicle" as the subject of the legislation, while "human" interests were incidental, which a motor vehicle must avoid violating - that's all, and no further.

"In its discourse, the right of a pedestrian is incidental; the mainstay of this legislation is the Motor Vehicle," it pointed out and said that the court must affirm and secure to citizens this fundamental right to walk on demarcated footpaths with clear articulation and declaration of such a right with the correlative duty to provision and maintain footpaths.

"If a road exists, there must then be a duty to ensure that a footpath is demarcated and maintained for the walkers. This is an enforceable duty. The fundamental right to walk on demarcated footpaths shall override the privilege of a motorised vehicle," it said.

The top court enhanced the motor accident claim compensation to Rs 11, 44,628 lakh payable to the father of the deceased child within two months and set aside the high court order reducing it.

It directed the registry to register the case with title "Re: Fundamental Right to Walk and Footpath" and impleaded the Centre through Ministries of Housing and Urban Affairs, Rural Development and Road Transport and Highways, as parties and sought the assistance of ASG KM Nataraj in the matter.

Punjab police departs Khalistani terror...

The deported operatives are believed to have served as overseas handlers, providing logistical and financial support to the module targeting India's vital freight corridors. Their capture could unlock crucial insights into funding routes and reveal other operatives operating from abroad. The Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF) - a banned pro-separatist militant group in India and the EU - has long exploited diaspora networks for resources and ideological backing. Malaysia has increasingly become a hub for such clandestine activities, with terror modules establishing channels for finance and coordination. With the two operatives in custody, investigators are now mapping the entire financial and operational network, anticipating more arrests and recoveries as the investigation continues.

TMC seeks disqualification of rebel MPs

One MP passed away sometime ago and the seat remains vacant.

In a show of strength, Banerjee came to meet the Speaker accompanied by three Lok Sabha members - Saugata Roy, Kalyan Banerjee and Mahua Moitra and Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien.

Talking to the media after the meeting, Abhishek Banerjee said the rebel MPs, who have claimed to join the NCPI, should be disqualified from the membership of the House on the ground of leaving the party.

He also said their claims of 'merger' are not valid, and according to law, two-thirds of the entire party must merge with another party, not just individual legislators.

"Twenty people met the speaker and claimed they should be treated as a separate group. Later, we got to know those MPs claimed to have joined another party, NCPI; nobody has heard the name of this party. Even they had not heard the name of this party," Banerjee said, flanked by Roy, Kalyan Banerjee, Moitra, and O'Brien. He said the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution is clear: if a member voluntarily gives up membership of a party, he or she is disqualified as an MP.

"So if (they) have been elected on a symbol and (are) claiming after two years that they are joining a new party, their membership should go," he said.

Banerjee also said that the rule on two-thirds of the members merging with another party applies to the whole party, and not just the legislative party.

"Based on that, I, as the leader of Lok Sabha of TMC, have submitted 20 different disqualification petitions against those MPs," he said.

"If you have left your membership of the party, which many of you have spoken of, and this merger is invalid, both are enough to disqualify you from the membership of the House," he said.

Banerjee added that they also presented several court judgments related to the Tenth Schedule to the speaker.

"They are asking for separate sitting arrangement, electing a Lok Sabha leader, chief whip... This is not possible. You will first be disqualified," he said.

"If they have any integrity left, they should leave their posts," he said.

Lashing out at the MPs who switched sides, Banerjee said, "They sold their self-respect."

"Someone has to escape ED, CBI... Some are getting money, or being threatened..." he said adding that he has "concrete proof," and those who have objections with the claims can approach a court.

"They are joining hands with the BJP because they can't fight; there is no space for such people in Bengal politics," he said.

"In the last seven days, I have received five summons... There have been two raids at my house, two raids at Mamata ji's house. They took Mamata ji's security. We don't want it either. What can one expect from the Government that unleashed bulldozers on the poor," he said.

Asked if he would also approach the court over the issue, he said that decision would be taken in due course of time.

"We have left it to the judgment and wisdom of the speaker. He has said he will listen to the other side again and call us once more. I hope the speaker of Lok Sabha will work as per the Constitution and not choke democracy," he said. The move comes after Birla invited the TMC Lok Sabha leader to present his views on the issue before a decision was made on a demand by 20 rebel TMC MPs to recognise them as a separate group following their merger with the NCPI. Banerjee also wrote to the speaker last week, urging him not to accord any recognition, status or facility to any group claiming to be a separate faction of the All India Trinamool Congress, contending that the Constitution and the anti-defection law do not permit the formation of a separate group within an existing political party.

If the speaker accepts the TMC rebels' plea, the NCPI will become the second-largest NDA constituent in the Lok Sabha, ahead of the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) that has 16 MPs and the Janata Dal (United), which has 12.

The BJP on its own has 239 members, excluding the speaker.

The NCPI was registered as a political party in January 2023, with its address listed in the Election Commission's (EC) records as a building in Sankrail in Howrah.

Former Lok Sabha secretary general and constitutional expert P D T Achary cited paragraph 4 of the 10th Schedule of the Constitution to underline that only a political party is allowed to merge with another party and just MPs or MLAs cannot merge.

Paragraph 4 of the 10th Schedule deals with the exception to disqualification in case of a merger. It says a member of a House will not be disqualified if the original political party to which he belonged merges with another political party and not less than two-thirds of the members of the legislature party concerned agree to such a merger.

