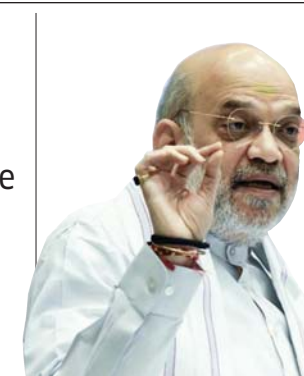


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Truck drags car for 500 meters in Bhubaneswar
Driver nabbed after dramatic police chase

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Panic gripped parts of Bhubaneswar late on Friday night when a speeding truck hit a car near Satya Vihar Square and dragged it for nearly 500 meters towards Pahal. The dramatic incident ended after a PCR team carried out a tactical operation to intercept the vehicle and apprehend the driver preventing further danger on the busy stretch.

The incident occurred near the Gangua Nala bridge under the Mancheswar police station. The truck collided with the car carrying a man and his niece. The damaged car was finally freed after being dragged for nearly half a km.

Remarkably, both occupants survived the ordeal with only minor injuries.

The truck driver attempted to flee the scene. A PCR-6 team immediately launched a pursuit.

Assessing the risks of directly stopping the speeding vehicle, the team devised a tactical strategy. Without alerting the driver, the PCR vehicle overtook the truck and coordinated with another Hyva truck to create a roadblock near Mother's Public School under the Pahal police station. The resulting congestion forced the truck to stop, allowing the police team to apprehend the driver and seize the vehicle.

The accused was identified as Jagamohan Bhukta of Boudh district and was produced before a court.

Bus owners give 10-day ultimatum
Threaten stir if demands unresolved

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Private Bus Owners' Association on Saturday gave the Odisha Government a 10-day ultimatum to address its key demands, warning buses would go off the roads if their issues are not resolved within the stipulated time.

The decision was taken during an executive committee meeting of the association, in which office-bearers from various districts of the State took part.

Association general secretary Debendra Nath Sahoo said if the government fails to act on their demands within 10 days, they would launch an indefinite strike, leading to a complete halt of private bus services across the State.

Among the key demands raised by the association are a hike in bus fares and an increase in annual maintenance charges. The members stressed the need for immediate intervention by the government to address rising operational costs.

The association also decided to submit a memorandum to the government, urging it to take prompt steps to resolve the issues.

H&UD camp court clears 142 appeal cases in a day

Special initiative aims to speed up resolution of BDA, BMC-related disputes

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A Special Camp Court organised by the Housing and Urban Development (H&UD) Department disposed of 142 pending appeal cases in a single day on Saturday marking a major effort by the government to reduce case pendency and ensure quicker resolution of disputes involving urban development and municipal authorities.

The court was held at Unnati Bhawan under the leadership of Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee with the objective of expediting the disposal of appeals filed under the Odisha Development Authorities (ODA) Act 1982.

As the designated Appellate



Authority for matters relating to the Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) and Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC), Padhee personally presided over the proceedings and reviewed a large number of pending appeals during the day-long session.

The 142 cases disposed of primarily involved appeals filed by citizens against orders issued by the BDA and BMC under provisions of the ODA Act. Officials said the exercise

would help ensure quicker justice and provide relief to citizens awaiting decisions on their appeals.

The initiative forms part of the government's broader efforts to make governance more responsive, transparent and accessible by creating effective platforms for citizens to seek redressal of grievances and challenge administrative decisions.

To further strengthen the appellate mechanism, the gov-

ernment has recently designated senior officers, including Special Secretaries and Additional Secretaries, as Appellate Authorities for similar matters. The decentralised arrangement is expected to accelerate disposal of cases and improve service delivery across urban areas.

The department plans to organise similar Special Camp Court camps in a phased and time-bound manner to clear pending cases.

Ayushman aid to cover pre-admission diagnostic tests

Minister directs hospitals for cashless treatment, set up helpdesks

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Diagnostic tests conducted up to three days before hospital admission under the Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and Gopabandhu Jan Arogya Yojana (GJAY) will now be covered under the treatment package in Odisha, a move expected to substantially reduce out-of-pocket medical expenses for thousands of beneficiaries across the State.

The announcement was made by Health and Family Welfare Minister Mukesh Mahaling during a review meeting with representatives



of empanelled private hospitals at Lok Seva Bhawan on Saturday. The meeting focused on strengthening implementation of the AB-PMJAY and ensuring quality, cashless healthcare services for beneficiaries.

Mahaling clarified that expenses incurred on diagnostic tests conducted within three days prior to hospital admission must be borne under the Ayushman treatment package.

He warned that strict action would be taken against hospitals found violating the guidelines.

Under the earlier practice, many patients and their families had to bear the cost of pre-admission diagnostic tests despite receiving treatment under the scheme. The latest decision is aimed at eliminating this financial burden and making healthcare more accessible for low-income families.

The minister also directed all empanelled private hospitals to provide courteous and patient-friendly services to beneficiaries. Noting that a large proportion of patients visiting hospitals are covered under the scheme, he asked hospitals to establish dedicated help desks to assist beneficiaries and facilitate hassle-free treatment.

A high-level committee has been constituted to inspect hospitals and monitor compliance with the revised guidelines. The Health Department has also instructed hospitals to maintain professional conduct and address patient grievances promptly.

Representatives of private hospitals shared their experiences, challenges and suggestions regarding implementation of the scheme, which the government said would be examined.

In Bhubaneswar Engineering student's death was murder, not accident



Six arrested as probe points to alleged love-triangle motive

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

What was initially suspected to be a fatal road accident in Bhubaneswar's Chandrasekharpur area has

turned out to be a premeditated murder allegedly linked to a love triangle with Commissionerate Police arresting six persons in connection with the killing of an engineering student.

The victim, identified as Baren Routray, was allegedly assaulted and run over by an SUV near Acharya Harihar

College Square late on Friday night. Police said the accused had planned the attack after a dispute with the victim earlier in the day. Investigators found that the incident was deliberately staged to resemble a road accident. Preliminary findings indicate that the accused tracked Baren's movements and intercepted him while he

was returning home.

The assailants allegedly attacked the student with cricket stumps before running him over with a vehicle. Baren died in the incident. Bhubaneswar DCP Jagmohan Meena said, "As per preliminary investigation, this is a premeditated murder as there was a past enmity over a love triangle."

The six arrested have been identified as Bapuni alias Bramhananda Das (36), Chidananda Das (31), Asish Dehury (30), Swastik Bhardwaj, Suraj Biswakarma (23) and Sridhara Nayak (20). Police said the owner of the vehicle allegedly used in the crime is also among those arrested. Investigators are examining the sequence of events leading to the murder and probing whether additional individuals were involved in the conspiracy.

Excess by Derabish PS woman SI alleged

Victim, also a woman, complains to DM, SP

RAJESH BEHERA ■ Kendrapada

Yet another allegation of police excess has surfaced in Kendrapada district with a woman accusing a woman Sub-Inspector (SI) of the Derabish police station of custodial assault and threats during an inquiry into a land dispute.

Narmada Samal (40) of Barahilo village under Laxminarayanpur gram panchayat has complained to the Kendrapada Collector, SP and SDPO alleging that Derabish PS SI Anasuya Nayak misbehaved with her and her 75-year-old mother Mata Mohanty in the police station.



According to Samal, the dispute began after some villagers dumped soil excavated from a pond on her mother's land. Mata Mohanty filed a complaint at the Derabish police station on May 17. On May 22, the Derabish IIC summoned both parties for inquiry and entrusted SI Nayak to look into the matter.

Samal alleged that when she requested impartial adjudication, the officer reacted angrily, dragged her, strangu-

lated her and twisted her hand, causing injury. She further alleged that Nayak threatened to forward her and her mother to jail by registering a fake case if she did not accept the decision.

Samal said she managed to leave the station and received treatment at the Derabish Community Health Centre.

Later, Samal submitted a written complaint at the Kendrapada Collector and SP's joint grievance cell seeking action against the errant SI.

SDPO Jyoti Ranjan Gauda said, "The allegations are being examined. An inquiry report is going to be submitted to the SP. If the SI is found guilty, action would be initiated as per law and departmental procedure."

Jagatsinghpur ZP staff suspended over camera in women washroom

PNS ■ Jagatsinghpur

The district administration on Saturday suspended an employee of the Zilla Parishad for his alleged involvement in the installation of a spy camera in the women's washroom at the office of the DRDA in Jagatsinghpur.

The district Collector placed Sanjay Adheka, the Junior Revenue Assistant of the Zilla Parishad, under suspension with immediate effect.

The administration initiated disciplinary action

against Adheka on the basis of prima facie evidence indicating his involvement in the installation of the spy camera in the women's toilet.

"The Junior Revenue Assistant of Zilla Parishad is placed under suspension with immediate effect basing on the prima facie evidence indicating his involvement in the installation and use of spy camera in the women's toilet, that amounts to serious violation of the privacy and dignity (modesty) of women, which is a punishable offence under the

relevance provisions of BNS and IT Act, 2000," stated the Collector's order.

The Additional Executive Officer of the DRDA had lodged a police complaint in connection with the detection of the camera in the women's washroom on May 26. Subsequently, cops reached the DRDA office and launched a probe in this connection.

A woman employee of the DRDA had reportedly spotted the hidden camera on May 25 and informed the higher authorities.

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Govt pushes for completion of Matiapada ROB

Bridge expected to ease traffic congestion in Puri

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

With the annual Rath Yatra approaching, the Odisha Government has stepped up efforts to complete key infrastructure projects in Puri with Works Department Principal Secretary Sanjay Kumar Singh reviewing the progress of the Matiapada Road Over Bridge (ROB) and setting deadlines for pending works.

During a visit to the project

site on Friday, Singh reviewed ongoing construction activities and directed the executing agency to accelerate the launching of the bow-string girder and casting of the bridge deck slab. He instructed the concerned agency to deploy adequate manpower, machinery and other resources to ensure the project remains on schedule.

According to Singh, the bow-string girder launching is expected to be completed by June 15 while deck slab casting is scheduled for completion by June 20. The department has accorded priority to

strengthening road and bridge infrastructure in and around Puri ahead of the Rath Yatra in line with the emphasis placed by Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi and Works Minister Prithviraj Harichandan on improving connectivity to the pilgrim city.

Once completed, the Matiapada ROB is expected to significantly improve traffic flow, reduce travel time and facilitate smoother movement of vehicles, particularly during major religious events and peak tourist seasons.

New City project moves ahead with master plan

■ Consultations begin for 800-acre urban hub

■ DPR expected within nine months

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The Bhubaneswar Development Authority (BDA) has launched the master planning process for its ambitious New City project near Bhubaneswar, marking a significant step towards developing a modern urban growth centre envi-

sioned to drive investment, innovation and sustainable development under the State's "Vikshit Odisha 2036" roadmap.

A stakeholder consultation and kickoff meeting for preparation of the master plan was held under the chairmanship of Housing and Urban Develop-

ment (H&UD) Department Additional Chief Secretary Usha Padhee at Kharvel Bhawan on Friday.

The master plan is being prepared by Singapore-based Surbana Jurong Infrastructure Private Ltd (SJI) while a market feasibility study for the project has already been conducted with the support of global consultancy firm JLL.

BDA Vice-Chairman Chanchal Rana, representatives of SJI and JLL, and officials from departments including Forest, Works, IT and Industries participated in the

meeting. The State Cabinet had accorded in-principle approval to the New City Development Scheme in September 2025. Planned across nearly 800 acres in Gothapatna, Malipada and Daspur mouzas within the Bhubaneswar Development Plan Area (BDPA), the project aims to emerge as a multi-economic growth zone supporting Odisha's long-term development goals.

Usha Padhee said the proposed city would be developed as a transit-oriented urban centre featuring integrated land use, efficient public trans-

port systems, shorter travel distances and housing options catering to all income groups.

The project also envisages world-class infrastructure, including MICE facilities, innovation-driven plug-and-play business hubs, data management centres, central forest parks, gateway plazas and expansive public spaces designed to promote community interaction and sustainable urban living. Chanchal Rana said the Detailed Project Report (DPR) for the project is expected to be completed within nine months.

6th-century statue in Harishankar damaged



Plaint seeks protection of heritage, action against miscreants

SUDHIR MISHRA ■ Balangir

The Kalbhairab statue located in Harishankar Temple was damaged on May 21 by some unknown miscreants, causing concern and hurting the sentiments of local people.

The statue is a historically and religiously significant antiquity, believed to have been made and installed during the 6th-7th century BC. It holds deep religious and cultural importance for the Adivasi communities of the region.

The deity is revered as a goddess associated with ancient knowledge of chemistry and is linked to Buddhist traditions, where a similar form is known as Kalantak Bhairab, points out a complaint submitted to the police.

The act appears to be a deliberate and malicious attempt to insult and outrage the religious sentiments of the Adivasi communities and followers of the deity. It constitutes an act of religious betrayal and vandalism of a protected cultural heritage site, it said.

It is pertinent to mention that several other ancient statues and heritage structures in the surrounding areas of Harishankar Temple and Gandhamardhan hills are also vulnerable and lack proper security and safeguards. The incident highlights the urgent need for protection of the sites. The Gandhmardan Yuba Surakhya Parishad and the Kosal Mukti Morcha have lodged a complaint with Khaprakhol police, seeking strong action against the culprits.

Coop official held for Rs 33.8L embezzlement

Vigilance alleges funds for cooperative schemes diverted through forged account entries

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha Vigilance arrested a cooperative banking official for allegedly embezzling Rs 33.80 lakh of government funds by manipulating financial records and concealing deposits meant for agricultural and cooperative development schemes, exposing a major case of financial fraud in the cooperative sector.

The accused, Patitapaban Majhi, a former Secretary of the Garhsantri Service Cooperative Society (SCS) under the Angul United Central Cooperative Bank (AUCCB) in Banarpal Branch, is currently working as a Banking Assistant at the AUCCB headquarters in Angul.

According to Vigilance officials, an investigation was launched following allegations of embezzlement of government funds exceeding Rs 33 lakh. The probe revealed that the alleged financial irregularities occurred during the 2017-18 financial year



when Majhi was serving as Executive Secretary of the Garhsantri SCS.

Investigators alleged that Majhi, who was responsible for managing daily collections and government deposits, made a series of fraudulent and fabricated entries in the society's day books to conceal the diversion of funds. While the records reportedly showed the accounts as balanced, cash amounting to Rs 33,80,963 was allegedly never deposited with the Angul United Central Cooperative Bank.

The diverted funds were reportedly linked to agricultural and cooperative development schemes and were allegedly misused for personal purposes.

Based on the findings, Odisha Vigilance registered a case before the accused was arrested and forwarded to the Court of the Special Judge, Vigilance in Angul.

AIKS calls for farmers' stir against proposed US-India trade deal

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Warning that a proposed US-India trade agreement could adversely affect Indian agriculture and farmers' livelihoods, the All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) on Saturday called for a united nationwide movement against what it described as policies that would expose the country's farming sector to economic exploitation and unequal competition.

The call was made at the expanded Odisha State Council meeting of the AIKS held here. AIKS national president Rajan Kshirsagar said Indian farmers have continued to struggle for issues such as remunerative prices, a legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price, irrigation facilities, agricultural infrastructure, storage facilities and food-processing units even decades after Independence.

Kshirsagar claimed that the proposed trade agreement



with the United States would place Indian farmers under severe economic pressure and urged the farming community to intensify protests from villages to Delhi against policies perceived as harmful to the agricultural sector.

AIKS national general secretary Ravula Venkaiah highlighted the organisation's role since its formation in 1936 under the leadership of Swami Sahajananand Saraswati and stressed the need to strengthen

farmers' movements through greater grassroots mobilisation.

AIKS national vice-president Ashish Kanungo announced a State-wide padyatra across Odisha during July and August on farmers' issues and plans for a major state-level "Krushak Garjan" rally in Bhubaneswar on September 1.

State secretary Kshirod Singh Deo outlined future programmes, including a drive to enrol one lakh members and

expand village-level branches.

CPI State secretary Dr Prasanta Mishra called for protecting fertile agricultural land from indiscriminate mining and industrial projects and demanded greater emphasis on agro-based industries to strengthen the rural economy.

The meeting was presided over by AIKS State president Shashibhusan Swain and State working president Sriharsha Rath.

CREDAI Odisha new office-bearers elected

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

CREDAI Odisha hosted its Installation Ceremony for the Leadership Team 2026-2028 here on Friday. The ceremony marked the formal induction of the new leadership team, setting the tone for a progressive and transformative tenure for the real estate sector in the State.

The newly-elected governing body of CREDAI Odisha for 2026-2028 includes Swadesh Kumar Routray-chairman, Anil Kumar Agarwal- president, Umesh Khandelwal- vice-president, Umashankar Panigrahy- vice-president, Dinesh Singhania-vice-president, Surya Kanta Behera- vice-president, Bibhu Chandan Jena- secretary and Ronak Dugar- joint secretary.

The event brought together distinguished office-bearers,



senior industry leaders, key stakeholders, policymakers and developers from across Odisha and the country.

The event was graced by eminent dignitaries including Sampad Chandra Swain, Minister Industries Skill Development, Suresh Pujari, Minister Revenue and Disaster Management, MLAs Babu

Singh, Susant Kumar Rout, Sofia Firdous, Asit Kumar Mohapatra, chairperson, Odisha Real Estate Regulatory Authority (ORERA) and Swadesh Kumar Routray, vice president (East), CREDAI National.

Swadesh Kumar Routray, chairman, CREDAI Odisha said, "This new tenure repre-

sents a renewed commitment to excellence, transparency, and responsible growth. As the real estate sector in Odisha continues to expand, our focus will be on strengthening trust, adopting best practices, and working closely with all stakeholders to create a sustainable and future-ready ecosystem."

Coastal security beefed up in Kendrapada

Amid Bangladeshi infiltration fear

PNS ■ Kendrapada

Odisha has intensified coastal security in Kendrapada district amid fears of illegal Bangladeshi infiltration following strict verification and eviction drives in West Bengal.

Security agencies in the State are maintaining heightened surveillance along vulnerable sea routes, particularly in the Mahakalpada and Rajnagar areas.

Sources said thousands of suspected infiltrators without valid documents are currently stranded near the border in West Bengal. Intelligence agencies suspect that some may attempt to enter Odisha via coastal pockets, prompting State authorities to step up preventive measures.

Acting on the directions of the Kendrapada SP, marine police stations have intensified operations, including drone surveillance and night

patrolling along the coastline. Officers are maintaining strict checks at sensitive sea routes to prevent illegal entry into the state.

Police officials said, "We are keeping a tight check on every intelligence input. Night patrols are being conducted 30 to 50 nautical miles into the sea. Individuals passing through the sea border are being checked for fishing cards, Aadhaar Cards and other identity documents. Those without valid IDs are being handed over to the police."

Authorities said that intelligence inputs are being continuously monitored and shared among senior officers to strengthen security measures.

Fishing activities are under close observation, with the Fisheries Department reporting 392 registered boats operating in the region. Security agencies remain on high alert to prevent any possible infiltration through Odisha's coast.

CM dismisses ex-BBSR Addl Tehsildar

Action follows inquiry into violations in land, revenue matters

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Reinforcing his government's zero-tolerance stance on corruption and administrative misconduct, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday ordered dismissal of former Bhubaneswar Additional Tehsildar Chittaranjan Pilla from government service following a departmental inquiry that found him guilty of serious irregularities in the discharge of official duties.

Pilla had served in Bhubaneswar before being posted as Deputy Collector in

Jagatsinghpur. During his tenure in the State capital, complaints were received regarding his handling of land and revenue-related cases, prompting the government to initiate a detailed inquiry.

Senior departmental officers conducted an investigation into the allegations and examined decisions taken by the officer in various official matters. The inquiry reportedly established multiple irregularities and violations of prescribed procedures in the execution of his responsibilities.

Based on the findings of the inquiry, the government initiated disciplinary proceedings, following which the Chief Minister approved the stringent action of dismissal from service.

Land under siege

Weak laws, slow eviction fuel rise of govt land grabbing

Enacting of Land Grabbing Prohibition Act demanded

SAROJ MISHRA ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha continues to grapple with a silent but deepening crisis of large-scale encroachment of government land, allegedly aided by weak enforcement mechanisms, prolonged eviction processes and the absence of a strong legal deterrent against land grabbing in the State.

Land, considered one of the most valuable assets of any State, has increasingly become the target of organised encroachment in Odisha, particularly in rapidly urban areas like

Bhubaneswar where land prices have skyrocketed as demand for land for residential and commercial purposes have expanded rapidly over the years.

Sources said organised land grabbers or mafia often target prime government land knowing fully-well that eviction proceedings can drag on for years under the existing legal framework. Glaring examples are Shyampur and Kalarahanga in which encroachments were demolished by the BDA and the BMC..

What has further intensified concerns is the absence of stringent penal provisions against land grabbing in Odisha. While States such as Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Gujarat have enacted

specific Land Grabbing Prohibition Acts under which illegal occupation of government land is treated as a criminal offence, Odisha's legal framework is seen as comparatively weak and largely procedural.

Although the Odisha Land Grabbing Prohibition Ordinance was brought in during 2015, it has reportedly remained ineffective in practice with little visible implementation on the ground. Legal experts point out that in many cases, land grabbers continue to operate without fear because the chances of immediate eviction or criminal prosecution remain low, said Orissa High Court senior advocate Subrat Kumar Nanda.

Questions are also being raised over what critics describe as a "reward mechanism" for encroachment. In several urban eviction drives, encroachers have allegedly demanded compensation, rehabilitation benefits or alternative accommodation from the government. In some instances, authorities, citing humanitarian or administrative compulsions, have provided monetary assistance or rehabilitation packages, which experts warn may inadvertently encourage further encroachment.

Urban planners and former revenue officials said encroachment of government land should not be normalised under any circumstances as it directly af-

fects public infrastructure, road expansion, civic amenities and future development planning. They argue that if misappropriation of even a small amount of government funds constitutes a criminal offence, illegal occupation of government land worth crores of rupees should attract equally stringent criminal liability.

Notably, in a major disclosure during the State Legislative Assembly session in December 2025, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi had said that over 500 acres of government land under the Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation (BMC) limits have been illegally encroached.

Majhi stated that en-

croachment has spread across several prime localities of the State capital, including Bapuji Nagar, Ashok Nagar, Ganga Nagar, Saheed Nagar, Surya Nagar, Bomikhal, Jharpada, and Patia.

According to the Chief Minister's written reply to a query, influential persons are occupying these government lands, leading to long-standing disputes and blocking civic development. Majhi informed the House that the State Government is taking firm steps to clear the encroachments. A special committee has been formed to carry out eviction drives and reclaim the occupied land. So far, more than 70 acres of government land have been freed from unauthorised occupation.

Govt grants Rs 1.08 cr for Sital Sasthi fest

Support for 21 festival committees to promote western Odisha's iconic cultural spectacle

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha Government on Saturday announced a financial package of Rs 1.08 crore for the celebration of Sital Sasthi in Sambalpur. The assistance is expected to strengthen arrangements for the week-long festivities that transform the city into a grand stage for religious devotion, cultural expression and community participation.

Acting on the directions of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, the Odia Language, Literature and Culture Department will extend financial assistance to 21 Sital Sasthi festival committees across Sambalpur district.

Sital Sasthi, which commemorates the celestial marriage of Lord Siva and Goddess Parvati, is among the largest cultural and religious festivals of western Odisha. The celebrations are renowned for their elaborate wedding rituals, colourful processions, traditional music, folk performances and participation of thousands of devotees from across the State and beyond.

Culture Minister

Suryabanshi Suraj said the festival embodies Odisha's rich traditions, cultural heritage and spiritual ethos. "The government remains committed to preserving and promoting such vibrant cultural traditions. This assistance will help celebrate the festival with greater grandeur and enthusiasm while further strengthening Odisha's distinct cultural identity at the national and global levels," he said.

The government views Sital Sasthi not only as a religious occasion but also as a major cultural event that showcases the unique traditions of western Odisha and contributes to the promotion of cultural tourism in the region.

Attack on Yadav community

BJD team to probe incident in Nabarangpur

PNS ■ Nabarangpur

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) has constituted a fact-finding team to investigate the alleged attack on members of the Yadav community in Ladhuapada village under Chandahandi block of Nabarangpur district, an incident that has reportedly triggered widespread concern across Odisha.

In a Press release issued on Friday, BJD president and former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik expressed deep concern over the incident, stating that the affected persons belong to Raighar block. Taking serious note of the matter, Patnaik constituted a multi-member fact-finding committee to visit the affected areas, interact with victims and local residents, and assess the ground situation.

The team has been tasked with ascertaining the circumstances surrounding the incident and submitting a detailed report with recommendations to the party leadership at the earliest.

Among the members of the delegation are MLA Manohar Randhari, former MPs Ramesh Chandra Majhi and Pradeep Majhi, along with several senior party leaders.

Condemning all forms of violence and intimidation, the BJD reiterated its commitment to justice, peace, and communal harmony in the region. The party also urged the administration to conduct a fair and impartial inquiry and take stringent action against those responsible for the alleged attack.

In Puri dist

Man kills father-in-law over financial feud

Absconds after dumping body in forest

PNS ■ Puri

A man has been accused of killing his father-in-law and disposing of the body in a nearby forest in Siddhipur village under the Astaranga police station in Puri district.

The deceased was identified as Bhramar Nayak, a resident of Mudugal village. He had been living with his daughter and son-in-law. Family members alleged that tensions had been brewing between the father-in-law and son-in-law for the past several days over financial matters.