Achary told PTI that if the leadership of a political party decides to merge with another political party, its MLAs and MPs have to agree on the merger, "but the MPs or MLAs alone cannot merge with another political party. This is the constitutional provision".

An EC official said the NCPI will have to "report" the new developments to the poll authority in due course and that there is "no tearing hurry" to inform the poll body.

A former EC official, who dealt with political parties in the poll panel, termed the TMC rebels' plan to merge with the NCPI an "innovation" that has no mention in either the anti-defection law or the Representation of the People Act.

U'khand a land of Yoga & spirituality: Dhama

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has said that Uttarakhand is the land of Yoga, spirituality and place of penance for the saints for

organised in view of the 12th International Yoga Day on June 21. "This event is not just a race, but a powerful campaign to

public awareness of Yoga and building a healthy society," he said. The CM said that the rich spiritual tradition and natural

India's ancient cultural heritage, a scientific and life-affirming method that establishes harmony between body, mind and spirit.

Dhama said that Yoga has gained global recognition due to the visionary leadership and efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He said that in today's times of increasing stress, depression and various health challenges, Yoga has emerged as an effective means of leading a healthy and balanced life. Dhama said that the State government is continuously working to establish Uttarakhand as a global hub for Yoga, Ayurveda, wellness, and naturopathy.

Cabinet minister Madan Kaushik, MLA Vinod Chamoli, Mayor Dehradun Saurabh Thapliyal, secretary AYUSH Ranjana Rajguru, district magistrate Dehradun Ashish Chauhan and others attended the programme.



many centuries. He participated in the 'Run for Yoga' programme at Police Lines on Friday. The programme was

promote healthy living, positive thinking, and yoga. This programme is an important initiative towards increasing

environment of Uttarakhand offer humanity the message of health, balance and a positive life. He said that Yoga is

Sanitation workers braving heat to keep Doon clean

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Municipal Corporation of Dehradun's sanitation workers continue to sweat it out, while Dehradun grapples with summer heat, with the mercury hovering around 40 degrees Celsius. From sweeping roads to collecting and disposing of waste, these workers spend long hours outdoors, often without regular holidays. And thanks to them, the city remains clean.

thy from the civic body as far as the facilities we deserve are concerned. They do not bother whether we are sick or injured. We are perhaps the most ill-cared lot," he rued.

Queried on their growing grievances, the chief municipal health officer Dr Anand Shukla said that sanitation workers are regular employees who receive salaries on time and are covered under various welfare schemes. "They are provided with medical facilities, insurance coverage and benefits under the government programmes such as Ayushman Bharat. Additional support is also extended during emergencies, disasters and adverse weather conditions," he claimed.

He further stated that every sanitation worker is assigned a specific area and workload and their duties are fixed as per established rules and regulations. "The Municipal Corporation ensures that all welfare measures and benefits available to sanitation workers are provided in accordance with the prescribed guidelines," he said.

Shopkeepers seek solution of tangled wires, cite fire risk after Paltan Bazaar blaze

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Shopkeepers in major city markets, including Moti Bazaar and Machhi Bazaar have expressed concern on the tangle of overhead electricity wires and warned that it carries fire risk.

Raising the issue of public safety, traders urged authorities to take immediate steps to address the congestion. They

gar Udyog Vyapar Mandal (DVMUVM) said they will soon meet the district magistrate to seek a permanent resolution to the problem.

It is important to mention that the concern intensified after a major fire recently gutted two garment shops in Sarnimal Market, Paltan Bazaar, causing extensive

creases fire risk. Authorities should consider a solution and shift these wires underground so fire incidents and other risks will be reduced," said a shopkeeper on condition of anonymity.

Sumit, another trader, said, "These wires are truly a matter of concern. It is risky for shopkeepers like us and for the public who visit the market. If authorities don't act, it will remain a risk."

Doon Valley Mahanagar Udyog Vyapar Mandal (DVMUVM) president Pankaj Masson said markets with narrow roads face the worst wiring congestion. He added that strong winds during bad weather worsen the condition, further increasing fire risk.

Masson said that they will soon meet the DM to push for a permanent solution. "Authorities should either convert these tangled wires into bunched cables or lay them underground," he said. Many other shopkeepers across the markets have echoed the demand, urging the administration to act before another fire breaks out.



said clearing and regulating the wires is crucial for protecting shops as well as the large number of customers visiting these busy market areas.

damage to stock on the upper floor.

"After the recent incident, many shopkeepers like us are worried. The wires in market areas are all tangled, which in-

Doctors for clean food and water amid diarrhoea rise among children

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Doctors have emphasised the importance of children drinking clean water and eating safe food during the ongoing season to prevent waterborne illnesses. They said this after they had noted an increase in cases of diarrhoea and vomiting among children recently. The increase in temperature encourages children to consume outdoor beverages, such as sugarcane juice, which raises the risk of water contamination and subsequently leads to an uptick in illness, doctors said.

borne infections due to contaminated water, making children more susceptible to illnesses. Consequently, the number of diarrhoea and vomiting cases has escalated, with an increased risk of typhoid as well. Children suffering from this may experience vomiting, loose stools and other symptoms.