The duo was involved in another heated argument on

Friday, following which the son-in-law allegedly assaulted Nayak, resulting in his death. It is further alleged that after the incident, the accused dumped the body in a nearby forest in an attempt to conceal the crime.

The allegations were made by the deceased's elder daughter, who claimed that her brother-in-law was responsible for the murder.

Police reached the spot, recovered the body and initiated an investigation.

"Stringent action should be taken against him (son-in-law). He has killed my father over a financial matter. We have registered a case against him. He should be jailed," said the deceased's daughter Sundari Nayak.

Gram Parivartan Project

DBF distributes sprayers, pumps

PNS ■ Cuttack

Strengthening its commitment to rural prosperity and sustainable farming, Dalmia Bharat Foundation (DBF), the corporate social responsibility (CSR) arm of Dalmia Bharat Limited, supported 23 farmers in Cuttack through distribution of agricultural equipment aimed at improving irrigation and farm productivity.

As a part of the initiative, the DBF distributed battery-operated sprayers to 13 farmers and 2-HP petrol-based motor pumps to 10 farmers cultivating paddy. Under its Gram Parivartan Project, the DBF has been supporting farmers with 2-HP petrol-based motor pumps and sprayers since 2023 benefiting



340 farmers till date.

The event was graced by Unit Head Kapilas Cement Works Debi Prasad Das and Technical Head Jagadish Bala, who encouraged the farmers to adopt improved practices for long-term prosperity,

along with the Sarpanch and village leaders.

Commenting on the initiative, Unit Head Das said "Agriculture continues to be the primary source of livelihood for thousands of rural families, and improving access to

basic farm infrastructure remains critical for sustainable growth. Through this initiative we aim to enable farmers with greater efficiency in cultivation and strengthen sustainable farming practices at the grassroots level."

In Koraput

Postmaster suspended for embezzling DBT funds

PNS ■ Koraput

The Sub-Postmaster of Baipariguda post office in Koraput was suspended on Friday in connection with an alleged Rs 50-crore fraud involving misappropriation of government Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) funds in Koraput and Nabarangpur districts.

The suspended official was identified as Gouranga Sarkar, the then Sub-postmaster of Jhariaogon Sub-Post Office in Nabarangpur district. The suspension order was issued by the Postal Superintendent following allegations of large-scale financial irregularities.

According to allegations, DBT funds meant for beneficiaries under various government schemes were allegedly siphoned off through fraudulent transactions at Jhariaogon, Kodinga and Dabugaon post offices.

The BJD had earlier alleged that lakhs of rupees belonging to beneficiaries were diverted from their savings accounts and transferred elsewhere through manipulation of records and transactions.

Following the allegations, an investigation was launched by the postal department into the suspected embezzlement and misuse of funds.

Chief Postmaster Satyabadi Biswal said that investigation was also underway against two other postmasters in connection with the fraud case.

Officials are currently examining financial records, beneficiary accounts and transaction details to ascertain the extent of the alleged scam and identify those involved.

Bags Sagar Aankalan Awards

PNS ■ Paradip

The Paradip Port Authority (PPA) has achieved a major national distinction by securing top rankings at the prestigious Sagar Aankalan Awards, organised by the Union Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

The awards were presented during a special ceremony held on Friday evening in Mumbai, where Paradip Port Authority (PPA) Chairman PL Haranadh received the awards from Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal. The ceremony brought together senior dignitaries from the maritime sector.

Under the Sagar Aankalan Certificate for Logistics Port Performance, the Paradip Port Authority secured 1st Rank in recognition of its outstanding overall performance in handling dry bulk cargo in the category of ports handling greater than or equal to 5 Million Tonnes. The PPA also secured 3rd Rank for its outstanding overall performance in handling container cargo in the category of ports handling less than 0.5 million TEUs.



During the event, the Union Minister launched the Logistics Port Performance Index (LPPPI), a comprehensive national benchmarking framework developed under the Sagar Aankalan initiative to assess and improve the competitiveness, efficiency, and service standards of Indian ports.

Expressing his happiness over the achievement, PPA Chairman Haranadh said, "These recognitions are a testament to the dedication and hard work of the entire Paradip Port family, including employees, stakeholders, port

users, and trade partners. Securing the 1st Rank in Dry Bulk Cargo performance and the 3rd Rank in Container Cargo performance under the Sagar Aankalan framework reflects our unwavering commitment to operational excellence, efficiency, and customer satisfaction. We remain committed to strengthening India's maritime sector and supporting the nation's economic growth."

work developed under the Sagar Aankalan initiative to assess and improve the competitiveness, efficiency, and service standards of Indian ports.

UAE Odia community holds Utkal Divas



PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Utkal Divas was celebrated with great enthusiasm in Abu Dhabi, bringing together members of the Odia community residing in the United Arab Emirates.

The event was organised by the Odia Community under the leadership of its president, Sougata Nayak.

The celebration witnessed the participation of more than 600 Non-Resident Odias, making it one of the prominent cultural gatherings of the Odia diaspora in the region.

The programme highlighted Odisha's rich cultural heritage through traditional cuisine, music and performances by renowned artists from the State.

India's Ambassador Deepak Mittal attended the event as the chief guest.

Cuttack Barabati MLA Sofia Firdous joined the celebration as the special guest.

Both dignitaries interacted with members of the Odia community and appreciated the efforts made to preserve and promote Odia culture and traditions outside India.

The event featured traditional Odia food and performances by distinguished artists from Odisha, offering attendees a cultural experience reminiscent of celebrations back home.

NGT to probe land grab by Wanderla in Khordha

Encroachment of 1.86 acres of forestland alleged

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The National Green Tribunal, Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata, has recently taken cognisance of allegations of illegal encroachment of forest land, unauthorised construction, tree felling, and environmental violations by Wanderla Holidays Limited in Khordha district.

Acting on an original application filed by environmental activist Dillip Kumar Samantaray, the Bench issued notices to the company, the Chief Secretary of Odisha, Secretary of Forest and Environment Department, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Collector, DFO and Tehsildar of Khordha, State Pollution

Control Board, SEIAA Odisha, IDCO, Ground Water Authority, and the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Petitioner's counsel Akhand informed the Bench that the dispute pertains to alleged unauthorised occupation of DLC/deemed forest land by Wanderla for expansion of its amusement park at Kumarbasta village.

Wanderla was allotted 50.63 acres by the State through IDCO for a water amusement park. However, the company allegedly encroached upon an additional 1.86 acres from Plot No. 834 under Khata No. 687, classified as DLC forest land, the petition said.

It alleged that Wanderla built a boundary wall and water treatment plant on the land after clearing trees and

INBRIEF

Odisha honours para-archer Payal for double gold feat

Bhubaneswar: Fresh from a triumphant campaign in Bangkok, Odisha's para-archery star Payal Nag returned home to a hero's welcome on Friday with the State Government felicitating her for



winning two gold medals at the World Para Archery Series 2026 and securing a berth in the upcoming Asian Para Games. The State Government presented Payal with a cash award of Rs 5.46 lakh for her double-gold feat and an additional Rs 3.23 lakh for procurement of sports equipments to support her future training and preparations. The felicitation ceremony was attended by Sports and Youth Services Minister Suryabanshi Suraj.

Menstrual hygiene awareness held in Mandap slum

Bhubaneswar: To mark the Menstrual Hygiene Day, an awareness drive was organised by Actionaid in collaboration with Center for Child and Women Development (CCWD) and Rogi Arogya Samiti at Mandap Slum under Ward No. 9 here. The objective was to educate the young girls about proper use of sanitary pad and its disposal system. ASHA worker Pramila Sahoo and Anganwadi worker Shantilata Behera focused on government schemes related to health of young girls and women. Among others, Kalyani Rout and Snigdha Das spoke. Swarnapriya Senapati proposed a vote of thanks.

Lawyer Pattnaik appointed Keonjhar CWC head

Keonjhar: Eminent lawyer and rights activist Dr Sandeep Kumar Pattnaik has been appointed as the Chairperson, Child Welfare Committee, Keonjhar. He was selected by a high level committee of the State government. Earlier, he was the member of CWC from 2018-2023. During the period, he did a lot for protection of child rights not only in Keonjhar district but also in the entire State. Dr Pattnaik has been working on child rights and human rights issues for years and he too heads citizen organisation, Voice Of Kendujhar.



OSDMA holds tsunami mock drill in Puri village

Konark: A tsunami mock drill was conducted at Bangar village under Tarokar Gram Panchayat in Gop block of Puri district with the joint cooperation of the Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) and the Gop block administration.



As part of the exercise, prior warning announcements about an approaching tsunami were made in Bangar village through public announcement systems, drums and bells. Following the warning, villagers from the coastal Bangar area and nearby villages were evacuated with their valuable belongings and domestic animals to designated safe shelter locations situated away from the sea. Later, a public awareness meeting was held with the support of the administration.

U-14 football, U-16 kabaddi tourneys in B'pur in June

Brahmapur: The Ganjam District Athletic Association will organise the U-14 2nd Inter-District Zonal Football Championship, CM Trophy-2026, at Mahatma Gandhi Stadium, Brahmapur, from June 1 to June 7. For the first time, the association will also conduct the U-16 Inter-District Zonal Kabaddi Championship from June 5 to June 7 at the same venue. Around 160 boys and 160 girls will participate in football, while 112 boys and 112 girls will take part in kabaddi. The district boys' and girls' volleyball teams will participate in the CM Trophy-2026 at KIIT, Bhubaneswar, on June 4 and 5. The district boys' and girls' Kho-Kho teams will participate in the championship at Angul from June 2 to June 4. District Athletic Association general secretary J Kameswar Rao informed about the championships.

Haryana assures 1,000 cusecs water via Munak canal: CM Rekha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

As water shortages deepened across large parts of Delhi, with residents in several neighbourhoods reporting dry taps for days, mounting dependence on tankers and growing concerns over contamination, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Saturday the Haryana Government has assured supply of 1,000 cusecs of water through Munak Canal.

The chief minister also said that more than 980 tankers making over 6,000 daily trips are being deployed to ease the crisis.

Additionally, by establishing additional borewells in the Yamuna Khadar area, water production capacity has been increased by 10.5



MGD per day. Earlier, the chief minister held a detailed review meeting on drinking water challenges and water supply situation with Delhi Jal Board (DJB) officials through video conferencing from the Chief Minister Seva Sadan. Water Minister Pravesh Sahib Singh, Delhi Jal

Board Vice Chairperson Satish Upadhyay, Member Ajay Mahawar, Chief Secretary Rajiv Verma, Delhi Jal Board Chief Executive Officer Vijay Bidhuri and other senior officials were present in the meeting. "To tackle the water-related challenges, an assurance has

been given by Haryana to maintain a minimum of 1,000 cusecs of water supply through the Munak Canal," she said after speaking to Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini.

Being a landlocked city, Delhi is dependent on neighbouring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh for raw water supply. DJB's overall average production capacity ranges between 990 and 1,000 million gallons per day (MGD) of drinking water, including the tubewells.

The chief minister also said that efforts are being made to provide relief to the people through more than 980 tankers and over 6,000 daily trips.

In the past several days, the DJB had been struggling to maintain its average water

production which has fallen by around 90 million gallons per day (MGD) from its target of 1,002 MGD this year.

In the past week, the DJB received 11,055 complaints on its helpline, out of which more than 8,500 complaints have been resolved, claimed officials.

"In the past few days, the DJB was receiving around 900 to 924 cusecs of water through the Munak Canal, the neighbouring state has assured to provide 100 cusecs more than the allocated amount of 924 cusecs to Delhi," a DJB official said.

Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh said the water level at Wazirabad has fallen from its normal pond level of 674.5 feet to nearly 668 feet, resulting in a shortage of raw water and affecting

water production by nearly 80-100 MGD.

"The water level at Wazirabad has fallen from its normal pond level of 674.5 feet to nearly 668 feet, resulting in a shortage of raw water and affecting water production by nearly 80-100 MGD. This situation has been aggravated by the prolonged dry spell in the upper reaches of the Yamuna." Emergency pumping arrangements have also been installed in the dry riverbed, contributing nearly 40 MGD of additional raw water. Along with around 130 MGD being diverted from the canal system, these measures have helped sustain operations at the Wazirabad and Chandrawal Water Treatment Plants, "Singh added. The Chief Minister directed the officials to take

immediate action considering every incident of water leakage seriously.

The chief minister directed the officials to take immediate action by considering every incident of water leakage seriously.

"Every single drop of water is precious and any kind of wastage will not be acceptable. The Government is paying equal attention to immediate relief measures as well as long-term solutions so that the water crisis can be permanently controlled in the future," the chief minister said in a statement.

The chief minister also said that the DJB will be roping in IIT Roorkee to conduct a feasibility study of bringing water through a pipeline from Haryana as a long-term effort.

Delhi Zoo expands cooling facilities to beat heat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Zoological Park has introduced a two-shift rotation system for animals and expanded cooling facilities, including pools, sprinklers and shaded shelters, to protect wildlife from Delhi's intense summer heat.

An official said tigers, lions, and bears share an enclosure in two shifts: 7 am to 1 pm and 1 pm onwards. This schedule reduces prolonged heat exposure and ensures each animal gets adequate access to cooling and shade, he said.

Zoo Director Sanjeet Kumar said that animals are taken to pools in shifts.

To maintain hygiene, stagnant water in moats is regularly cleaned, disinfected and refilled, he said.

"Shade structures over water pools prevent water from overheating, while sprinklers and water coolers are operational in all enclosures, including those for tigers, lions and leopards," Kumar said. He said green mats have been installed in several enclosures to reduce direct sunlight.



Class 11 student stabbed over bike dispute dies in Ghaziabad; three arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A 17-year-old Class 11 student who was stabbed during an altercation in Ghaziabad on May 28 died during treatment at a private hospital in Noida on Friday, police said. The police added that three of the five accused have been arrested, and raids are underway to trace the two who are still at large.

The deceased, Surya Chauhan, was a resident of Navneet Vihar Colony in Khoda. He was stabbed in the abdomen on the afternoon of May 28 after being called to a meeting spot. He died around noon on Friday, nearly two days after the attack. ACP Indirapuram Abhishek Srivastava said police were alerted at around 3:30 pm on May 28 and rushed the injured teenager to a hospital. He was subsequently referred to a private hospital in Noida, where he succumbed to his injuries.

DCP City Dhawal Jaiswal said preliminary investigation suggests the accused and the deceased were known to each other. A dispute had broken out between the two sides over riding a motorcycle, which escalated into a heated argument. In a fit of anger, one of the accused allegedly stabbed Chauhan, the officer



Surya Chauhan FILE PHOTO

said. The family's account of the attack is more harrowing than the initial dispute suggests. According to Chauhan's family members, he received a phone call asking him to come to a meeting spot on the afternoon of May 28. He went there with his friends. An argument broke out, following which he was stabbed in the abdomen.

Chauhan ran nearly 200 metres in an attempt to save his life, but the assailants chased him and attacked him again with knives. DCP Jaiswal confirmed that police are conducting raids to nab the main accused, who had called the victim to the meeting spot.

Among the three arrested is a person from whom the knife used in the crime was procured, the officer said. Acting on a complaint lodged by Chauhan's family, police have arrested the three accused, and efforts are underway to arrest the remaining two.

MCD revives Jangpura pet park project, tenders issued now

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Dog lovers have a reason to rejoice with the national capital will get its first dedicated pet park later this year, as the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) revives a nearly two-year-long-pending project in Jangpura, which has remained non-operational since its initial development.

Fresh tenders for the facility, spread across around 1.5 acres near the Jangpura-Defence Colony flyover, were issued earlier this month. The civic body is appointing a private operator under the public-private partnership (PPP) model who will manage the facility and develop additional amenities. "Last time, we could not find a suitable second party to carry out the



operations of the project. This time, we are certain that an agency will be finalised within the next two to three weeks," an MCD official said.

Officials said the facility is expected to become operational once an agency is finalised to run and maintain the park and will accommodate more than 20 dogs at a time. The park, planned as a comprehensive

pet-friendly space, will include dedicated exercise and play zones, dog trails, swimming and tracking areas, grooming and medical facilities, and a day-care centre for working pet owners.

Officials said the facility is designed with safety measures such as double-gated entry points to prevent dogs from accidentally running out of the premises. "The project is under process, and we are certain that the facility will be opened in the next few months after the operational arrangements are put in place," the official said.

The pet park was originally developed in early 2023 as a multi-purpose space offering recreational, veterinary and day-care services for pet dogs. However, despite the

completion of basic infrastructure, the facility never opened to the public due to delays in appointing an operator, officials said.

Officials aware of the matter said the project was initially held up because the MCD Standing Committee, which was required to approve rates and offers submitted through the tendering process, was not constituted.

Even after a committee was formed in 2025, the proposal remained pending. Under the first phase of development were repurposed to house a veterinary clinic, grooming centre and cafeteria. The civic body earlier stated that entry to the facility will be regulated, allowing only registered and vaccinated pet dogs inside.

Nausena Shaurya Vatika to inspire youths: Yogi Adityanath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday that the newly inaugurated 'Nausena Shaurya Vatika' in Lucknow would inspire youth, strengthen patriotic values, and offer visitors a chance to understand the Indian Navy's role, sacrifices and technological capabilities.

Addressing a gathering after inaugurating the facility along with Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Adityanath said the Naval-themed memorial and open-air museum was jointly developed by the Indian Navy and the Uttar Pradesh



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and State Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak greet the gathering in Lucknow PTI

Government and would become a significant attraction in the state capital.

Welcoming Singh to his parliamentary constituency, the chief minister thanked

Indian Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and his team for completing the project within the stipulated timeframe in collaboration with the state Government.

Adityanath said visitors coming to Lucknow would now witness not only India's cultural heritage and traditions but also a centre showcasing the country's defence capabilities. Referring to the warship INS Gomati, the museum's centrepiece, he said the vessel safeguarded India's maritime interests for years before being decommissioned in 2022 and now inspires future generations on the banks of the Gomti River. "When people think big and work towards larger goals, the outcome creates opportunities that inspire society. Through this museum, young people will learn about the Indian Navy,

the conditions in which our soldiers serve and the challenges they overcome," he said. The chief minister said respect for the armed forces is one of the key pledges highlighted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the vision of a developed India.

He said soldiers guarding the country's borders in extreme weather conditions and naval personnel protecting maritime frontiers enable 140 crore Indians to live peacefully and contribute towards national development.

"Development can move forward effectively only in a secure environment," said Adityanath, adding that cit-

izens also have a responsibility to honour the sacrifices made by armed forces personnel. Emphasising the importance of national security, he said strong defence capabilities commanded respect globally.

The chief minister said while peace remained the highest virtue in normal circumstances, decisive action was necessary when the nation's security is threatened. Adityanath said the museum, along with the recently inaugurated Rashtriya Prerna Shal, would emerge as a major centre showcasing the courage and valour of India's armed forces.

Phones buzz in Delhi-NCR with 'Extremely Severe Alert'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Millions of mobile phones buzzed across Delhi-NCR and parts of western Uttar Pradesh on Saturday after receiving an "Extremely Severe Alert" notification on their mobile phones, accompanied by a loud warning buzzer.

The alert warned of severe weather conditions, including thunderstorms, lightning, strong winds, heavy rainfall and hailstorms, likely to affect several districts over the next few hours.

The message stated: "Severe Thunderstorm (wind speed 60-80



kmph, gusting to 90 kmph) with Lightning and Moderate to Intense Spell of Rain and Hail is very likely to occur at a few places over Aligarh, Baghpat, Bulandshahr, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Ghaziabad, Hapur, Mathura and Meerut in the next three hours."

The emergency notification triggered concern among many residents, with several taking to social media to share screenshots of the alert and express surprise over the loud alarm tone that accompanied the message. The alert was part of the government's cell broadcast warning

system, designed to rapidly disseminate emergency weather information to people located in potentially affected areas.

The national capital saw a further drop in the minimum temperature on Saturday, as the air quality improved to the satisfactory category, amidst heavy winds and light to moderate rain in several parts of the city.

A yellow alert issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) remained in place for Saturday and Sunday as well. Palam recorded a minimum temperature of 21.5 degrees Celsius.

RTI activist shot dead in Punjab

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Phagwara

Jalandhar-based RTI activist Simaranjit Singh was shot dead by unidentified armed individuals near the gate of Mahru village under the Satnampura police station area on Saturday, police said.

Jalandhar Range DIG Naveen Singla said a 32 bore pistol was found near the body of Singh, while a 12 bore rifle was found in an SUV parked near the crime spot. He was shot from a close range in his head. "We are scanning CCTV footage and have



formed multiple teams of police for tracing the assailants who will be arrested soon," the DIG said, adding that if needed, help will be sought from counterintelligence for solving the murder case. Singla, along with Kapurthala SSP Gaurav Toora, rushed to the spot after getting the information about the murder.

Delhi reconstitutes Kanwar committee, Kapil Mishra named chairman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday reconstituted the high-level Kanwar Committee ahead of the annual Kanwar Yatra, appointing Culture and Law Minister Kapil Mishra as its chairman. The Chief Minister directed departments to ensure smooth arrangements for lakhs of devotees expected to pass through the Capital during the pilgrimage season.

The committee has been tasked with coordinating preparations related to traffic management, security, medical services, electricity, water supply, and facilities at Kanwar camps during the Shravan month. Five BJP MLAs, Ajay Mahawar, Anil Sharma, Kamail Singh, Sanjay Goel, and Umang Bajaj, have been inducted as members of the panel.

Announcing the decision, the Chief Minister said the Delhi Government would con-



tinue to provide assistance to Kanwar camps and ensure improved arrangements for pilgrims this year as well. She said the yatra was not merely a religious gathering but also a reflection of India's cultural traditions and social harmony. "The government's objective is to ensure that every Kanwariya entering Delhi is treated with dignity and provided proper facilities," the Chief Minister said.

The Kanwar Yatra sees lakhs of devotees carrying holy water from the Ganga to offer at Shiva temples during Shravan. Delhi serves as a major transit route for pilgrims travelling through neighbour-

ing states, leading to large-scale temporary camps and traffic diversions across the city every year.

Officials said the newly formed committee will soon begin meetings with district magistrates, Delhi Police, the Public Works Department, the Health Department, and other agencies to review preparedness. According to the Chief Minister's Office, the focus areas this year will include route planning, installation of waterproof tents, uninterrupted electricity and water supply, deployment of medical teams, and strengthening of security arrangements.

Several feared trapped as five-storey building collapses in Saket

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Several people are feared to be trapped under debris after a five-storey building collapsed near Saket metro station in south Delhi on Saturday evening, officials said. The entire five-storey structure collapsed, flattening into a massive mound of rubble, according to officials at the site.

According to police officials, the building had a coaching institute on the ground floor, and construction work was underway on upper floors. It is suspected that those trapped may be students.

"Three to four people who were found trapped under the collapsed structure were rescued. They sustained only minor injuries and have been taken for treatment," a local resident said.

"It was a glass-facade commercial building, and no one can say with certainty how many occupants were present inside at the time of



Rescue operation underway after a building collapsed at Saket area in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

the incident. Usually, around 300 to 400 people are in the building, though we hope fewer people were inside when the collapse occurred," he added.

Locals said the impact was limited to a few smaller structures nearby, while the surrounding buildings remain intact. A small adjoining building which housed a mess was also affected, locals said.

People present there were evacuated, and apart from a few minor injuries, no major issues have been reported so far.

"It was a commercial building where students attended classes and people worked. Had the collapse occurred during office hours, the death toll could have been much higher. I think even at this hour, three or four people would have been

EVERY EFFORT BEING MADE TO RESCUE THOSE TRAPPED, SAYS CM

New Delhi: Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said on Saturday that every possible effort is being made to safely rescue those trapped in the building collapse near Saket Metro Station.

The Delhi Fire Services received a call regarding the building's collapse at 7.44 pm. The incident took place on Western Marg in Saidulajab near Saket Metro Station.

Expressing her concern about the incident, Gupta

stated that the situation is being closely monitored.

"Teams from NDRF, Delhi Fire Services, Delhi Police, DDMA, MCD, CATS and Civil Defence are carrying out rescue operations on a war footing," Gupta said in a post on X.

The Chief Minister emphasised that every effort is being made to rescue those trapped and to provide immediate assistance to the affected families.

doing night shifts, and they might be injured or dead. The construction was of poor quality," another local said.

The Delhi Fire Services (DFS) received a call regarding the building collapse at 7.44 pm. The incident took place on Western Marg in Saidulajab near the Saket Metro station.

Seven fire tenders were rushed to the spot.

Visuals from the site showed the building reduced to heaps of concrete, twisted metal and broken pillars, with debris strewn across the area. Residents and neighbours rushed to the spot carrying flashlights and mobile phones, trying to ascertain the extent of the damage and check whether anyone was trapped under the debris.

Navy Chief pitches for maritime theatre command

MANASH PRATIM BHUYAN
■ New Delhi

Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi on Saturday strongly pitched for a dedicated naval theatre command combining capabilities of all three services and the coast guard as he cited the West Asia conflict to underline that maritime security is directly linked to energy security and national resilience.

In an exclusive interview with PTI, Admiral Tripathi said theaterisation must remain strictly guided by operational effectiveness and enhancement of national military capability rather than organisational restructuring alone.

Framing military jointness as a combat necessity rather than a concept, the Navy Chief said any new joint structure must prioritise maritime realities while fully aligning with broader national objectives of integrated warfighting.

In view of the unfolding crisis in West Asia, the setting up of a dedicated naval

theatre command incorporating assets and personnel from the Army, Navy, Air Force and the Coast Guard has gained traction. The overarching blueprint envisions two additional theatre commands to manage the Northern and Western fronts.

Admiral Tripathi also argued that the ongoing instability in West Asia and the Russia-Ukraine conflict serve as “stark reminders” that security is interconnected, and distance from conflict does not equate to distance from its consequences.

“The first and most critical lesson is that maritime security is directly linked to economic security, energy security and national resilience,” he said.

“Disruptions to shipping routes, energy flows, and maritime logistics chains have immediate strategic and economic consequences, affecting insurance costs, shipping patterns and the strategic balance across entire regions,” he said.

The Navy Chief said the



character of warfare itself is undergoing a profound transformation and that the maritime battlespace today extends seamlessly from seabed to space, while cyber, electromagnetic, information and cognitive domains have become equally vital.

Modern conflict is increasingly defined by speed, scale and simultaneity. Speed is no longer just an enabler; it is a distinct capability, he noted.

The Navy Chief, citing the

recent conflicts, also said that the myth of short and swift wars has been debunked and that strategic depth no longer guarantees sanctuary in an era of long-range precision weapons and persistent surveillance.

“Additionally, the weaponisation of tariffs and the disruption to interdependent supply chains require nations to shift their logistics from “Just-in-Time” efficiency to “Just-in-Case” resilience,” he said.

“To build a future-ready force, the Indian Navy is aggressively incorporating AI, quantum technologies and autonomous solutions across all domains in line with the Indian Navy Roadmap for Uncrewed Systems,” he said.

Admiral Tripathi said the Indian Navy's future fleet will not be defined by platforms alone, but by the integrated effects it can generate, utilising an optimum mix of low-cost, high-impact uncrewed solutions alongside high-end crewed platforms.

“We are continuously refining our operational concepts, training methodologies, space-based communications and cyber resilience to ensure our people can operate in a highly transparent, contested and data-driven environment,” he said.

The Navy Chief said the past year has been a definitive testament to his force's commitment to being a first responder and a preferred security partner.

“In an increasingly inter-

connected and contested maritime environment, the Indian Navy maintained an unprecedented operational tempo across our areas of interest — clocking nearly 11,000 ship days and over 50,000 flying hours in 2025 alone,” he said.

“Foremost among these achievements was Operation Sindoor, which demonstrated our absolute combat readiness, operational reach and deterrence potential.”

“The immediate deployment of a Carrier Battle Group and our forward operational posture in the Northern Arabian Sea forced the Pakistan Navy to remain confined to harbour or close to the Makran coast,” he said.

This aggressive posturing, Admiral Tripathi said, reaffirmed the Navy's ability to rapidly position combat power and successfully shape the strategic environment, while simultaneously impacting their maritime economy due to increased shipping risks and elevated insurance premiums.

(PTI)

Himanta meets PM, seeks guidance for Assam Govt



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday paid a courtesy visit to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at his official residence in New Delhi. The meeting marked Sarma's first formal interaction with the Prime Minister after assuming office as Chief Minister for a second consecutive term.

During the meeting, the Chief Minister briefed the Prime Minister on the initial progress and priorities of the newly formed NDA 3.0 Government in Assam.

Sarma also expressed gratitude to PM Modi for his continued support and leadership, while seeking his guidance and blessings for the State's future development initiatives.

Sharing details of the meeting on social media platform X, Sarma wrote, “Honoured to call upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji in New Delhi today. I briefed him on the headstart we are making in the NDA 3.0 Government in Assam, thanked him for his unstinted support and sought his continued blessings and guidance in the coming years.”

Delhi court frames MCOCA charges against Sukesh Chandrasekhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A Delhi court has framed charges against conman Sukash Chandrasekhar, his wife Leena Paulose, and 19 other accused persons in the ₹217 crore extortion case, invoking the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act against all 21 accused. The development comes in the case that had drawn national attention after Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez was named in a related money laundering investigation by the Enforcement Directorate for allegedly receiving expensive gifts purchased from the proceeds of the crime.

Special Judge Prashant

Sharma of the MCOCA Court at Patiala House Courts, New Delhi, framed charges on May 30, 2026, under multiple sections of the Indian Penal Code covering cheating, extortion, forgery, criminal conspiracy, and impersonation, along with Section 66 of the Information Technology Act and Sections 3 and 4 of MCOCA. The case pertains to FIR No. 208/2021 registered at PS Special Cell and subsequently investigated by Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing.

Additional Commissioner of Police, Economic Offences Wing, Ravi Kumar Singh, described the development as a landmark moment in a four-year investigation. “The framing of charges under



MCOCA in this highly significant and complex case marks a major milestone and reflects the strength of the evidence collected during the investigation,” Singh said.

Chandrasekhar ran his illegal extortion business from Tihar Jail in connivance

with jail officials. Impersonating himself as a senior government official including the Union Home Secretary, Union Law Secretary, and officers from the Prime Minister's Office, he contacted Aditi Singh, wife of former Ranbaxy promoter

Shivinder Mohan Singh, and extorted more than Rs 200 crore from her over a period of one year on the pretext of a contribution to party funds.

The EOW filed a chargesheet naming 14 accused, including Chandrasekhar and his wife Leena Maria Paul, in 2021, with charges under IPC provisions and MCOCA. The accused allegedly used hawala routes and shell companies to park money earned from the proceeds of crime.

The case widened significantly when the Enforcement Directorate named actress Jacqueline Fernandez in a supplementary chargesheet in connection with money laundering linked to the same extortion proceeds.

Pune hooch tragedy: Toll rises to 17 as 22 officials suspended

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Pune

Maharashtra minister Girish Mahajan on Saturday said the death toll in the spurious liquor tragedy in Pune and neighbouring Pimpri Chinchwad has risen to 17 or 18, as the State Government cracked the whip and suspended 22 police and excise department personnel for not acting against the illegal liquor trade.

A senior police official, however, said the death toll was 15. Eight persons, including the suppliers of the methanol which was added to the liquor, have been arrested so far.

Mahajan, who visited the families of the victims, termed the incident “very painful” and said most of the deceased were daily-wage labourers who consumed liquor adulterated with methanol. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has announced financial assistance of ₹5 lakh for the families of the deceased, while the local civic body has sanc-



tioned an additional ₹1 lakh in aid, he said.

“The death toll has reached 17-18. These people belonged to economically weaker sections and consumed this liquor as it was available cheaply,” the minister said.

Additional Director General Sunil Ramanand of the Criminal Investigation Department — which is probing the case — said that so far 15 people — 11 from Pimpri Chinchwad and four

from Hadapsar — have died after consuming the toxic liquor.

Mahajan said that local representatives have assured employment to one member from each affected family. “After the CID inquiry report is submitted, stringent action will be taken against all those responsible,” he said, adding that the chief minister has ordered a statewide crackdown on the illicit liquor trade.

Youth Congress launches campaign for national law to protect gig workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Indian Youth Congress on Saturday launched a nationwide campaign seeking a national law for gig workers and said millions employed by online delivery platforms continue to face exploitation, low wages and a lack of social security safeguards.

The demand was raised at the ‘Gig Workers’ Nyay Campaign’ conclave held at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters in Delhi, where workers from various app-based service and delivery platforms participated.

Addressing the gathering, Indian Youth Congress (IYC) president Uday Bhanu Chib said the organisation would press the Centre to enact a national legal framework for gig workers.

“We will appeal to the Government in Parliament to enact a national law for gig workers across the country, similar to the legislation already established in



Karnataka and Telangana,” Chib said.

He said while app-based work is often projected as flexible employment, the reality is that a majority of workers depend on it as their primary source of income and are forced to work long hours without adequate social security or labour protections.

“Their earnings, their time, their work and their future are increasingly determined by algorithms. Yet, they have little transparency regarding payments, incentives or

account deactivations,” he said. Claiming that the IYC had interacted with over 40,000 platform workers across more than 20 cities, Chib said workers frequently complained about arbitrary account suspensions, lack of insurance coverage and the absence of effective grievance redressal mechanisms.

Citing NITI Aayog estimates, he said India currently has over 7 million gig workers, and number is expected to rise significantly in the coming years, making a uniform national framework necessary.

Kuki groups protest in Manipur, demand release of 14 civilians

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Imphal/Churachandpur

Civil society organisations on Saturday organised protest rallies in Kuki-Zo inhabited areas of the State, demanding the release of 14 community members allegedly being held hostage and justice for the three Church leaders killed in the recent ambush.

In Churachandpur district, the rally was held under the aegis of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders' Forum (ITLF), with participants raising slogans against violence and

calling for immediate action against those responsible for the killings.

Protesters also demanded the safe release of the 14 Kuki abducted civilians.

They carried placards bearing messages such as, “How Long Will India Stay Silent?”, “No Citizen Should Live in Fear”, and “Stop Terror and Ethnic Intimidation”.

In a statement, Kuki Inpi Manipur said the demonstrations were organised to protest the alleged failure of authorities to identify and bring to justice those involved in the killing of the three church leaders.



LDF Govt emptied Kerala coffers, alleges Chennithala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thiruvananthapuram

Kerala Home Minister Ramesh Chennithala on Saturday accused the previous Left regime of emptying the State's coffers and incurring a huge debt, and questioned where all that money had been spent.

Chennithala also alleged that the CPI(M) was deliberately fomenting protests, especially using students, and unleashing violence to trouble the new UDF Government, which has barely taken charge.

Speaking at a party event in Thiruvananthapuram, the minister alleged that before stepping down from power, Pinarayi Vijayan emptied the treasury and imposed a huge financial debt on the state due to the numerous loans taken by his administration.

“No one knows why such huge debts were incurred, and on what all that money was spent. Certainly, all the expenditures and loans taken by the previous Government were not for the progress of the State,” he alleged.

There has been no response to the



allegations from Vijayan, CPI(M) or the LDF.

Chennithala claimed that the financial situation of the state was in a bad shape due to the alleged loot and corrupt activities of the previous Government and asserted that all the illegalities would be unearthed and the culprits would be punished.

He further said that with the new Government barely even 10 days old, protests have started in the State, with students being forced into agitations and clashing with police.

Even prominent Left leaders came on

the streets to protest the Enforcement Directorate (ED) action against Vijayan's daughter, he said.

“We did not order the ED probe. They (CPIM) should have faced it legally instead of unleashing violence. Is violence the solution to such matters?” the minister asked.

He said that on his orders, the police acted in a restrained manner when the CPI(M) activists resorted to violence outside Vijayan's rented home here and did not enter the Left party's office where some of those behind the attack on ED officials' vehicles were hiding.

“Despite that, we have till now arrested 22 persons in connection with the violence. Some were arrested in Kottayam. All those involved in the incident would be arrested and brought before the law without exception. Unhappiness over the loss of power should not be shown by resorting to violence,” Chennithala said.

In his speech, the minister also said that the Government was seriously considering releasing all the benefits of its employees, which had been put on hold by the previous administrations.

Punjab civic polls: Mann dismisses Opposition's complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Saturday said that, stunned by their crushing defeat in the municipal elections, Opposition parties have resorted to questioning the “most peaceful, free and transparent” civic polls ever conducted in the State.

According to Punjab State Election Commission (SEC) data, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) won 958 municipal wards, or more than 48 per cent of the 1,977 wards that went to polls on May 26, while the Congress finished a distant second with 397 wards.

The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) won 192 wards, the BJP 172, the BSP 7, while independent candidates won 251 wards, the data showed.

“The Punjab Government



ensured that these civic polls were conducted in a free, fair, transparent and peaceful manner. State Government employees who discharged their duties sincerely for the smooth conduct of these elections deserve accolades.

“However, the opposition is unable to digest its humiliating defeat and is now making a hoarse cry over the results,” Mann said while speaking to reporters in Chandigarh.

He was responding to a query on the Opposition charge that the AAP Government indulged in the misuse of official machinery in the May 26 civic body polls.

Mann pointed out that the fairness of the elections was evident from the fact that Opposition candidates had also emerged victorious in several wards and local bodies, including in contests decided by very

narrow margins.

“The transparency of these elections can be judged from the fact that in several pockets, Opposition candidates won seats, some even by thin margins. This clearly shows that the elections reflected the genuine will of the people,” he added.

He further said that opposition parties have repeatedly been rejected by the people of Punjab because they have failed to offer any positive agenda.

“Over the last four years, people across Punjab have solidly stood by AAP and its pro-people policies. We have won every by-election, panchayat election, zila parishad election, civic poll and other electoral contests with the active support of the people. These results reflect the immense faith that Punjabis have reposed in our Government,” said Mann.

Therefore, we have to be very cautious in terms of our deployment, in terms of our employment, and the protection which is required to protect our troops as well as the civilians in the border areas," he said.



PROSPECT

IREDA Q4 profit slips 1.7% to ₹492.63 crore



State-owned IREDA (Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency) has posted a marginal 1.77 per cent decline in net profit to ₹492.63 crore during the March quarter on account of higher expenses. The company had reported a net profit of ₹501.55 crore in the same quarter a year ago, the company said in an exchange filing on Friday.

During January-March, the company's total income rose to ₹2,181.28 crore from ₹crore in the fourth quarter of the preceding 2024-25 financial year.

Expenses increased to ₹1,562.14 crore from ₹1,285.91 crore in the last quarter of FY25.

For the entire FY26, IREDA posted a net profit of ₹1,874 crore, up from ₹1,698 crore in 2024-25. Annual income also rose to ₹8,338.89 crore from ₹6,755.69 crore in FY25. In a separate statement, the company said it has "posted the highest ever annual profit."

The Board of Directors recommended a final dividend of ₹0.75 per equity share for the financial year 2025-26, subject to approval of shareholders in the ensuing Annual General Meeting.

Military school alumni win top honours among passing-out NDA cadets



The three top medal winners of the 150th course of the National Defence Academy (NDA) share a common foundation: all are alumni of military schools and institutions known for nurturing future military leaders.

During the Passing Out Parade on Saturday, Rohit Kajla was awarded the President's Gold Medal, while the President's Silver and Bronze Medals were presented to Peeyush Rautela and Sahil Sharma, whose entry to NDA was itself a statement of perseverance, respectively.

Kajla said his father, a retired Havildar from the 3 Grenadiers Regiment, motivated him to pursue a career in the armed forces. "I hail from Jhajjar, Haryana. Inspired by my father to join the armed forces, I was enrolled in Rashtriya Military School, Bengaluru. The training at the school prepared me for a career in the military, and I cleared the NDA examination and the SSB (Services Selection Board) interview," he said.

BPTP launches Downtown 66 in Gurugram

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gurugram

BPTP Limited, one of the National Capital Region's established real estate developer, has announced the launch of Downtown 66, a premium residential development in Sector 66, Gurugram, with a Gross Development Value (GDV) of approximately ₹2,500 crore.

The residential development comprises 504 luxury residences in 3 & 3.5 BHK configurations, with prices starting from ₹5.32 crore. The project is being developed with an estimated investment of approximately ₹1,200 crore.

Positioned within one of the city's prominent urban corridors, the project is inspired by global downtowns where residences are seamlessly connected to social spaces, lifestyle experiences, and commercial hubs within a cohe-



sive, walkable ecosystem, according to a press release.

Rising to an approximate height of 150 metres along Golf Course Extension Road, Downtown 66 introduces a built form that integrates architecture with a layered living experience one that moves beyond conventional residential planning towards a more curated, immersive, experience-oriented format of urban living.

"A architecture and everyday living come together within a structured, walkable framework in Gurugram," said Vineet Nanda, Chief Business Officer, BPTP Limited.

Multilateral exercise PRAGATI 2026 concludes



TONY DAS ■ Guwahati/Shillong

The maiden edition of Multilateral Exercise PRAGATI 2026 concluded successfully at Umroi Military Station, Meghalaya, with a comprehensive 72-hour validation exercise that showcased enhanced interoperability, mutual trust and collective readiness among participating armed forces.

The exercise brought together over 400 military personnel from 13 nations — India, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Maldives, Myanmar,

Nepal, the Philippines, the Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Vietnam — under the banner of Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region (PRAGATI).

The closing ceremony was attended by six Vice Chiefs and more than 40 senior military officials from participating nations. Lt Gen Dhiraj Seth, Vice Chief of the Army Staff, hosted the visiting dignitaries and engaged in bilateral interactions aimed at strengthening defence cooperation and military-to-military relations.

Conducted in semi-moun-

tainous and jungle terrain, the exercise focused on counter-terrorism operations and featured intensive training through lectures, demonstrations and practical exercises. Participants trained together in mixed teams, undertaking activities such as rock craft, ambush and counter-ambush drills, slithering, jungle lane shooting, room and bus intervention, IED detection and casualty evacuation.

A major highlight of the exercise was the camaraderie and soldierly bonding displayed by participants, who trained and operated together under challenging conditions, fostering mutual understanding, trust and professional cooperation.

As part of the exercise, the Indian Army, in collaboration with FICCI and the Army Design Bureau, organised a defence equipment display showcasing indigenous defence technologies and next-generation military equipment.

Delhi's future lies in balancing urban growth with sustainability: LG Sandhu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Saturday said Delhi's future lies in balancing urban growth with sustainability, protecting ecological assets such as the Yamuna floodplains and green belts, and fostering greater citizen participation.

He outlined a long-term roadmap for transforming the national Capital into a model city under the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

Addressing an industry forum attended by corporate leaders from northern India, Sandhu called for a fundamental shift in Delhi's development model, saying the city must move beyond traditional "concrete expansion" and adopt an approach that integrates environmental protection, technological innovation and inclusive growth.

He emphasised that Delhi's future competitive-



ness would not be measured merely by its skyline or physical infrastructure but by its liveability, connectivity and environmental resilience.

"The future identity of global cities will be shaped by how effectively they balance development with environmental responsibility," Sandhu said, urging industry leaders to move beyond the role of service providers and become strategic partners in a collaborative governance ecosystem.

The lieutenant governor noted that Delhi's green

belts, biodiversity zones and the Yamuna floodplains should be viewed as integral to the Capital's future urban identity. He described them as the city's "legacy narratives" and said their preservation and restoration would be critical to ensuring sustainable growth.

Sandhu stated that the ongoing initiatives, including large-scale plantation drives, ecological restoration projects and the rejuvenation of public parks, reflect a transition towards urban planning that prioritises public

health, climate resilience and heat mitigation. A key pillar of the proposed "Viksit Dilli" framework, he said, is the restoration and protection of Delhi's ecological assets, including the Yamuna floodplains, ridge areas, green belts, water bodies and neighbourhood parks.

Highlighting efforts in this direction, Sandhu referred to the Jal Sanchay Abhiyan under which 101 water bodies across the city are being rejuvenated in the first phase. He said such initiatives represent a lasting shift away from a development model focused solely on physical expansion towards one centred on ecological balance.

A greener Capital, he said, is not only an environmental objective but also essential for addressing rising temperatures, improving climate resilience and enhancing public health, particularly for vulnerable sections of society.

CCPA slaps ₹7 lakh fine on Vajiram and Ravi for misleading UPSC success claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Central Consumer Protection Authority has imposed a penalty of ₹7 lakh on Vajiram and Ravi IAS Study Centre for publishing misleading advertisements, which claimed credit for candidates who cleared the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2023, most of whom had enrolled only in its free interview guidance programme.

The regulator found that a majority of candidates cited in the institute's advertisements had enrolled only in its free interview guidance programme (IGP), a short-duration course that begins only after candidates have already cleared Prelims and Mains on their own.

The institute had claimed on its official website, shortly after results were declared,



that "8 Rank Holders in the Top 10" and "37 Rank Holders in the Top 50" are from Vajiram & Ravi.

It had further asserted that "every year, more than 30 per cent of the officers selected through UPSC Civil Services Examination are students of Vajiram & Ravi," the regulator said in a statement.

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), headed by Chief Commissioner Nidhi Khare and Commissioner Anupam

Mishra, found that 7 out of the 8 top-10 rankers cited in the advertisement, and 29 out of the 37 top-50 rankers, had enrolled only in the free IGP, a fact the institute had not disclosed.

The concealment was not limited to 2023. Data examined by the CCPA revealed a consistent pattern of non-disclosure across multiple years.

In 2021, 86.36 per cent of the institute's successful candidates had enrolled only in the IGP; in 2022, the figure

was 78.31 per cent; in 2023, it rose sharply to 97.56 per cent; and in 2024, it stood at 71.69 per cent. In none of these years was this information disclosed on the institute's official website.

The CCPA noted that the IGP is a short-duration programme that commences only after a candidate has independently cleared both the Preliminary and Mains stages of the UPSC CSE, two highly competitive stages at which the institute had no academic contribution whatsoever. By prominently featuring such candidates alongside advertisements for comprehensive paid coaching programmes, without any disclosure of the specific course opted for, the institute created a misleading impression that these candidates were products of its full-length coaching.

DRI seizes over 24 kg of narcotic drugs in Kerala

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kochi

The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has seized over 24 kg of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances in Kerala and arrested five individuals, the officials said on Saturday.

The Kochi Unit of the DRI seized the contraband, including methaqualone, methamphetamine and hashish oil, at Kochi, Malappuram and Thiruvananthapuram under Operation Chakravayuh. They were intended for illicit distribution.

Five individuals, including key operatives involved in the trafficking networks, have been apprehended under the provisions of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.

The contraband was



ensure transparency and accuracy in the reporting and monitoring of election expenditure.

As mandated by the Election Commission of India, the submission and reconciliation of election expenditure accounts must be completed on or before the 30th day following the declaration of results, i.e., on or before June 4, 2026.

The meeting was attended by ADC and In-Charge of the Election Expenditure Monitoring Cell, Monika Borgohain, officials associated with the Election Expenditure Monitoring Cell, and other concerned officers.

Import duty cut to improve cotton supply: Textile Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre's move to exempt all customs duties on cotton imports for five months till October 30 will ensure adequate availability of cotton for the textile industry, lower input costs and boost the competitiveness of Indian textiles, the Textile Ministry said on Saturday.

Industry bodies welcomed the decision, terming it a "much-needed relief" for the apparel sector.

"The measure is expected to augment the availability of cotton for the Indian textile and apparel sector and provide much-needed relief



to the entire value chain," the Apparel Export Promotion Council (APEC) stated. In a notification, the Finance Ministry said the import duty exemption will be effective

from June 1, 2026.

"The measure, implemented during the cotton off-season, will ensure adequate availability of cotton for the textile industry, support

MSMEs, moderate input costs, and strengthen the competitiveness of Indian textiles" while safeguarding farmers' interests and ensuring market stability," the Textile Ministry stated.

APEC Chairman A Sakthivel stated that the decision will particularly benefit small and medium enterprises, which have been facing challenges due to the sharp increase in cotton and yarn prices.

He further noted that the removal of customs duty on cotton imports is the need of the hour and will help moderate domestic cotton prices.

In this regard, he appealed to all spinning mills to pass

on the benefits of lower cotton costs by rationalising yarn prices. This will help stabilise the entire textile value chain and enable garment exporters to secure and execute export orders more competitively in the coming months, Sakthivel said.

"Amid the ongoing global volatility and uncertainty, the 11 per cent import duty on cotton was acting as a major hindrance to the Indian textile and apparel sector in raising its global competitiveness since our major Asian competitors already have duty-free access to cotton," Confederation of Indian Textile Industry (CITI) Chairman Ashwin Chandran said.

Bihar Govt suspends two IAS officers on corruption charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Patna

The Bihar Government on Saturday suspended two senior IAS officers on charges of corruption, following recommendations based on findings shared by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Special Vigilance Unit (SVU), as per official orders.

According to separate orders issued by the General Administration Department (GAD), the suspended officers are Yogesh Kumar Sagar of the 2017 batch and Abhilasha Kumari Sharma of the 2014



batch. While Sagar is currently posted with the Social Welfare Department, Sharma is posted with the Rural Development Department.

The suspension orders stated that documents received from the ED through the SVU, along with evidence and recorded statements, indicated that the officers were allegedly involved in obtaining

undue monetary benefits through bribery, commissions and other favours.

Both officers have also been accused of receiving benefits from a contractor who was recently arrested by the SVU in connection with a corruption case. Officials said the ED had conducted an inquiry into the matter and subsequently communicated its findings to the SVU, recommending further action. The two officers have been placed under suspension with immediate effect under Rule 3(3) of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969.

FROM THE WORLD

HUNGARY

Bus crash: One killed, 23 injured

A bus carrying young athletes to a competition in Hungary early on Saturday veered into the opposing lane and then collided with a tree, killing the driver and injuring nearly two dozen, police said.

The accident occurred near the town of Hird in southwestern Hungary at around 5.20 am local time, Baranya County Police said in a statement, adding that the cause of the accident had not yet been determined.

There were 28 people on the bus including 19 youth competitors from the aerobics division of the nearby Pecs Sports School, as well as three coaches, six parents and the driver.

The bus was taking the students to the second round of a competition in the capital Budapest, around 120 miles to the north, when the crash occurred. (AP)

COLOMBO

SL suspends top Buddhist monk

The powerful Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka on Saturday stripped a senior monk facing charges of child abuse after weeks of relentless pressure.

Pallegama Hemarathana, one of the most prominent Buddhist monks, was on May 14 ordered to be remanded after being arrested on May 9 following an investigation into a case of child sexual abuse.

The 71-year-old monk is accused of abusing a 15-year-old girl in the temple premises located in the north central capital of Anuradhapura.