Dr Rawat advised that to prevent these issues, children should ensure that they consume safe beverages. They should prefer drinks that have been properly cleaned, avoid drinking water directly from the tap (instead, boil it before storing it in earthen pots) and prioritise safe, treated, or boiled water. Additionally, proper hygiene practices such as washing hands with soap before meals and after using the toilet, maintaining proper sanitation and sewage disposal and wash-

ing fruits and vegetables with clean water are crucial. It's also critical to avoid consuming contaminated food and water, he said.

Further reiterating these points, paediatrician at Shri Mahant Indresh Hospital Vishal Kaushik noted that as temperatures rise, children are more likely to opt for outdoor drinks, like sugarcane juice. This season sees a higher chance of water contamination, leading to increased cases of diarrhoea and vomiting in OPD. Currently, there has been an increase of about five to 10 per cent in these cases. To mitigate such health risks, children are urged to maintain hygiene, ensure they drink clean water and limit their intake of outdoor beverages. These precautions will play a vital role in preventing diseases among children, he said.

Ardh Kumbh: Railway Board chairman reviews preparations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Haridwar

The chairman and chief executive officer of Railway Board Satish Kumar arrived in Haridwar on Friday and held a review meeting with the Mela administration, railway and police officials regarding preparations for the upcoming Ardh Kumbh Mela 2027. The meeting discussed in detail the convenience of pilgrims, security, crowd management and railway operations during the religious mela slated from January 14 to April 20, 2027.

Kumar stated that the

inspected the Command and Control Centre located in the fair control building, referred to as CCR and stressed on further strengthening the technology-based monitoring system.

The Mela officer Sonika said that based on the experiences of the previous Kumbh and major bathing festivals, it is estimated that 1.25 to 2 crore devotees will arrive at the main bathing festivals of the upcoming Ardh Kumbh. "In view of this, extensive preparations are being made for infra-



role of Indian Railways is crucial in a massive congregation like the Kumbh Mela. He directed officials to ensure timely preparation for the operation of special trains, additional coaches, platform management, holding areas, smooth evacuation arrangements and a modern CCTV-based surveillance system.

structure, parking, transportation, security, disaster management and crowd control," she added.

Among the senior officers present included the DRM Vinita Srivastava, senior divisional security commissioner Rishi Kumar, SSP (Kumbh) Ayush Agarwal and additional Mela officer Dayanand Saraswati.

Juvenile accused sent to reform home in POCSO case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

A day after a sexual assault case involving minors surfaced, Dehradun Police took a juvenile accused booked under Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act into their custody and sent him to a child reform home. Notably, the alleged incident occurred in the Juna Mahal area of Paltan Bazaar. Police said that they had sent the juvenile to the reform home as per the Juvenile Justice Board order.

from Hindu organisations had gathered and demonstrated in Juna Mahal and temporarily closed shops in the market on Thursday, demanding stern action.

Police further said that the case had been registered based on a complaint from a woman living in the Kotwali Nagar area. The complaint alleges that her 14 year old daughter had been lured, abducted and sexually abused by the accused. Although the boy had threatened to kill her if she dared disclose

the incident, the girl shared her ordeal with her mother on returning home after which she lodged a complaint at the Kotwali city police station. Based on the complaint, a case has been registered under Sections 65(1) and 351(3) of the Indian Penal Code and Sections 3/4 of the POCSO Act and an investigation has been initiated.

The circle officer (CO), Swapnil Kumar said that investigation and other legal proceedings are continuing.

First export consignments of U'khand litchi on way to Italy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA), under the Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry, facilitated the first export consignment of fresh Uttarakhand litchi from Dehradun to Italy. This milestone marks the entry of Uttarakhand's premium litchi into the European market and reflects the growing international acceptance of India's high-quality fresh fruits, said the APEDA officials.

The inaugural consignment, comprising one metric tonne of fresh litchi, was exported to Italy, showcasing the export potential of Uttarakhand's horticulture sector. "The shipment is expected to strengthen India's presence in international fresh fruit markets, while promoting premium produce from the Himalayan

region," informed a senior officer.

Notably, Dehradun litchi is widely recognised for its distinctive sweetness, attractive red colour, delicate aroma and superior pulp quality. The region is known for renowned varieties such as Rose Scented, Calcuttia and Bedana. The favourable agro-climatic conditions of Uttarakhand, particularly in the districts of Dehradun, Haridwar, Nainital and Udhampur, contribute significantly to the fruit's premium quality and market appeal.

The export initiative has

also resulted in improved returns for growers, with farmers receiving prices approximately 25 per cent higher than prevailing domestic market rates. The development is expected to encourage wider adoption of quality production practices and greater participation in export-oriented horticulture.

The shipment was facilitated through the coordinated efforts of APEDA, Uttarakhand government, exporters, farmer producer organisations (FPOs), logistics partners and other stakeholders.

The APEDA officials fur-

ther said that the export of Uttarakhand litchi to Italy represents a significant step towards diversifying export destinations for India's fresh fruits and reinforces the country's reputation as a reliable supplier of premium horticultural products.

"APEDA continues to advance India's agri-export agenda through market development initiatives, quality assurance mechanisms, infrastructure support and capacity-building programmes aimed at enhancing farmers' access to high-value international markets," an officer said.

BRIDCUL (ब्रिडकुल) NIT (Notice Inviting Tender) On behalf of Managing Director, BRIDCUL, sealed Item Rate Tenders with Post Qualification, are invited in two separate envelopes (Technical and Financial) simultaneously by Contractors Empanelled with BRIDCUL in Civil work Category-III (upto 2 Crore) and as per the detailed specification, terms & Conditions given in the tender documents for following work:-

Table with 5 columns: S. No., Name of work, Estimated Cost with GST & All Taxes (In lac), Bid Security/EMD (In Rs.), Cost of Tender Form, Tender Document can be obtained /submitted at

The tender documents can only be purchased from the office of the respective Project Manager between 10.00 am to 5.00 pm on all working days from 20.06.2026 to 03.07.2026. The cost of tender document amounting to Rs 5000+18% GST, will be paid while purchasing the tender documents, by cash or Demand Draft in the favour of Project Manager, BRIDCUL, Dehradun. The tenders should reach the office latest by 1500 hours on 03.07.2026 and the technical bid shall be opened at 1530 hours on the same day in presence of tenderers who choose to be present.

ICICI Bank 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 Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

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")

States Focus



PASSPORT DELIVERY NOW TRULY DEMOCRATISED: JAISHANKAR

The passport delivery process today has become "truly democratised", and this seamless service serves as an engine for a prosperous, globally connected and Viksit Bharat, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday. In his address at the Annual Regional Passport Officers' Conference, which also marked Passport Seva Divas, he said the annual passport issuance volume has surged to over 138 lakh in the financial year 2025-26, which reflects the "soaring aspiration" of India and its people. The external affairs minister said the passport service today has become "swift" and "accessible", while acquiring a passport was akin to a privilege earlier. (PTI)



DEFENCE MINISTRY INKS ₹425 CR DEAL FOR NAVY GENERATORS

Ministry of Defence on Friday signed a contract with Bharat Forge Limited, Pune, for the acquisition of 12 sets of 1.25 MW Marine Gas Turbine Generators, with a minimum 60 per cent indigenous content, for the Indian Navy at a total cost of around Rs 425 crore. Giving details, officials said the contract was inked under the Buy (Indian) category in the presence of Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh. The project reinforces the Government's commitment to Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make-in-India by creating a robust domestic manufacturing ecosystem. It would enhance maritime self-reliance in critical strategic technologies and bolster the Indian Navy's operational readiness through indigenous production and end-to-end life-cycle support. (PTI)

No leave for medical students during NEET exam: NMC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Medical Commission has directed all medical colleges and institutions under its purview not to grant leave to students on June 20 and 21, except in exceptional circumstances, to support the fair conduct of the NEET-UG re-exam on Sunday.

The move comes in the backdrop of some instances when students of medical colleges were found to be involved in activities that could compromise the sanctity and integrity of the examination process, the Commission said in a notice issued on Thursday. The instruction has been issued in compliance with directions received from the Department of Higher Education under the Ministry of Education regarding the conduct of the medical entrance examination, it said. The Commission also asked medical colleges to remain vigilant and sensitise students against involvement in any activities that could compromise the sanctity and integrity of the examination process.

"In the past, instances have come to notice where some students of medical colleges were found to be involved in activities that could compromise the sanctity and integrity of the examination process," the notice said. "In view of this, and as a matter of general deterrence, all the medical colleges are hereby directed to remain vigilant and ensure that students are sensitised against any involvement in activities prejudicial to the conduct of the examination," it added.



PM-VBRY has created over 70 lakh jobs, says PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY) has created over 70 lakh jobs across the country so far, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday as he transferred incentives worth ₹2,400 crore for 15 lakh first-time employees and their employers. The amount will be transferred to the beneficiaries through the direct benefit transfer.

Addressing the event, Modi said that when the Government, the youth and the industry work together, job creation grows multi-fold.

He informed that Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana has created 70 lakh jobs and provided social security cover for the beneficiaries under the scheme. The Government encour-



ages those institutions or employers who generate new jobs, Modi said, adding that the Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana forms a bridge between the youth and the industry for first-time job seekers.

He said, "Through PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana, we are supporting employment generation, empowering youth and building a stronger workforce for the future."

The scheme is about empowering first-time employees and building a bridge between the youth and the industry, he stated. The aspirations, skills and potential of our youth shape the path to a Viksit Bharat, he said.

Modi further said that India's youth will be at the

forefront of driving global growth, innovation and entrepreneurship in the years to come.

In the 21st century, opportunities will belong to nations that nurture skilled talent, foster innovation and uphold the highest standards of quality, he said, adding that India has unprecedented capability in these three areas.

Under PM-VBRY, the Government has provided an outlay of ₹99,446 crore and targeted 3.5 crore job creation in two years.

Under the scheme, up to ₹15,000 is provided for first-time employees. Employers get up to ₹3,000 per month per new employee under the scheme.

To boost employment in the manufacturing sector, extended benefits are being provided for up to four years under the scheme.

NIA arrests 10 accused in Manipur ethnic violence cases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday arrested 10 accused in six different cases of ethnic violence in Manipur.

In a coordinated operation with Manipur Police and the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), a joint multi-location search operation in the districts of Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishnupur, Churachandpur, Ukhrul, Chandel, and Pherzawl in the strife-torn north-eastern state led to the arrest of the accused.

Investigations in multiple cases revealed that the accused had played active roles in various incidents of violence during the period of ethnic unrest in Manipur, including attacks on security



forces, looting of arms and ammunition, and bank robberies, a statement issued by the NIA said. The operations, conducted on the basis of extensive intelligence, technical and field investigations by the NIA along with the state police and the central security agency, were focused on identifying and prosecut-

ing individuals, across communities, involved in criminal and terrorist activities in the state, it said.