He, however, spent time in hospital without being transferred to jail until May 22, when he was granted bail.

The law enforcement and the Buddhist hierarchy came under criticism for attempts to go slow on the powerful monk and there was relentless pressure from all quarters. (AP)

India recalls Zia’s inspiring role in Bangladesh war on 45th death anniversary

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Dhaka

The Indian High Commission in Dhaka on Saturday recalled former Bangladesh president Ziaur Rahman’s role in the 1971 Liberation War, saying India stood alongside the people of Bangladesh then and continued to do so now, as it marked the 45th anniversary of his death.

“We recall his famous radio address of March 1971, which electrified the masses, inspired them on a path of resistance against oppression and led to national liberation,” the mission said in a statement, describing Zia as “one of their nation’s bravest sons”.

It added: “Today, as then, India stands shoulder to shoulder with the people of Bangladesh in a saga of shared sacrifices and a common journey towards progress and prosperity of both our peoples.”

A serving major in the Pakistan Army in 1971, Zia proclaimed Bangladesh’s independence on behalf of the country’s founding father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in a broadcast from the makeshift Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra on the outskirts of the southeastern port city of Chattogram.

His address came after Pakistani troops launched “Operation Searchlight” on the night of March 25, 1971, in

Soldiers report Gaza killings despite ceasefire

SAM MEDNICK ■ Tel Aviv

The Israeli combat soldier saw his teammates yelling in celebration, congratulating one another. They had just struck a vehicle of Palestinians driving near the Israeli-controlled part of the Gaza Strip, killing everyone inside.

The reservist said scenes like this had become common after a fragile ceasefire took effect in October. In the weeks he was stationed in Gaza, he said, he saw soldiers relishing the chance to go after those who crossed — or came close to crossing — the so-called yellow line that divides the strip into Israeli-controlled and Palestinian areas.

“It was a jungle,” the soldier, in his 20s, told The

Associated Press. “After the ceasefire, the order was: If someone crosses the line, you shoot them.”

As diplomatic efforts to strengthen the deal have stalled, three soldiers described to AP a sense of confusion in the embattled territory, with a lack of clarity on rules of engagement around the yellow line. Some commanders paid lip service to the agreement, the soldiers said, while privately voicing desire for the war in Gaza to continue. Sometimes, troops were too far away or acted too quickly to recognize who they were shooting, one soldier said — a concern echoed in comments from a whistle-blower group of veterans.

The soldiers’ accounts are



a rare glimpse into what’s happened in the Israeli-controlled part of Gaza since the deal went into effect seven months ago. The soldiers — reservists deployed throughout Gaza between October

and January who’ve since returned — spoke on condition of anonymity because they feared being ostracized over their comments.

They said they were speaking out because they were

angered and saddened by what they saw.

AP has documented shootings of Palestinian civilians, including children playing, close to the yellow line. And the soldiers said it felt like the killings never stopped amid the tenuous deal.

“To call it a ceasefire is a joke,” one soldier told AP.

Gaza’s yellow line has been ambiguous, and Israel has taken control of more land

When the ceasefire went into effect, Israel withdrew troops to a buffer zone demarcated by a yellow line, giving it control of just over half the strip.

Under the agreement, Israeli forces are meant to complete a fuller withdrawal, though there’s no timeline for that. The US-backed diplomat overseeing

the truce says progress is deadlocked over the central sticking point of disarming Hamas, upon which all other issues — including Israeli withdrawals and reconstruction — hinge. In the meantime, Israel has expanded control over additional territory in Gaza. Both sides have accused the other of violating the ceasefire.

The line’s exact location has been ambiguous and sometimes invisible. In some places, it’s marked with yellow blocks and barrels; in others, it at times hasn’t been indicated at all.

The Israeli military invited AP this week to see a section of the yellow line in central Gaza, near the Maghazi refugee camp. The line there was visible, demarcated by a

wide dirt path and small yellow markings. To the east was a desolate stretch of open space leading to a heavily fortified Israeli military post about 500 meters away.

An Israeli military commander said Hamas is active on the other side of the line and frequently sends people — militants and civilians — toward the line and even across it to test the army’s readiness and responses.

“There is no reason for anyone to come near the line,” he said, speaking on condition of anonymity under military rules. “There’s nothing here.”

The army says the entire line, which stretches the length of Gaza, is now clearly marked. (AP)

India, EAEU discuss limited interim trade deal: Russian minister

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

Moscow

India and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) are discussing a “limited and temporary” trade arrangement covering selected groups of goods as part of negotiations on a proposed free trade agreement, Russia’s Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov has said, according to a media report.

Describing the negotiations as “complex”, Reshetnikov said on Friday that the Indian side’s requests were “quite ambitious”. “Things are more complicated with India: the economy is larger, mutual interests are more complex, so to speak. And, frankly, our colleagues’ requests are also quite ambitious,” he said in an interview with the Vesti programme, according to the state-run TASS news agency.

“Therefore, we are currently discussing a limited and temporary free trade zone, that is, for a list of goods defined by product groups,” he added. Reshetnikov’s remarks came hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin said negotiations on trade liberalisation between India and the EAEU had gained momentum.

Speaking at a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council in Kazakhstan’s capital Astana, Putin was quoted as saying by TASS: “Last year trade agreements were concluded with Mongolia and the United Arab Emirates, as



Russia’s Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov

well as with Indonesia, intensifying negotiations on trade liberalisation with India.”

The Russian president added that the EAEU supported launching talks on free trade agreements with new partners and that all aspects of such cooperation would be carefully analysed.

The EAEU is a five-member economic bloc comprising Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia. It was established in 2015 to promote economic integration through a common market, removal of trade barriers and coordination of economic policies among member states.

The India-EAEU free trade agreement process has gathered momentum in recent years. In August 2025, India and the EAEU signed the Terms of Reference to formally launch negotiations for a free trade agreement. At the time, the two sides said bilateral trade turnover had reached USD 69 billion in 2024, up seven per cent from the previous year.

Truck carrying refugees crashes in eastern Afghanistan, killing 22

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kabul

A truck carrying Afghan refugees returning from neighbouring Pakistan overturned on a highway in eastern Afghanistan on Saturday, killing at least 22 people and injuring about 36 others, most of them women and children, officials said.

The accident occurred in Laghman province on the main highway linking Kabul, the Afghan capital, with Nangarhar province, said Abdul Malik Niaza, the spokesperson for the provincial governor.

He said among the dead were 10 children and five women, and the injured were taken to hospitals in Nangarhar.

The provincial director of public health, Aminullah Sharif, said 22



people were killed and about 36 injured. He said the accident occurred when the truck fell into a ditch after the driver fell asleep.

The passengers were among thousands of Afghans who recently returned from Pakistan, which launched a crackdown on migrants

WHO head visits Congo’s Bunia amid fast-spreading Ebola outbreak

JUSTIN KABUMBA/MARK BANCHEREAU ■ Bunia (Congo)

The head of the World Health Organisation Saturday arrived in eastern Congo’s Bunia, a city at the heart of an outbreak of a rare type of Ebola, where the virus still spreads faster than the response, despite better-organised health facilities and new aid arrivals.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus is expected to visit a treatment centre and meet local authorities, health workers and affected families in Bunia.

“The best way to address this is to provide all the necessary support to fight the disease at its epicentre and to continue offering every assistance needed,” Tedros told reporters late Friday.

The WHO said Friday

authorities have reported 906 suspected cases and 223 suspected deaths. Neighbouring Uganda has confirmed nine cases and one death, the Ugandan ministry of health said Friday.

The Bundibugyo virus, the current kind of Ebola, has no approved treatment or vaccine. “This is a difficult situation, and we recognise that. But the Democratic Republic of Congo has faced the Ebola virus many times before. We are confident that it can once again bring this outbreak under control,” Tedros told reporters Friday after meeting with Congo’s Prime Minister Judith Suminwa Tuluka.

Medical aid donated by the European Union arrived in Ituri, the heart of Congo’s Ebola outbreak, on Thursday, with more shipments expect-



ed over the next eight days.

The US announced \$80 million in additional aid on the same day, bringing its total commitment to more

than \$112 million.

Response efforts at Bunia’s Rwampara and General hospitals appear more organised, with additional staff,

protective gear and medical supplies, though patients continue arriving around the clock, an AP reporter observed on Friday. (AP)

4 rescued from flooded Laos cave, search on for 2 missing

JINTAMAS SAKSORNCHAI ■ Bangkok

Rescue workers in Laos said Saturday they have safely evacuated four villagers trapped in a flooded cave for 10 days, the day after another one was successfully extracted. Two men remain missing.

Lao and Thai rescue groups posted about the successful operation on social media, along with photos of the men lying on stretchers, wearing oxygen masks and being wrapped in foil blankets.

The villagers had reportedly entered the cave last week to look for valuable minerals before being trapped by flash flooding that blocked their way out. One other villager escaped in time and alerted



the authorities to the seven left behind.

Lao organization Rescue Volunteer for People said on its Facebook page that the water level inside the cave receded low enough for

them to leave with divers who had gone in to deliver food and water. They said they will continue their search for the two who remain missing.

The first man was safely

evacuated on Friday. According to rescuers, that operation took about 30 minutes.

Videos showed the moment he emerged from the water alongside a diver, catching his breath before struggling to crawl through a narrow, flooded passage and rising unsteadily to his feet. As rescuers helped him away from the tunnel, one could be heard warning others to be careful because his hands were injured. He was then wrapped in a foil blanket and helped into a seated position.

Another video showed the man getting out from the cave’s entrance with a lamp strapped to his forehead. He was walking unsteadily with the assistance of two men,

who handed him over to other team members amid a waiting crowd.

The villagers had reportedly entered the cave last week to look for valuable minerals before being trapped by flash flooding that blocked their way out. One other villager escaped in time and alerted the authorities to the seven left behind.

Five of them were found alive Wednesday. They were identified by their first names as Khamla, Mued, Ee, Ing and Laen.

The men had been supplied with water, soft food and foil blankets to keep them warm, although videos shot inside the cave suggested that their conditions continued to deteriorate.

Rescue teams from Laos

and neighboring Thailand were joined by Japanese and Malaysian colleagues. Indonesian, French and Australian specialists also reportedly arrived at the site in a rugged area in the central province of Xaisomboun, about 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of the capital, Vientiane.

Several of them had taken part in the complicated 2018 cave rescue in northern Thailand of 12 schoolboys and their soccer coach. More risky tasks await rescuers.

In a video shot Friday, just about an hour before the evacuation of the first man began, Thai rescuer Kengkaj Bongkawong of the Metta Tham Rescue Kalasin detailed the challenge they are facing in the operation. (PTI)

Vietnam BrahMos deal already signed, Indonesia pact in final stages: Defence Secy

GURDIP SINGH ■ Singapore

Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh said on Saturday that he understood a BrahMos missile deal with Vietnam had already been signed, though it was probably yet to be publicly announced, while a similar pact involving Indonesia was in the final stages.

“My understanding is that with both Indonesia and with Vietnam, the deal is in the final stages that in fact, for Vietnam, I understand that it has already been signed, probably not publicly announced, but it’s already been signed,” Singh said in Singapore, while answering a question on potential buyers of the missile system at the Shangri-La Dialogue.

The Philippines, which signed a contract worth nearly USD 375 million in 2022, was the first foreign buyer of the BrahMos missile system from India.

Indonesia said in March that it had entered into an agreement with India to procure the BrahMos missile system.

And, earlier this month, there were news reports that suggested Vietnam was close to signing a BrahMos missile deal with India. But Singh’s comments on Saturday came as the first official word on this in public domain.

However, the values of the Vietnam and Indonesia deals have not been officially disclosed yet.

Referring to the broader issue of sharing advanced defence technologies, Singh said countries gener-



Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh

ally sold sophisticated weapons systems and platforms to nations they regarded as friendly partners. “Obviously you share technology with people you trust,” he said.

He further said that India has a strong commitment to the ASEAN nations, “and we treat all of you as

“friendly foreign countries” with whom we can share advanced defence technologies”.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) comprises 11 member states — Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the

Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

Several ASEAN member states, including the Philippines and Vietnam, have overlapping maritime claims with China in the South China Sea — one of the world’s busiest trade routes. India’s BrahMos exports to countries in the region have drawn attention as New Delhi expands defence ties with Southeast Asian nations. Singh told delegates at the Shangri-La Dialogue that India was ready to work with partners across the region and beyond to build resilient supply chains, trusted defence partnerships, secure maritime commons and innovation cooperation. “Today, resilience has become one of the defining strategic requirements of our time.” (PTI)



Hegseth reassures Pacific allies, eases China threat talk

DAVID RISING ■ Singapore

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth assured Pacific allies on Saturday that Washington remained committed to the region, but toned down previous comments calling China a threat.

Speaking to a group of world leaders, diplomats and top security officials at the Shangri-La defence conference in Singapore, Hegseth said that the region “has profound implications for US security and prosperity” and that Washington’s priority was to “achieve a lasting and favourable balance of power in the Pacific.”

It was his second time addressing the forum, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS). Last year, he raised the ire of Beijing by warning of rapidly developing threats from China, particularly its aggressive stance



toward Taiwan. He said China is no longer just building up its military forces to take Taiwan, it’s “actively training for it, every day.”

This year, however, the meeting comes only about two weeks after US President Donald Trump visited Chinese leader Xi Jinping in Beijing, following which Trump called Xi a

“great leader” and said that they were going to have a “fantastic future together.”

Hegseth says China won’t be allowed to dominate the region

Hegseth, who was with Trump in Beijing, said the two leaders had agreed that China and the US should “build a constructive rela-

tionship of strategic stability, based on fairness and reciprocity, reaffirming that while our nations will vigorously protect our respective interests, we can secure practical, mutually beneficial agreements where our interests align.”

However, he said it was still an American priority to ensure that China is not allowed to dominate the Indo-Pacific.

“There is rightful alarm regarding China’s historic military buildup and the expansion of its military activities in the region and beyond,” he said.

“We share a clear-eyed assessment of that security environment and a mutual understanding that a Pacific dominated by any hegemon would unravel the regional balance of power and undermine the equilibrium we all seek to preserve.”

Later in the day, Chinese Maj Gen

Meng Xiangqing praised Hegseth’s remarks about the meeting between Xi and Trump, saying the consensus the leaders reached “should provide strategic guidance for China-US relations over the next three years and beyond.”

“During his meeting with President Trump, President Xi Jinping made it clear that such constructive strategic stability should be a positive form of stability centred on cooperation, a healthy form of stability in which competition remains within reasonable bounds, a normal state of stability in which differences are managed and kept under control, and a lasting form of stability that offers the prospect of peace,” he said.

US Sen Tammy Duckworth, part of a congressional delegation to the conference, accused the Trump administration of “cozying up” to China. (AP)

Bus hits cars in Virginia, killing five people and injuring 34: State Police

ERIK VERDUZCO/ALLEN G BREED ■ Stafford (US)

Stafford (US), May 30 (AP) A bus crashed into vehicles slowing for a work zone on Interstate 95 in Virginia early on Friday, killing five people and injuring dozens, including the driver, authorities said. The crash happened at about 2:35 am on southbound I-95 in Stafford County, near Quantico. All five of the people who died were in vehicles hit by the bus, and 44 people were taken to hospitals, including three in critical condition, police said.

“The preliminary investigation indicates that traffic was slowing southbound for an upcoming work zone,” state police said in a news release. “A bus failed to slow for traffic and struck six vehicles.”

Police said there were “approximately” 34 passengers on the bus.

“We have got patients in multiple hospitals. We have got the driver at a hospital here,” said Peyton Vogel, a Federal Transit Administration spokesperson who was on the scene. “I have got to say, this is one of the most tragic things I have ever seen. Absolutely tragic.”

Four of the fatalities were in one car, which caught fire. State police said the victims were a 45-year-old male, a 44-year-old female, a 13-year-old female and a seven-year-old male, all from Greenfield, Massachusetts. Their names were not released by police, but a



statement from the school the children attended in Greenfield said they were Dmitri and Ecaterina Doncev and their daughter, Emily, and son, Mark.

“The Doncev family was a cherished part of our school community, and their loss is being felt deeply by our students, families, faculty, and staff,” Providence Christian Academy said.

The fifth victim, an unidentified 25-year-old female from Worcester, Massachusetts, was in an SUV that was struck by the bus. State police identified the bus driver as Jing S Dong, 48, of Staten Island, New York. Charges are pending, authorities said.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said on the social media platform X that Dong was an American citizen originally from China who got his commercial driver’s licence two years ago in New York.

Mary Washington Healthcare said it received 19 patients from the crash. It posted online that seven of the patients were taken to its trauma centre in

Fredericksburg, where four were being discharged and three remained in treatment — one in serious condition and two in critical condition. Twelve were taken to its hospital in Stafford, where they were later discharged in good condition.

The National Transportation Safety Board posted online that it was sending a “go-team” to conduct a safety investigation into the crash and that it would have a spokesperson at the scene.

The southbound lanes had reopened by noon, but traffic was still backed up for a couple of miles, according to a state transportation advisory. Bus company had satisfactory record

The bus was operated by E&P Travel Inc., based in Kings Mountain, North Carolina. A compliance snapshot from the Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration showed only one injury accident involving the company’s vehicles in the previous two years and listed its safety rating as “satisfactory.”



Myanmar President U Min Aung Hlaing offers prayers during his visit to the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhi Gaya, Bihar

PTI

Ukraine keeps up assault on Russian oil infrastructure as Kyiv braces for more strikes

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Moscow

Ukrainian drone strikes caused fires at more Russian oil facilities overnight into Saturday, local Russian officials said, in what appeared to be the latest attack on Moscow’s vital oil industry.

Authorities in Russia’s Rostov region said falling drone debris sparked a fire that damaged an oil depot and tanker in the port of Taganrog, while officials in the neighbouring Krasnodar region reported a fire breaking out at an oil depot in Armavir for the same reason.

“Another facility of Russia’s oil industry has been reached — Armavir,”



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote on X Saturday of the attack in the Krasnodar region, noting that Armavir is “500 kilometres from our state border.”

“We are rightfully bringing the war back to where it came from,” he wrote.

Ukraine has expanded

its mid- and long-range strike capabilities, deploying drone and missile technology that it has developed domestically to battle Russia’s 4-year-old invasion. Attacks on Russian oil assets that play a key part in funding the invasion have become almost daily occurrences.

India-funded hospital foundation laid in Nepal’s Manang district



India and Nepal jointly laid the foundation stone for a hospital building that will be built with financial aid from New Delhi in a remote municipality in the northern Manang district of the Himalayan nation.

Deputy chief of the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu, Rakesh Pandey, and chairman of the Nason Rural Municipality, Dhan Bahadur Gurung, jointly laid the foundation stone for the construction of the hospital building at ward number 5 of the municipality on Thursday.

The hospital is being built with Indian assistance of NRs 56 million under the High

Impact Community Development project, a press release by the Indian Embassy said.

Gurung appreciated India for providing development support and expected that the new facility would help provide better health care services in the area, which is almost a day’s drive in a high altitude area about 280 kms northwest of Kathmandu.

India continues with aiding construction of colleges, schools, hospitals and community halls as part of the High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP) across the length and breadth of Nepal. (PTI)

Pak’s Dadu records 51.5 degree Celsius, new high in Sindh



A new record high temperature of 51.5 degrees Celsius was recorded on Saturday in Dadu as a searing heat wave continued to grip large parts of Sindh province of Pakistan.

Data from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) showed that Dadu’s previously recorded highest temperature was 51.4 degrees Celsius on May 18, 2016.

By late afternoon on Saturday, 51 degrees Celsius temperature was also recorded in Jacobabad, while in three other places — Shaheed Benazirabad (Nawabshah), Larkana and Mohenjodaro — the mercury hit 50 degrees Celsius, Sarfaraz Khan, chief

meteorologist at the Karachi office of the PMD, said.

By late afternoon, the temperature had peaked at 51.5 degrees Celsius in Dadu, which is a new maximum temperature record for the city, he said, adding, “It is not the first time. In Sindh province, higher temperatures have been recorded previously.

In 2024, temperatures in the Mohenjo-Daro city ruins had peaked at 53 degrees Celsius.”

Khan said while the maximum temperature recorded in Karachi was 37.5 degrees Celsius, other places in Sindh, like Sakrand, Ghotki, and Khairpur, had temperatures ranging from 46 to 49 centigrade. (PTI)

Trump plans to appeal order allowing all importers that paid struck-down tariffs to seek refunds

MAE ANDERSON ■ New York

Businesses big and small have started receiving tariff refunds after the US Supreme Court ruled that President Donald Trump lacked the constitutional authority to impose higher import taxes on goods from nearly every other country.

The process could grind to a halt, however, after the Trump administration said Friday that it intended to appeal a federal judge’s order to allow all companies that paid the invalidated duties to seek refunds, not just the ones that filed lawsuits.

Until the Department of Justice informed the judge of



its planned appeal, the refund system overseen by US Customs and Border Protection had been working fairly smoothly. Refunds reached the bank accounts of the first successful applicants on May 12, about three

weeks after importers and their customs brokers could start submitting claims through an online system, according to CBP.

Applications for refunds totalling USD 85 billion - more than half of the USD 166 billion

the agency estimated the government owes to companies that paid the tariffs on imported goods - were accepted for processing as of May 22, CBP reported in a legal filing earlier in the week. It said it had so far directed the Treasury Department to issue USD 20.6 billion in refunds.

The administration revealed its appeal preparations while objecting to a demand by Judge Richard K. Eaton for CBP Commissioner Rodney Scott to appear in the US Court of International Trade to answer questions about how long it would take to repay all 330,000 importers that might be eligible for refunds. (AP)

Tens of thousands march in support of Turkiye’s deposed Opposition leader

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Istanbul

Tens of thousands of supporters of the deposed leader of Turkiye’s main opposition party marched through central Ankara on Saturday.

Ozgur Ozel was removed from his post at the head of the Republican People’s Party, or CHP, by court order on May 21. Many people consider the ruling to be a politically motivated bid to neutralise the opposition.

Crowds earlier gathered in Guven Park in the heart of the Turkish capital to hear Ozel deliver a speech condemning his removal. They then joined



him on an impromptu march to the mausoleum of Turkiye’s founder, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk.

“They are attempting to replace the CHP’s elected chairman and appoint a trustee,” Ozel told supporters. “Today is the day to

restart our march to power. I wish this were an internal party matter. This is not an internal matter for the CHP. This is a matter between (President) Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the nation.”

The appeals court ruling overturned a 2023 party con-

gress vote that appointed Ozel as CHP leader. The court decision replaced him with his predecessor, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, sparking outrage among party supporters. Ozel, 51, succeeded the 77-year-old Kilicdaroglu after 13 years of mostly ineffective opposition to Erdogan.

Ozel has framed the court case, which centred on alleged irregularities in the congress vote, as the latest legal attack on the CHP. Criminal cases across the country, mostly alleging corruption in CHP-run municipalities, have seen hundreds of elected officials and party members detained.

Congress has taken on Epstein, but lawmakers and survivors still searching for accountability: US

STEPHEN GROVES ■ Washington

For nearly a year, public demand and increasingly outspoken calls from the survivors of Jeffrey Epstein’s sexual abuse have driven Congress to mostly set aside party politics and search for accountability.

Yet even after interviews with some of the highest-ranked officials to ever appear before a congressional investigation, including a former president, lawmakers have little to show in terms of criminal culpability for Epstein’s crimes or a definitive acknowledgment of government failure.

Democratic Rep. Ro Khanna of California, who sponsored legislation to force the release of case files on Epstein, told The Associated Press he is still asking, “Why there has not been a single investigation of people who have allegedly abused or committed financial crimes?” Lawmakers hoped to get some

answers to those questions during a transcribed interview Friday with Pam Bondi, President Donald Trump’s former attorney general who oversaw the release of the files.

But the interview left Democrats fuming at Bondi’s decision to defend the Trump administration’s handling of that material, as well as her refusal to answer questions about the Republican president’s involvement.

Democratic lawmakers also singled out Republican Rep. James Comer, chair of the House Oversight Committee, saying he has allowed administration officials to dodge tough questions from Congress. For survivors of Epstein’s abuse, including several who travelled to Washington to confront Bondi, it was a frustrating development at a time when many are weary of pleading their case before government officials.

They say the Department of Justice’s chaotic release of the files, which includ-



Victims of Jeffrey Epstein’s abuse, Liz Stein, Dani Bensky, Sharlene Rochard, Marina Lacerda and Andrea Sterling, are seen before former Attorney General Pam Bondi arrives for her deposition at the Rayburn House Office Building on Capitol Hill on Friday in Washington

REPRESENTATIVE IMAGE

ed nude photos and personal information of potential victims, has only added to a wider failure by the criminal justice system to believe or protect them.

“The government’s refusal to acknowledge the failures that were there have led to so much harm,” said Annie Farmer. “And I think whenever you’re

thinking about things from a perspective of justice or healing, without acknowledgment, it’s really hard to move forward.”

Push for accountability scrambled political lines

The committee’s investigation has been remarkably bipartisan at many

moments, with Democrats and Republicans joining to issue subpoenas and force witness testimony.

Besides Bondi, lawmakers have interviewed former Democratic President Bill Clinton, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Trump’s commerce secretary Howard Lutnick.

That effort shows lawmakers are willing to cross political lines when there is overwhelming public pressure to act. Dozens of women have accused Epstein, a wealthy and well-connected financier, of sexual abuse and rape, including in the years after he reached a deal with federal prosecutors in 2008 to dispose of a federal investigation in exchange for pleading guilty to state level sex offense charges in Florida.

Epstein, who was found dead in a New York jail cell in 2019 while facing sex trafficking charges, was accused of paying underage girls hundreds of dollars in cash for massages and then

molesting them.

His case has captured the public imagination as an example of how the rich and powerful escape accountability for wrongdoing. Lawmakers took up the cause last year after the administration failed to meet promises to provide transparency on the case.

Different continents, different standards?

Despite the investigation originating in the United States, the reckoning over Epstein has been relatively mild in the country compared with Europe. There, senior figures in governments including the United Kingdom, Sweden, Norway and Slovakia have all been forced to step down over their ties to Epstein. In its investigation, the House committee spoke to some of Epstein’s closest associates, including his former financial client Les Wexner, his lawyer Darren Indyke and his accountant Richard Kahn. (AP)

THE TREND IS ASIAN

Fueled by midnight screen cravings, Indian diners are finally ditching cheap instant packets for the fierce, authentic flavours of real Asian street food, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Japanese ramen is a quiet, almost meditative experience. You sit alone, focused entirely on the bowl. The broth runs deep and complex, built over hours from pork bones or dried fish. Korea takes that same noodle and turns it into a party. Spicy, loud, shared across a table with fried chicken and cold beer. Same noodle, completely different soul

For millions of young Indians streaming Korean dramas, hunger points directly to the spicy red broth eaten outside a Seoul convenience store. People watch characters slurp instant noodles by the Han River and suddenly their local takeaway choices feel inadequate. This screen-induced craving laid the groundwork for a boom in authentic Asian dining across India.

The same obsession spills into Japanese cuisine. Catch anyone fresh off a flight from Tokyo and they will talk your ear off about Ichiran ramen. People come back talking about those tight, quiet wooden stalls where they drank rich pork broth until the bowl was dry. Nobody just gets the noodles anymore. You have to get a side of pan-fried gyoza, making sure to drag them through black vinegar first. Then there's the chicken karaage - a quick squeeze of lemon cuts right through the fat, and you wash the whole thing down with a freezing cold Japanese beer. The local crowd has figured out these rituals. They expect a properly cured, soft-boiled egg to

melt into their soup. For years, satisfying that craving in India meant facing two bad options. You could pay absurd hotel prices, or you could boil a salty packet of instant noodles at home. The middle ground did not exist. Urban professionals wanted actual depth of flavour, but they lacked the two hours required for a sit-down dinner.

Shivang Gupta and Ruhi Gupta recently opened NODO in Delhi's Khan Market to address this nationwide shift. It is a grab-and-go kitchen built to serve premium Asian food in under seven minutes. Rather than offering an overwhelming diner-style booklet, NODO keeps it ruthlessly simple. They operate out of three defined spaces, which are a sushi counter dubbed The Tokyo Street, the Dimsum Lab, and a custom ramen station. Seafood lovers usually point straight to the baked dynamite or the classic spicy tuna. On the flip side, the kitchen treats vegetarian orders with equal respect, serving up massive asparagus tempura rolls packed tight with rich cream cheese.

But the ramen really steals the show. Has anyone ever managed to finish the Kimchi Umami bowl without breaking a sweat? That fermented

soup base delivers a serious chilli kick. If you prefer a richer soup, they spend hours boiling down a classic tonkotsu. They also serve a notoriously hot Seoul fire buldak and a really well-balanced Thai coconut curry. You dictate exactly what goes into the bowl. Pick your noodle base first, then load up on the add ons. People tend to go all in, asking for cuts of fresh salmon, crab meat, cubes of tofu, and those soy marinated eggs with yolks that melt straight into the hot liquid. What really surprised me is how they handle the non meat options. The kitchen managed to recreate all eight of their rich broths into purely vegetarian formats that sacrifice absolutely zero flavour. NODO follows strict traditional prep, using alkaline water for their noodles to prevent the heavy stomach feeling that comes with cheap supermarket packets.

This focus on precision shows exactly how far the local palate has evolved. Augusto Cabrera, the Head Chef at BOYA, witnesses this shift daily. He points out that Japanese cuisine grew rapidly here because people are finally chasing refined, global experiences. They want the freshness and craftsmanship that Tokyo is famous for.

DO YOU KNOW?



Kimchi is over 2,000 years old and packed with probiotics



Sushi was once considered fast food in Japan!



India's Korean noodle sales up 40 per cent

Interestingly, Cabrera notes a massive surge in Nikkei cuisine too. While a Japanese kitchen leans into quiet structure, a Korean table is total, beautiful chaos. You will probably fight over the last piece of tteokbokki. They drown these thick, chewy rice cakes in a spicy red sauce that is just so yummy. People literally grab crispy seaweed rolls to mop the plate clean. Then there is the japchae. Every single table seems to order a massive portion of these slippery glass noodles, which arrive hot, coated in roasted sesame oil, and mixed with thinly sliced vegetables.

And when Delhi hits peak summer heat, hot soup gets entirely replaced by mul naengmyeon. Slurping cold buckwheat noodles from a freezing, tangy broth feels like hitting a reset button. Japanese menus are seeing a similar shift towards shared grazing. Diners now match dry sake with charred yakitori skewers, or order plates of raw sashimi alongside agedashi tofu, letting the fried bean curd soak up all that warm, savoury dashi.

A whole generation is changing how it eats. Quick food no longer means processed junk. The sudden demand for authentic takeaway has traditional restaurants scrambling.

INDIA'S GROWING APPETITE FOR KOREAN AND JAPANESE CUISINE



Tteokbokki



Bibimbap



Gimbap



Japanese Cold Tofu



Sushi



Japanese curry rice

The living silk knot

Every hand knot carries a story no machine ever could

SAKSHI PRIYA

A single knot of silk holds the weight of a century. When Partition divided the subcontinent, SD Nirula crossed from Bannu to Delhi with a quiet determination to protect India's handwoven legacy.

Decades later, curator Sunayana Chibba framed an evening of live santoor music around walls draped in intricate, hand-knotted wool and silk rugs. These carpets take months to finish, with thousands of individual threads mapping generations of regional folklore.

At the center of the room sat Nazir, a Kashmiri master weaver operating a traditional loom. His fingers secured each live hand-knot with rhythmic precision. "How do you sustain this craft when the world moves so fast?" a voice asked over the wooden thud of his tools.

He pointed toward the half-finished Nizam pattern resting on his loom. Every single color used, he explained, carries the distinct memory of his ancestors. Machines will print flawless rugs in minutes, but they will never capture the deep sorrow hidden behind these traditional woven flower designs.

Nazir detailed a quiet crisis. Societies frequently fail to support the artists responsible for keeping history alive. These gifted creators face a forced silence, operating with zero stage left to stand on as cultural heritage spaces vanish.

With their recent inauguration at The Kunj in New Delhi, Kesari Home provides that missing platform. By funding the India Vision Foundation and partnering with rural families, Archana Nirula ensures human artistry survives intact. Will we let this heritage fade into machinery, or will we finally give these masters the stage they deserve?



PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR

ART CORNER

Jhuma Datta: Healing through the lens of nature

After surviving ovarian cancer, photographer Jhuma Datta turns to nature and the lens to rediscover healing, resilience, beauty, and emotional renewal

SAKSHI PRIYA

We spend so much of our time fighting the current when things fall apart. Maybe the real trick is simply letting the earth set the pace. That idea kept circling my mind at *Prakriti Raga: A Melody of Nature*. Jhuma Datta recently wrapped up this sixth solo photography show in New Delhi, and it felt completely different from a standard gallery evening. The opening night drew some of the most prominent names in the country. Chief Justice of India Surya Kant inaugurated the event, joined by Justice Vikram Nath, Justice PS Narasimha, Justice KV Viswanathan, and a former Vice President of India. Seeing them all standing there made one thing obvious. Datta has built a creative career from scratch, standing proudly on her own beside her husband, Supreme Court Judge Dipankar Datta.

When I asked her how falling ill changed everything, her answer came without hesitation. In 2016, an ovarian cancer diagnosis stopped her life cold. During the worst of the treatment, her camera and the natural world became her absolute lifelines. On her lowest days, just focusing on a tree or the open sky gave her some breathing room away from the reality of being ill. Nature never required her to be strong. It existed, and that steadiness helped her heal emotionally, reminding her she remained an integral part of something alive. On the days she felt physically wrecked, looking through a viewfinder at a random tree or an empty sky gave her room to breathe. The outdoors

expected absolutely nothing from her. That quiet presence mended her mind, proving she was still deeply rooted in a living world.

Because she used to paint, Datta brings a trained eye for colour and form to the lens. You see it in her global captures. Out in Kazakhstan, she photographed the Tiramisu Mountain. This whole landscape actually sat under the Tethys Sea a very long time ago. Today it leaves behind these amazing stacks of white, red and beige stone that pile

up to look like a massive pastry. Nearby at Bokty Mountain, she set her camera on Polaris and left the shutter open for three hours in freezing conditions. The stars carved bright circles across the sky. The final image shows a truth we usually miss. We are always moving forward, even when we feel broken.

Her work also takes you to the freezing sands of Jökulsárlón beach in Iceland. Arriving to a flat and grey sunset, Datta used her car headlights to light up the ice, creating a golden glow against the cold water. The surrounding walls featured Lake Antorno in Italy, bright tulips from Srinagar, Vagator's quiet beaches, and the Godafoss waterfalls.

Every photograph reads like life seen through a grateful survivor's eyes. By showcasing this immense beauty, her recently concluded exhibition leaves a lasting legacy that inspires a profound sense of responsibility to protect our precious planet for future generations.

CJI Surya Kant at Jhuma Datta's 'Prakriti Raga' exhibition

PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR

A medley of religion and faith

GYANESHWAR DAYAL

In a world where religion often divides, Taiwan does the opposite; it blends, layers, and celebrates. With over ten thousand temples, churches, and shrines packed into the island nation, it has earned its reputation as the most religiously diverse place in Asia. It is not merely tolerant of different faiths; it is a living mosaic where Buddhism, Taoism, folk religion, Christianity, and indigenous spirituality coexist and intertwine.

What makes Taiwan uniquely extraordinary is that its people rarely box themselves into a single belief system. According to a survey by Academia Sinica, 27.9 per cent of the population exclusively practises traditional folk religions, 19.8 per cent practises Buddhism, and 18.7 per cent practises Taoism. Yet, as many as 80 per cent of practitioners combine multiple traditions. Walk into any temple in Taipei or Tainan, and you might find Buddhist statues sharing an altar with Taoist deities and Confucian ideals under one ornate, dragon-crowned roof.

Contemporary Taiwan is predominantly a mixture of Buddhist and Taoist, with 93 per cent of the population identifying with these traditions. Taiwan follows Mahayana Buddhism, emphasising compassion and communal salvation, whilst Taoism brings a rich pantheon of gods and the pursuit of harmony with nature. They do not compete; they complement. Taiwanese folk beliefs combine these traditions alongside the deification of local heroes and ancestor veneration. The goddess Mazu, protector of sailors, is beloved, with millions joining annual pilgrimages in her honour. These festivals are living celebrations pulsing with devotion.

Christianity arrived via Dutch and Spanish missionaries in the seventeenth century. Today, 5.5 per cent identify as Protestant and 1.4 per cent as Catholic. Strikingly, many chapels imitate classical Chinese architecture, blending Western faith with Eastern aesthetics.

Taiwan's sixteen recognised indigenous peoples hold high Christian populations today, though their original animist traditions echo through oral traditions. Whilst only 4 per cent currently identify as followers of indigenous religions, 53 per cent feel a connection to those ways.

Taiwan's deep religious harmony is constitutionally guaranteed. Here, the divine wears many faces and is warmly welcomed through every single door.



TAIWAN'S ICONIC DRAGON AND TIGER PAGODAS RISE ABOVE LOTUS-FILLED WATERS, SHOWCASING THE ISLAND'S RICH CULTURAL HERITAGE



IN MEMORY OF



TEAM VIVA

Ujale apni yaadon ke hamare saath rehne do, Na jaane kis gali mein zindagi ki shaam ho jaye. The evening has finally descended upon one of the most brilliant custodians of our language. Bashir Badr is gone, leaving behind a profound quiet in a world already rapidly losing its cultural sanctuaries. We are watching the forced silence of our masters unfold in real-time, losing the very architects who kept our collective history breathing through their craft. It brings up the uncomfortable reality of how quickly we abandon our heritage, pushing our finest traditional artists into a forced silence with zero stage left to stand on. Now comes the hard part: keeping his words breathing in a world that barely stops to listen anymore.

BASHIR BADR'S POETRY STILL HOLDS OUR HEARTS

FOR SUGGESTIONS, FEEDBACK OR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE WRITE TO US AT FEATURES@DAILYPIONEER.COM

The Pioneer AGENDA

A democracy cannot thrive where power remains unchecked and justice is reserved for a select few
— John Lewis



The Government is legally empowered to take over properties, companies, assets and the management of organisations, but with a caveat: it must be done for the public good and in a democratic manner. The legitimacy of such actions depends strictly on necessity, transparency, fair compensation and public accountability, free from any hidden motive. The Delhi Gymkhana is a case in point

From land disputes to land ailments



VIVEK KUMAR SINGH
The writer is an ex-IAS officer and is presently Chairman, RERA Bihar

"Land dispute" is perhaps the most casually used phrase in India's administrative vocabulary. It appears in police station diaries, revenue court files, district reviews and civil litigation with remarkable frequency. Yet, despite its widespread use, the expression conceals more than it explains. Almost every kind of land-related conflict — from a minor boundary disagreement to a convoluted title suit - gets loosely classified as a "land dispute".

This generic approach is not merely semantically weak. It is administratively damaging. It leads to misdiagnosis, procedural confusion and inappropriate remedies. Different problems are treated alike, often resulting in avoidable litigation, delayed interventions and, in many cases, escalation into violence. India's land governance system, therefore, needs a conceptual reset. Instead of treating all conflicts as "land disputes", administrators should begin to view them as "land ailments" requiring proper diagnosis, sensitivity assessment and category-specific treatment.

The distinction is important. A land ailment framework recognises that land-related problems are not uniform in nature, intensity or consequence. A fraudulent registration, an encroachment on government land, a mutation mismatch, a title conflict among legal heirs and a seasonal boundary clash between neighbouring farmers are fundamentally different issues. They emerge from different causes, involve different stakeholders and require different interventions. Yet, the administrative reflex often remains the same - push the matter into prolonged civil litigation or invoke preventive policing provisions to maintain peace. Neither approach addresses the root cause.

The overreliance on civil suits has created a situation in which even routine issues drift into years of litigation. Simultaneously, excessive reliance on police intervention converts many land matters into law-and-order exer-

cises without resolving the underlying administrative deficiency. The result is a governance vacuum in which neither the legal nor the executive system produces timely closure.

A diagnostic framework offers a middle path. The first step in such a framework is classification. Land ailments should be categorised into distinct groups: title-related ailments, possession-related ailments, record-related ailments, tenancy-related ailments, public land ailments and acquisition-related ailments.

Title-related ailments generally arise from competing ownership claims, defective conveyances or inheritance disputes. Possession-related ailments involve encroachments, forcible occupation or boundary overlaps. Record-related ailments stem from inconsistencies between registration records, mutation records and cadastral maps. Public land ailments concern encroachments on commons or government land. Acquisition-related ailments emerge from disputes over compensation, rehabilitation or alignment.

This classification itself can significantly improve administrative clarity. Once the precise nature of the ailment is identified, the administration can design an appropriate response rather than mechanically pushing every case into the same procedural pipeline.

The second element is risk assessment. Not all land ailments carry equal potential for escalation. A dormant title dispute between absentee owners may not require urgent intervention, whereas a boundary dispute during the sowing season can rapidly deteriorate into violence. Encroachments involving community land may trigger collective mobilisation and political intervention. District administrations should, therefore, adopt a simple sensitivity matrix. Factors such as prior violence, proximity between parties, agricultural cycles, community mobilisation, political involvement and the strategic value of the land should be assessed systematically. Cases can then be categorised into low-, medium- and high-risk categories.

Such triage has practical value. Low-risk cases can be resolved at the circle/tehsil level through demarcation or mutation correction. Medium-risk cases may require supervision at the sub-divisional level. High-risk cases should come under the joint monitoring of the District Magistrate and Superintendent of Police. This allows

administrative attention to be directed where it is most needed.

The third pillar of the framework is category-specific treatment. Boundary- and possession-related ailments require rapid on-site demarcation using modern survey tools. Record-related ailments require synchronisation between registration and revenue databases. Community land ailments require geo-tagging, encroachment inventories and public disclosure. Acquisition-related ailments require transparent compensation mechanisms and grievance-redressal systems.

Technology can play a transformative role here. India's land governance architecture still suffers from fragmentation between registration records, mutation records and cadastral maps.

CONTINUED ON >> P12

Legacy of Government takeovers in India



J GOIKRISHNAN

The Government's power to take over property has become a hot topic after the Central Government issued a notice to the Delhi Gymkhana Club. The Government's power to take over has a long history. Earlier, the 'Right to Property' was a Fundamental Right, and the Government faced hardships in road and infrastructure construction. In 1971, Indira Gandhi removed

the Right to Property from the Fundamental Rights and changed the rule that, by paying a price, the Government can take over any property. The price decided by the Government and the people challenging it in the courts were curtailed.

This power of the Government was changed by the Janata Party Government in 1978 by making the Right to Property a Legal Right, and the prices of compensation were increased, and people could challenge the takeover in courts. Basically, the Government has to declare the reason or purpose for taking over a property. This was not seen in the Gymkhana Club eviction notice. The matter is now before the Delhi High Court, and this case will go on for many years, and both parties will go up to the Supreme Court. Many such high-profile takeover cases are now in court. During the initial days of the arguments, the Club cited the landmark judgment on Indian Express. When *Indian Express* was battling the Rajiv Gandhi Government, citing some changes made inside the building as a violation of land allotment, the Government issued a takeover notice. In the end, *Indian Express* won the case. Citing a series of violations, the Government has issued orders to take over the nearby Link House and Herald House. These two cases are still pending in different courts.

The Link House case has been pending in the Delhi High Court for the past six years. The Government won the case in the erstwhile *National Herald* newspaper's publishing office, Herald House, takeover. Now the matter has been pending in the Supreme Court since 2019. Meanwhile, the Enforcement Directorate (ED), in 2025, provisionally attached National Herald's properties in Delhi, Mumbai and Lucknow.

Recently, the Gujarat Government has taken over the land allotted to Asaram Bapu. The reason cited for the takeover was to construct a new stadium for the Commonwealth Games 2030. The High Court also ratified the Government's decision. Now the case is pending in the Supreme Court.

Not only properties, but the Government can attach anything. Indira Gandhi, during the Emergency period, appointed five directors in the Indian Express newspaper company in a bid to take over from Ram Nath Goenka. But the Government's attempt failed due to Goenka's objections at the very first board meeting. He picked a fight with

one of the Government-appointed directors, Congress leader Kamal Nath, and got the board meeting called off. Details of this incident are described verbatim in Arun Shourie's recent book, *The Commissioner For Lost Causes*. The *Times of India* was managed by a committee headed by Bombay High Court judges for more than 10 years when the promoters were arrested for financial violations, and Indira Gandhi, in the mid-1970s, returned the newspaper to the promoters.

India's famous takeover was in 1953 when Jawaharlal Nehru ordered the acquisition of Air India from the Tata Group. Another was the nationalisation of banks by Indira Gandhi in 1969, citing financial violations by private bankers. Many educational institutions were also taken over by the Government, citing mismanagement and corruption.

THE BJP GOVERNMENT OF UTTARAKHAND IN 2018 PASSED AN ACT TO TAKE OVER 51 TEMPLES IN THE STATE, INCLUDING KEDARNATH AND BADRINATH TEMPLES

In South India, many temples were taken over by the Government by creating a board to run the administration of temples. In Tamil Nadu, during the DMK regime, many temples were taken over, citing mismanagement. In 2014, the Supreme Court passed a landmark judgment on the takeover of a temple in a case filed by Subramanian Swamy. The apex court ordered that if there is any mismanagement in temple administration, the Government can take over and appoint a new management to rectify the problem, and it must be handed back to believers/priests within three years. The BJP Government of Uttarakhand, in 2018, passed an Act to take over 51 temples in the state, including Kedarnath and Badrinath Temples. The Government never explained why this Act was brought in. Due to huge protests from people and priests, after two years the Government withdrew the Act to save its skin from public anger.

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A 112-year old heritage: Why Delhi cannot afford to lose the Gymkhana Club

NAVINA JAJA

Delhi has never been a city built through erasure. It has always evolved through accumulation. The city's identity lies not in uniformity, but in layering — in the ability to preserve different historical rhythms simultaneously.

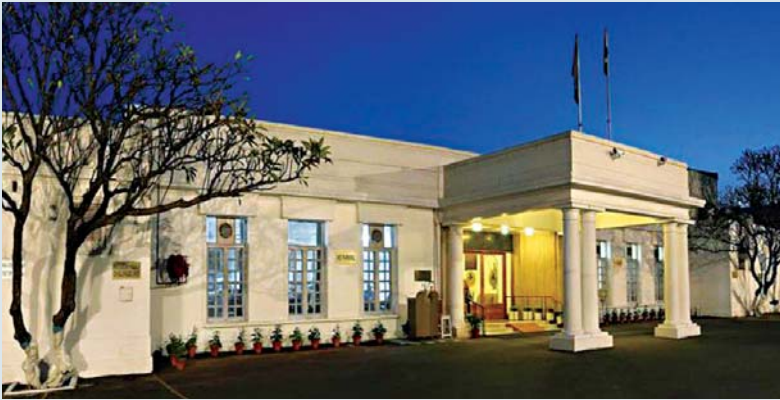
This is why Delhi cannot be understood solely through monuments of state power. Its real autobiography lies equally in the spaces where diplomacy unfolded, where political negotiations occurred informally, where cuisine, sport, etiquette, conversation and governance intersected, and where generations inherited not simply buildings but ways of inhabiting the city. Within this larger historical manuscript of Delhi, the Delhi Gymkhana Club occupies a singular place.

Established in 1913 as the "Imperial Delhi Gymkhana Club", the institution

emerged during the creation of New Delhi itself. Yet, over more than a century, it transcended the politics of its origin and became woven into the civic memory of the capital. Today, the Gymkhana survives not merely as a club, nor merely as a historic structure, but as one of Delhi's most important living heritage landscapes - a place where diplomacy, governance, sport, cuisine, ecology, sociability, prestige and memory continue to coexist.

Its significance lies precisely in the fact that it remains inhabited history.

Unlike static monuments, the Gymkhana functions as a living civic environment. Its lawns, verandahs, courts, dining halls, kitchens, bars, reading rooms and gardens preserve inherited rituals of gathering and encounter. Its atmosphere has been shaped not only by architecture, but by continuity itself - by the fact that gen-



erations have continued to use the space as part of Delhi's civic life.

Certain institutions become important because they preserve not only structures, but habits of civilisation. Delhi Gymkhana belongs to this cate-

gory. The political and diplomatic importance of Delhi Gymkhana forms an essential part of its historical significance. The informal political discussions and negotiations that ultimately paved the way for the Gandhi-Irwin

Pact of 1931 were notably held within the club's premises. The pact represented one of the defining moments in India's freedom movement, symbolising a critical stage in the constitutional negotiations between the nationalist movement and imperial authority.

Delhi during this period was not governed solely through official chambers. The city's political culture unfolded equally through gardens, residences, salons, clubs and semi-public civic spaces, where relationships, conversations and informal negotiations shaped political outcomes. Mahatma Gandhi, Lord Irwin and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel belonged to a political era in which the social geography of Delhi formed part of the architecture of governance itself. The Gymkhana evolved into one of Delhi's principal environments of soft cultural diplomacy. Long before luxury hotels became

diplomatic stages, the Gymkhana functioned as one of the capital's most important social and diplomatic salons. Situated within the diplomatic geography of New Delhi and surrounded by embassies and state institutions, the Gymkhana continues to function as a softer extension of the capital's international identity. It represents not simply elite sociability, but the diplomacy of atmosphere - the manner in which a capital projects continuity, hospitality, prestige and institutional memory.

One of the central debates surrounding institutions such as Delhi Gymkhana concerns privilege. Yet privilege itself possesses a history, and cities mature when they learn to preserve the full complexity of their social evolution rather than flattening it into simplistic moral categories.

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“DARKNESS CANNOT DRIVE
DARKNESS; LIGHT CAN DO THAT. HATE
CANNOT DRIVE OUT HATE; LOVE CAN
DO THAT”
— MARTIN LUTHAR KING

Extortion Crackdown: Wake-up Call for South Asians in Canada



Seventeen arrests, 106 charges, and a trail that reached across Canada and into the United States made this more than a routine police sweep. Canadian authorities say a joint extortion task force helped dismantle the “For Brothers” group, an international criminal network accused of threatening, shooting at, and setting fire to South Asian-owned businesses.

The case sits at the intersection of organised crime, border enforcement, and community fear. Police say the group used intimidation as a business model, then relied on mobility and cross-border ties to stay ahead of investigators. The response, in turn, drew in agencies that normally work separate cases, then pushed them into one file.

What police say the group was doing across Canada and beyond

Peel Regional Police say the alleged campaign reached restaurants, trucking businesses, and other South Asian-owned companies in the Greater Toronto Area and British Columbia. The pattern, according to police, included extortion demands, threats, arson, and shootings.