The NIA expects the arrests to reveal significant information about the planning, execution, and support networks involved in the cases of violence, the statement said. The agency is also exam-

ining possible linkages between the various incidents, as well as the individuals and groups involved in the insurgency, it said.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in ethnic violence between Meiteis and Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

TN Assembly unanimously resolves against Mekedatu Dam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chennai

The Tamil Nadu Assembly on Friday adopted a unanimous resolution against Karnataka's move to construct a dam across river Cauvery at Mekedatu, expressing support for all measures undertaken by the State Government on the issue.

Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay piloted the government resolution over the nearly 13 years long dispute with the neighbouring State, with the members of the opposition, including Leader of the



Opposition Udhayanidhi Stalin and AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami, backing the Government.

The Congress too supported the ruling TVK in the Assembly, taking a contradictory stand opposing the Karnataka Congress Government, which is keen on pursuing the balancing reservoir project.

Experts flag concerns over SC-appointed Aravalli panel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Scientists, senior environmental and policy experts, and other stakeholders from across India have written to the Chief Justice of India (CJI), raising questions over the composition of the Supreme Court-appointed high-powered expert committee tasked with reviewing the Centre's report on the definition and delineation of the Aravalli hill range.

The letters, written on Thursday and Friday, seek changes to the committee's composition, citing concerns about its independence.



The committee, constituted under the Supreme Court's May 25 order, is headed by Kanchan Devi,

Director General of the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education, and has been directed to submit

its report by August 31.

The other members of the panel are Dr Subhash Ashutosh, former director general of the Forest Survey of India; Dr Rajendra Kumar Sharma, former director of the Geological Survey of India; Brij Mohan Singh Rathore, former joint secretary in the Environment Ministry; and Professor Ashok K Bhatnagar, former head of the Department of Botany at Delhi University.

The court also appointed Professor Jagdish Krishnaswamy of the Indian Institute for Human Settlements, Bengaluru, and

Professor Laxmikant Sharma of the Central University of Haryana as special invitees whom the chairperson may associate with the committee's work, if required.

The Environment Ministry was directed to nominate an officer of the rank of director to serve as the panel's member secretary.

In one of the letters, environmentalist and social scientist, Dr Ravi Chopra, expressed doubts about the panel's ability to provide independent written opinions on the disputed issues, noting that almost all its members are serving or retired Government officials.

NTA to hold nationwide mock drill for NEET exam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre is not leaving anything to chance, and the National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct a nationwide mock drill on Saturday as part of the preparations to ensure the NEET UG-2026 re-examination on Sunday, June 21, is conducted smoothly and securely.

The mock drill will begin at 9 AM and continue until late evening. More than 2.5 lakh security personnel are expected to participate in the

exercise across the country. All examination centres have already been handed over to the National Testing Agency (NTA). On the day of the examination, the centres will operate under a three-tier security system to prevent any irregularities.

According to officials, paramilitary forces will be responsible for the custody and security of question papers and answer booklets. More than 5,000 examination centres across the country will be monitored through CCTV surveillance



and security personnel deployed.

The nationwide mock drill is aimed at assessing preparedness, coordination among agencies, and the effectiveness of security measures ahead of the examination. Elaborate security arrangements are in place to ensure the examination is conducted smoothly for the 22.79 lakh candidates who would be appearing for the re-NEET. On Friday, the Government issued detailed advisories on where to track updates on the examination, and also listed the arrangements in place.

Himanta urges FM Sitharaman to raise northeast funding limits

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Friday urged Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow the northeastern states to have access to enhanced funds through externally aided projects, citing "exceptional track record and honest implementation of schemes and projects" in the region.

He said that such projects, worth Rs 53,000 crore, are underway in Assam alone.

"On behalf of Assam and our sister states in the northeast, I made a passionate appeal to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman to allow



our Governments access to enhanced limits through Externally Aided Projects (EAP), keeping in view our exceptional track record and honest implementation of schemes and projects," Sarma said on X.

After attending a seminar on 'Leveraging EAPS in North-Eastern States' in Shillong, he said that over the past few years, these projects, backed by multilateral financial agencies, have empowered Assam to initi-

collaboration and planning in the implementation of such projects".

The Chief Minister's Office (CMO), in a post on social media, said Sarma highlighted the transformative growth of Assam.

Sarma cited the successful completion of the EAP-funded Lower Kopili Hydroelectric Project in just three-and-a-half years.

He also mentioned projects such as the Kumar Bhaskar Varma Setu in Guwahati and the ongoing Dhubri-Phulbari Bridge as examples of the state's strong development momentum and effective utilisation of Externally Aided Projects, the CMO said.

NSF slams Yoga Day order for hurting faith

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kohima

The Naga Students' Federation (NSF) has expressed grave resentment and unequivocal opposition to a recent circular issued by the Directorate of School Education, Government of Nagaland, which directs educational institutions across the State to observe the 12th International Day of Yoga on June 21, 2026.

The student body has strongly objected to the scheduling of the event, pointing out that June 21 falls on a Sunday. The Federation viewed the directive as a blatant disregard for the religious sentiments and spiritual convictions of the Naga people, emphasising that Sunday occupies a sacred place in the Christian faith and is strictly devoted to worship, prayer, and fellowship.