That mix matters because extortion crews do not need to rob every target in the same way. One business may get a phone call. Another may face a fire set overnight. A third may hear shots fired outside a storefront. The aim is the same in every case, force payment and keep the victim quiet.

Police said the alleged operation was not confined to one neighborhood or one province. Investigators linked the group to activity beyond Canada, which points to a wider criminal network rather than a local street crew. That wider reach makes the case harder to untangle, because money, people, and threats can move fast.

Why South Asian business owners were singled out

Extortion crews often target business owners who can be pressured into silence. Restaurants and trucking firms are common examples. They deal with cash, thin margins, long hours, and close community ties. That makes them easier to intimidate and harder to replace.

South Asian-owned businesses also often depend on trust inside tight-knit local circles. A threat against one owner can echo through a whole commercial strip.

Word spreads quickly, and fear spreads with it. For the people running these businesses, the pressure is personal. A threat to a storefront can feel like a threat to a family. That is what makes extortion so corrosive. It reaches far beyond the balance sheet.

How the violence helped the extortion scheme work

Police say the violence was not random. Arson, shootings, and threats were tools. They were used to send a message, not just to one victim but to everyone nearby.

A burned door or a shattered window tells other owners what may happen if they refuse to pay. A shooting does the same thing with more



force. In that sense, the violence becomes part of the collection system. It is meant to keep the money moving and the complaints low.

The damage lasts even when no one is hurt. Business owners may cut hours, move locations, or stop answering unknown calls. Families may change routines. Staff may leave. The costs pile up long after the news fades.

How the joint extortion task force was built to move faster

The response began as a full-time task force in September 2025, after extortion reports kept stacking up and individual cases started to look connected. Peel Regional Police led the effort with provincial and federal partners, while investigators also worked with agencies across borders.

Police said the wider investigation involved Peel Regional Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, the Canada Border Services Agency, Surrey Police Service, and the FBI. Canadian organized-crime cases often need that kind of mix. The RCMP and CFSEU-B.C. also play important roles in similar files, because cross-border groups do not stop at city limits or provincial lines.

The reason for the special team was simple. Separate investigations can miss the pattern. A shooting in one area, a threat in another, and a drug file somewhere else may all look unrelated at first. Put the files together, and the shape of the network starts to appear.

Why multi-agency cooperation matters in organised crime cases

Each agency brings a different tool. Local police see the street-level complaints and preserve the immediate evidence. Provincial units can connect patterns across divisions. Border officers can track travel, shipments, and immigration status. Federal partners can widen the view when a case crosses borders.

That matters in extortion cases because the pressure often moves faster than any single unit can keep up. A victim may be in one city, a suspect in another, and the money somewhere else entirely. Shared intelligence turns separate fragments into one picture.

In plain terms, the task force was built to stop the group from hiding inside the gaps between

Criminal charges and immigration consequences are separate processes. One runs through the courts. The other runs through Canada's immigration system. Still, they can move at the same time when police and border officials believe a suspect may be inadmissible

agencies. Those gaps are where organised crime often grows.

What the task force had already uncovered before the arrests

By the time the arrests came in May 2026, the task force had already collected enough evidence to support a large charge sheet. Police said the probe had taken over multiple files and linked them into one organised-crime investigation.

That work produced the charge package that followed. Police said the group's alleged conduct included extortion, violence, arson, and drug-related offenses. The scale of the case suggests a long build, not a quick reaction.

Authorities also said the early stages of the probe helped uncover people and records tied to the network before the arrests were made public. That kind of groundwork is often what turns a string of complaints into a coordinated takedown.

What the arrests and charges reveal about the scope of the case

Police arrested 17 men, many of Punjabi origin, from places including Brampton, Surrey, British Columbia, and Manteca, California. The 106 charges cover a broad mix of alleged offenses, including extortion, firearms violations, arson, and drug-related counts.

The numbers matter because they show range. This was not treated as one isolated extortion file. It was handled as a network with multiple roles and multiple points of contact. Police said more arrests could still follow, which suggests the case is not closed.

The spread also shows how the group allegedly

operated across borders. A person in one province could support threats in another. A suspect in the United States could still be part of the chain. That is how modern organised crime often works, through distance, not despite it.

The evidence police say they seized

Police said investigators recovered illegal firearms, illicit drugs, fraudulent identification documents, and other suspicious records. Each item adds a different layer to the case.

Illegal guns support claims of intimidation and violence. Drugs point to another revenue stream. False IDs can help people move, hide, or pose as someone else. Records can show contacts, cash flows, or travel links. Put together, they can sketch the outline of a network that relies on more than extortion alone.

None of that proves guilt by itself, of course. It does show why police treated the file as organised crime instead of a one-off dispute. The evidence points to structure.

Why the case stretches across provinces and into the United States

Investigators said the network had links across Ontario, British Columbia, the United States, and India. That kind of spread matters because it changes how the case has to be handled.

A local extortion crew can be investigated with local tools. A cross-border network cannot. Money may move through one country while threats are made in another. People may live in one place and work criminal roles in another. That makes coordination essential.

The case also fits a wider pattern Canadian police have seen before, where commercial trucking corridors and major metro areas are used for organised crime, drug movement, and identity fraud. The same routes that carry freight can also carry risk.

How immigration enforcement is becoming part of the crackdown

The Canada Border Services Agency has opened immigration cases tied to suspected extortion activity, and police said several people were detained. According to the latest figures shared by investigators, six of the 17 charged may face

immigration action.

Criminal charges and immigration consequences are separate processes. One runs through the courts. The other runs through Canada's immigration system. Still, they can move at the same time when police and border officials believe a suspect may be inadmissible.

That gives authorities another way to disrupt a network. Even when criminal cases take months or years, immigration steps can move faster. For groups that depend on movement across borders, that matters.

What removal proceedings mean for suspects without Canadian status

In plain language, “inadmissible” means a person may not be allowed to stay in Canada. The reason can be a criminal charge, a conviction, false documents, or other concerns under immigration law.

Removal proceedings are the steps that can lead to someone being sent out of the country. CBSA can start those steps while a criminal case is still pending. That does not erase the court case. It adds another path for enforcement.

For police, that tool can be useful in organized-crime investigations because it can cut off access, travel, and support networks. For suspects without Canadian status, it can change the entire case before a trial is finished.

Why border and police agencies are treating extortion as a national security issue

Extortion used to be seen, in many places, as a local crime with local victims. That view has changed. When crews use firearms, fake IDs, drugs, and cross-border contacts, the file looks different.

It also affects more than one business. Repeated extortion waves can weaken trust in police, scare off investment, and make whole communities feel unprotected. Border agencies care because the same routes that move people can also move weapons and money. That is why the crackdown involved more than a single police department. The threat is wider than one neighborhood, so the response is wider too.

What the crackdown means for the South Asian community now

The immediate effect of the arrests is relief for some business owners, but fear does not vanish overnight. Many owners in the South Asian community have spent months hearing threats, checking cameras, and wondering which call might be the next one.

Police have urged victims not to pay extortion demands and to report threats to law enforcement or Crime Stoppers. That advice has come with a hard truth. Silence helps the people making the threats, and fear can spread faster than any police bulletin. The larger damage is harder to measure. Families change routines. Owners cut back on hours. Some people decide the cost of staying open is too high. When that happens, extortion stops being a single crime and becomes a drag on an entire community. The arrests matter because they show how extortion, violence, and immigration enforcement now overlap in major organised-crime cases. Canadian police are no longer treating these files as isolated threats to one shop or one street.

For South Asian communities, the case is a reminder that targeted extortion can reach into daily life with alarming ease. For police, it shows that the people behind these networks can move across borders, hide behind false papers, and use fear as a shield. The challenge now is not only breaking one group. It is stopping the next crew from using the same methods, the same routes, and the same silence.

FROM AGENDA COVER

From land disputes to land ailments

Integrated Land Information Systems can substantially reduce these inconsistencies. GIS mapping, drone surveys and Satellite Image Time Series (SITS) can help detect encroachments and monitor land-use changes in near real time.

Yet technology alone cannot solve the problem. Administrative philosophy must evolve alongside it. India has already experimented with specialised legal mechanisms which recognise that many so-called “land disputes” are, in fact, administrative and possession-related ailments requiring swift executive intervention rather than prolonged civil litigation. The Bihar Land Disputes Resolution Act, 2009, was conceived precisely for this purpose. The law empowered designated authorities to address disputes relating to possession, boundary demarcation, unlawful dispossession and certain categories of record inconsistencies through a time-bound quasi-judicial process. Its utility lay not merely in dispute resolution, but in preventing routine land conflicts from escalating into law-and-order situations or drifting into decades of civil litigation.

The importance of such a framework is often underestimated. In practice, a large number of land conflicts arise not from complex title questions, but from gaps between records, possession and field realities. By creating a specialised institutional mechanism, the Bihar model attempted to provide rapid administrative correction at the local level while reducing pressure on civil courts and police systems.

This does not, however, diminish the importance of mutation or updated revenue records. Mutation remains the State's closest administrative approximation of the current title and lawful possession. While it may not confer absolute ownership, dismissing it merely as a fiscal entry weakens the credibility of land administration itself. A balanced approach would therefore treat mutation as a “best-claim” indicator of current title and possession, subject to judicial scrutiny, while simultaneously strengthening specialised administrative mechanisms for rapid field-level dispute resolution. India may also need to rethink its larger approach to titling. The binary distinction between “conclusive” and “presumptive” titles is often mis-

leading because title itself is dynamic and transaction-driven.

The implications of this framework extend beyond dispute resolution. Land governance affects investment, infrastructure, agricultural productivity and social stability. Delayed acquisition, uncertain records and recurring encroachments increase transaction costs and erode public trust. Conversely, timely diagnosis and resolution can significantly improve governance outcomes.

The administrative structure required for such a transition already exists. Circle/Tehsil Offices, Sub-Divisional Offices, District Administrations and Police systems can be integrated into a layered framework of diagnosis, triage and treatment. What is missing is conceptual clarity and procedural discipline.

The language of “land disputes” belongs to an older era of reactive governance. India now requires a more sophisticated framework that treats land-related conflicts not merely as disputes to be contained, but as ailments to be diagnosed, treated and prevented. That transition may appear semantic at first glance. In reality, however, it could fundamentally transform the quality of land governance in India.

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A 112-year old heritage: Why Delhi cannot...

Delhi has always contained layered worlds of privilege. Mughal courts, aristocratic havelis, princely salons, colonial institutions, diplomatic enclaves, and post-Independence bureaucratic cultures all formed part of the city's historical ecology. These spaces reveal how successive eras imagined prestige, etiquette, influence, and public life. The Gymkhana preserves one such layer within the city's autobiography.

Its value lies not in celebrating privilege uncritically, but in preserving the historical memory of how Delhi functioned across different political periods. A mature civilisation does not preserve only the heritage of the street and the bazaar; it



also preserves the heritage of diplomacy, ceremony, refinement, and institutional culture. The city's greatness lies precisely in its coexistence of worlds — common and elite, public and ceremonial, chaotic and refined. To erase every inherited institution associated with prestige would not democratise history; it would impoverish it.

The word Gymkhana itself reflects the layered cultural inheritance of South Asia. The suffix khana in Persian, Urdu, and Hindustani traditions signifies a chamber, house, or place of gathering. It was never merely a sports club. Its verandahs, tea rooms, kitchens, lawns, dining spaces, and bars created an environment where diplomacy, food, sport, governance, and conversation intersected within the everyday life of the capital. Delhi has long conducted politics not only through formal institutions but through gatherings, salons, dinners, and spaces of sociability where civic culture was negotiated informally.

The sporting history of Delhi Gymkhana constitutes one of its most important inheritances. The club developed some of the capital's most distinguished sporting facilities for tennis, cricket, squash, swimming, billiards, and equestrian culture. These spaces were never simply recreational amenities; they became part of Delhi's ceremonial and civic identity. Among these facilities, the

historic grass tennis courts possess particular significance. Delhi Gymkhana's grass courts are not merely playing surfaces. They preserve one of the last surviving traditions of grass-court tennis in India, a sporting lineage stretching back through Davis Cup-era matches and a culture of tennis now increasingly rare within the subcontinent.

Its courts preserve not merely athletics, but an entire civic rhythm: afternoon matches beneath old trees, verandah conversations, post-game dinners, inherited sporting etiquette, and intergenerational traditions that together form part of the city's lived heritage.

The debate surrounding Delhi Gymkhana must also be understood within a broader Asian and international context. The great capitals of the world recognise that heritage does not survive solely through monuments. It survives equally through living institutions and ceremonial landscapes where memory continues to be inhabited.

London preserves its historic clubs and civic societies as part of its metropolitan identity. Singapore carefully conserves institutions such as the Tanglin Club and Singapore Cricket Club amidst rapid modernisation because it understands that continuity creates prestige. Hong Kong retains historic civic institutions alongside contemporary skyscrapers. Tokyo protects ceremonial gardens and inherit-

ed social landscapes despite immense urban density. These cities recognise that global capitals derive identity not only from economic infrastructure but from continuity of atmosphere and memory. Delhi Gymkhana belongs to this larger Asian tradition of living heritage institutions.

Ecology, Air Pollution, and the Green Lungs of the Capital. The grounds form part of one of the last surviving low-density green lungs of central Delhi. In a city struggling with severe air pollution, shrinking tree cover, rising temperatures, and increasing congestion, these open landscapes possess immense environmental significance extending far beyond private membership.

The lawns, mature trees, gardens, and breathing spaces preserve part of the original ecological logic of New Delhi, a city conceived through permeability, ceremonial greens, tree-lined avenues, and climatic balance. These landscapes were never ornamental luxuries. They formed part of the environmental infrastructure of the capital itself. The preservation of such landscapes therefore becomes a civic necessity.

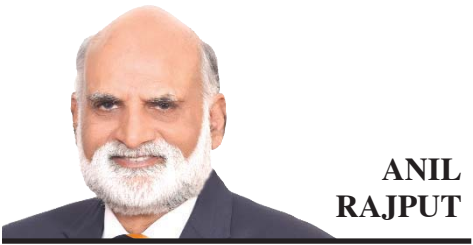
Living heritage landscapes accumulate atmosphere across generations. Once dismantled, they cannot simply be reconstructed elsewhere. One may recreate walls and architecture, but not continuity. Destroying such a place would resemble dismantling a Renaissance theatre and later attempting to reproduce its atmosphere inside a museum.

Delhi Gymkhana has already entered the realm of recognised heritage through the manner in which its grass courts, historic architecture, ceremonial landscapes, and long sporting afterlife have become embedded within Delhi's civic memory rather than remaining confined to the private history of a club. Over time, the institution has evolved into what may be understood as a living ‘heritagescape’, a historical environment where sport, diplomacy, ecology, architecture, and sociability collectively contribute to the cultural identity of the capital city. Delhi Gymkhana is one such environment. To remove it would not merely alter a parcel of land. It would tear out one of the living pages from the manuscript of Delhi itself.

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“PEOPLE WILL TRAVEL ANYWHERE
FOR GOOD FOOD – IT’S CRAZY”
— RENE REDZEPI

Vibhuvana Sankashti: A culinary expression of prayer and discipline



ANIL
RAJPUT

Vibhuvana Sankashti, a sacred observance dedicated to Lord Ganesha, revered as the remover of obstacles, the guardian of wisdom and auspicious beginnings, is a rare form of Sankashti Chaturthi celebrated during the spiritually significant Adhik Maas. While Sankashti Chaturthi is observed every month on the fourth lunar day of Krishna Paksha, the waning phase of the Moon after the full moon, Vibhuvana Sankashti gains a special significance because it occurs within Adhik Maas, the additional month periodically added to the Hindu calendar to align the lunar and solar cycles. Its rarity gives the occasion a heightened devotional importance, marked by fasting, prayer and self-discipline. Like many sacred occasions in Indian tradition, food on this day is more than nourishment after abstinence; it becomes an expression of devotion itself. The cuisine reflects simplicity, purity and sacred offering, where vrat preparations, milk-based dishes and Lord Ganesha’s beloved sweets such as modaks and laddoos become symbols of faith, gratitude and inner balance.

The significance of Vibhuvana Sankashti arises from the broader Hindu tradition of observing fasting and prayer as ways of seeking relief from difficulties and inviting auspiciousness into life. Over time, the observance came to acquire a distinct devotional significance, particularly because of its association with the sacred period of Adhik Maas. Across regions and communities, devotees may observe day-long fasting, visit Ganesha temples, recite sacred narratives and complete rituals connected with moon sighting before breaking the vrat. Homes and shrines are adorned with flowers, durva grass and garlands that hold special significance in Ganesha worship, while many devotees wear traditional attire as a reflection of reverence. As with many Indian sacred observances, these rituals gradually shaped culinary traditions of their own, carrying the spirit of gratitude and sacred offering. Regular grains, onion, garlic and heavy foods are usually avoided by those following a traditional fast, while ingredients such as sabudana, samak rice,

hara, potato, sweet potato, peanuts, milk, curd, coconut, jaggery, fruits and rock salt form the heart of the meal.

The day usually begins before the food itself. The home is cleaned, the place of worship is prepared, and Lord Ganesha is offered flowers, durva, lamps, incense and sweets. The food prepared for Vibhuvana Sankashti is first offered to the deity, then distributed as prasad, and only afterwards enjoyed by the family. The prasad itself becomes a symbol of devotion and supplication that marks the spirit of the occasion.

Among the most familiar savoury preparations associated with Sankashti fasting is sabudana khichdi, prepared by soaking tapioca pearls until they soften and then cooking them gently with roasted peanuts, cumin, green chilli, boiled potato and rock salt. Its success lies in patience because sabudana must be soaked with care so that the grains remain separate rather than turn sticky. Often, it is finished with fresh coriander and lemon juice, giving the dish both energy and lightness after a day of fasting. Alongside it, sabudana vada offers a more festive variation to the same ingredients. Mashed potatoes, soaked sabudana, crushed peanuts and mild spices are shaped into small patties and fried until crisp. When eaten after the evening puja with curd or a simple chutney, it provides more sustenance without breaking the rules of vrat food.

Potatoes and root vegetables occupy an important place because they offer nourishment without the heaviness of regular grains. Vrat wale aloo are usually made with boiled potatoes simmered in a light gravy of cumin, green chilli, rock salt and sometimes curd, creating a dish that is soft, warm and suitable with puris. Jeera aloo, simpler and drier, is prepared by tossing potatoes with cumin, rock salt and a little ghee, allowing the flavour of the vegetable to remain central. Dahi aloo brings curd into the preparation, making the dish cooling and gentle on the stomach.

Sweet potato and arbi deepen this savoury range. Shakarkandi chaat is made by roasting or boiling sweet potatoes, cutting them into pieces and seasoning them with rock salt, roasted cumin, lemon and sometimes a little chilli. It is sweet, tangy and filling, and it reflects the Indian ability to create festive flavour from the simplest produce. Arbi fry, prepared with colocasia sliced and cooked until lightly crisp, offers an earthier taste. In some homes it is pan-fried with cumin and rock salt, while in others it is made slightly more elaborate with vrat-friendly spices. Both preparations provide substance without excessive richness.

ness, allowing the meal to remain devotional rather than indulgent.

Where a more complete post-vrat meal is prepared, fasting grains and flours become part of the recipes. Samak rice khichdi, made from barnyard millet, is one of the most widely used substitutes for rice during fasts. It is cooked with potatoes, peanuts, cumin and rock salt until soft, and may be served with curd or raita. Its texture makes it comforting after a long day, especially for elderly devotees or those who avoid fried food. The puris prepared on the occasion also hold pride of place. Depending on regional customs and fasting practices, households prepare different varieties of puris, ranging from traditional wheat puris to vrat-friendly versions made with flours such as rajgira, singhara or kuttu. The dough is typically kneaded with water or milk, sometimes enriched with mashed potato, banana or mild spices for texture and flavour, before being rolled into small discs and deep-fried until they puff into soft golden rounds. In some traditions, sweet puris prepared with jaggery and cardamom are also made, adding a gentle sweetness to the sacred meal. Rajgira puri, made from amaranth flour and Kuttu puri, made from buckwheat flour, are some of the more popular varieties. Singhara atta paratha, made from water chestnut flour, is sometimes used as a substitute for puris and is cooked on a tawa with ghee and served hot. Together, these preparations make the meal feel complete while retaining the discipline of fasting.

The accompaniments are equally important because they prevent the meal from becoming heavy or monotonous. Peanut chutney is made by grinding roasted peanuts with green chilli, cumin, rock salt and curd or lemon, giving the plate a nutty depth. Cucumber raita cools the body and balances fried foods, while plain curd itself is often treated as one of the simplest and most sattvic supports for a vrat meal. In some homes, grated coconut, roasted cumin and fresh coriander are added to curd-based accompaniments. Such additions may appear modest, but they show the refinement of Indian fasting cuisine, where balance is created through texture, temperature and digestive wisdom.

No Sankashti associated with Lord Ganesha can be complete without the memory of modak. Kadachie modak, especially beloved in Maharashtrian households, is made with a rice flour covering and a filling of coconut and jaggery, gently steamed until soft and fragrant. Though regular rice flour may not be used by every fasting



household, the dish remains culturally connected with Ganesha as a symbol of sweetness, knowledge and fulfilment. Some families prepare vrat-friendly versions using permitted flours, while others offer modak symbolically as naivedya and keep the personal meal simpler. Fried modak gives a different texture, with a crisp outer shell and sweet filling, and is often made when the occasion is observed with a more festive household meal. The act of shaping modak by hand itself becomes a form of devotion, requiring attention, patience and care.

The sweet offerings extend beyond modak and reveal the breadth of vrat cuisine. Coconut laddoo is prepared by cooking grated coconut with jaggery or sugar until it binds into soft rounds, sometimes scented with cardamom. Til-gud laddoo brings together sesame and jaggery, creating a warming sweet that is particularly valued in cooler seasons, though it may be made at other times according to family practice. Rajgira laddoo, made from popped amaranth and jaggery, is both light and nourishing, and its crisp texture makes it a popular fasting sweet. These laddoos are not merely desserts but a source of energy, as they are made from ingredients that sustain and energize the body after long hours of fasting.

Milk-based sweets add another layer of fulfillment to the post-vrat meal. Sabudana kheer is made by simmering soaked sabudana in milk until the pearls turn translucent, then sweetening it with sugar or jaggery and flavouring it with cardamom. It is soft, cooling and easy to digest, which makes it suitable after a day of limited eating. Makhana kheer, prepared with roasted fox nuts simmered in milk, has a nutty softness and is often enriched with almonds, cashews or raisins where permitted. Shrikhand, made from strained curd mixed with sugar and cardamom, offers a creamy and cooling sweet that is especially valued in western Indian homes. These sweets are often taken after the main prasad, because they also serve the purpose of restoration.

The lighter end of the meal belongs to fruit and sacred mixtures. Panchamrit, made with milk, curd, ghee, honey and sugar, occupies an important ritual place and is received as a blessing. Fruit chaat, made with bananas, apples, pomegranate, papaya or seasonal fruit, may be seasoned lightly with rock salt and roasted cumin. Banana with milk or curd is perhaps one of the simplest vrat foods, yet it

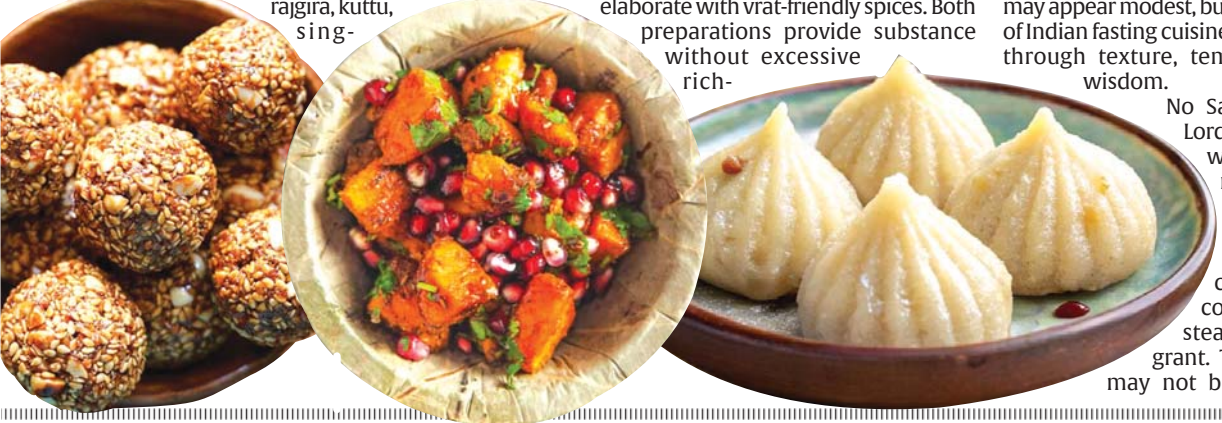
remains deeply practical because it gives energy without elaborate cooking. In many households, these foods are taken during the day by those who cannot remain completely without nourishment, while others receive them only after puja. This flexibility is part of the strength of Indian ritual culture, where discipline is honoured but human circumstance is also considered.

Beverages during Vibhuvana Sankashti follow the same principle of cooling, restoring and supporting the body. Chaas is prepared by diluting curd with water and seasoning it lightly with roasted cumin and rock salt. Sweet lassi provides greater nourishment and is often taken when the fast has been long. Nimbu pani offers hydration with lemon, water, sugar or jaggery and a small pinch of rock salt. Coconut water is valued for its natural lightness, while aam panna, kokum sherbet and bel sherbet appear according to region and season. In some homes, rose milk or simple fruit drinks are prepared for children and elderly family members. These beverages remind us that vrat cuisine is not only about what is prohibited, but also about how the body is protected while the mind remains turned towards prayer.

The fast is broken after sighting the moon, offering arghya while reciting prayers, and sharing prasad. The arghya usually centres on water, sometimes accompanied by flowers, akshat and other ritual ingredients according to family tradition. There is no display or extravagance in the arrangement, yet the plate feels abundant because every preparation carries intention. A small serving of samak rice khichdi, a spoon of dahi aloo, a piece of sabudana vada, a bowl of sabudana kheer and a single coconut laddoo can become a complete festive meal when received after reverence. The significance lies not in the variety of dishes alone but in the movement from fasting to offering, from offering to gratitude, and from gratitude to shared nourishment.

In conserving the cuisine associated with Vibhuvana Sankashti, we preserve more than a list of fasting recipes. We preserve an inherited understanding that food becomes integral to spiritual intent, a process of purification and a supplication for divine guidance. I believe such observances act also as a reminder that our culinary heritage is not built only on feasts, but also on devotion, offerings to divinity and sharing with the community. It is my belief that Vibhuvana Sankashti, rare in its occurrence and steadfast in its discipline, teaches us that the simplest meal, prepared with sincerity and received with gratitude, can itself become a form of worship.

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)



The salad side of summer

Crunch matters. Colour matters. And a good summer salad, it turns out, is exactly what the season ordered

TEAM VIVA

When the brutal heat finally hits this summer, absolutely nobody wants to stare down a heavy plate of hot food. Your body practically begs for something cold, loud, and fresh. We start craving serious crunch and bright, sharp dressings that wake up a tired mouth instead of putting us to sleep. That is the truth about a proper green bowl. It is not about dieting; it is strictly about surviving the afternoon without feeling sluggish. Café Delhi Heights seems to understand this rather well. Their current menu—especially the sharp Raw Papaya Salad and the chilled Salmon & Mango Bowl — makes a quietly convincing case for the salad as something worth genuinely looking forward to.



Roasted Beetroot Salad: Earthy, tangy and satisfying

Roasted beetroot sits at the centre of this one, earthy and soft, balanced out by sharp rocket leaves and a generous crumble of goat cheese. A honey and lemon dressing pulls it all together, and somehow the whole thing tastes both light and satisfying at once.

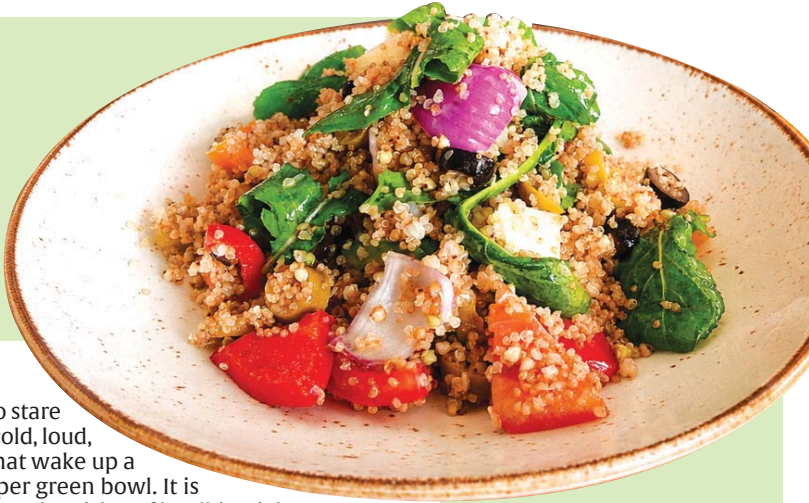


Greek Salad: Clean, bright and effortlessly free

The kitchen piles sharp raw onions, crisp bell peppers, salty black olives, and bursting cherry tomatoes over a fresh bed of chilled lettuce. Drenched in a punchy herb, lemon, and olive oil mix, then crowned with thick, creamy feta, it satisfies every salty, savory, and tangy summer craving.

Raw Papaya Salad: Papaya that packs a punch

Shredded green papaya brings a loud crunch to the table. The kitchen aggressively tosses these raw strands in a sharp, intense sweet chili and lemon dressing that bites back immediately. Buried under a heavy handful of crushed peanuts, this bold plate wakes up your tired mouth instantly.



Panzanella Salad Rustic, bold and utterly satisfying

Watch the kitchen toss massive, rustic bread chunks straight into warm vegetables, letting the crusts soak up all that sharp garlic, lemon, and olive oil. Showered with oregano and heavy parmesan, this messy, comforting bowl feels more like a hearty feast than a simple salad.

IN CAESAR WE CRUNCH



Tossing the Caesar Salad



Sprinkling Fresh Cilantro



The Perfect Caesar Plate

PHOTO: PANKAJ KUMAR

Flavours of Taiwan



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

Taiwan is often celebrated for its technological advancement, vibrant cities and rich cultural traditions, but one of its most fascinating attractions is its food culture. The island nation offers a remarkable culinary experience where global flavours coexist harmoniously with local traditions. For Indian travellers and food enthusiasts, Taiwan has increasingly become a delightful destination because it offers not only authentic Taiwanese cuisine but also some of the finest Indian food in East Asia. Taiwan’s tea ceremonies are calming experience. Over the years, Indian cuisine has gained immense popularity across the world. Rich spices, diverse regional recipes and the balance of flavours have made Indian dishes universally loved. Taiwan, too, has embraced this trend warmly. Cities such as Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung have numerous Indian restaurants — Pooja’s, Doon Valley, to name a few—, serving everything from butter chicken and biryani to masala dosa and paneer tikka. The growing

popularity of naan, curry and tandoori dishes among locals reflects how Indian food has become a cultural bridge connecting nations.

At the same time, Taiwanese cuisine has its own unique identity. Restaurant Chun shui Tang invented now world famous, bubble tea. Night markets across Taiwan are central to this culinary culture. Shilin Night Market offer an endless variety of street food that attracts locals and tourists alike. Iconic delicacies include beef noodle soup, xiao long bao and the world-famous bubble tea, which originated in Taiwan. Seafood lovers can enjoy oyster omelettes, grilled squid and fresh fish dishes, while healthy vegetarian options influenced by Buddhist traditions are widely available. What makes Taiwan truly special is the opportunity to enjoy both Indian and Taiwanese cuisines side by side. This coexistence of culinary traditions reflects Taiwan’s openness, cosmopolitan spirit and cultural warmth, making it a paradise for food lovers.



Taiwan's iconic Baobing:

In Taiwan, this delicacy is served piled high with fresh fruits such as mango (pictured above), accompanied by finely shaved ice that blends beautifully with the flavours. Finished with a drizzle of condensed milk, it is cold, sweet and a must-try.

TAIWAN BLENDS SCENIC BEAUTY, MODERN INFRASTRUCTURE AND UNFORGETTABLE CULINARY EXPERIENCES FOR TRAVELLERS



The Art of Living completes 45 years of global service

TEAM AGENDA

As The Art of Living marked 45 years of humanitarian service and global outreach, the organisation celebrated the occasion with the launch of five major initiatives focused on youth empowerment, entrepreneurship, sustainability, consciousness studies, and education. The event, held at The Art of Living International Center, also coincided with the 70th birthday celebrations of Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, whose teachings on peace, well-being, and human values have influenced millions across the world.

Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan presided over the launch ceremony and joined dignitaries in unveiling a commemorative postal stamp on the occasion.

The newly launched initiatives — the Youth Career Excellence Programme, Faculty of Eastern Knowledge Systems, Art of Living Innovation and Entrepreneurship Incubation, Centre of Excellence on Consciousness Studies and Human Potential, and Eco Shanti — reflect the organisation's expanding vision in addressing contemporary social, educational, environmental, and human development challenges.

The launch ceremony marked the culmination of month-long celebrations at The Art of Living International Center, attended by 678 distinguished guests from India and abroad.

Addressing the gathering, CP Radhakrishnan spoke about the extraordinary global reach of the movement founded by Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

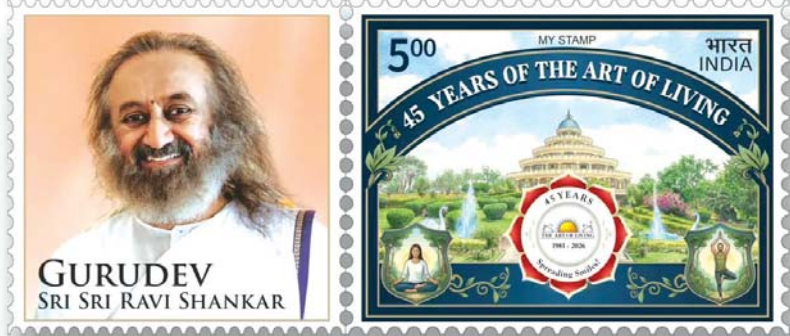
“Today is a celebration of a great vision that has touched millions of lives across continents. I was astonished to learn that The Art of Living is present in 182 countries. Almost the entire civilisation of mankind is getting linked through this movement,” he said.

Praising Gurudev's simplicity and compassion, the Vice President remarked that what made his contribution extraordinary was “the humility and humanity he embodies”.

Welcoming the Vice President and guests, Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar highlighted the growing global recognition of meditation and inner well-being in modern life. “The world today has recognised that meditation is no longer a luxury. With 192 countries coming together to declare World Meditation Day, there is a growing understanding that meditation is a basic necessity for a healthy, happy, and stress-free life,” Gurudev said.

Emphasising holistic human development, he noted that “knowledge, meditation, and music” must accompany people throughout life.

Gurudev concluded with a call for global harmony rooted in the ancient Indian ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam — One World Family. “Let us dream of a world free from fear, tension, and hatred. A peaceful and harmonious world begins with peaceful and harmonious individ-



(L-R) Karnataka Governor Thaaawarchand Gehlot, Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan, and Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar at the Art of Living International Center

uals,” he said. Governor of Karnataka Thaaawarchand Gehlot also addressed the gathering, highlighting Karnataka's connection to the origins of the global movement. “It is a matter of pride for Karnataka that the roots of this global movement are connected to our sacred land. For more than four decades, The Art of Living has promoted peace and well-being at the individual, community, and global levels through a variety of programmes,” he said. The Governor also praised Gurudev's contribution to peace-building efforts across the world.

The five initiatives launched during the event aim to address some of the most pressing needs of contemporary society through innovation, education, sustainability, and human development.

The Youth Career Excellence Program seeks to prepare young people for careers in the civil services while also providing industry-oriented hospitality training to improve employability among rural and urban youth.

The Faculty of Eastern Knowledge Systems will function as a multidisciplinary platform integrating Eastern wisdom traditions with modern education and research to address ethical, social, and ecological challenges.

The Art of Living Innovation and Entrepreneurship Incubation initiative aims to support innovation-driven and hardware-focused start-ups through mentorship, prototyping facilities, and early-stage funding, with a vision to nurture 500 start-ups.

Meanwhile, the Centre of Excellence

on Consciousness Studies and Human Potential will create an interdisciplinary ecosystem for research and innovation in consciousness, cognition, mental well-being, and human potential.

Eco Shanti, the organisation's sustainability initiative, seeks to eliminate single-use plastics through sustainable alternatives and aims to reduce plastic production and usage by at least 100,000 tonnes annually by 2030.

For nearly a month, The Art of Living International Center hosted a series of celebrations reflecting the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam. The event drew participation from prominent personalities across politics, business, spirituality, arts, and public life.

Among those who joined the celebrations were Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Sarbananda Sonowal, Maharashtra Chief Minister Shri Devendra Fadnavis, along with leading diplomats, scholars, faith leaders, and artists.

The month-long celebrations featured global meditations at the newly inaugurated Dhyana Mandir, cultural performances celebrating India's artistic heritage, discussions on mental well-being and consciousness, and stories of transformation from people whose lives have been impacted by Gurudev's work over the past 45 years. At its core, the celebration reaffirmed Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar's enduring vision of building a stress-free, violence-free society rooted in inner peace, service, compassion, and human values.

One World: One Family

In a world increasingly troubled by war, division and uncertainty, the ancient ideal of ‘Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, One World, One Family’ feels more relevant than ever before. At a time when humanity is often fragmented by borders, beliefs and conflicts, the BAPS Hindu Mandir Abu Dhabi stands as a living embodiment of this timeless vision. Through its message and service, the mandir quietly reminds the world that humanity flourishes not through division, but through unity



DR SWAMI GYANANANDDAS

On the evening of April 2, 2024, as the golden lights of Abu Dhabi slowly merged into the serenity of the Ramadan twilight, an extraordinary scene unfolded within the sacred stone corridors of the BAPS Hindu Mandir Abu Dhabi. Bathed in radiant illumination and adorned with elegant decorations along every pathway, the mandir blossomed into a special celebration. On this special evening, the mandir opened its doors for ‘Omsiyyat’, an Arabic word evoking an intimate gathering of heartfelt conversation, reflection and companionship.

What followed was far more than a ceremonial gathering. Within the serene mandir complex, alive with the spirit of timeless Indian culture and spirituality, more than 200 distinguished guests from different faiths and nationalities gathered shoulder to shoulder. Hindu swamis, Muslim scholars, Christian priests, Jewish rabbis, Bahá'í representatives, diplomats, ministers and community leaders sat together not as representatives of separate religions, but as members of one human family.

Among them were His Excellency Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, UAE Minister of Tolerance and Coexistence; His Excellency Dr Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi; and His Excellency Dr Mugheer Khamis Al Khalil, leaders whose presence itself reflected the UAE's larger vision of harmony. Rabbi Jeff Berger of the Abrahamic Family House captured the spirit of the evening beautifully when he observed that “unity in diversity is not merely a principle, but a practice”. And on that evening, the practice became visible.

Then came perhaps the most moving moment of all. As the Ramadan fast con-

WITHIN THE SERENE MANDIR COMPLEX, ALIVE WITH THE SPIRIT OF TIMELESS INDIAN CULTURE AND SPIRITUALITY, MORE THAN 200 DISTINGUISHED GUESTS FROM DIFFERENT FAITHS AND NATIONALITIES GATHERED SHOULDER TO SHOULDER

cluded, leaders of different religions gathered to share suhoor together in the mandir complex. Volunteers lovingly served pure vegetarian Indian and Arabic delicacies, simple meals transformed into symbols of coexistence. Around the dining tables, differences of race, language, nationality and belief quietly dissolved into conversation, laughter and mutual respect. It was diplomacy without negotiations, peace without slogans and spirituality without barriers.

Addressing the gathering, Sheikh Nahayan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan spoke with rare conviction. At a time when the world is threatened by “separatism, distrust, intolerance and conflicts”, he said, the mandir brings “hope to the world”. His words carried the weight of a deeper truth that humanity survives not through power alone, but through coexistence.

Swami Brahmaviharidas (Head, BAPS Mandir Abu Dhabi), speaking on behalf of the mandir and inspired by the guidance of Guru Mahant Swami Maharaj, expressed gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and the UAE leadership for nurturing such a vision of harmony. Reflecting on the atmosphere of the evening, he shared a striking thought once voiced

by a scientist: that if humanity were ever judged by visitors from another world, he would rather they judge Earth by what was happening in Abu Dhabi that evening than by the wars and monuments of hatred scattered across the globe.

And perhaps that was the true significance of Omsiyyat. It was not merely an interfaith programme. It was a quiet yet powerful declaration that the ancient Indian ideal of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, The World Is One Family”, is not an unreachable philosophy.

That same spirit continued to reveal itself even during recent wartime anxieties across the Gulf. On the soil of the UAE, the leadership of the nation and the swamis of the BAPS Hindu Mandir Abu Dhabi came together in a shared effort of care, prayer and humanitarian support for stranded and distressed families, a living reflection that, in moments of fear and uncertainty, One World, One Family is not merely spoken, but lived.

Reinforcing the UAE's enduring commitment to coexistence and human unity, Swami Brahmaviharidas was recently received by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Hamad Al Nahyan, Adviser to the President of the UAE and Chairman of Abu Dhabi Airports. In a warm and meaningful exchange, Swami Brahmaviharidas expressed gratitude for the visionary leadership of His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in nurturing an environment of stability, security, equality and mutual respect for people of all faiths and nationalities across the UAE. His Highness, in turn, appreciated the mandir's growing role as a beacon of peace, harmony and shared humanity, advancing values that continue to unite hearts beyond cultural and religious boundaries.

Yet, beyond official meetings and ceremonial exchanges, something far deeper has quietly taken root. The mandir has now become a sacred thread of relationship between the UAE leadership and the Hindu swamis. Their bond, built upon mutual respect, trust, care and shared ideals, has evolved into a living expression of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, One World, One Family”, a rare and inspiring symbol of harmony between two nations, two cultures and two faith traditions.

(The writer Dr Swami Gyanananddas is a dedicated follower of the Swaminarayan tradition and has earned a PhD from MS University)



Weekly Overview

The week opens under an intense Scorpio Moon, bringing deeper reactions and stronger internal processing. Midweek, Sagittarius increases movement, communication and outward thinking. By the weekend, Capricorn shifts focus toward discipline, responsibility and practical decision-making.



Aries (Mesh): Early developments may prompt deeper reflection, particularly in financial or emotional matters where clarity has been delayed. Reactions around you may feel stronger than expected, making patience more valuable than confrontation. Midweek brings movement, discussions and fresh momentum, especially in work or travel plans. By the weekend, practical responsibilities demand attention, and discipline becomes essential.



Taurus (Vrisabha): Relationships and interpersonal dynamics may demand greater attention during the opening phase of the week. Others may appear emotionally intense or difficult to read, so avoid reacting too quickly to changing behaviour. Midweek supports practical thinking, communication and clearer planning, particularly where pending decisions require movement. Weekend brings clarity and confidence; stubbornness may slow progress.



Gemini (Mithun): Routine matters and unfinished responsibilities may dominate the opening days, making it important to avoid distraction or scattered effort. Emotional undercurrents in the workplace or within close interactions may require calmer handling. Midweek brings stronger movement, conversations and opportunities to reconnect with people or plans that had slowed earlier. By the weekend, practical judgment matters. Avoid emotional decisions.

WEEKLY MOON SIGN FORECAST | 31 MAY - 6 JUNE

Strong Reactions, Expanding Thoughts and Grounded Decisions

Dr Shanker Adawal
Astrologer, Author & Researcher

This forecast is based on your Moon Sign (Janma Rashi), which often reflects day-to-day emotional and instinctive patterns more closely than general Sun-sign readings.



Cancer (Karka): The week begins with stronger emotional intensity, though this may also improve creativity, intuition and personal involvement in important matters. However, emotional reactions could become heavier if expectations remain too rigid. Midweek shifts attention toward routine responsibilities, health matters or work structure requiring practical balance. By the weekend, relationships and communication improve, though emotional maturity will still be necessary in sensitive discussions. Listen more, explain less.



Leo (Simha): Domestic matters, emotional comfort or unresolved personal concerns may shape the opening phase of the week. You may prefer distance from unnecessary noise or social pressure for a while. Midweek brings renewed confidence, movement and stronger external engagement, making this a useful phase for communication and practical progress. By the weekend, routine responsibilities and pending commitments may demand greater discipline. Avoid postponing practical matters that have already waited too long.

Virgo (Kanya): Conversations and communication may carry stronger emotional weight during the opening days, particularly where misunderstandings or assumptions already exist. This is not the best phase for impulsive



reactions. Midweek supports movement, learning, planning and broader thinking, helping mental pressure settle gradually. By the weekend, emotional stability improves and creative thinking becomes stronger. Practical judgment remains important, while confidence steadies.



Libra (Tula): Financial thinking or practical concerns may require greater attention during the early part of the week. Emotional spending or unnecessary commitments should be avoided. Midweek brings stronger social movement and improved communication, though not every opinion around you will require a response. By the weekend, family matters or emotional responsibilities may need patient handling. Maintaining balance between personal expectations and practical realities will become important.



Scorpio (Vrischik): With the Moon opening the week in Scorpio, emotional awareness, observation and personal intensity naturally increase. This can help you recognise what has remained unresolved beneath the surface. However, reactions may become stronger if control is pushed too far. Midweek gradually lightens mental pressure and supports practical movement in financial or work-related matters. By the weekend, communication improves, though measured words will still produce better results than emotional insistence.



Sagittarius (Dhanu): The opening phase may feel mentally crowded, with emotional or practical matters demanding quiet observation before action becomes possible. Midweek becomes your stronger phase, as the Moon enters Sagittarius and restores movement, confidence and outward

momentum. Travel, planning or meaningful discussions may move more naturally during this period. By the weekend, financial discipline and Practical matters return to focus. Excitement alone may not be enough.



Capricorn (Makar): Social expectations, group discussions or professional coordination may dominate the opening phase of the week. Emotional reactions from others could require diplomacy rather than direct confrontation. Midweek supports planning and broader perspective, though overcommitting should still be avoided. By the weekend, the Moon enters Capricorn, restoring steadiness, discipline and clearer personal judgment. This is the strongest phase of the week for organised effort and practical correction.



Aquarius (Kumbh): Responsibilities or professional expectations may feel heavier during the opening days, particularly where emotional pressure and practical demands become mixed together. Midweek brings improved communication and stronger support through discussions, planning or collaboration. However, not every opportunity needs immediate commitment. By the weekend, emotional energy becomes quieter and more inward-looking. Some matters may benefit from patience and observation before important conclusions are reached.



Pisces (Meen): The week opens with deeper thinking, emotional reflection and a stronger need to understand situations beyond surface appearances. Midweek supports movement, communication and practical progress, especially in work or responsibility-driven matters. However, expectations should remain realistic. By the weekend, social interactions become constructive, helping pressure ease. Practical discipline remains necessary, but balance becomes easier to maintain.

BRIEFLY

Ramesh, Srikanth shine in surfing competition



Kerala's Ramesh Budihal topped the standings with an impressive score of 14.83, while Srikanth D followed closely with 13.00 in the men's open quarterfinals of the seventh NMPA Indian Open of Surfing 2026 here on Saturday. Teenage sensation Kishore Kumar (11.80), Ajeesh Ali (9.93), Sanjay Selvamani (9.57) and Sivaraj Babu (8.76) also secured their places in the semifinals after strong performances across the heats. The second day of the tournament, a crucial stop on the national surfing series and a significant event in the selection of the Indian team for the 2026 Asian Games, greeted competitors with cool breezes and clear, sunny skies. A total of six quarterfinals and six semifinals were contested across five different categories. (PTI)

Asian U20 Championships: India wins 3 gold on day 3



Indian athletes clinched three gold medals to continue their strong performance and retain the second spot at the end of the third and penultimate day of the Asian U20 Championships here on Saturday. Nikhil Chandrashekar (3000m steeplechase), Basant (high jump) and Shahnavaaz Khan (long jump) swelled the Indian gold medal tally to seven. India had won four gold medals on Friday. Nikhil Chandrashekar sprinted to victory in the men's 3000m steeplechase. His winning time of 9:25.44 seconds was his personal best. Shahnavaaz Khan won the second gold medal as he dominated the men's long jump. His best jump of the day was 7.84m. Compatriot Jithin Arjunan Raman Chandrasekaran won silver with a jump of 7.66m. India's third gold on Saturday came through Basant in the men's high jump. He cleared 2.20m. Aarti added a bronze to the medal tally. She finished third in the women's 200m with a time of 24.12 seconds, a personal best. Bhumika Sanjay Nehate finished a close fourth with a time of 24.13 seconds. (PTI)

Robinson learns of World Cup berth on golf course

RONALD BLUM
■ Fayetteville (North Carolina, USA)

Antonee Robinson got the news on the 13th hole of a golf course in the English countryside, Gio Reyna in a Connecticut parking lot while enjoying a smoothie alongside his wife and dog. Cristian Roldan tucked a phone into his pocket during a Seattle Sounders team meeting. "I just wanted it to feel and vibrate," he said. American players dispersed across North America and Europe were told notification of coach Mauricio Pochettino's World Cup picks would arrive via WhatsApp at

1 pm EDT on May 22. Chris Brady, hoping to earn the number 3 goalkeeper spot, was in the Central time zone and waited nervously with Chicago Fire teammates. "When 12 struck, nothing came... what does that mean?" he remembered thinking. "But, yeah, eventually got the message." Gathered now at the new US National Soccer Training Center and a nearby hotel in Trilith ahead of their June 12 World Cup opener against Paraguay, players relaxed after making the cut for their sport's pinnacle event. "It was just sheer elation," 27-year-old defender Mark McKenzie said. "Four years of hard work, sacrifice. It was



obviously heartbreaking not making '22 but turned it directly into just motivation to make sure the next time around my name would hopefully be on that roster." In the rush to get to the US, McKenzie left his film camera

back in France, where he plays for Toulouse. Robinson, still the first-choice left back at age 28 after starting four years ago, hadn't allowed himself to think too far ahead during a season in which a difficult recovery

from May 2025 knee surgery delayed his first Premier League start this season for Fulham until mid-December. He was on the 13th hole of Pyford Lakes in Woking when his phone buzzed. "I was playing bad, played bad after but I was a lot happier," he said. "It was a massive relief just because the year I've had and the ups and downs personally." Reyna, a son of former US captain Claudio Reyna, was notoriously almost sent home from the 2022 tournament by then-coach Gregg Berhalter for lack of hustle during training. His status was uncertain because of an unimpressive club season with German club Borussia

Moenchengladbach, which didn't start him after December 19. He was outside Barvida in Norwalk, Connecticut, alongside wife Chloe and Melo, his 1-year-old Cavapoo, when Pochettino's video message flashed. "I was sitting in the car," the 23-year-old midfielder recalled. "We didn't want to go home because we were both a little bit nervous." Roldan, a member of the 2022 roster who didn't get into a match in Qatar, received an emotional hug from his brother Alex, a Sounders teammate. Cristian didn't play for the US between July 2023 and his first call-up under Pochettino last September. (AP)

Mexico president gifts her World Cup ticket to Indigenous athlete

FABIOLA SANCHEZ
■ Mexico City

Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum delivered a promise on Friday by giving away her ticket to the World Cup opening match. Sheinbaum, the first female president in the country's 200-year history, donated her ticket number 00001 to Yolett Cervantes Cuaquehua, a 21-year-old Indigenous woman from the eastern state of Veracruz. Mexico plays the opening match against South Africa on June 11 at Azteca Stadium. Cervantes Cuaquehua was selected by a jury after winning a contest for her ball-handling skills. "They are the pride of Mexico. They will not repre-



sent the president, or the head of government, they will represent Mexico," Sheinbaum said at a press conference to give away the ticket to Cervantes Cuaquehua. Sheinbaum also gave away tickets to other matches being played in Mexico City, Guadalajara,

and Monterrey - the Mexican venues for the World Cup - to three other amateur athletes aged 16, 22, and 23. They were also selected by the jury as part of a contest organized by the government. "Thank you so much for considering us," Cervantes

Cuaquehua said. Sheinbaum in March ruled out attending the opening game, stating she wanted to give prominence to young Mexican female soccer players. "I think a young woman who plays soccer is a great representative of our country. Very few people will be able to attend the opening," Sheinbaum said at the time. She added she will watch the game at the Zocalo, the capital's main square, where a Fan Fest will be set up. The president's announcement generated mixed reactions in Mexico. While some considered it a commendable decision, others criticized it, arguing that it was a missed opportunity to promote the country. (AP)

Nice beat Saint-Etienne to retain Ligue 1 spot



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Nice (France)

Nice stayed in Ligue 1 after beating Saint-Etienne 4-1 in the second leg of their promotion-relegation playoff on Friday. All of the goals came in the second half with striker Elye Wahi sealing the victory with

two late goals. French Cup runner-up Nice finished 16th in Ligue 1 and Saint-Etienne placed third in Ligue 2. The first leg finished 0-0 on Tuesday and the return leg was played behind closed doors after crowd trouble marred Nice's final league game.

Davies named to Canada's World Cup squad despite hamstring injury

ANNE M PETERSON
■ Montreal

Alphonso Davies was named to Canada's World Cup squad on Friday night although it's too soon to tell whether he'll be ready for the team's opener because of a hamstring injury. The defender, who plays for Bayern Munich, was injured earlier this month in the loss to Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League semifinals. Davies is Canada's captain and among the most prominent players named to the team, along with Juventus forward Jonathan David, Southampton forward Cyle Larin and Villarreal midfielder Tajon Buchanan. Coach Jesse Marsch named

nine defenders, 10 midfielders, four forwards and three goalkeepers to the 26-player roster for the World Cup, which opens on June 11. Marsch included Davies on the team's latest 32-player training camp roster earlier this week, but he did not immediately join the team, instead remaining in Germany to continue his recovery. The team trained this past week in Charlotte, North Carolina, ahead of a pair of preparation matches against Uzbekistan on Monday in Edmonton and against Ireland on June 5 in Montreal. "He (Davies) is already on the pitch running, and so we've got to just kind of see where he's at in his overall progression, and then



we've got to try to find ways to accelerate him, but he's super excited to get here," Marsch said. "I'm really hopeful that he has a few days to get away, and that he can come here and be fresh." Canada is co-hosting the World Cup with the United

States and Mexico. The Canadians are in Group B along with Switzerland, Qatar and Bosnia and Herzegovina, which eliminated Italy in the European playoffs. The Canadians will have all three of their group-stage matches on home soil.

Djokovic loss to teen Fonseca at French Open ensures new Slam winner

SAMUEL PETREQUIN/
JEROME PUGMIRE
■ Paris

There will be a new men's champion at the French Open after Novak Djokovic followed Jannik Sinner out of Roland Garros in a five-set stunner on Friday. Brazilian teenager Joao Fonseca beat 24-time major winner Djokovic 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5, 7-5 in the third round to follow Thursday's huge upset, when number 1 Sinner - 56th year's runner-up lost to 25th-ranked Juan Manuel Cerundolo. "Ten minutes after the match I could realize a little bit what I did, what I achieved," the 19-year-old Fonseca said. "How difficult it was and how amazing it was for me." Djokovic's latest quest for a record 25th Grand Slam singles



title was ended and it was just the second time he lost from two sets up, the other also coming in Paris in 2010. Along with Daniil Medvedev, Marin Cilic and Stan Wawrinka, all the men's major winners are out, thus guaranteeing that a new pair of hands will raise the Coupe des Mousquetaires trophy aloft on June 7 on Court Philippe-Chatrier. "Of course, Jannik and

Djokovic out, there's more chances," said Fonseca, who next faces two-time runner-up Casper Ruud, who beat Tommy Paul 4-6, 6-7 (4), 6-4, 7-6 (4), 7-5. Second-seeded Alexander Zverev, the 2024 runner-up, also advanced to the fourth round with a 6-4, 6-3, 5-7, 6-2 win late Friday over Frenchman Quentin Halys. The 39-year-old Djokovic faded as the court

slowed in the evening cool. "Tough one for me to lose," Djokovic said. "I was barely standing on my legs toward the end of the match." In the final game, Djokovic had a break point for 6-6 but Fonseca served out with three consecutive aces and became the first teenager to beat Djokovic at a Grand Slam tournament. "I just enjoyed being on court and what a pleasure it was. It's my first stepping on court against him," Fonseca said. "We still think he's 20. At the end of the match I think he was more fit than me, that's crazy." Fonseca wished his mother in the crowd happy birthday and thanked all the Brazilians who turned up to watch. **Djokovic doubts:** This wasn't as big an upset as

Sinner's loss because Djokovic came to Paris with doubts. After he lost the Australian Open final to Carlos Alcaraz, a shoulder injury limited his clay-court buildup to one competitive match and Djokovic labored for at least three hours in each of his previous two rounds before facing the full fury of Fonseca's booming forehand. "Taking everything in consideration and all the circumstances, I think the level was really good," said Djokovic, whose last major title was the 2024 US Open. The heat that stressed Sinner also got to Djokovic, who applied ice packs on both sides of his face during changeovers. Djokovic snapped at a television camera operator for getting too close to his face at one point. (AP)

Larry King, ex-husband of Billie Jean King, dies at 81

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ California

Larry W King, the former husband of Billie Jean King who partnered with her on the creation of the WTA Tour and the "Battle of the Sexes" tennis match, died Friday. He was 81. King died at his home of prostate cancer, said his wife, Nancy Bolger King. Larry King and Billie Jean King met at Cal State-Los Angeles and married in 1965. Billie Jean King credited him as "one of the unsung heroes in the establishment of women's professional tennis in the early 1970s." "Larry's intelligence, love, commitment and humor



helped me navigate my career for more than 20 years," Billie Jean King added in a statement, saying: "We were married for 22 years and in business together for decades. He was involved behind the scenes when the Original 9 signed our \$1 contracts and he and I co-owned several

tournaments on the Virginia Slims Tour." Together, Larry and Billie Jean King founded World TeamTennis, after Billie Jean was long interested in a team format for the sport. Larry King designed the colorful courts and revamped scoring system that helped popularize the sport.

U18 Women's Asia Cup: 15-year-old Nousheen scores brace as India pip Malaysia 2-1

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kakamigahara (Japan)

Fifteen-year-old Nousheen Naz struck twice as India made a winning start, beating Malaysia 2-1 in a pool A game of the U-18 women's Asia Cup hockey championship on Saturday. After a goalless first quarter, India ended the deadlock in the 19th minute off a penalty corner, when Nousheen capitalised on an opportunity during a set-piece to place the ball into the net and give her side a 1-0 lead. Nousheen struck again in the second quarter. In the



28th minute, she beat Malaysian goalkeeper with a sharp shot to double India's lead to 2-0 before the hooter signalled half-time. Malaysia looked to

recover in the second half and eventually managed to cut India's lead down to one goal in the 41st minute, as Nur Azli breached the Indian post to reduce the margin to 2-1.

India lose 2-3 to Australia, share women's hockey series 2-2

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Perth

The Indian women's hockey team lost 2-3 against hosts Australia to share the four-match friendly series 2-2 here on Saturday. India came out strongly in the contest, taking a 1-0 lead in just the second minute when Navneet Kaur converted a penalty corner to put early pressure on Australia. In the second quarter, Deepika Soreng (23th) doubled India's lead with a neat conversion. It remained 2-0 at half-time. Australia fought back in the third quarter, levelling through strikes from Abby Wilson (42nd) and Olivia



Downes (44th) in quick succession. A late strike from

Courtney Schonell (58th) gave the hosts a narrow 3-2 win.

Despite the result, India can take plenty of positives

from the tour. Having bounced back from an opening-game defeat to win the next two matches, the Indian team demonstrated resilience, tactical discipline and a potent attacking threat throughout the series, continuing to build ahead of the upcoming season that begins with the FIH Nations Cup in New Zealand. India had lost 1-2 against Australia in the series opener but bounced back strongly to beat the hosts 4-2 in shootout after both the sides were locked 1-1 at the end of regulation time in the second match. India then defeated Australia in the third match to take a 2-1 lead in the series.

Vinesh Phogat loses in semifinals at Asian Games trials

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Vinesh Phogat was knocked out of the Asian Games selection trials here on Saturday after losing to Meenakshi Goyat 4-6 in a tense semifinal bout of the women's 53kg event. The loss will dash Vinesh's hopes of a comeback and her chances of securing a berth at the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan later this year.

Earlier, Vinesh had summoned her years of experience to prevail in a fiercely fought bout against a super aggressive Nishu to reach the semifinals.

After a rather easy 7-1 win against Jyoti, Vinesh had to contend with a technically sound Nishu, who opened up a massive 5-0 lead and almost pinned the star grappler in the first period after a sensational four-point throw, but she survived.

The bout was emotionally charged but was littered with challenges and technical fail- ures of the screens. The res- ultant long breaks gave Vinesh much needed breather. She remains technically skilled, but time away from the mat has certainly taken a toll on her endurance.

Nishu used the half head locks effectively to keep Vinesh under check for a large part but Vinesh needed that one move to turn the tables and she found that in the second period — a pow- erful four-pointer as she threw Nishu on mat. Vinesh had Nishu in her grip as she went for a pin.

Sitting in her coach corner, her husband Sombir Rath and supporters charged on the net, demanding a pin. Eventually, a challenge was sought. It was ruled that the referee gave 'wrong whistle' but Vinesh was not given the 'pin' result. Nishu was put on the ground position, though she could not take advantage. Another two- pointer put Vinesh ahead 6- 5. It soon became 6-6, putting Vinesh ahead on criteria. Nishu attempted a take down but was not given points. Nishu's coach challenged the decision but lost as Vinesh left the mat relieved. Stunned, Nishu refused to share hands with the referee and Vinesh and stood on mat for a long time, crying. She will now fight it out with Meenakshi Goyat, who had shocked Antim Pangal in the Asian Championship trials.

Meanwhile, Antim Panghal needed only 34 seconds to make a winning start as she defeated Tannu by technical superiority.



I HAVE NOT FAILED, SAYS VINESH AFTER EXITING ASIAN GAMES TRIALS

New Delhi: Vinesh Phogat asserted on Saturday that she has “not failed” after exiting the Asian Games selection trials with a semifinal defeat to Meenakshi Goyat, vowing to come back stronger. Vinesh was knocked out of the trials after losing to Meenakshi 4-6 in a tense semifinal bout of the women's 53kg event.

“I have not failed,” were Vinesh's first words after the defeat here.

“I was fighting a whole system, I was on one side and everyone else on the other,” Vinesh added, referring to her longstanding battle with the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI).

She was allowed to compete in the trials by the Supreme Court after a favourable decision from the Delhi High Court also. “I had to fight for every point, I was not given a fair deal.”

Vinesh also vowed to come back, saying she will keep preparing, but did not specify where she would compete next.

Earlier in the day, two-time world championships medallist Vinesh was allowed to compete in the women's 53kg category after the WFI reversed its earlier stand of restricting her participation to the 50kg division.

The dramatic turn of events came during the official weigh-in on Saturday morning when Vinesh was informed that she would be permitted to compete only in the 50kg category, citing her participation in that weight class in her last four international events, including the Paris Olympics.

The wrestler strongly objected to the decision and accused the federation of discriminating against her by denying her the opportunity to compete in a category of her choice.

Sangakkara questions Sam Curran’s absence from IPL



BHARAT SHARMA
■ Mullanpur

Rajasthan Royals head coach Kumar Sangakkara has questioned the last-minute injury pull-out from England all-rounder Sam Curran and said the BCCI must continue to ensure that foreign players meet their contractual obligations throughout the Indian Premier League.

Curran had withdrawn from the IPL citing a season-ending groin injury. However, he is back in action having played three games for Surrey in the T20 Blast back home.

Overseas players' availability has always been an issue in the IPL. This season, Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins turned up for their respective teams in the second half of the competi- tion due to niggles.

Punjab Kings co-owner Mohit Burman too has said the BCCI and foreign boards need to align better on player availability so that a team's balance is not impacted signifi- cantly. The BCCI already has a two-year ban in place for a foreign player who pulls out of the IPL after being bought in the auction.

Following the loss to Gujarat Titans in the Eliminator, the Royals' coach Sangakkara expressed his frustration over Curran's case that forced them to find a replacement in Dasun Shanaka. “We were told that Sam Curran had a season- ending injury, but I think I saw him playing for Surrey for two games or three games now, so that was disappoint- ing. “We'd have loved to have had him here playing for us, but I think having got Dasun Shanaka as a replacement when we were told early, everyone should be extreme- ly proud of themselves,” said Sangakkara.

Can the BCCI deal with the player availability problem more strictly?

“A proper tight policy around that is always a requirement. The BCCI has a strict policy on that. Every person goes through injuries, and if it's a serious injury, (or) a season-ending injury, of course we understand,” said the head coach.

“We've had quite a few injuries. We've also had players like Adam Milne, (Shimron) Hetmyer, quite a few who've come here, not had much of a game. Lthuan-dre Pretorius is another one.” (PTI)

Shubman Gill: Not playing to the occasion brings out best in Gujarat Titans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mullanpur

A ton-up Shubman Gill on Friday said not playing to the occasion brings out the best in Gujarat Titans as his side qualified for the final of IPL 2026 with a commanding seven-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals here.

Gill smacked 104 off 53 balls with 15 fours and three sixes to eclipse the first-innings heroics of Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, who made a calculated 96, to power Gujarat Titans' victory in the Qualifier 2 here.

“(The) feeling is really good. But (a) quick turn- around so tomorrow (Saturday) we'll just rest and recover and then go there and assess conditions,” Gill told the broadcaster after the match here.

“If you don't play the occa- sion it brings the best out of us and that's what we spoke about. Let's take the occasion out and play some good cricket. Whether we win or lose, we should play good cricket,” he said while reveal- ing GT's mantra.

The IPL final this year will be a repeat of the Qualifier 1 in which defending champi- ons Royal Challengers Bengaluru had beaten Gujarat Titans by 92 runs.

GT's win on Friday was built on a 167-run opening stand between Gill and Sai Sudharsan (58), who was dis- missed hit-wicket for a second game in a row. “We



complement each other and each other's game very well. When we are batting out there our communication is very good. One of us has to take down one of the bowlers and we are very good in deciding which bowler to take on,” Gill said.

“I don't think anyone has seen that (hit-wicket) happen in two games. I saw some video on social media about taping his hands, and I think I'll have to do that,” he said.

Talking about his knock,

He is more than ready, says Sanga on India call up for Sooryavanshi

BHARAT SHARMA
■ Mullanpur

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's per- formance against world class bowlers in the IPL is an indi- cator that he is more than ready to play for India, said Sri Lankan legend and Rajasthan Royals head coach Kumar Sangakkara.

The 15-year-old had a phe- nomenal first full season in the IPL as he aggregated 776 runs at a staggering strike rate of 237.31. He could well end up as the leading run getter of the tournament if Shubman Gill or Sai Sudharsan don't surpass him in the final on Sunday.

Having taken the likes of Jasprit Bumrah, Kagiso Rabada and Pat Cummins to the cleaners over the course



of the two month long com- petition, Sooryavanshi has reinforced the popular belief that he is rarest of rare who would serve India for long.

After endorsements from former cricketers including the legendary Sunil Gavaskar,

the world, I think he's more than ready to take on any challenge that you throw at him. And I'm sure that he'll get that call-up very, very soon,” said the Sri Lankan after Royals' exit from the IPL.

“He's batted with a lot of maturity, he has shouldered the responsibility of that opening partnership so well for this season,” he added.

India's next T20 assign- ment is in Ireland late June and there is a strong likeli- hood of Sooryavanshi making his international debut in that series.

After a 29-ball 97 in Eliminator, the teenager switched gears for 96 off 47 balls on Friday night, showing he can adapt if the situation demands.

“Yeah, I thought he batted

Gill said he wanted to finish the game for the Titans.

“I was in the kind of zone where I was just looking at the gaps and the bowler and see my zone and try to hit it there. That's what happens when you're batting well, you see the gaps and middle it,” Gill said.

“At one point we thought we could restrict them to 180-190 but they made 210 (214/6) so we just wanted to get a good start. I wanted to finish it off but got out,” he said.

Rajasthan Royals' skipper Riyan Parag said a score of around 240 would have been challenging.

“It was a par score; it was defendable. I felt after the heavy roller, it got better in the second innings. In the first innings, the bowlers got some grip, and the slower ones did well. I thought 230 would have been a par score (and) a score around 240 would have been challeng- ing,” he said.

The Royals' captain said Sooryavanshi's 96 was a calculated knock.

“I can't put it into words, there's one way where you slog and score many runs. But he doesn't slog, you could see his innings today - he calculates and plays his shots,” he said.

“I can't say how, but hope- fully he will go on to do well in his career, do well for the Rajasthan Royals and win us a second title.”

Riyan praised his side for making the playoffs despite their inexperience.

think they need. So for Vaibhav, it won't be different.

“We'll sit down with our medical team and then go through what he might need and then support him. We'll run our camps, he'll have enough practice opportuni- ties in Nagpur (Talegaon) with us. So we'll be keeping a very close eye, not just on Vaibhav, but all our players,” he said.

Asked if he would coach a carefree soul like him differently to others, Sangakkara added: “We don't clutter his mind too much. He comes to all our team meetings, he con- tributes, he listens, and he does a lot of homework. He practises well and he reads bowlers well, he watches their videos and prepares himself really well.” (PTI)

Shubman Gill’s batting has just been phenomenal: Vikram Solanki

BHARAT SHARMA
■ Mullanpur

Gujarat Titans director of cricket Vikram Solanki has been blown away by the form and consistency his captain Shubman Gill has shown in the Indian Premier League. Gill has totalled 722 runs this season, scoring the bulk of the runs for his team alongside opening partner Sai Sudharsan (710). Both are operating at a healthy strike rate of 160.

Gill gave a batting master- class in his team's chase of 215 on Friday, steering the Titans to their third final in five seasons.

Gill, the Test and ODI captain for India, was dropped from the T20 side ahead of the World Cup

earlier this year. Considering his appetite for runs in the shortest format, Gill seems determined for a national comeback.

“It is on the back of a lot of hard work. I can only imagine all of the work that Shubman has put in through- out his career to get to where he is as far as batting is con- cerned. He's an exceptional young man, and sometimes you have to realise he is still a young man. To be playing the cricket that he is, to be batting the way he is, is just phenomenal,” said Solanki.

“... and Sai is no less so. He might be a little younger in his journey, but you can see that he takes a fine example from Shubman and under- stands that actually his skills are what you and I might



view as batsmanship — the sort of traditional form of batting — but there is no doubt in my mind that if a situ- ation, a circumstance requires them to up their run

rate, and that wicket actual- ly suits them playing that way, then they can adapt.”

Did Gill come into this IPL with a different mindset fol- lowing his exclusion from the T20 World Cup squad? “He was preparing exactly as he has done before. He's a wonderful talent. T20 cricket is a format that you have to ride in different times as much as work hard when you're not playing well. He has played so much cricket. He's so experienced for somebody so young. He knows how to deal with all of those matters.”

“Success, (or) failure, pro- fessional sports is about dealing with exactly that. He was very measured when he arrived in our camp. His preparation has been on point as it always is. Regardless of what jersey he's wearing, his preparation is on point and that's exactly how he arrived this year,” said Solanki.

When asked for a response on rival teams and experts branding the Titans as a pre- dictable unit, Solanki did not have much to say.

“They are learned gentle- men of the game. We play a form of cricket that we trust and I don't really have any- thing else to say about it.”

On their meticulous plan- ning for Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Solanki chose to praise the teenager.

“I'll just say what an excep- tional innings he played (against Sunrisers Hyderabad). He continues to be a young man to be. It's defying any sort of logic to how he's taken on such expe- rienced international bowlers and played as well as he did today (against GT). I wish him well.” (PTI)

Neeraj brother’s advice during Para Worlds helped me break my own record: Sumit Antil

SUMAN RAY ■ New Delhi

Legendary Neeraj Chopra's priceless advice during the World Para Championship last year resulted in his world record-obliterating effort of 74.82m, said two-time Paralympic gold medallist Sumit Antil.

Antil shattered his own world record of 73.29m by an incredible 1.53 metres in the men's javelin F64, to claim the gold at the 8th Indian Open Para Athletics International Championship in Bengaluru on Wednesday. The silver medalist — Maharashtra's Sandip Sargar with 62.88m — was almost 12 metres short of him. “Neeraj bhai guides me from time to time. He came to



see my throw at the Para World Championship in New Delhi last year.

He pointed out a few shortcomings to me. So, I am benefiting from that here,” Antil told PTI in an exclusive Zoom interview from his hometown in Sonipat on

Saturday. “My coach and Neeraj bhai are good friends, and they talk to each other about my technique. So, all of us together are breaking the world records again and again. And 75 metres for a para-athlete is a very long throw,” Antil added.

Antil, who had also trained alongside Tokyo Olympic gold medallist back in the day, couldn't stop talking about the kind of influence he has had on his career.

“Sometimes it feels nice to be compared with Neeraj bhai because he is also my idol,” you couldn't miss the pride in his voice. But there are times when unfair compari- son with Chopra had left him a trifle baffled. “Sometimes when the comparison is done in the wrong way you just wonder why it is happening because I and Neeraj are in absolutely different categories (able-bodied and para)-so why the comparison?”

“I mainly focus on taking tips from Neeraj bhai from

time to time and talking to him. As an athlete, he is very strong, but as a person, he is even better,” he observed.

Eyes trained on 80m mark: Antil has now trained his eyes on breaking the 75m mark consistently and even- tually get to 80m mark, which will be phenomenal marker for a differently abled athlete.

“In Bengaluru, I was expect- ing a little more than my final effort (best effort) . I was expecting to get around 75-76 metres on the sixth throw (but managed with 74.82). So, now I will try to make the 75 metres with consistency. I will try to get to the distance of 77-78 metres and repeat this performance again on the ground. So that I can

aim for a mark of 78-80 metres in future.”

Describing his build up to the event and how he eclipsed his own world record, the champion thrower said: “I had gone with full preparation to beat the world record because I have been chasing this record for the last 2.5 years.

“Finally, everything fell in line and when I learnt about the throw of 74.82m, it was nice to know that the record that I have been trying to break has been broken. To achieve that, we made many changes to tech- nique and rhythm, and I even lost seven kilos after my weight was measured in February-March.” (PTI)

Odisha Gymnastics apologises after dead president’s name on letterhead causes embarrassment



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha Gymnastics Association secretary Ashok Kumar Sahoo has apologised for the continued use of late president Samir Dey's name on the association's official letterhead, describing it as an “unintentional mistake”.

The apology came after PTI reported that invoices related to the National Gymnastics Championships were issued on a letterhead bearing the name of Dey, who passed away in November 2024.

The Nationals concluded here earlier this month.

“I, Ashok Kumar Sahoo, Honorary Secretary, Odisha Gymnastics Association, took notice of the story published in different media channels about the mention of our late President Shri Samir Dey on our letterhead. It was an oversight error and an unintentional mistake,” Sahoo said in a statement.

“We run our association transparently. However, I apologise for the oversight error and we will rectify it as soon as possible,” he added.

A complaint submitted to the commissioner-cum-sec- retary of Odisha's Sports and Youth Services Department has questioned how the OGA managed to secure nearly '98 lakh from the state gov- ernment for the 2026 National Gymnastics Championships even as invoices of more than '1.96- crore and official documents continued to carry the name of late Dey as president.

Sahoo had said that vice- president Dhiren Panda was currently functioning as the in-charge of the association but fresh letterheads had not been printed, resulting in the continued use of old stationery bearing Dey's name. The secretary had also said that the present committee, which has been in place for nearly two decades, would be dissolved by August and fresh elec- tions conducted in compli- ance with the National Sports Code.