In a joint statement, NSF President Mteising and Education Committee Convenor Pithungo Shitio asserted that institutionalising such activities on a Sunday violates the religious freedom guaranteed under Article 25 of the Indian Constitution. They added that the directive is inconsistent with Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



(ICCPR) and Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).

"The Federation condemns in the strongest terms the unwarranted directive and calls upon the Directorate of School Education and the Government of Nagaland to immediately withdraw the notification," the statement read. The NSF cautioned the state Government against any attempt to coerce compliance under the guise of official instructions, warning that authorities would be held solely responsible for any untoward consequences.

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-Pahalgam 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

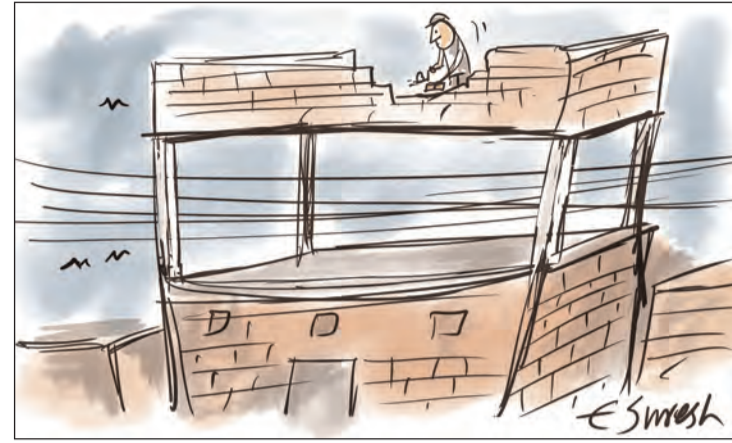


JS RAJPUT

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

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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 Bhaderwah 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

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

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

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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 wants 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.



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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.

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'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

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 —

"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.

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.

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-



ous coordination 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.



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 offenses. His co-accused Giovanni Lallu, 21, was arrested in July last year and another suspect, Younes Ali Younes, 20, was arrested a month later.

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."

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)

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

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-



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



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

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 Eurostaty 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-



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

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
17				18			
			19				
20	21				22		23
24				25			
		26					
27					28		
		29					
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)

- 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 | 14, May | 33, All |
| 21, Flyaway | | 16, Al-me-d | |
| 22, Ere | | 17, The-AM | |
| 23, Rear | | 19, Pacific | |

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 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 fuller 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 for 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 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'



DEBORAH 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-pacer 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 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



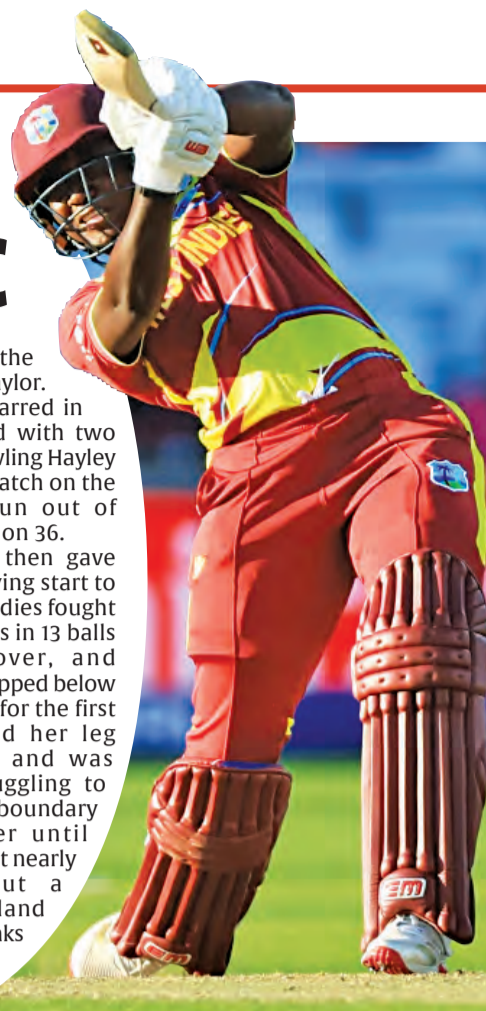
Fraser and Carter then gave Scotland a brilliant flying start to the chase.

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. Carter injured her leg in the fourth over and was dropped on 19. Struggling to run, she didn't hit a boundary after the fifth over until the 18th. Scotland went nearly five overs without a boundary. But Scotland stayed in the game thanks to poor bowling and fielding. (AP)



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 skipper and captain 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. "Whatever decisions that are made involve the cricket committee, the selectors and all other stakeholders, including the support staff, the head coach and the players concerned. "There are

regular conversations taking place. For that reason, we do not need any special session of interaction. This is an ongoing process," the secretary said, keeping all his cards close to his chest. He maintained that he would not divulge any board room information. "I do not think I should disclose anything before the media or the public because these are strategic discussions. I am not authorised to speak about them before the media." "Secondly, these are matters that should remain within the boardroom."

BCCI to follow government diktat on Bangladesh:

The Indian cricket team had postponed its white-ball tour of Bangladesh last year due to unrest in the neighbouring nation.



Shreyanka Patil ruled out with ankle injury

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Leeds

In a major blow to India, off-spinner Shreyanka Patil has been ruled out of the ongoing Women's T20 World Cup due to an ankle injury, with uncapped legspinner Prema Rawat named as her replacement.

The 23-year-old Patil sustained the injury during India's 95-run victory over the Netherlands here on Wednesday. The incident occurred in the final over of the Powerplay when Patil twisted her ankle while attempting to stop the ball.

She was seen clutching her right leg immediately with the team physio rushing onto the field. Unable to put any weight on the injured ankle, Patil was stretchered off after bowling just one delivery.

"The Event Technical Committee of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 has approved Prema Rawat as a replacement for Shreyanka Patil in the India squad," an ICC media release stated.

The 24-year-old Rawat earns her maiden call-up to the senior national team. She has featured in two seasons of the Women's Premier League, playing six matches for



Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

Rawat was part of the India A squad scheduled to tour England for a six-match white-ball series begin-

ning with the first T20 in Northampton on Saturday.

She had also impressed at the Rising Stars Women's Asia Cup, claiming eight wickets at an economy rate of 4.27 as India A won the title.

The setback continues Patil's unfortunate run with injuries in recent years.

A broken finger in July 2024 ruled her out of that year's T20 World Cup. She subsequently battled shin splints in both legs before suffering a stress reaction in her wrist, making the latest injury another frustrating blow in an injury-plagued phase of her career.

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. (PTI)



Shreyas makes a good leader: Vysakh

G UNNIKRISSHAN ■ Chennai

Shreyas Iyer's maiden audition as India's full-time T20 skipper will take place in England next month, and his Punjab Kings teammate Vysakh Vijaykumar said the Mumbai cricketer's exceptional man management skills will stand him in good stead. Iyer was given the reins of the T20 squad after the Ajit Agarkar-led selection panel decided to move on from Suryakumar Yadav earlier this month.

"I think the way he treats everybody equally, that is the biggest thing because youngsters will be, obviously, under a lot of pressure. So, the way you handle them, speak to them, makes a lot of difference,"



Vysakh told PTI.

"The IPL is a tough competition, and, you know, Indian players are the ones who are going to win the tournament for you. So, the way he handled all the Indian players, uncapped players, was calming and a lot of learnings (from it) for me and everyone, and it makes him a good leader," he added.

Vysakh, who joined PBKS

ahead of IPL 2025, has played two seasons under Iyer, seeing from close quarters the evolution of him as a leader and batter. "From the first time that I have seen him in 2025, he has matured so much as a captain and player.

Every day he is bringing new things on the table and every day he is eagerly wanting to try it out. "He has this fire and aura that he carries every time he goes into the field, as he wants to win it no matter what and the way he handles himself and the way he handles everybody in the team, it's such a pleasure," he said. The Karnataka pacer, who played 10 matches this season, said Iyer gave him ample opportunity to prove his mettle. (PTI)

Jaiswal, Rahul, Rana in focus

G UNNIKRISSHAN ■ Chennai

Along with a dominance-extending series clean sweep, India will eye substantial runs from KL Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal in the third and final ODI against Afghanistan here on Saturday. While Rahul's spot in the one-day squad has never really been in doubt, Jaiswal would welcome a heavy knock to stake his claim for a space in the already-crowded top-order.

Jaiswal was brought back to the 50-over format for the first time since December 2025, and he was dismissed for 4 in the second match against the Afghans at Lucknow. The left-hander had made an unbeaten 116 against South Africa at Visakhapatnam in his previous appearance but since then the return of Ishan Kishan has added one more contender to the top-order positions. Kishan did no harm to his reputation with a hundred at Lucknow, and skipper Shubman Gill dropped himself to No. 3 to accommodate Jaiswal.

Neeraj Chopra joins fight against doping

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Two-time Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra has taken the lead in fighting the menace of doping that plagues Indian sports with his foundation inking an MOU with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to launch a campaign that aims to educate athletes against it.

At the IOA athletes forum here on Friday, Chopra delivered a video message announcing the initiative between Neeraj Chopra Foundation and the IOA.

"I have seen how kids want to enhance performance by doping to win big medals. But from my story, I can tell you it took me 10 years to get to the Olympic medal," he said.

"You need patience to achieve something in sports. I am seeing that it has come down in today's kids. They want to achieve things quickly, cross 80m in one year. It takes five years to do that.



"Sometimes kids take supplements which might be contaminated. When I was a junior, whenever I heard about doping bans, I used to get so surprised by the time lost. I had promised myself then that I would never take this route," he added. India has been topping the World Anti Doping Agency's annual list of highest dope offenders for the last three years.

Yuvraj Singh to join Delhi Capitals as batting coach; Pant likely to be traded

KUSHAN SARKAR ■ New Delhi

Former white-ball stalwart Yuvraj Singh is all set to join Delhi Capitals as its batting coach for the 2027 season, IPL sources tracking the development said on Friday.

Yuvraj, India's player of the tournament in both 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup, has worked as a personal mentor for current India skipper Shubman Gill and world's No. 1 ranked T20 batter Abhishek Sharma in recent years.

Even Rishabh Pant had sought Yuvraj's advice when he underwent a slump in form.

The assignment with Delhi Capitals will be Yuvraj's first coaching assignment in the cash-rich league.

Yuvraj played last of his 132 IPL matches in 2019 for Mumbai Indians before calling time on his competitive career.

"There will be complete overhaul of coaching staff in Delhi Capitals as JSW will be running the management for the 2027-28 seasons as per agreement. The trio comprising Venugopal Rao, Hemang Badani and Munaf

Patel, who were appointed by co-owners GMR, will make way for new support staff.

"Sourav Ganguly will take over as Director of Cricket and Yuvraj will join as the batting coach," the IPL source told PTI.

As per the agreement, co-owners GMR and JSW take turns in managing the affairs of the men's team for two years.

DC could not qualify for the play-offs in last two seasons and their planning, strategy and choice of players at the auction left a lot to be desired. It is understood that Ganguly, who has had a big influence on Yuvraj as his first international captain, wanted the flamboyant southpaw on board.

While Ganguly as the Director of Cricket also looked after JSW's SA20 franchise Pretoria Capitals and also DC Women, Yuvraj will only have to look after the DC men's team.

It will be interesting to see whether Rishabh Pant, who is all set to leave Lucknow Super Giants, can be traded by Delhi Capitals in lieu of one or two players from the existing set-up. (PTI)



NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE	
Department	Electrical (TRD)
Tender No.	T-01-TRD-MB-26-27-I
Name of Work	TRD work i.e.w. PH-53 works at various stations of Moradabad Division for forthcoming Kumbh Mela 2027
Tender Closing Date & Time	10.07.2026, 15:00 Hrs
Advertised Value (Rs.)	Rs. 1,24,91,297.52/- (Including GST@18%)
Bid Security (Rs.)	Rs. 2,49,800/-
Tender Doc. Cost (Rs.)	NIL
Validity of offer (Days)	60 days
Period of completion	04 Months
Website particulars & Address of office	www.ireps.gov.in Divisional Railway Manager's Office, Northern Railway, Moradabad.
No.: Elect/TRD/MB/2026-27/TTN-03	Date: 18.06.2026 2109/2026

NORTHERN RAILWAY TENDER NOTICE		
No 75-W/23/WA/Publication	DATED: 19.06.2026	
Sr. DEN/HQ/MB acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against following tenders Nos. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker's cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.		
Tender No. Date	93-DRM-MB-26-27 dt. 19.06.2026	94-DRM-MB-26-27 dt. 19.06.2026
Name of work	Provision of New Jetty Hut and OFC Room at Junction point RGB Station of Moradabad Division. & Heavy repair to Nallah/drainage at RG colony and boundary wall work at RG under ADEN/CH.	Provision of Divyangyan facilities at Babraha, Bahjol, Bishararaganj, Dibal, Dabbara, Dhanari, Gumthai & Kundarki
Tender Closing Date	16.07.2026	16.07.2026
Advertised Value (Rs.)	96,06,722.53	2,98,27,917.16
Earnest Money (Rs.)	1,92,100.00	5,96,800.00
Tender Cost (Rs.)	00	00
Bidding Start Date	02.07.2026	02.07.2026
Period of Completion	6 Months	6 Months

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 2124/26

INDIAN RAILWAYS "PUBLIC NOTIFICATION" Proforma 10-1
 Notice is hereby given to all users of Railway lines and premises situated on the completed section of the under noted section of the Northern Railway that the 25 kV, 50 Hz, AC overhead traction wires will be energized on or after the date specified against the section. On and from the same date the overhead traction line shall be treated as live at all time and no unauthorized person shall approach or work in the proximity of the said overhead line.
 Sections: OHE modification on 25 kV, AC single phase 50 Hz supply for provision of two nos emergency cross overs from (i) Km location 71/19 to Km Location 71/21 of up line and from Km location 71/16 to Km Location 71/18 of Dn main line at JUC end and (ii) from Km location 73/23 to Km Location 73/25 of up line and from Km location 73/20 to Km Location 73/22 of Dn main line at PTKC end and other associated modification work at Mukerian station on Bhogpur-Pathankot section of Jammu Division of Northern Railway, Date 28-06-2026

INTRODUCTION OF 25 kV AC TRACTION "WARNING TO ROAD USERS" Proforma 10-2
 It is notified for information of the Public that in connection with introduction of 25 kV AC electric traction over OHE modification on 25 kV AC single phase 50 Hz supply for provision of two nos emergency cross overs from (i) Km location 71/19 to Km Location 71/21 of up line and from Km location 71/16 to Km Location 71/18 of Dn main line at JUC end and (ii) from Km location 73/23 to Km Location 73/25 of up line and from Km location 73/20 to Km Location 73/22 of Dn main line at PTKC end and other associated modification work at Mukerian station on Bhogpur-Pathankot section of Jammu Division of Northern Railway, height gauges have been erected at all the level crossings with clear maximum height 4.75m above road level with a view to prevent loads of excessive height from coming into contact or dangerous proximity to live traction wire (Contact Wire), which shall be at a height of minimum 5.5 m above the rail level at level crossings.
 Public are hereby notified to observe the height specified above for the purpose of loading vehicles and to see that the load carried in road vehicles do not infringe the height gauges under any circumstances.
 The dangers of a load of excessive height are as follows:- i) Danger to the height gauge and consequent obstruction to the road as well as the railway line. ii) Danger to the materials or equipment carried on the vehicle itself. iii) Danger of fire and risk of life due to contact with or dangerous proximity to the conductors.
 No. 17-Elect/CRD/UMB/132 Date: 19-06-2026 2125/2026
 SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE