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India-Nordic ties at strategic high: PM

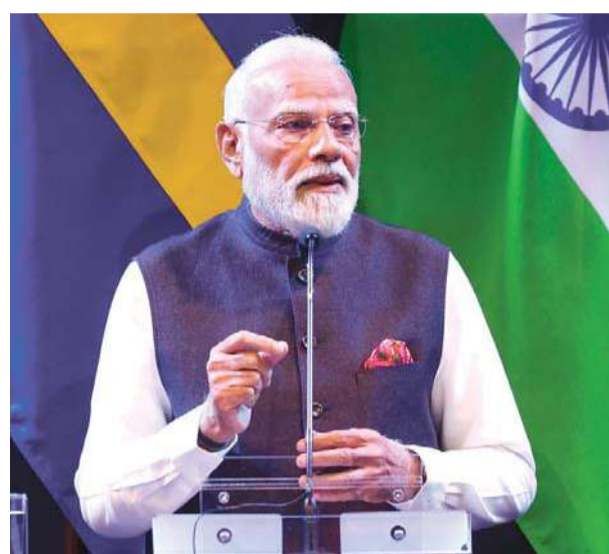
The discussions focused on strengthening cooperation in clean energy, trade and digitalisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday departed from Norway for Italy, concluding a visit that saw India's ties with Nordic nations elevated to a new strategic level focused on green technology and innovation.

In a post on social media platform X, Modi described the Norway leg as "very fruitful," noting productive discussions with Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store and participation in the India-Nordic Summit. He thanked the Government and people of Norway for their hospitality and warmth.

During his two-day visit, Modi held bilateral talks with leaders from across the Nordic region, including Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdóttir (as referenced in summit participa-



Prime Minister speaking during an interaction with European Round Table (ERT) members in Gothenburg, Sweden

tion), Finland's Prime Minister Petteri Orpo, and Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen. The dis-

ussions focused on strengthening cooperation in clean energy, sustainability, trade, and digitalisation.

TODAY, WE DECIDED TO ELEVATE INDIA-NORDIC RELATIONS TO A GREEN TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP. WITH THIS WE WILL ENSURE A BETTER FUTURE FOR WORLD
PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

A key outcome of the visit was the India-Nordic Summit, where India and the Nordic countries comprising Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden agreed to elevate their relationship to a Green Technology and Innovation Strategic Partnership. The framework is expected to deepen collaboration in clean energy transition, blue economy initiatives, trade, and investment flows.

Modi also met King Harald V of Norway, highlighting India's rapid economic transformation and opportunities for Norwegian businesses. He was additionally con-

ferred Norway's highest civilian honour, the Grand Cross of the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit, in recognition of his role in strengthening India-Norway relations.

India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the Oslo visit marked the opening of "a new chapter in India-Nordic and India-Norway partnership."

Following Norway, Modi will travel to Italy on the invitation of Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. In Rome, he is expected to meet Italian President Sergio Mattarella and hold bilateral talks with Meloni.

Heated exchange at MEA press briefing in Norway

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A tense and unusually confrontational exchange unfolded during a Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) press briefing in Norway on Monday night, after a Norwegian journalist repeatedly questioned Indian diplomats on issues of press freedom, minority rights, and human rights in India.

The briefing, addressed by MEA Secretary (West) Sibi George, escalated when journalist Helle Lyng challenged India's democratic credentials and asked why India should be "trusted" on matters of civil liberties. The interaction became increasingly heated, with Lyng interrupting proceedings at multiple points and briefly walking out of the briefing room before returning.



Secretary (West) Ambassador Sibi George addressing a press briefing regarding Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in the 3rd India-Nordic Summit in New Delhi

In response, George firmly defended India's democratic framework, rejecting the allegations and criticising what he described as selective narratives about the country. He argued that many external criticisms were based on limited or biased reporting. "You know how many stories are up here in India...

we have breaking news every day," George said, pointing to the scale of India's media landscape. He added that critics often rely on "one or two news reports" or what he described as accounts from "ignorant NGOs," without fully understanding India's complexity.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

The Bystander

Vijay appointed the astrologer who had predicted his victory as officer on special duty.



PIONEER IN SHORT

EX-CM BC KHANDURI PASSES AWAY AT 91

Former Uttarakhand chief minister and senior BJP leader Bhuvan Chandra Khanduri (91) died at a private hospital here on Tuesday, following a prolonged illness. The veteran leader breathed his last at around 11 am, his daughter and Uttarakhand Assembly Speaker Ritu Khanduri Bhushan said. Khanduri is survived by his wife Aruna, son Manish, and daughter Ritu Khanduri Bhushan. The former chief minister was suffering from age-related ailments and underwent frequent hospitalisations recently. Before entering politics, Khanduri retired from the Indian Army as a major general. Popularly known as "General Sahab", he earned a reputation as a disciplined and strict administrator. Khanduri served as the chief minister of the hill State twice.

FULL REPORT ON P5

PUTIN SET TO VISIT INDIA IN SEPTEMBER

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to travel to India in September to participate in the BRICS Summit 2026, which will be hosted in New Delhi on September 12 and 13. The development was confirmed by Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov on Tuesday, highlighting the continued diplomatic engagement between Moscow and New Delhi.

The upcoming visit will be Putin's second trip to India within a year, underlining the strong strategic partnership shared by the two nations. In December last



year, the Russian leader visited New Delhi for the 23rd India-Russia Annual Summit, where he held extensive discussions with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on defence cooperation, trade expansion, energy security and global geopolitical developments.

India currently holds the BRICS presidency for 2026 and is preparing to host several high-level meetings and diplomatic events connected to the grouping throughout the year.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Fuel prices hiked again, second time in 5 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

For the second time in a span of five days, prices of petrol and diesel were hiked again on Tuesday by about 90 paise per litre across the country and across all variants.

The increase pushed petrol prices in New Delhi to ₹98.64 per litre from ₹97.77, while diesel rose to ₹91.58 from ₹90.67. Mumbai saw petrol rise by 91 paise to ₹107.59 per litre and diesel by 94 paise to ₹94.08 per litre. Kolkata recorded the steepest hike in petrol at 96 paise to ₹109.70 per litre, while diesel prices rose by 94 paise to ₹96.07 per litre. In Chennai, petrol prices



An employee refuels a vehicle at a petrol pump in New Delhi

rose by 82 paise to ₹104.49 per litre, and diesel by 86 paise to ₹96.11 per litre.

The ₹4 per litre increase in fuel prices in two instalments is likely to have an impact on retail inflation that could soon spill over into household budgets and everyday spending.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Cab, auto drivers' unions call 3-day strike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Commercial vehicle drivers' unions in Delhi-NCR have announced a three-day strike from May 21 to 23 (from Thursday to Saturday), demanding an immediate hike in taxi and auto fares amid rising fuel prices, and alleged exploitation by app-based cab aggregators. Reacting to this, Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said he is hopeful of resolving the issue soon after discussion with Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta.

According to Anuj Kumar Rathore, vice-president of the Chaalak Shakti Union, due to the continuously increasing prices of CNG, petrol and diesel, middle-



class drivers are struggling to support their families. Therefore, in coordination with other organisations of Delhi, the 'Chaalak Shakti Union' has called for a Chakka Jam (strike) and appealed not to operate vehicles on May 21, 22 and 23.

"If the Government does not immediately increase taxi fares and issue a notification within one or two

weeks, this movement will be intensified into a large-scale protest, for which the Delhi Government solely would be responsible," the union added.

The drivers of commercial vehicles also stated that "strong policies be formulated to stop the economic exploitation of taxi drivers".

CONTINUED ON >> P4

SC refuses to recall order on sterilisation of stray dogs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The right to live with dignity encompasses the right to move freely without the threat of harm from dog bite attacks, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while dismissing pleas seeking a recall of its earlier order on the relocation and sterilisation of stray canines.



"The court cannot remain oblivious to harsh ground realities where children, international travellers and old age people have fallen victim to dog bite incidents," a bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria said in response to the petitions by animal rights activists and others.

The court also issued a slew of directions to states, union territories and other statutory bodies to augment infrastructure to deal with stray dogs. Stray dogs picked up shall not be released back to their original place, the court said.

FULL REPORT ON >> P10

Naxalism eradicated nationwide: Shah

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Tuesday that Naxalism has been eliminated across the country, ahead of the Government's March 31, 2026, deadline. While speaking in Jagdalpur, Chhattisgarh, Shah praised India's security forces for their bravery and sacrifice, calling this a major step in solving an important internal security issue.

He pointed to three key dates in the campaign against Naxalism: December 13, 2023, when the BJP took office in Chhattisgarh and began a focused effort against the



Maoist insurgency; August 24, 2024, when police leaders from all States agreed to work together to end Naxalism by March 2026; and March 31, 2026, which now marks an early victory.

Shah emphasised the importance of State cooper-

ation, noting that most non-BJP Governments supported the central strategy.

The Home Minister criticised the previous Congress Government in Chhattisgarh for failing to cooperate, saying that real progress in the Bastar region began only after the BJP took over in December 2023. "It was after December 2023... that we could eliminate Naxalism in Bastar," Shah said. He also challenged the idea that Naxalism grew because development did not reach tribal and forested areas, arguing instead that Naxalism itself blocked development.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Jahangir Khan withdraws from Falta by-election

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata

Trinamool Congress candidate Jahangir Khan announced on Tuesday that he is withdrawing his nomination and will not contest the Falta by-election. This decision comes two days before repolling on May 21, with vote counting set for May 24.

At a press conference in Kolkata, Khan described his withdrawal as a selfless act for "peace and development." He stated, "My vision was 'Sonar Falta' (Golden

I HAVE WITHDRAWN MY CANDIDATURE IN THE INTEREST OF FALTA'S DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Falta). Our Chief Minister is providing a special package for the people of Falta; for this very reason, I am withdrawing my nomination. I have withdrawn my candidature in the interest of Falta's development and peace."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

India records all-time high power demand amid heat wave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The scorching heat wave conditions across the country on Tuesday led to an all-time high peak-hour power demand of 260.45 GW, mainly due to increased use of air-conditioners and desert coolers. Furnishing this data, the power ministry has also projected that the demand would reach 270 GW this summer as temperatures will continue to soar for the next few days. Notably, India continued to dominate the global heat chart in a striking way on Tuesday afternoon.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) data show the continuation of the heat-

wave in large parts of north-west and central India, as the mercury touched the 44-46 degrees mark in many places on Tuesday. The northwest and central India, including Delhi-NCR, are now experiencing "peak summer" conditions as temperatures continue to rise relentlessly across the national Capital. Banda in Uttar Pradesh recorded 48.2 degrees Celsius, the highest in this summer season, while Amravati recorded a blistering 46.8 degrees Celsius.

According to AQLin's live temperature rankings at around 2:30 pm, all of the world's top 100 hottest cities were still located in India, underlining the intensity and



People shield themselves from the heat on a hot summer day in New Delhi

spread of the ongoing heat-wave across the country. The updated rankings showed temperatures rising further through the afternoon, with

even the cities at the bottom of the top 100 list recording a scorching 44 degrees Celsius. A massive number of cities were clustered in the

46°C bracket by afternoon, including Banda, Bathinda, Pathankot, Bareilly, Jhansi, Kaithal and Haridwar.

The NCR has experienced its hottest day in the last two years. According to the India Meteorological Department's data, among several stations, Ridge recorded the maximum temperature at 46.5 degrees Celsius, making it the hottest location in Delhi during the day. Safdarjung and Palam registered 45.1 degrees Celsius. Additionally, the minimum temperatures remained elevated between 27 degrees Celsius and 28.2 degree Celsius across the Capital city, leading to discomfort at night.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Tuesday rush exposes Metro planning

ABHINAV KUMAR JHA
New Delhi

The platform at Rajiv Chowk on Tuesday morning looked the way it always does when something has gone wrong upstream. People pressed against the yellow line, a train sitting longer than it should at the platform, the announcement system repeating itself, and a quiet collective calculation spreading through the crowd: I am going to be late.

Metro Monday was supposed to be the beginning of something. The Delhi Government's campaign to reduce fuel consumption by encouraging citizens to leave their cars at home



and take the Metro had its first official day on Monday, and by all accounts it worked, in the sense that more people came. What it did not do was come with additional train frequency, expanded platform capacity, or any visible preparation for the load it was explicitly designed to increase.

On Tuesday, the conse-

quences were still being felt. This correspondent travelled across the Blue Line and Magenta Line during the morning peak, and the conditions were consistent: packed coaches, extended halts at major interchange stations, and commuters who had made the responsible choice and were being punished for it.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Delhi records hottest day in two years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi residents are now experiencing "peak summer" conditions as temperatures continue to rise relentlessly across the national Capital. The city experienced its hottest day in the last two years, with dry winds and a searing sun pushing temperatures to 45.1 degrees Celsius.

Additionally, the minimum temperatures remained elevated between 27 degrees Celsius and 28.2 degrees Celsius across the Capital city. The night temperature was also recorded above the normal, leading to discomfort in the night. The maximum temperature on Monday was recorded at 43.4 degrees Celsius, the second-highest this summer.

Tuesday also marked the fourth heatwave day recorded in Delhi this year. Heatwave conditions were earlier recorded on April 23, 24 and 25, an IMD official said. The city has witnessed its hottest May day since 2024.

According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), Safdarjung, the city's base weather monitoring station, recorded a maximum temperature of 45.1 degrees Celsius, 4.7 notches above normal and 1.7 degrees higher than the previous day. The Palam station also logged 45.1 degrees Celsius, 3.8



People cover themselves on a hot summer day in New Delhi

PANKAJ KUMAR

notches above normal with a 24-hour rise of 1.6 degrees.

The Lodhi Road station recorded a maximum temperature of 45.2 degrees Celsius, 6.2 notches above normal and 1.4 degrees higher than the previous day, officially recording heatwave conditions, while the Ridge station recorded the hottest temperature in the city at 46.5 degrees Celsius, five notches above normal with a 24-

hour rise of 1.9 degrees.

Ayanagar station recorded a maximum temperature of 45.5 degrees Celsius, 3.4 notches above normal and 1.1 degrees higher than the previous day. The minimum temperature settled at 28.2 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung, 1.7 notches above normal and 1.9 degrees higher than the previous day, while Palam and Ridge recorded 28.1 degrees Celsius each, with

departures of 1 and 1.4 notches above normal respectively, and 24-hour changes of 1.2 degrees and 1.3 degrees.

Lodhi Road registered a minimum temperature of 27 degrees Celsius, three notches above normal and 1.6 degrees higher than the previous day, while Ayanagar recorded 27.4 degrees Celsius, 0.9 notch above normal, with a 24-hour change of 1.6 degrees.

Data showed that temperatures were significantly above normal across the region. The data also indicated that the maximum temperature rose by 1.1°C to 1.9°C across different monitoring centres within 24 hours, reflecting a rapid escalation in daytime heating.

Minimum temperatures remained elevated between 27 degrees Celsius and 28.2 degrees Celsius across Delhi. As per the IMD data, among the weather stations, Safdarjung recorded a minimum temperature of 28.2 degrees Celsius, 1.7 notches above normal. Palam recorded 28.1 degrees Celsius, 1.0 notch above normal; Lodhi Road 27.0 degrees Celsius, 3.0 notches above normal; Ridge 28.1 degrees Celsius, 1.4 notches above normal; and Ayanagar 27.4 degrees Celsius, 0.9 notch above normal.

This has led to a surge in peak demand clocking 7,776 MW this year and the discoms - BSES and Tata Powers have successfully met the peak hour demand in their respective areas.

With the mercury expected to remain above 44-46 degrees Celsius over the next three days, the India Meteorological Department has issued a yellow alert for heatwave conditions, warning people to take precautions against prolonged exposure to the scorching heat.

Govt to distribute summer kits having sattu, ORS, gamcha to 1 lakh construction workers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Government will distribute special kits containing sattu, ORS, sherbat syrup, prickly heat powder, gamcha and other items among one lakh construction workers in the city to help them cope with the intense summer heat.

Top sources said the Government has started the process to engage a public sector unit for the procurement of the items, packaging and distribution of the summer kits to nearly one lakh workers registered with the Delhi Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Board.

Each kit will have nine items including 250 grams of instant energy glucose, one kg premium quality sattu (roasted gram flour), 30 oral rehydration solution (ORS) sachets, cotton gamcha



(towel), sunlight protection cap, prickly heat powder, one-litre water bottle, 250 ml of sherbat concentrate kept in a durable utility backpack.

The approximate cost of distribution of each kit is estimated to be ₹1,890. The Board has started the process for selection of a PSU for supply of summer kits to Delhi to the construction workers, sources said.

The Delhi Government recognises that construction workers engaged in outdoor and labour-intensive activi-

ties are particularly vulnerable to extreme summer conditions and heatwave related occupational risks such as dehydration, heat stress, fatigue, and associated health complications, said a request for proposal (RFP) document issued by the Board.

The Board aims to ensure timely supply and distribution of the summer kits to approximately 1,00,000 registered construction workers to support their health, safety, and overall working conditions.

The number of construction workers may increase or decrease as per the conditions. Priority will be given to workers working on construction site, according to a note, prepared by the department. Since real-time authenticated data regarding construction workers presently engaged at construction sites in Delhi is not available with the Board, the estimated beneficiary coverage has been derived on the basis of active and renewed registered construction workers maintained in the database of the Board, it said.

Considering workforce mobility, seasonal migration, operational feasibility, budgetary availability, and implementation timelines, a reasonable coverage ratio of approximately 25 per cent of the active renewed worker base has been considered for the estimation process, it said.

Govt plans collection centres for damaged idols

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday announced a new public campaign to set up dedicated collection centres for damaged idols of Hindu deities across the Capital. According to the Chief Minister, the initiative aims to ensure respectful disposal while protecting the environment.

The Delhi Government plans to establish special centres where residents can deposit old and damaged idols that are no longer suitable for worship. The idols will later be recycled using scientific, environmentally friendly methods, officials said.

Announcing the initiative, the Chief Minister said the campaign would be shaped through public participation and invited suggestions from citizens before the final framework is prepared.

"For years, people have worshipped these idols in their homes with devotion.



But when idols get damaged, many are left under peepal trees, near riverbanks, in parks, or by roadsides. This hurts religious sentiments and also creates cleanliness and environmental concerns," the Chief Minister said. She said the Government wants to create a dignified system that respects faith while also addressing civic and environmental challenges.

According to officials, the government is currently working on a detailed action

plan for the initiative.

Citizens have been asked to give suggestions regarding the functioning of the proposed collection system, possible locations for collection centres, and ways to make the process more organised and respectful.

The Chief Minister said the campaign should not remain limited to a government programme but evolve into a public movement supported by people across the city.

"A good idea becomes a movement when people

support it. Respecting faith and keeping Delhi clean are both collective responsibilities," the Chief Minister said while appealing to residents to share their views through social media and other public platforms.

Officials said the Government intends to involve local communities, resident welfare associations, and market bodies while preparing the final model for implementation.

The proposal comes amid growing concerns over the disposal of religious waste in public spaces and water bodies. Environmental experts have often pointed out that idols made with synthetic colours, plaster, and chemical coatings can contribute to pollution when dumped in rivers, drains, or open spaces.

Government sources said the proposed recycling process would focus on environmentally sustainable methods to reuse materials from damaged idols without harming the environment.

Traffic crawls across Delhi as summit rehearsal triggers diversions, congestion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Traffic movement slowed across several parts of the national capital on Tuesday afternoon as restrictions and diversions imposed for a high-level summit rehearsal at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi led to long snarls and commuter frustration on key stretches. Heavy congestion was reported from parts of central, north and south Delhi between noon and 3 pm, particularly on roads leading towards the New Delhi district, with many office-goers and commuters complaining of delays.

Delhi Traffic Police had earlier issued an advisory regarding the rehearsal being conducted ahead of the 'International Big Cat Alliance Summit' and the 'India-Africa Forum Summit', scheduled at



Bharat Mandapam from May 28 to June 1.

Commuters took to social media platform X to complain about prolonged traffic jams and poor lane discipline at several locations.

"Delhi doesn't believe in traffic management. Status at 12.30 pm on 19.05.26 - stuck in traffic jam," an X user posted, sharing visuals of vehicles moving bumper-to-bumper near the Ridge Road.

The commuter further wrote that despite the round-

about on the Ridge Road being located barely 20 metres from Hindu Rao Hospital and within 700 metres of the official residences of the chief minister and lieutenant governor, "traffic indiscipline and nuisance remain a daily feature."

Similar complaints surfaced from areas around Tilak Marg, Mathura Road, SP Marg and Connaught Place, where motorists said diversions led to traffic spillover on internal roads.

Traffic Police launches Project SANGAM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Traffic Police has launched "Project SANGAM", a multi-agency initiative aimed at easing congestion and improving urban mobility through citizen participation, enforcement drives and engineering interventions across the national capital, according to an official statement.

Project SANGAM, or Systematic/Synergistic Action & Networked Governance for Area Mobility, seeks to transform traffic management from traditional enforcement-driven policing into a collaborative governance model by involving Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), Market Welfare Associations (MWAs) and

youth groups in addressing local traffic challenges, the statement said.

Following directions from Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, the initiative was brought into effect after a review meeting chaired by the LG at the Todapur traffic facility on April 2 and formally launched on April 3, it said.

According to the statement, extensive consultations in Dwarka's UER-II corridor led to proposals for 13 free left turns to reduce congestion during peak hours. Plans for four foot-overbridges (FOBs) at Sector 22-23, Sector 04-12 Market, Sector 06-10 Market and near Sector-01 have also been initiated, while road redesigning work was carried out at Elephant Chowk.

Water supply to be disrupted in parts of Delhi as ammonia levels rise in Yamuna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Water supply in several parts of the city is likely to remain affected over the next two days, officials said on Tuesday. The disruption comes after two major Delhi Jal Board (DJB) water treatment plants reduced production due to high ammonia levels in the Yamuna.

While high ammonia levels in the river remain a recurring challenge for the DJB, the situation has been aggravated by reduced raw water supply from neighbouring Haryana.

"Around 10 per cent production capacity has been reduced at the Wazirabad WTP and 15 per cent at the Chandrawal WTP due to the twin problems of high ammonia levels and reduced



water supply," a senior DJB official said.

"We are in talks with the Haryana government to increase water supply. Hopefully, the situation will improve within a day or two. The problem started last night," the official said.

The Wazirabad plant has an overall production capacity of 138 million gallons per day (MGD). The other affected facility, the Chandrawal plant, the city's oldest water treatment plant complex, has a combined capacity of 99

MGD. Production there has been reduced by around 15 per cent and is currently at about 84 MGD.

Areas under the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC), and parts of North Delhi, are likely to face low or no water supply.

"Due to low pumping from the DJB Chandrawal Plant, water supply from the Jhandewalan Reservoir will remain affected this evening in several NDMC command areas. Citizens are requested to use water judiciously," the NDMC said in an alert.

Water demand in Delhi peaks during the summer season. To address this, the Delhi government implements a summer action plan every year. Under this year's plan, a target of supplying 1,002 MGD of water has been set.

Gadkari inspects ₹4,463 crore DND-Faridabad-Sohna Corridor to boost Jewar Airport connectivity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Tuesday inspected the ambitious DND-Faridabad-Sohna Access Controlled Highway project. The project, which is a major infrastructure corridor aimed at transforming connectivity across Delhi-NCR and providing faster access to the upcoming Noida International Airport at Jewar.

The high-speed six-lane corridor, being developed under the Bharatmala Pariyojana, is expected to connect Delhi,

Noida, Ghaziabad, Faridabad, Gurugram, and Sohna through a seamless expressway network. Officials said the project, spread over nearly 59 km, is being built at an estimated cost of ₹4,463 crore.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, who accompanied the Union Minister during the inspection, said infrastructure projects worth nearly ₹1.60 lakh crore are now reshaping the transport landscape of the National Capital Region.

She credited the Centre for accelerating road and mobility projects across Delhi and said the city would have

faceted far worse traffic congestion without the ongoing expansion of expressways, tunnels, and elevated corridors. "The Centre has given Delhi a modern and future-ready road network. These projects will ease congestion, reduce pollution, and improve connectivity across the region," the Chief Minister said after the inspection.

The inspection was attended by Union Ministers of State Ajay Tamta, Harsh Malhotra, and Krishan Pal Gurjar, Delhi PWD Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma, Haryana PWD Minister Ranbir Singh Gangwa, South Delhi MP



Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari along with Chief Minister Rekha Gupta and others conduct a joint on-site inspection of the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway Link (NH-148 NA) project, New Delhi

Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, and former MP Ramesh Bidhuri.

One of the key attractions of the project is a 140-metre Network Arch Bridge, considered among the most advanced steel bridge structures in the country. Officials said the bridge has been designed with tied-arch technology and crossed hangers to improve strength and earthquake resistance.

The project also uses modern engineering techniques, including precast segmental construction, launching girders, high-strength steel structures, and advanced rubber bearings

aimed at increasing durability and safety.

Officials highlighted the project's environmental component as well. Around two lakh metric tonnes of inert material generated through bio-mining of the Okhla and Ghazipur landfill sites are being used in road construction. Noise barriers, landscaping, and plantation work are also part of the project design.

The DND-Faridabad-Sohna corridor is expected to play a crucial role in improving access to the Noida International Airport at Jewar. A separate 31.4-km express-

way project linking the airport with the DND-Ballabhgarh Bypass and the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway is also under development at a cost of ₹2,360 crore.

Officials said the corridor would connect the Yamuna Expressway and the Eastern Peripheral Expressway, allowing traffic from northern India to reach Jewar Airport without entering Delhi.

The new route is expected to significantly reduce traffic pressure on the capital and improve travel for commuters coming from South Delhi, Gurugram, and Faridabad.



IN FOCUS



A man covering himself and a child due to intense heatwave on a hot summer day at Taj Mahal in Agra, Uttar Pradesh PTI

Punjabi singer found dead after six-day hunt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh/Ludhiana

What began as a routine trip to buy groceries ended in a chilling murder mystery that stretched from Ludhiana to Canada through Nepal. Six days after Punjabi singer Inder Kaur, alias Yashinder Kaur, disappeared in her white Ford Figo car, her decomposed body was pulled out of the Neelon canal on Tuesday, exposing what police describe as a carefully planned murder allegedly executed by a Canada-based man obsessed with marrying her.

The grim discovery came barely a day after divers recovered her car from the same canal, deepening suspicions that the victim had been murdered and dumped along with the vehicle to erase evidence. Investigators now believed that the accused

travelled thousands of kilometres with a single motive — to eliminate the woman who had rejected him after discovering he was already married and a father of two.

Police have named 37-year-old Sukhwinder Singh alias Sukha, a native of Mahlan Khurd village in Moga and a PR holder living in Calgary, Canada, as the prime accused. Two of his alleged accomplices — his father, Pritam Singh, and friend Karamjit Singh of Bhaloor village — have been arrested, while Sukhwinder remains on the run.

ACP Inderjit Singh Bopara said that the accused had allegedly come from Canada "specifically to execute the murder". According to investigators, Sukhwinder first landed in Kathmandu on April 30 before entering India on May 2. After reaching Punjab, he allegedly hired two taxis



from Moga and began tracking the victim's movements. Police said that he fled back towards Nepal the same night after the murder and later escaped to Canada.

Insta Friendship, Forced Marriage Pressure
Preliminary inquiry revealed

that Yashinder and Sukhwinder had become friends through Instagram nearly five years ago when she was active in the music industry. The friendship gradually developed into a relationship, and Sukhwinder frequently visited her home whenever he came to India.

Relatives said that he had even attended Yashinder's birthday celebrations on January 13 this year and had earlier promised to marry her. However, the relationship began collapsing after the singer discovered that he was already married and had two children in Canada.

Police sources said that Yashinder had firmly refused marriage after learning the truth, but Sukhwinder allegedly continued pressuring her.

Kidnapping angle under probe

According to the complaint filed by Inder's brother Jotinder Singh at Jamalpur police station, Sukhwinder, along with armed associates, abducted Yashinder at gunpoint on May 13 with the intention to kill her. Police initially registered an FIR for kid-

napping, criminal conspiracy, and Arms Act violations against Sukhwinder and his aides. Murder charges were added later after the body was recovered from the canal.

However, investigators are also probing another version presented by some relatives, who claimed that Yashinder may have voluntarily accompanied Sukhwinder to drop him somewhere before the two allegedly argued.

Cause of death still unclear

Police said that the exact cause of death remains unknown and will only be confirmed after the post-mortem examination at Samrala Civil Hospital.

Investigators are trying to determine whether Yashinder was shot dead or attacked with a sharp-edged weapon before her body was dumped into the canal.

CAA applicants must disclose old passport details: MHA

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH ■ New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued new amendments to the Citizenship Rules, 2009, making it mandatory for applicants seeking Indian citizenship under the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, to disclose any valid or expired passports issued by Pakistan, Afghanistan, or Bangladesh.

Those possessing such documents must also give an undertaking to surrender them within 15 days of their citizenship being approved. The changes, titled the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026, were published in the official gazette on Monday and took effect immediately. A new clause has been added to Schedule IC of the application form. Applicants must now declare via affidavit whether they are "not in pos-



session of a valid and/or expired passport(s)" from the three neighbouring countries. If they hold such a passport,

they are required to provide full details, including passport number, date and place of issue, and expiry date. They must surrender the document to the Senior Superintendent of Post or the concerned Superintendent of Post within 15 days of approval.

The move aims to eliminate any possibility of dual citizenship, which Indian law does not permit. Officials stated that the amendment provides greater procedural clarity to the CAA process, under which non-Muslim minorities, Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians, from Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh who fled religious persecution and entered India before December 31, 2014, are eligible for fast-tracked citizenship.

The notification also warns that providing false information can result in the deprivation of citizenship.

The MHA has clarified that this step is purely administrative and will not affect the humanitarian intent of the CAA. The online portal for CAA applications, launched in 2024, has already received numerous claims, and the new requirement is expected to enhance verification without changing the core eligibility criteria of the 2019 law. The amendment is part of the ongoing implementation of the CAA, which remains a contentious political issue.

Supporters see the passport disclosure requirement as a practical safeguard that promotes transparency and helps prevent misuse. Critics, however, have raised concerns that it could create hurdles for persecuted minorities arriving without proper documentation, especially members of communities such as the Matua Hindus in West Bengal.

AI's future hinges on ethics, human-centric systems: Nadda

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) depends on the collective ability to build ethical and human-centric systems, Union Health Minister JP Nadda said.

Nadda was addressing the 79th World Health Assembly in Geneva and speaking at the plenary session of the World Health Assembly (WHA).

Speaking on the session theme 'Reshaping Global Health: A Shared Responsibility', Nadda reiterated India's commitment to "Health for All." On the growing role of AI in healthcare, the minister said India has recently launched the Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare, as he stressed the need for ethical frameworks in deploying emerging technologies. "The future of AI depends on our collective ability to build ethical and



human-centric systems," he said. Nadda highlighted India's progress towards universal health coverage by citing the establishment of over 1.85 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs across the country.

The minister also highlighted that the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission has created over 880 million unique digital health identities to facilitate longitudinal health records.

Heated exchange at MEA press briefing in Norway

George further emphasised India's constitutional protections, stating that the Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and legal remedies for all citizens. He also highlighted gender equality provisions, noting that women in India were granted voting rights immediately after independence in 1947.

"We have a Constitution which guarantees the rights of the people... We have equal rights for the women of our country," he said, adding that India's democratic system itself-particularly its electoral process-was the strongest evidence of its commitment to human rights.

"What is the best example of human rights? The right to change Government, the right to vote. And that is what is happening in India," he said. The confrontation followed a post by Lyng on X a day earlier, in which she criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi for not taking her question during his visit to Norway. In her post, she also referenced India's ranking on the World Press Freedom Index and argued that journalists have a duty to question visiting leaders.

In response, the Indian Embassy in Norway had publicly invited her to attend the official press briefing, encouraging her to raise her questions directly during the media interaction.

The incident also drew political commentary in India. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi shared Lyng's post on social media, criticising the Government and suggesting that the episode reflected negatively on India's global image and leadership.

Following the exchange, Lyng defended her conduct on X, stating that journalism can be confrontational and that her role is to seek direct answers from those in power, especially when she feels responses are incomplete or evasive.

The episode has since sparked wider debate over press engagement, diplomatic communication styles, and differing perspectives on media freedom and accountability.

Cab, auto drivers' unions call 3-day strike

"The union had to approach the Delhi High Court last year, which clearly directed that the problems of taxi drivers should be resolved and the taxi fare should be increased. Despite this, the Delhi Government continues to make excuses and delay this matter by saying that the file has been sent to the Lieutenant Governor for approval," the letter added.

The All India Motor Transport Congress (AIMTC) on Monday wrote to Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, raising their demands, including a hike in taxi, auto fares and withdrawal of the environment compensation cess on commercial vehicles.

Addressing a press conference here, Gadkari said, "I discussed this issue (collection of environment compensation cess) with CM Gupta. We will soon find a solution to this issue".

The drivers also raised concerns about app-based cab companies, alleging that they are raising prices and "acting arbitrarily," while taxi drivers in Delhi are "becoming victims of economic exploitation and slavery-like conditions." "Fares for city taxis have not been hiked in the Delhi-NCR region for the last 15 years. Meanwhile, the cost of CNG, petrol, diesel has increased manifold," the letter added.

Last week, the Delhi Auto Rickshaw Union and

the Delhi Pradesh Taxi Union had also raised similar concerns in a letter to the chief minister, demanding a fare hike.

The unions said a protest will be held at the Delhi Secretariat as well on May 23. AIMTC has also announced a three-day strike in Delhi-NCR in response to the Delhi Government's decision to increase the environment compensation cess on commercial vehicles. AIMTC, which represents truckers, private bus operators, taxi drivers, and maxi cab operators, met in Delhi on Tuesday to discuss concerns regarding the cess hike.

AIMTC stated that over 68 transport associations and unions in Delhi-NCR will suspend operations for three days to protest policies issued by the CAQM, the courts, and the Delhi Government, which they describe as unjust.

The union has listed several demands, including withdrawal of the cess hike on all Delhi-bound goods vehicles, reversal of the proposed ban on non-Delhi-registered BS-IV commercial goods vehicles from November 1, 2026, and restricting the cess to vehicles transiting through Delhi.

India records all-time high power demand...

Delhi's electricity demand has surged to a new high of 7,776 MW at 3:30 PM on May 19, 2026, according to State Load Dispatch Centre (SLDC) data. This comes just a day after demand touched 7,542 MW and later rose to 7,600 MW at night, showing how rapidly consumption is climbing. According to the IMD, severe heat wave conditions will continue in most of the country for the next few days.

India's electricity demand surged to a record high on Tuesday as scorching temperatures drove up the use of cooling appliances like air conditioners. Peak demand touched a record 260 Gigawatts (GW) during daytime on Tuesday, surpassing yesterday's peak demand.

"Today, the peak power demand (solar hours) of 260.45 GW was met successfully at 15:40 hrs. This is a new high surpassing Monday's peak demand (solar hours) of 257.37 GW, which was also successfully met," the Ministry of Power said in a post on social media platform X. The ministry also stated that Yesterday (Monday) at 15:42 hours, the peak power demand of 257.37 GW was met without any shortfall.

This peak demand was a new high, surpassing the previous record of 256.1 GW, which was met on April 25, 2026, it said. Monday's peak demand eclipsed the previous all-time high of 256.11 GW recorded on April 25 at 15:38 hrs. The power ministry has projected that the peak power demand would reach 270 GW this summer. The city experienced its hottest day this summer, with the maximum temperature soaring to 45.1 degrees Celsius. The maximum temperature on Monday was recorded at 43.4 degrees Celsius, the second-highest this summer. The searing heat wave in the national Capital saw the highest surge in power demand, clocking 7,776 MW this year, and the Discoms successfully met the peak hour demand in their respective areas. The power demand is expected to touch 9,000 MW as compared to 8,656 MW last year. Delhi's peak power demand has seen a sharp rise in May compared to previous years, reflecting the impact of an intense and early summer.

The country's peak power demand has risen with temperatures from April onwards and further intensified in May. Last summer, the peak

FROM PAGE - 1

power demand was 242.77 GW, recorded in June, 2025, but stayed below the Government's estimate of 277 GW. In May 2024, the peak power demand reached 250 GW, a record at that time and exceeding the previous all-time peak of 243.27 GW set in September 2023.

Naxalism eradicated nationwide: Shah

"The truth is exactly the opposite," Shah said. "Development could not reach these areas because Naxalism was there." He noted that some regions were even less developed than Naxal-affected districts but did not experience insurgency because there was no violence or fear. In places like Bastar and other Red Corridor areas, people were caught in a cycle of fear and underdevelopment. Now that Naxalism is gone, the focus is shifting to rebuilding.

Shah said that as of May 19, 2026, former Naxal strongholds are seeing new development, with roads, schools, hospitals, and job programs finally moving forward. The success is the result of ongoing efforts by the Central Reserve Police Force, state police, and intelligence agencies, supported by political determination and inter-State cooperation. Ending Naxalism early also frees up resources that were used for counterinsurgency. While some may question the timing or political motives, the reality is that fear has lifted from many villages.

The Shah outlined upcoming development programmes for the region. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) established about 200 security camps in Bastar, with nearly a third to be converted into 'Veer Shahid Gundadhar Seva Dera', aimed at supporting regional service and development. He said the aim of the 'Veer Shahid Gundadhar Seva Dera' initiative is to link Bastar with development.

A credit society and a village dairy will be established to support local livelihoods. Each tribal household will receive a cow and buffalo for cooperative marketing, allowing women to supply milk.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for special efforts to formulate schemes to preserve and promote tribal culture," he said. Shah said the initiative provides a platform for tribal culture, including dance, song, language, attire, cuisine, and handicrafts. He said two Bastar Olympics have been organised, with participation from 3.94 lakh players, including many former Naxals who have accepted rehabilitation. Shah said these developments mark the end of Naxal influence and the start of a new phase for Bastar.

Fuel prices hiked again, second time in 5 days

Economists say that if the situation does not improve in the coming days, then more hikes may be in the offing. However, the approach of gradual hikes in petrol and diesel prices is to avoid an immediate inflation shock to the economy.

The fresh hike comes after State-run oil marketing companies had already increased fuel prices by around ₹3 per litre last Friday, for the first time in more than four years, as surging global crude prices following the Iran war forced State-run fuel retailers to pass on part of their mounting losses after months of holding rates steady through key State elections. Rates vary across States due to differences in value-added

tax. After Tuesday's increase, petrol and diesel prices are now the highest since May 2022.

On May 15, compressed natural gas (CNG) prices were also raised by ₹2 per kg in cities, including Delhi and Mumbai. On Sunday, CNG prices were again hiked by ₹1 a kg.

The rise of global crude oil prices to above \$100 per barrel levels since the start of the US-Iran conflict has sent shockwaves across most major economies around the world. With the Strait of Hormuz still closed and a trickle of traffic flowing through it, supplies are disrupted, and there seems to be no end in sight as of now. What this has meant is that major economies around the world, including India, have been forced to raise prices of petrol and diesel as the import bill continues to rise.

Jahangir Khan withdraws from Falta...

Khan emphasised that the decision was his own. This announcement follows weeks of unrest in the South 24 Parganas constituency, a traditional TMC stronghold. The Election Commission cancelled polling on April 29 after reports of "severe electoral offences and subversion of the democratic process." Allegations included EVM tampering, voter intimidation, unauthorised booth entries, and missing CCTV footage. The EC ordered fresh polling at all 285 stations. This occurred amid significant political change in Bengal, with the BJP winning 207 seats in the 2026 Assembly elections and ending TMC's 15-year rule.

Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari has campaigned in Falta, promising a special development package. TMC sources privately attribute Khan's withdrawal to mounting pressure, including the arrest of over 100 party workers since May 4 and vandalism of local offices.

Locals noted Khan's absence after May 4. Although Abhishek Banerjee campaigned actively for him before the April 29 polling, top party leaders were notably absent in Falta ahead of the repoll. This absence led to speculation that Khan was becoming politically isolated as the constituency became a prestige contest.

Falta became one of the election's most contentious seats after allegations that perfume, ink, and adhesive tape were used on EVMs during the April 29 polling. The BJP objected and publicly called for fresh elections, stating that the situation required intervention.

Officially, the party described the withdrawal as 'personal' but criticised the administration. "Since election results were declared, more than 100 of our workers have been arrested in Falta alone, and the EC continues to turn a blind eye," a TMC statement said.

BJP leaders welcomed the development. Adhikari had previously taunted Khan, who is locally known as "Pushpa," saying he had "run away." With TMC now lacking a candidate, the repoll is expected to result in a win for BJP's Debangshu Panda.

This situation highlights the shifting political landscape in West Bengal, with the BJP consolidating power and TMC facing internal challenges. For Falta's voters, Khan's withdrawal is likely to result in a quieter poll and may permanently alter the local political balance.

Putin set to visit India in September

The summit in New Delhi is expected to focus

on strengthening cooperation among emerging economies, reforming global governance institutions and increasing the influence of developing nations in international decision-making.

The previous BRICS Summit took place in Rio de Janeiro, where member nations discussed ways to deepen collaboration under the theme "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance."

India's relationship with Russia continues to hold major strategic importance despite New Delhi's growing ties with Western nations. Defence cooperation remains one of the strongest pillars of the partnership.

Tuesday rush exposes Metro planning

At Mandi House, a Government employee waiting for a Blue Line train towards Dwarka said he had taken the Metro for the first time in several months after the Government's appeal. "Yesterday was terrible. Today is also bad," he said. "If they want people to use the Metro, the Metro needs to be ready for people."

At Kashmiri Gate interchange, one of the busiest transfer points in the network, the crowd during the morning rush had spilled back from the platform onto the stairwell. A woman with a school bag and a lunch box pressed against the wall said she had been standing on the platform for three trains. "Each one was full. I could not get in," she said. Her school, she added, had already marked her late.

At Central Secretariat, where Government employees heading to South Block, North Block, Shastri Bhawan, and the surrounding ministry complex disembark, the platform was unusually congested. A senior clerk said he had started taking the Metro following his department's internal advisory about fuel conservation. "I support the idea. But the Metro was not prepared for extra passengers," he said. "It felt like everyone came at once and there was no planning for it."

The issue commuters raised was not with the initiative itself. Several said they understood the reasoning given rising fuel prices and the West Asia situation. The problem, as one passenger at Rajiv Chowk put it, was that the Government had appealed for more Metro use without first ensuring the Metro could absorb it. "The campaign told us to come. The Metro told us to wait," he said.

On Monday, reports had emerged of trains halting longer than usual on the Magenta Line, causing platform build-up at stations like Hauz Khas and Janakpuri West. A Delhi University student had told reporters she missed exam time because of the delay. A private sector employee said he had waited fifteen minutes at a station while a train stood still, arriving late to his office.

A Delhi Metro Rail Corporation spokesperson said the corporation was monitoring ridership patterns following the Metro Monday initiative and would assess whether frequency adjustments were required on specific lines during peak hours. The spokesperson said the Metro encourages additional ridership and is committed to providing safe and comfortable travel.

That commitment will be tested in the coming days. The Government has said the Metro Monday campaign will continue and expand. If it does, the platforms at Rajiv Chowk, Kashmiri Gate, and Central Secretariat will need more than a campaign slogan to manage what arrives on them.

Ex Uttarakhand CM BC Khanduri passes away

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Dehradun

Former Uttarakhand chief minister and senior BJP leader Bhuvan Chandra Khanduri died at a private hospital here on Tuesday following prolonged illness. He was 91.

The veteran leader breathed his last at around 11 am, his daughter and Uttarakhand Assembly Speaker Ritu Khanduri Bhushan said.

Khanduri is survived by his wife Aruna, son Manish, and daughter Ritu Khanduri Bhushan. The former chief minister was suffering from age-related ailments and underwent frequent hospitalisations recently.

Before entering politics,

Khanduri retired from the Indian Army as a major general. Popularly known as 'General Sahab', he earned a reputation as a disciplined and strict administrator.

Khanduri served as the chief minister of the hill state twice. He first took office in 2007 after the BJP won the assembly polls.

He resigned from the post in 2009, accepting moral responsibility for the party losing all five Lok Sabha seats in the State. The BJP reappointed him as the chief minister in 2011.

Khanduri also served as a Union minister. He held the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways in the Cabinet of late prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.



He was credited for executing the Golden Quadrilateral project. The initiative successfully connected the four

corners of India via highways. President Droupadi Murmu condoled Khanduri's demise, saying his commitment to good governance and public welfare will always be remembered.

"The news of the demise of former chief minister of Uttarakhand and former Union minister, Major General (Retd) BC Khanduri ji, is extremely sad. After rendering exemplary service in the Indian Army, he set an example of honest, simple, transparent, and development-oriented politics in public service.

"His commitment to the development of the country and Uttarakhand, good governance, and public welfare will always be remembered," the President said in a post on X in Hindi.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama expressed grief

over the demise of the veteran leader.

Dhama termed his demise an irreparable loss for both state and national politics. "He presented an unparalleled example of national service, discipline and dedication during his tenure in the Indian Army," Dhama said.

The chief minister said that Khanduri established a strong identity for development, good governance, transparency, and clean politics in public life. "He gave a new direction to development by taking many crucial decisions in the interest of the state," Dhama added.

He said that Khanduri's simplicity, forthrightness, and efficiency will always remain a source of inspiration.

States Focus



NORTHEAST SHINING EXAMPLE OF LIVING HERITAGE: PRESIDENT

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said the artisans from Northeast India are a shining example of the country's living heritage and urged them to pass on these invaluable traditions to the younger generation. The President was interacting with a group of artisans and weavers from the North Eastern States, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. The artisans and weavers were those who helped in crafting the invitation kit and showcasing the diverse artistic and cultural heritage of the North Eastern region of India during the 'At Home' reception held on January 26, a statement issued by the President's office said.



CBSE EXTENDS CLASS 12 EXAM ANSWER SHEET DEADLINE

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has extended the last date for obtaining scanned copies of evaluated answer books for Class 12 board examinations by a day, following technical issues on its website. According to a CBSE circular issued on Tuesday, the deadline has been extended from May 22 to May 23. "It is hereby informed to all stakeholders that due to a technical problem encountered on the CBSE website for Post-Verification Facilities and to ensure sufficient time to the students, the last date for obtaining scanned copies of evaluated answer books has been extended," the circular said. Candidates have been advised to utilise the extended timeline and apply accordingly, while all other terms and conditions remain unchanged.

Dharmendra Pradhan reviews NEET re-exam preparations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday reviewed preparations for the forthcoming NEET-UG re-examination and directed officials to ensure its conduct in a "secure, seamless and foolproof manner" under strict security protocols, officials said.

During chairing the review meeting, Pradhan stressed that all gaps identified in the earlier examination process must be comprehensively addressed and eliminated to ensure complete integrity and transparency in the conduct of the examination, he said.

"The minister emphasised that the Re-NEET examination must be conducted in a secure, seamless and fool-



Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan chairs a review meeting on preparations for the NEET (UG) re-examination, directing officials to ensure foolproof conduct under strict security protocols in New Delhi

proof manner under stringent security protocols," the officials said.

The minister directed authorities to hold coordination meetings with district magistrates and superintendents of police across states to ensure robust monitoring and effective implementation of examination arrange-

ments. Underscoring that vigilance and security at examination centres must remain uncompromised, Pradhan also instructed officials to ensure adequate arrangements for students, including transportation, drinking water and other essential facilities, they added.

India, Vietnam to co-produce military hardware

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India and Vietnam, on Tuesday, underlined the importance of maintaining peace, stability, and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region and resolved to work closely to jointly produce military hardware in line with their "enhanced comprehensive strategic partnership".

Expanding defence ties was the central focus of the meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and his Vietnamese counterpart, General Phan Van Giang. The meeting took place in Hanoi.

"Both the ministers reviewed the growing defence partnership between the two countries and discussed ways to further deepen cooperation in maritime security, defence industry, training and regional stability," the defence ministry



said. Sources said defence industrial cooperation for joint production of military hardware was one of the key areas of the Singh-Giang meeting. It is also learnt that Vietnam has shown keen interest in procuring BrahMos missiles from India.

Singh landed in the Vietnamese capital on Monday on a two-day visit.

Following the talks, India and Vietnam signed an agreement for cooperation in the field of artificial intelligence and quantum technology. The defence minister's visit

to Hanoi came days after India and Vietnam elevated their ties to an enhanced comprehensive strategic partnership.

"The two sides exchanged views on regional and global security developments of mutual interest and emphasised the importance of maintaining peace, stability, security, safety and freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific region," the ministry said on the Singh-Giang meeting.

"They discussed avenues to expand cooperation in areas including military training, defence industry collaboration, maritime security, capacity building, UN peace-keeping, cyber security and high-level exchanges," it said.

In the meeting, Gen Giang appreciated India's continued support and underscored the long-standing friendship and growing strategic partnership between the two nations.

Amit Shah asks HCs to set up special courts for 5-year-old cases

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Jagdalpur (Chhattisgarh)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said High Courts should set up special courts for the speedy disposal of cases pending for more than five years.

Chairing the 26th meeting of the Central Zonal Council (CZC) in Jagdalpur, headquarters of Chhattisgarh's Bastar district, Shah also said timely DNA testing in cases registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and rape cases could raise conviction rates in these offences to "100 per cent".

The meeting was attended by Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama, along with senior officials, said an official release.

Shah said it was a matter of "great joy" that the meeting was being held in Bastar after achieving the "historic milestone" of a Naxal-free India.

The entire credit for making India Naxal-free goes to the hard work and bravery of the jawans of our security forces, he said, adding that coordinated efforts by intelligence agen-



cies, state police and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) ensured timely and decisive action against Naxalites.

He said development initiatives were simultaneously carried out in areas freed from Naxalism under the "Whole of Government Approach", with state governments and central departments working together.

"Our fight is not over yet because Naxal-affected areas have been lagging behind in the race for development for nearly five decades. The effort would continue until these regions matched the rest of the country in terms of development," the release quoted Shah as saying.

After resolving all contentious issues between the states (in the central zonal council) as well as those between the states and the Centre, the meeting was being held in a very positive and cordial atmosphere, he said.

Tech gives instant answers but can't replace ethics: PK Mishra

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Dr PK Mishra, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, on Tuesday addressed the Third Convocation of Nalanda University at Rajgir, Bihar. He congratulated the 221 graduates representing 14 nations, marking their academic accomplishment as a milestone built on hard work and perseverance.

While recognising the ancient Nalanda Mahavihara as one of the greatest learning centres in history, Dr Mishra said that "There are universities that are institutions. And then there are uni-

versities that are civilisational symbols. Nalanda belongs to the latter category".

Highlighting the historical and geographical significance of the region, Dr Mishra underscored Nalanda's core philosophy that knowledge must remain open to dialogue, connected across disciplines, and directed towards humanity's greater well-being.

He praised the university's new Net Zero campus, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, recalling Bodhi Gaya, where Lord Buddha attained enlightenment. Dr Mishra observed that "Indeed, the entire Asian continent has greatly benefited



from the teachings of Lord Buddha. I am sure, the learning from this great University will spread far and wide across the continents".

Reflecting on Nalanda's foundational intellectual traditions, Dr Mishra highlight-

ed its interdisciplinary approach. He stressed the importance of cultivating vada, rigorous dialogue and inquiry, as an antidote to modern intellectual passivity, cautioning that while technology provides instant

answers, it cannot replace ethical reasoning and moral responsibility, or fully comprehend human meaning, suffering, dignity, or aspiration. "Civilisations decline not when they lose information, but when they lose the capacity for reflection and independent thought," Dr Mishra asserted.

Detailing India's commitment to democratising learning, Dr Mishra outlined the National Education Policy's focus on multidisciplinary education, multilingual instruction, and the formal integration of Indian Knowledge Systems.

Examining the profound and widespread impact of

Artificial Intelligence, Dr Mishra raised crucial questions regarding ethics, bias, privacy, and human agency. He warned that AI models trained predominantly on English-language and Western datasets may not adequately capture the agricultural, medical, or climatic realities of Asia and the Global South, risking a dangerous gap between technological models and local realities.

Positioning Asia at a critical global inflection point, Dr Mishra recognised the rapid economic growth of the region's nations, highlighting India's transition into a bright spot in the global economy.

Positioning Asia at a critical global inflection point, Dr Mishra recognised the rapid economic growth of the region's nations, highlighting India's transition into a bright spot in the global economy.

Assam Police summon Surjewala; Gaurav Gogoi expected to be next

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Assam Crime Branch has summoned Congress leader Randeep Surjewala in the case filed by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife, Riniki Bhuyan Sharma. It is learned that Pawan Khera has confessed to the police that the fake passport documents were given to him by Surjewala. Sources from the police said that Gaurav Gogoi gave the fake documents to Surjewala, and after interro-



gating Surjewala, Gogoi will be summoned.

The Crime Branch has directed Surjewala to appear before investigators in Guwahati on May 23. The case originated after Congress spokesperson

Khera allegedly made controversial remarks concerning the wife of the Chief Minister during a press briefing. Khera alleged that the Chief Minister's wife is illegally holding three countries' passports, and he showed documents regarding this allegation.

According to sources, significant revelations came out during the questioning of Khera. He had named those who were involved in creating documents against the Chief Minister's wife.

Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya to launch Gandhi AI Holobox

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya will launch its third AI-powered interactive HoloBox on Wednesday, dedicated to Mahatma Gandhi. This will enable the visitors to engage in life-like interactive conversation with Mahatma Gandhi, the father of the nation.

Earlier, AI-powered HoloBox installations of Sardar Patel and APJ Abdul Kalam were launched at the Sangrahalaya. Soon, it is envisaged to launch the



HoloBox installation of Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

PMML showcases the lives, vision and contributions of various Prime Ministers of India, and for enhanced interaction and visitor satisfaction, the use of technology is being

intensified in the Sangrahalaya. "Such initiatives reinforce the commitment of PMS in presenting India's political and democratic heritage in a holistic manner," said PMML Director Ashwani Lohani.

Operation Sindoor unveiled India's smart power: Army Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India unveiled "smart power" during Operation Sindoor and dismantled terror infrastructure and then stopped "deliberately and purposefully," Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi said on Tuesday.

Making this assertion, he also said the punitive military strikes displayed a coherent national act, and the Indian forces struck deep and punctured a long-standing strategic assumption. The Army chief underlined these points in a seminar, "Security to



Prosperity: Smart Power for Sustained National Growth.'

Stating that 12 months ago, India offered the world a "partial answer" to the so-called smart power questioned, he said, "On the intervening night of May 6-7 in 2025, Bharat acted. In a precisely defined 22-minute

operation window, Operation Sindoor delivered military precision, information control, diplomatic signalling and economic resolve as one coherent national act."

"We struck deep, dismantled terror infrastructure, punctured a long-standing strategic assumption, and then stopped, deliberately and purposefully. The deliberate thought after 88 hours was smart power in its most complete expression, knowing exactly which instrument to apply, at what intensity, and precisely when to convert a military moment into a strategic one," he said.

8 in 10 urban Indians experiencing severe heatwave

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Eight in ten urban Indians surveyed across the country have confirmed experiencing a severe heatwave in their area, with half expressing concern about health risks, including dehydration and heatstroke, according to a nationwide survey by LocalCircles that received over 127,000 responses from citizens across 322 districts of urban India.

The survey findings come as the India Meteorological Department has issued fresh heatwave alerts for several parts of northwest, central, and western India, with temperatures expected to touch



or exceed 45 degrees Celsius in multiple districts. Delhi has been placed under a yellow alert for heatwave conditions on Tuesday and Wednesday. The IMD has also flagged unusually warm nights and rising humidity levels across several cities,

compounding health risks.

Among the 20,866 respondents who answered the question on heatwave severity, 26 per cent said the impact had been extremely severe, with daily life disrupted and outdoor movement stopped, while 53 per cent described it

as severe but manageable. Only 19 per cent called it moderate, and 2 per cent said the impact was mild.

The health consequences are already visible. Among those affected, 70 per cent reported fatigue and weakness, and 63 per cent reported dehydration or excessive thirst. Dizziness or lightheadedness was reported by 30 per cent of respondents, heat rash by 27 per cent, headache by 20 per cent, and muscle cramps by 17 per cent. Only 17 per cent said they had no symptoms.

The disruption to daily life is significant. Of the 22,121 who responded to that question, 20 per cent said the heatwave had caused major disruption,

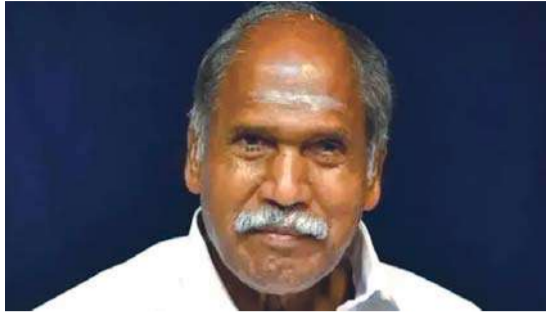
leaving them unable to work or go out during the day. Another 44 per cent reported moderate disruption with reduced productivity. Only 14 per cent said they were unaffected.

Heat-related deaths have already been reported. A worker in Karnataka died after collapsing in temperatures above 41 degrees Celsius. Two schoolteachers in Odisha died due to severe heat exposure.

Officials in Delhi and Pune have issued advisories asking that outdoor labourers not be exposed to extreme heat during peak afternoon hours and that children and the elderly avoid prolonged exposure.



States Focus



PUDUCHERRY CM RESIGNS FROM THATTANCHAVADY SEAT

Puducherry pro-tem Speaker A Anbalagan on Tuesday accepted the resignation of AINRC leader and Chief Minister N Rangasamy from the Thattanchavady Assembly constituency. Rangasamy contested from Thattanchavady and Mangalam seats in the April 9 Assembly polls and won in both constituencies.

A release from Assembly Secretary J Dayalane said the chief minister has retained the Mangalam seat. The pro-tem Speaker has accepted Rangasamy's resignation from Thattanchavady. Later, the Secretariat of the Puducherry Legislative Assembly published a notification in the gazette stating that the Thattanchavady Assembly constituency here is vacant since the afternoon of May 17, following the acceptance of the resignation of the seat by Rangasamy.



RAJASTHAN ASSEMBLY POISED FOR ITS 75TH FOUNDATION DAY

Rajasthan Assembly Speaker Vasudev Devnani on Tuesday announced that four major events will be organised as part of the year-long celebrations marking 75 years of the House, officials said.

Devnani said the celebrations would be dedicated to the legislature and showcase the evolution of democracy by bringing together tradition, experience, innovation, women and youth participation. The programmes, to be held under the 'Amrit Mahotsav', are expected to be grand and historically significant, with invitations proposed to be extended to the president, vice president, prime minister and Lok Sabha speaker.

Kharge attacks PM Modi over fuel hike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Tuesday hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the fuel price hike, alleging that robbing common people and getting industrialist Gautam Adani a "free pass" from the US showed the PM's "compromised model".

Kharge accused the BJP of lacking foresight and leadership. He alleged that Modi had proved to be a failure on the economic front, and his Government should reflect on its failures and seek solutions by taking everyone along.

His remarks came after petrol and diesel prices were hiked by about 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, marking the second increase in fuel rates in less than a week after state-run oil firms ended a nearly four-year freeze on revisions.

"Just four days after the price hike, the Modi Government has once again



increased the prices of petrol and diesel. Having set the stage, preaching about savings while shifting the burden of their failures onto the public, this effort is in full swing," Kharge alleged on social media.

"Robbing the common people and giving Adani a free pass from America — this is Modi's Compromised Model," the Congress chief alleged. Kharge was referring to the US Department of Justice permanently dropping all criminal charges against industrialist Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar,

bringing a high-profile securities and wire fraud case in New York to a complete close after prosecutors concluded they could not sustain the allegations.

Referring to the issue of purchase of Russian oil, Kharge said, "Modi ji, who fills the air with false pride about being the 'vishwaguru', has begged and pleaded with America for a one-month extension on 'permission' to buy Russian oil. Every time he does this, he hurts the pride of 1.4 billion Indians. No previous Government has ever stooped to this level".

India's fuel hike lowest globally: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The BJP on Tuesday defended the 90-paise hike in petrol and diesel prices, triggered by the West Asia conflict and disruption in the Strait of Hormuz, saying the increase is among the lowest anywhere in the world outside heavily subsidised Gulf economies.

Petrol and diesel prices were hiked by about 90 paise per litre on Tuesday, marking the second increase in fuel rates in less than a week after state-run oil firms ended a nearly four-year freeze on revisions.

On Friday, petrol and diesel prices were raised by ₹3 per litre for the first time in more than four years, as surging global crude prices forced state-run fuel retailers to pass on part of their mounting losses after months of holding rates steady through key State elections.

In a post on social media, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said consumers across the world have borne the impact of the crisis through steep increases in fuel prices.



BJP IT department head Amit Malviya

"Fuel prices have surged across the world. Brent crude has stayed above \$100 a barrel," he said. "Even after the recent revision of 91 paise per litre, fuel prices in India have risen by only about 4 per cent, among the lowest increases anywhere in the world outside heavily subsidised Gulf economies," Malviya added.

Malviya said India has remained an exception, as public-sector oil marketing companies have absorbed substantial losses rather than immediately passing the burden on to consumers.

"For 76 days after the crisis began, Indian public sector

OMCs absorbed massive under-recoveries, reportedly around ₹1,000 crore per day, instead of passing the burden directly to citizens," he said.

He also shared comparative figures of fuel price increases in several countries, claiming that petrol prices rose by 89.7 per cent in Myanmar, 56.3 per cent in Malaysia, 54.9 per cent in Pakistan and 52.4 per cent in the UAE.

According to him, diesel prices increased by 112.7 per cent in Myanmar, 71.2 per cent in Malaysia, 44.9 per cent in Pakistan and 86.1 per cent in the UAE.

JPC in Gujarat to seek views on simultaneous elections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Ahmedabad

A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) examining the proposal for simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and State assemblies began its three-day visit to Gujarat on Tuesday to hold discussions with stakeholders and gather views on the issue.

The 41-member parliamentary panel, headed by BJP MP PP Chaudhary, is scrutinising two proposed legislations related to simultaneous elections — The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill and

the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill.

The committee members arrived at GIFT City in Gandhinagar to hold discussions about simultaneous elections with State leaders, elected representatives and others.

Addressing reporters at the airport after arriving in Ahmedabad, Chaudhary said the concept of 'One Nation, One Election' was in the national interest and had received support from several institutions and committees.

"The concept of 'One Nation, One Election' is in the national interest. The Law



BJP MP PP Chaudhary

Commission of India, headed by a sitting or retired Supreme Court judge, has also stated that simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha

and state legislative assemblies should be held," he said. Chaudhary said NITI Aayog had also advocated simulta-

neous polls in its papers, while a Parliamentary Standing Committee comprising members from different political parties had endorsed the proposal.

"In light of all these considerations, it is evident that holding simultaneous elections is absolutely essential for the nation's welfare," he said.

The BJP leader credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for initiating the electoral reform process, and said the Centre had earlier constituted a committee under former President Ram Nath Kovind to examine the

issue. "It was PM Modi's foresight and vision that such electoral reforms are necessary. Consequently, he constituted a committee under the leadership of Ram Nath Kovind. In its report, this committee also recommended simultaneous elections," Chaudhary said.

According to the recommendations, elections to the Lok Sabha and State assemblies should be held together, while elections to panchayats and municipalities should be completed within 100 days of the parliamentary and Assembly polls, he added.

Punjab gets NCSC notice over casteist word in Census list

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC) on Tuesday issued notices to the Punjab Government and the Directorate of Census Operations over a complaint alleging the use of "casteist" and derogatory words in an official list for the upcoming census exercise in the State.

The commission sought an action taken report within 15 days from the Director of Census Operations, Punjab, and the Principal Secretary of the Department of Social Justice, Empowerment and Minorities, Punjab Government. "The National Commission for Scheduled



Castes has taken cognisance of the use of casteist words in the official list prepared for the upcoming Census operations and has issued a notice in this regard to the Director, Census Operations, Punjab and the

Principal Secretary, Department of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of Punjab," the notice said.

The complaint was submitted to NCSC Chairperson Kishor Makwana by Hardeep

Singh Gill, Vice-Chairperson of the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis. "... a complaint/information has been received by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes... and the Commission has decided to investigate/inquire into the matter," the notice said.

The commission said the alleged use of objectionable and derogatory words for the Valmiki community during the census process had triggered outrage among community members.

"Considering the sensitivity of the matter, the commission has taken prompt action and issued notices to the concerned departments," it said.

No more unnecessary referrals by Bihar doctors: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Saran (Bihar)

Bihar Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary on Tuesday issued strict directions to all Government doctors in the districts to stop the practice of "unnecessarily" referring patients to major hospitals in the State. The new directive will be in force in the State from August 15 this year.

Addressing a gathering at the launch of Sahyog camp, a move to ensure prompt resolution of people's grievances concerning different departments, at Sonapur in Saran, Choudhary said, "Government doctors in the districts must stop the practice of unnecessarily referring patients to major hospitals in the State."

"It will be in force in the State from August 15. Strict action will be taken against Government doctors at the panchayat and district levels if they are



found referring normal cases to major hospitals in the State," he said.

Barring some serious diseases (subject to scrutiny), patients should be treated well at district and panchayat level hospitals, the CM said. "The Government is strengthening the district healthcare system to ensure better treatment facilities for patients at the local level. The new and hi-tech medical facilities at the

panchayat and district level hospitals will be fully functional from August 15 this year," Choudhary said.

Emphasising the effective use of existing healthcare infrastructure, he urged officials to work with sensitivity to strengthen public confidence in Government health services.

Explaining about Sahyog camps, organised at panchayat levels across the State on Tuesday, the CM said, "Such camps are being organised to ensure prompt resolution of people's grievances concerning Government departments. The Government has already launched 'Sahyog' portal and toll-free helpline number '1100' for the purpose."

The CM also made it clear that strict departmental action, including suspension, would be taken against officials who fail to dispose of an application listed on the 'Sahyog' portal and issue orders within 30 days.

Jammu forest drive puts Omar Abdullah Govt in tight spot

MOHIT KANDHARI
Jammu

An anti-encroachment drive carried out by the Forest Department in the Raika Bandi forest belt of Jammu early Tuesday morning has once again put the Omar Abdullah-led Government in a tight spot.

During the drive, a joint team of the Forest Department, Forest Protection Force, Police personnel, officers of the belt force and District Administration, in the presence of First Class Magistrates, conducted the operation and demolished approximately 32 illegally constructed concrete and temporary (Kuccha) struc-

tures. Approximately 3 hectares of encroached forest land were reclaimed during the operation.

The eviction drive prompted protests from affected families who termed the action unjustified. They alleged that the drive was carried out without any prior notice.

Minister for Jal Shakti, Forest & Tribal Affairs in the Omar Abdullah-led popular Government, Javed Ahmed Rana, levelled serious allegations against the LG administration. Cornered by the affected families during his visit to the area, Javed Rana told media persons that the drive was carried out in silence, without consulting



the elected Government or my Ministry.

In a written statement, Javed Rana said this was not a demolition drive. This was a cruelty-planned, targeted, and carried out in silence, without consulting the elected

Government or my Ministry.

He said these families have protected these lands for over half a century. They are not encroachers; they are the soul of Jammu's pastoral heritage.

He said, "I have assured

every affected family of full rehabilitation. I am demanding an immediate halt to this injustice, an institutional inquiry against the responsible officers, and I am taking this up directly with Chief Minister Omar Abdullah".

"No tribal family will be left homeless on my watch. Our people deserve justice, not displacement. I will fight for them, inside every office, at every level — until they are restored with dignity".

Officials who supervised the demolition drive said that the forest department will undertake mapping of tribal settlements and other habitations in forest areas across Jammu to check further encroachments.

Palaniswami holds crucial meet; rebels defy AIADMK chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Chennai

AIADMK general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami on Tuesday held a crucial meeting of senior office-bearers to strengthen his position in the party, while rebels refused to budge and continued to pose a challenge to his leadership.

While Palaniswami, a day after extending an olive branch to rebels to come forward and talk to resolve issues, held a 2-hour-long meeting of loyalists at party headquarters, he did not accept the demand of the dissenters to convene the general council.

Also, none from the rebel group, led by senior leaders CV Shanmugam and SP Velumani, responded positively to Palaniswami's invitation to join hands and not become fireflies.

Emerging from the Palaniswami-led meeting, senior leader OS Manian said "constructive debate" was held, adding nothing was spoken on convening the general council.

According to party leader BV Ramana, a Palaniswami loyalist, the meeting was attended by about 80 district



secretaries. All the office bearers and cadres "solidly stood" with Palaniswami, and the party would work out a strategy to emerge victorious, he said.

"Over 80 district secretaries attended the meeting. A few could not attend as they were not able to arrive at the party headquarters on time," Ramana told reporters, emerging from the meeting.

Manian said the meeting did not discuss rebel leader Vijayabaskar's alleged claim of "obtaining signatures" from functionaries to urge the leadership to conduct a general council meeting to discuss the poll debacle and take a "good decision".

The breakaway group raised the pitch for convening the party's general

council to introspect on AIADMK's successive defeat in the elections since 2019.

Shanmugam, speaking to reporters, slammed Palaniswami as he, on the one hand, requested the dissenting leaders to come for talks and at the same time he continued to remove office-bearers — 31 district secretaries — from their positions.

Shanmugam, Velumani and Vijayabaskar are among those who have been stripped of their party posts. Such a course of action was not only valid but also was nothing but a threat and intimidation.

Shanmugam said he and his supporters were willing for a discussion but could not accept being labelled as "traitors" for expressing their opinion.

Jharkhand maintains zero-polluted Ganga stretches

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Jharkhand, which has the shortest stretch of the Ganga main stem among the five basin States, has maintained a record of zero Polluted River Stretches (PRS) on the river for the last seven years, according to Namami Gange.

Jharkhand's model stands out because the focus is on preventing pollution rather than restoring a degraded river stretch.



"While most Namami Gange stories are about cleaning up, Jharkhand's is about not letting it get dirty in the first place," the programme said in a post on social media. "In 2018, the CPCB recorded zero polluted river stretches on Jharkhand's Ganga main stem. In 2025, after seven years of Namami Gange work, the count is still zero. The state has held the line," it added.

"The job in Jharkhand is not to recover lost ground. It is to keep the Ganga main stem clean while work on tributaries and industrial discharge continues," Namami Gange said.

According to an infographic shared by the programme, five sewage-infrastructure projects with a sanctioned treatment capacity of 261.5 million litres per day (MLD) and a total outlay of ₹1,310 crore have been approved in the State to maintain the river's clean status.

In Memorium of General BC Khanduri



DEVENDER SINGH ASWAL

It's a matter of profound shock and sorrow that General BC Khanduri has left his mortal frame. He was 91 years old and not in good health for quite some time past. It's an hour of grief and sorrow for me personally, as my association with him goes back to the time when he was first returned to the Lok Sabha. As an officer of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, I was privileged to meet him in the Committee Room number 62 of the iconic old Parliament Building, now rechristened Samvidhan Bhawan, where I was assigned the duty to oversee the procedural formalities, we had lunch together in the Parliament House Railway Canteen, since, as a first timer, he was not familiar with the building. I found him, as against the general perception of a General, very soft spoken, laconic and abstemious. The chance meeting gradually developed into a close and abiding relationship over the many decades. Soon after, in the 10th Lok Sabha with the formation of the Government, I was appointed as OSD to a Union Minister, but I stayed in personal touch with General Khanduri as he used to enquire about the Governmental schemes and programmes which he keenly wished to publicise in his constituency so that the people could partake the benefits.

But, the turning point came when he joined the Vajpayee Government as Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways (Independent Charge) in the year 2000 and was later given the additional charge of the Ministry for Urban Development and Urban Poverty Alleviation. While I congratulated him, I could not ask him directly whether he would consider appointing me his PS in

the Ministry of Urban Affairs. I broached the matter with my friend and guide, JC Mamgain, an officer of the IRS and his OSD in the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways. Mamgain conveyed my desire to the minister. I was told that General Khanduri didn't speak but gently smiled. It was construed as a positive signal, and I was advised to meet the Minister at once. I immediately walked over from Parliament House Annex to the Transport Bhawan across Parliament Street and reached the Minister's office. The Minister was in a review meeting of the Golden Quadrilateral, his favourite scheme, for which he earned tremendous goodwill and fame, and for which he shall always be remembered as the pioneer of India's expanding world-class road infrastructure. Soon after the meeting, I was ushered into his room. He asked, "Why do you want to join as PS when you are well placed as Dy Secretary in Lok Sabha?" I gave an honest, straight answer, and he gladly issued orders for my appointment as his PS in the Ministry of Urban Affairs.

It was during the course of the Parliament Session that I joined as his PS. During sessions of Parliament, Ministers remain extremely busy and preoccupied with parliamentary work. All the more, General Khanduri was given an additional portfolio of Urban Development by Vajpayee ji as a stopgap arrangement, following the resignation of Anant Kumar. The work pressure was tremendous. There was a constant barrage of questions, and other urgent parliamentary matters which he had to handle and reply in Parliament, in both the Houses by turn, and for both the Ministries. It was a Herculean task, especially with the growing interest of the MPs in the expanding work of the Golden Quadrilateral. In the Ministry of Urban Development itself, there were a great many policy issues of urban squalor, poverty alleviation, land and DDA, and there were connected allegations of irregularities and demolition of unauthorised colonies and religious structures built unauthoritatively on Government land in Delhi. There were



large and pending files which his predecessor ministers did not clear or which were shutting from the Minister's office and the Ministry. The Secretary wanted the long-pending policy files to be cleared, but General Khanduri had clear instructions to me to return such files during the Parliament session and accept only files relating to questions, legislation and other parliamentary matters which could not brook delay. The Secretary of the Ministry was perturbed as he wanted the files to be approved. He once visited my chamber and asked me to accept all the files, but I had to abide by the orders of my Minister, incurring the insidious wrath of the Secretary, which I did face after demitting office, as the allotment of the flat allotted to me was cancelled by him.

Ministers spend a lot of time rehearsing replies to questions listed for oral answer, which generate supplementary questions. At least two briefing meetings were held for the Starred Questions of each House for each Question day. General Khanduri asked officers to anticipate at least ten possible supplementary questions and be ready with the requisite information for his consideration. He used to be on the dot at 9 am in his room in Parliament House.

Once I was just a few seconds late, but before he could ask for me, I entered the room from the rear side, and he just smiled and said, "How can a parliamentary official be late?" General Khanduri studied in dept, knew his subject well and marshalled facts and figures in reply to supplementary questions with great poise and confidence, earning adulation from all sides in the House.

During his ministership as Urban Development Minister, there were some demolitions by the DDA of a religious sect built on Government land. There was hue and cry in Parliament, particularly by SC MPs, as they tabled notices for urgent discussion in both the houses of Parliament. Speaker Manohar Joshi (of Shiv Sena) asked the Minister for Urban Development to have a meeting with the SC MPs to resolve the issue. General Khanduri held a meeting with the SC leaders in Parliament. Unfortunately, during the discussion, the DDA Land Commissioner justified the demolitions and had the temerity to say that "the demolitions were going on right now". General Khanduri unexpectedly flew into a rage and asked the officer "to shut up" and directed that "the demolitions of religious structures be stopped forthwith". The meeting

adjourned. I had never seen him in such a state of high fury. I asked the Joint Secretary in charge of the Ministry, and his reply was "discretion is the better part of valour", suggesting that demolition during the sessions of Parliament is sheer foolishness. In some other case, when the Directorate of Estates wanted to physically evict the occupants of a coveted bungalow, occupied for long by a certain opposition party member, but whose physical eviction could not be carried out without the approval of the predecessor ministers. The Ministry sought the order of the new Minister-General Khanduri. He reflected on the matter and asked me to remind him at approximate time to seek the advice of the PM when he attends the Cabinet Meeting as a special invitee. Vajpayee, a great leader and statesman that he was, refused to play the vendetta politics and signalled to keep the matter in abeyance. The bungalow has now become a memorial.

As a Minister, I found him very earnest, visionary, hard-working and a hard task master. He conducted the meetings in a business fashion, and officers heard him attentively in pin-drop silence. His understanding of matters was phenomenal-his intellect sharp and his disposal quick and strictly in accordance with the rules. I recollect, when a case for out-of-turn allotment of a house to a Government servant, recommended by him as an MP to his predecessor minister, was put up to him as Urban Development Minister, he concurred with the official line. I had to struggle to ensure that I was quite thorough with the file content before submitting for his approval, as his queries were sharp and penetrating. Soon after the Parliament was adjourned sine die, he relinquished the charge of Urban Development Minister as a new Minister was sworn in. I, too, relinquished the office, the post being coterminous.

But my association with General Khanduri continued and became much closer. He was CM of Uttarakhand twice, and I occasionally met him in Uttarakhand Bhawan in Chanakyapuri. It's bad luck for Uttarakhand that he did

not have a full term to serve as the CM of Uttarakhand. He was a doer, a performer, a straightforward leader, perhaps not very apt for the fissiparous politics of a small State. He served Parliament for 4 terms — the 10th, 12th, 13th, 14th and 16th Lok Sabhas.

I distinctly remember, when Ministers were being administered oath after the constitution of the 16th Lok Sabha, we were together in my office, and I noticed his anguished brow over the selection of certain members as ministers. There was some tinge of sadness over the selection and distribution of ministerial portfolios. Later, he was nominated as Chairman of the Defence Committee, and I made it a point to meet him in his office and discuss many current issues, particularly about our defence-related parliamentary subjects and the burning issues of Uttarakhand. I was then Additional Secretary in charge of the Estimates Committee, chaired by Dr Murli Manohar Joshi.

The Estimates Committee was also examining certain aspects of the Defence Estimates, and in line with the recommendations of the Defence Committee, the Estimates Committee also recommended that the budget allocated to the Defence Ministry, if not spent during the same financial year, should not lapse but should form a non-lapsable pool so that funds are available for defence purchases as and when deals are done. Besides, as Chairman, he produced many reports which were considered critical by the Government. He was not renominated as Chairman of the Defence Committee even though the election to the 17th Lok Sabha was not far behind. Nevertheless, whatever tasks were assigned to him or offices held by him, he accomplished his duties fearlessly and admirably as a gallant soldier for whom the call of duty was first and foremost. I pay my humble, respectful homage to General Khanduri. Sir, your legacy of honesty, integrity and hard work will continue to guide and inspire.

The author is former Additional Secretary, Lok Sabha and a member of Supreme Court Bar Association

Drug peddler's property worth ₹1.5 cr attached in Srinagar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Srinagar

Property worth ₹1.5 crores belonging to a notorious drug peddler was on Tuesday attached in Jammu and Kashmir's Srinagar, police said. Continuing its intensified crackdown against drug trafficking and narcotics-related activities under the ongoing 'Nasha Mukht Jammu &



Kashmir Abhiyan', Srinagar police has attached a residential house along with adjoining land measuring seven marlas worth approximately ₹1.50 crore, a police spokesperson said. He said the property belongs to a notorious drug peddler, Owais Amin Dentho, a resident of Parimpora locality of the city here. The property has been attached under the relevant provisions of the NDPS Act in connection with a registered case at Parimpora police station, the spokesperson said.

Prioritise maintenance of ponds: Haryana CM to officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chandigarh

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday directed officials to accord top priority to the management and upkeep of ponds across villages in the State.

He emphasised that while beautification of ponds is important, strict measures must also be taken to ensure that contaminated water does not flow into them.

While chairing a meeting of the Haryana Pond and Waste Water Management Authority, he directed officials to undertake regular cleaning of ponds developed under the Amrit



Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini

Sarovar Yojana, and asserted that all works should be carried out with complete transparency while Referring to ponds and 'johads' (community-owned, traditional rainwater harvesting structures) situated

within densely populated village areas, he said sanitation and cleanliness around such water bodies must receive special attention.

According to an official statement, Saini directed the officials to strengthen

pond embankments, undertake desilting operations, and remove wild grass growing along the edges.

He also directed that proper pathways for morning and evening walkers, seating benches and solar lighting facilities be developed around ponds for public convenience.

Saini further directed that Gram Panchayats should be made responsible for the regular maintenance of ponds.

He directed officers to conduct periodic inspections and ensure immediate rectification of any shortcomings noticed during inspections.

The chief minister said

untreated wastewater from villages should not be discharged directly into ponds.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi envisions providing better civic amenities in villages and transforming ponds into clean and aesthetically developed public spaces where people can spend quality time and engage in recreational activities," he said.

The chief minister further directed officers to promote fish farming in large ponds. He said ponds should be auctioned through an online auction portal, and the revenue generated from such auctions should be utilised for maintenance and upkeep of the ponds.

Maharashtra Govt signs MoUs for nuclear energy projects

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The Maharashtra Government on Tuesday signed memoranda of understanding (MoUs) with four companies to attract investments worth ₹6.5 lakh crore in the nuclear energy sector, with the projects expected to generate 25,400 MW of power and create 1,23,500 jobs.

The Government signed the agreements with NTPC Limited, Adani Power Limited, Reliance Industries Limited and Lalitpur Power Generation Company Limited at a meeting held at

Mantralaya, an official release said. The statement quoted Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis as saying that the investments would support Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of making India an energy-rich nation and achieving zero carbon emissions.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi has set a goal of making India an energy-rich nation and achieving zero carbon emissions. Maharashtra is making every possible effort to fulfil this objective. Investments coming into the state's clean energy sector will certainly strengthen the country's journey



towards becoming an energy-rich nation," Fadnavis said.

Nuclear energy was a crucial component of clean energy generation, and Maharashtra had signif-

icant opportunities in the sector, he said.

"This investment will not only boost power generation in the state but also create substantial employment opportunities. Maharashtra will continue to remain at the forefront of clean energy generation in the country," the CM added.

The companies should move swiftly to implement the agreements and undertake surveys of project sites, Fadnavis said, adding that all state Government departments concerned would extend full cooperation.

CPI(M), BJP clash over Vande Mataram in Kerala

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The CPI(M) on Tuesday criticised the full rendition of "Vande Mataram" at the Congress-led UDF Cabinet swearing-in ceremony in Kerala, terming it an "incorrect step" and saying it is "inappropriate in a pluralistic society."

The BJP hit out at the CPI(M), accusing the Communists of "insulting" the national song in order to "appease radical vote-bank forces such as Jamaat-e-Islami and SDPI."

Distancing itself from the row, sources in the new Government said they had no role in the programme, as it was fully organised by the Lok Bhavan.

A day after the swearing-in ceremony of the VD Satheesan-led Cabinet, the CPI(M) state secretariat said the Congress Working



Committee had, as early as 1937, taken the view that singing all parts of "Vande Mataram" was not suitable for a pluralistic society, leading to the removal of certain portions.

It noted that the Constituent Assembly later clarified in 1950 that only the first eight lines of the approved version should be treated as the national song.

The party argued that some portions of the song

represent religious beliefs and that using the full version in official ceremonies goes against India's plural traditions. It said the Cabinet event "reversed that position" by including the omitted portions.

The CPI(M) also pointed out that similar full renditions were not performed even in BJP-ruled West Bengal during swearing-in ceremonies, suggesting Kerala's move was unusual.

It added that Governments should avoid actions that could "weaken a pluralistic society" or "undermine secularism."

Responding sharply, BJP state president Rajeev Chandrasekhar said, "The CPI(M) has now come forward questioning Vande Mataram in an attempt to hide the embarrassment of being completely rejected by the people."

In a Facebook post, he accused the Left of distancing itself from India's culture and traditions and said Marxism was an "imported ideology" unable to align with Indian values.

Chandrasekhar also alleged that the Left has a record of forcing its cadres to apologise for slogans like "Jai Hind," and accused it of targeting the national song to appease "vote-bank forces" such as Jamaat-e-Islami and SDPI.

Dutch pact boosts Gujarat's Kalpasar project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gandhinagar

Gujarat's ambitious Kalpasar Project has received renewed international attention following recent discussions between India and the Netherlands on advanced water management and coastal infrastructure technologies.

During his visit to the Netherlands, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reviewed the renowned Dutch dam project known as Afsluitdijk alongside Dutch leadership.

The visit highlighted similarities between the Dutch marine engineering model and Gujarat's proposed Kalpasar Project in the Gulf of Khambhat.

In the presence of officials from both nations, India's Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management signed a letter



of intent aimed at strengthening technical cooperation in water management and large-scale infrastructure planning.

The Kalpasar Project has long been envisioned as a transformative initiative designed to create a massive freshwater reservoir by constructing a dam across the Gulf of Khambhat. The project proposes harnessing water from multiple rivers flowing

into the gulf while also integrating renewable energy generation, irrigation, transport connectivity, and regional development.

Experts believe the project could significantly improve long-term water security in Gujarat, particularly for drought-prone regions of Saurashtra. The proposed infrastructure is also expected to reduce travel distance between South Gujarat and

Saurashtra while supporting sectors such as fisheries, tourism, and clean energy production.

The Dutch Afsluitdijk project, considered one of the world's landmark engineering achievements, has successfully protected low-lying regions in the Netherlands from flooding for decades by separating seawater from freshwater reserves. Indian authorities view Dutch expertise in marine barriers and coastal engineering as potentially valuable for Gujarat's future planning.

Officials stated that the cooperation reflects growing India-Netherlands collaboration in climate adaptation, sustainable infrastructure, and water resource management. The development is expected to provide technical insights that may help accelerate planning and execution of the long-discussed Kalpasar initiative.



Editor's TAKE

The case for incentivising population growth

Andhra Pradesh's move to incentivise population growth reflects that demographic challenges are regional and require localised responses

Are populous nations better off than those with a smaller population is a question that is not easy to answer. Generally speaking, a large population is difficult to manage and has its downsides, as it puts pressure on resources, the environment and governance. As more people compete for limited resources, conflict is inevitable. However, on the other hand, many nations are struggling with sluggish or negative population growth and are even inviting people from outside to settle. Even China, which we have replaced as the most populous nation, is reeling under the negative impacts of pursuing an aggressive population control regime. In India, we have charted a cautious course. While public campaigns like 'Hum Do Hamare Do' and many incentives for having small families have been offered, it has never been coerced, and the choice has by and large remained voluntary, except for a brief period during the Emergency in the 1970s when it was aggressively pursued by Indira Gandhi's government. The result was resentment, and the government fell. However, now it appears that views on population growth have come full circle, and Andhra Pradesh is now actively promoting larger families.

The Andhra Pradesh government's decision to incentivise larger families marks a sharp shift in India's long-standing population policy. With the State's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) falling to 1.5 – well below the replacement level of 2.1 – concerns are growing over an ageing population and a declining young workforce. Under the proposed "Pillale Sampada" initiative, families opting for a third and fourth child may receive financial incentives. The concern is not merely statistical. Falling fertility rates eventually reshape economies, labour markets and social structures. A shrinking young population means fewer workers, lower productivity, reduced tax revenues and increasing pressure on welfare systems. As elderly populations grow, governments face mounting healthcare and pension burdens without a sufficiently large workforce to sustain them. This is precisely the demographic trap confronting countries such as Japan, South Korea, Italy and Germany. Even China, once synonymous with strict population control through its one-child policy, is now struggling with rapid ageing and declining productivity.

However, what is right for Andhra Pradesh at the moment may not be suitable for the rest of the country. India has a largely unemployed population, and pressure on resources is immense. It would be difficult to join the club of developed nations if population growth is not checked. Encouraging larger families without simultaneously expanding social infrastructure could deepen economic inequalities. Moreover, demographic realities differ sharply across India. Northern States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar continue to record relatively high fertility rates, while southern States are ageing faster due to better literacy, urbanisation and healthcare outcomes.

The larger lesson is that population is neither a burden nor an asset in isolation. Its value depends on how effectively governments invest in education, healthcare, skill development and employment generation.

Italy and India: A strategic partnership for the Indo-Mediterranean

'Made in Italy' has always been synonymous with excellence worldwide, and today it finds a natural synergy with the high-quality goals of the 'Make in India' initiative



NARENDRA MODI | **GIORGIA MELONI**

The relationship between India and Italy has now reached a decisive stage. In recent years, our ties have expanded with unprecedented momentum, evolving from a cordial friendship into a special strategic partnership grounded in the values of freedom and democracy, and a common vision for the future.

At a time when the international system is undergoing a profound change, the partnership between Italy and India is guided by regular exchanges at higher political and institutional levels, and is gaining a new and higher dimension that combines our economic dynamism, societal creativity, and millennia-old civilizational wisdom. Our cooperation mirrors our shared awareness that prosperity and security in the 21st century will be shaped by the ability of nations to innovate, manage energy transitions, and strengthen strategic sovereignty. To this end, we have committed to deepen and diversify our bilateral relationship with a view to pursuing new objectives and pooling our complementary strengths. We aim to forge a powerful synergy between Italian design, manufacturing excellence, and world-class supercomputers-reflecting Italy's position as an industrial powerhouse-and India's rapid economic growth, engineering talent, scale, and innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystem with over 100 unicorns and 200,000 start-ups. This is not a simple integration, but a co-creation of value where our respective industrial strengths amplify one another.

The Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and India paves the way for increased trade and investment in both directions. We want to reach and exceed the Euro 20 billion target for trade between Italy and India by 2029, with a focus on defence & aerospace, clean technologies, machinery, automotive components, chemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles, agri-food, tourism and more.

"Made in Italy" has always been synonymous with excellence worldwide, and today it finds a natural synergy with the high-quality goals of the "Make in India" initiative. In this context, the growing interest of Italian businesses in the production for India and the increasing presence of Indian industries in Italy, numbering over 1000 from both sides now, is a positive sign that will strengthen the integration of our supply chains.

Technological innovation lies at the very heart of our partnership. The coming decades will be shaped by a technological revolution of unmeasurable scope, marked by advances in sectors such as Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, and digital infrastructure. India's dynamic innovation ecosystem, coupled with highly skilled profession-



tal talent pool, and Italy's advanced industrial capabilities make our cooperation in the above sectors both natural and strategic. The growing partnership between our Universities and Research Centres will support this. India's Digital Public Infrastructure is already finding resonance with a large number of countries particularly in the Global South. Artificial Intelligence, in particular, is already impacting our societies and the global economy. Italy and India have long been collaborating to ensure that AI development is responsible and human-centred. From this perspective, India and Italy also see AI as a powerful instrument for inclusive development, especially for the Global South, where digital public infrastructure and accessible, multilingual technologies can bridge divides rather than deepen them. Building on India's vision of MANAV-putting human at the centre of technology-and Italy's leadership in promoting a human-centric 'algorithmics' rooted in its humanist tradition, our partnership seeks to ensure that AI acts as a catalyst for social empowerment. Our approach combines India's digital scale with Italy's ethical and industrial expertise, ensuring technology serves human dignity. By sharing best practices in secure digital cooperation, capacity-building and resilient cyber infrastructure, we aim to create an open, trustworthy and equitable digital space in which every nation can shape and benefit from AI.

This perspective forms the core of Italy's G7 Presidency and outcomes of the AI Impact Summit 2026, held in New Delhi. Conceiving AI as a tool created by humans for humans means firmly asserting that technology cannot replace individuals or undermine their fundamental rights, nor be used to manipulate public debate or alter democratic processes. Our approach to defending freedom and human dignity in an increasingly interconnected world hinges on this very challenge.

Our cooperation also covers the space sector. India's impressive advancements in space exploration and satellite technology, together with Italy's aerospace engineer-

ing excellence, offer significant opportunities for joint initiatives and next-generation technology development.

Security and stability remain essential to ensuring nations' prosperity. Italy and India intend to further strengthen their cooperation in sectors such as defence, security and strategic technologies. Our collaboration will help ensure the security of critical maritime routes, strengthen resilience in the face of threats, such as terrorism, international criminal networks, drug trafficking, cyber-crimes and human trafficking.

Energy is another key pillar of our partnership. The global transition towards diversified energy sources requires innovation, investment, and cooperation. India and Italy are collaborating from renewable energy to hydrogen technologies, and from smart grids to resilient infrastructure. While India's push for becoming a hub for Green Hydrogen exports offers immense potential, it perfectly complements Italy's advanced technology in renewable infrastructure and its strategic role as an energy gateway for Europe. Our collaboration along with other countries in key India-led initiatives-International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and Global Biofuels Alliance (GBA)-is also important in this context.

Physical, digital and human connectivity is the thread that weaves us together. Both India and Italy are located at the very heart of two crucial hubs of the global economy, the Indo-Pacific and the Mediterranean-regions that cannot be viewed as separate spheres, but instead as increasingly interconnected spaces. As a matter of fact, we are witnessing the emergence of what might be termed the Indo-Mediterranean, an important corridor for trade, technology, energy, data and ideas tying the Indian Ocean to Europe. It is precisely within this interconnected space that our bond naturally evolves into a special strategic partnership-one that bridges two continents and shapes new global dynamics.

In this context, the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) represents a vision aimed at connecting our regions through modern transport and infrastructure, digital networks, energy systems, and resilient supply chains. India and Italy are also committed to working together with other partners to make this vision a reality.

We can address our shared challenges by drawing upon the profound partnership and the enduring cultural ties between our nations. Within Indian culture, the concept of "Dharma" evokes the sense of responsibility that must guide our actions, whilst the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" – the world is one family-resonates powerfully in this interconnected digital age. Such values find a natural echo in Italy's humanist tradition, rooted in the Renaissance, which highlights the dignity of each individual and the power of culture to unite peoples and societies. Our shared vision, therefore, aims to lay the foundation for a strong and forward-looking India-Italy Partnership with our people at the centre.



Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India and Giorgia Meloni, President of the Council of Ministers of the Italian Republic

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PICTALK



A farmer ploughs a muddy field in preparation for paddy cultivation in Assam's Tamulpur. PHOTO: PTI

Many excuses for not accepting God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

2ND OPINION

My aged mother, living in one of the six states that went to the Assembly polls, was unsure whether she would cast her ballot this time because of poor health. Yet members of a certain party arranged her commute to the polling booth, where she was told she could not vote because she had misplaced her Aadhaar card. Strangely, she was not disappointed. In her words, "It doesn't matter who comes to power. They are all the same." Still, she and my late father had always shown allegiance to the Congress party and voted for the "hand", regardless of the candidate. Their loyalty was less about ideology and more about history and habit.

For many people like me, national politics is not central to everyday life. It appears in fragments – television debates, newspaper headlines or snippets overheard in conversa-

tion. To those deeply invested in politics, this may seem like indifference towards democracy or a lack of strong views about governance. But that is not entirely true.

Many who consider themselves apolitical stay away from mainstream political discourse because of the confusion, disillusionment and fatigue it creates. It often brings to mind George Orwell's Animal Farm, where ideals of equality and justice slowly collapse into hypocrisy and moral decay. Time and again, political systems appear trapped in this cycle. Even newer political entrants that promised reform and clean governance eventually seem vulnerable to the same compromises they once criticised. This raises an uncomfortable question: is genuine political change sustainable in a world quietly driven by self-interest behind public-good rhetoric? The repeated cycle of hope and disappointment reinforces the popular belief that "all are the same", pushing many people away from the theatre of politics. Adding to this spectacle is the growing trend of celebrity politics, where film stars can become political heavyweights overnight, often because of public adoration rather than political credentials. Vijay continues Tamil Nadu's long tradition of blending cinema with politics, turning elections into dramatic public events. Whether his entry will truly reshape the State's political landscape remains uncertain.

For most ordinary citizens, however, politics is ultimate-

ly judged by stability and governance. People care less about who rules and more about whether governments improve daily life. Employment, safety, healthcare, education and economic relief matter more than ideological slogans. Political parties may champion grand principles, but unless citizens feel protected and supported, party names and leaders gradually lose significance.

Being ideologically neutral does not mean being ignorant or opinionless. For many, it is simply a refusal to be boxed into rigid political identities. Political parties demand loyalty and fixed alignment, while individuals often hold complex and even contradictory beliefs. A person can value secularism and equality simultaneously without subscribing entirely to one political camp. Yet modern political discourse increasingly pushes people to choose sides and follow strict ideological lines. As a result, many prefer distance – not from public issues themselves, but from the insistence that they must think in only one prescribed direction. They are not anti-political; they are merely quieter participants in democracy. Their silence should not be mistaken for apathy. Often, it reflects a belief that thoughtful engagement does not always need to be loud, partisan or confrontational.



The writer is a spiritual teacher and a popular columnist

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HEALTHY HABITS KEY TO PREVENTING LIFESTYLE DISEASES

The growing burden of lifestyle diseases extends far beyond hospitals and medicines into the everyday habits shaped by convenience, stress and sedentary routines. Despite rapid technological progress, the human body continues to respond to basic biological realities that modern lifestyles increasingly ignore.

Dietary reform must therefore become central to public awareness. Replacing simple carbohydrates with complex ones and choosing boiling or steaming over frying are practical measures with long-term benefits. A colourful salad rich in seasonal fruits and vegetables can significantly improve nutrition while reducing dependence on heavily processed foods. Behavioural habits also influence food choices more than people realise. Fruits and healthy snacks kept visible and within easy reach

are more likely to be consumed than unhealthy items stored conveniently nearby.

Carrying home-cooked meals, avoiding impulsive eating and incorporating post-meal walks can gradually improve health outcomes. Activities such as walking, jogging, swimming, calisthenics and weight training collectively strengthen cardiovascular health and reduce the risks of hypertension, diabetes and obesity.

India cannot afford to treat prevention casually while lifestyle diseases continue spreading silently across all age groups. Public health campaigns, schools, workplaces and families must work together to cultivate healthier habits, because a healthy population is ultimately as vital to national progress as economic growth itself

HARSH PAWARIA | ROHTAK

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Britain's growing crisis

In the post-war era, the UK was regarded as a model of institutional stability, financial sophistication and democratic continuity. Yet, in little over a decade, it has gone through six prime ministers without halting decline or restoring public confidence.

Now, Prime Minister Keir Starmer is facing rebellion within his own party. For a former imperial power and G7 economy, Britain today reflects a troubling combination of political instability, economic stagnation and institutional fatigue. A major problem lies in its hollowed-out economic structure. The country steadily deindustrialised while relying heavily on London's financial and service sectors. Since the 2008 financial crisis, productivity growth has stagnated, wages have remained under pressure, infrastructure has weakened and public services have become visibly strained.

Meanwhile, the National Health Service faces rising costs from an ageing population, while pension commitments are becoming fiscally difficult to sustain. Immigration remains politically contentious despite the economy's dependence on migrant labour.

Britain now faces difficult choices. It may have to reform even its most protected institutions if it hopes to revive and sustain its economy in the long term.

R NARAYANAN | NAVI MUMBAI

India's expanding global reach

Apropos "Prime Minister Modi's five-nation outreach" (May 19, 2026). The Prime Minister's tour reflects a decisive shift in India's foreign policy from traditional diplomacy towards strategic technology partnerships. By engaging with countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden, India is positioning itself as a global innovation hub while reducing dependence on imports. The outreach strengthens supply-chain resilience and opens opportunities in semiconductors, renewable energy and maritime security. It also signals India's ambition to emerge as a leader in advanced manufacturing and green technology. Such engagements show how diplomacy can become a catalyst for economic transformation and technological self-reliance.

The visit also underlines India's pragmatic approach to global power dynamics. By diversifying alliances across Europe, India balances geopolitical interests while advancing developmental priorities. This outreach builds trust through cooperation rather than competition and strengthens India's image as a stable and forward-looking global player. As supply chains and energy networks undergo transformation, India's proactive diplomacy ensures it remains central to conversations on innovation and sustainability.

K CHIDANAND KUMAR | BENGALURU

Caring for the elderly

The decision of the newly elected Congress government in Kerala, led by VD Satheesan, to establish an Elderly Welfare Department based on the Japanese model deserves appreciation.

With the rapid growth of the ageing population, elderly welfare has become an important social and administrative responsibility. Senior citizens require proper healthcare, financial security, emotional support and protection from neglect to ensure a dignified and secure life. The Japanese model is particularly significant because Japan has successfully developed advanced systems of geriatric healthcare, assisted living, social security and community participation for the elderly. Its emphasis on independence, dignity and active ageing has made it a global example in elderly welfare. Adopting such a model can help Kerala effectively address the challenges faced by senior citizens and strengthen social justice. Furthermore, this initiative can inspire other States to implement similar welfare-oriented policies and contribute towards building a more inclusive and compassionate society. Kerala's proposed Elderly Welfare Department reflects a timely and compassionate response to the growing needs of an ageing population.

AC VINEETH KUMAR | KERALA



Revenue records and the crisis of outdated judicial assumptions

Why India's land jurisprudence must revisit anachronistic assumptions about revenue records



VIVEK KUMAR SINGH

A legal system derives strength from judicial precedents, but precedents themselves are shaped by the institutional realities of their time. Problems arise when assumptions embedded in old precedents continue to guide contemporary adjudication long after the administrative landscape that produced them has fundamentally changed.

The recent Supreme Court order in Vadiyala Prabhakar Rao vs Government of Andhra Pradesh, arising out of SLP(C) No. 27590 of 2025, yet again reiterates the oft-repeated precedents on mutations, titles and revenue records. The propositions contained in the precedents mentioned, have deep roots in Indian jurisprudence and have appeared consistently over decades. Historically, the reasoning was understandable. In colonial India, land revenue constituted one of the principal sources of state income, and revenue records primarily existed to identify the person liable to pay land revenue. Courts earlier, using that contemporary logic, justifiably resisted the idea that fiscal entries could automatically determine ownership.

That caution had a sound institutional basis. Revenue administration in many parts of India was susceptible to inaccuracies, local influence, and manipulation. A mutation entry made for fiscal purposes could not displace substantive title established through better evidence. Judicial reluctance to elevate revenue records into conclusive proof of ownership was thus prudent. But post-independence India no longer resembles the administrative landscape in which these doctrines evolved. Today, land revenue has lost most of its fiscal significance. In some of India's largest States with high State Own Tax Revenues (SOTR), land revenue contributes only a tiny fraction of total receipts - roughly 0.7 percent in Maharashtra, around 0.09 percent in Uttar Pradesh, and similarly marginal levels in Karnataka. In many States, the cost of maintaining the land revenue administration itself exceeds the actual land revenue collected.

The land revenue department therefore survives not because it is fiscally lucrative, but because it performs an indispensable governance function. Modern land revenue administration is no longer principally about collecting rent or cess. It is about maintaining and updating records relating to possession, inheritance, succession, transfer, partition, tenancy, acquisition, compensation, and lawful occupation.

Revenue records today determine access to institutional credit, crop insurance, welfare schemes, acquisition compensation, rehabilitation benefits, developmental permissions, and even disaster relief. Government agencies themselves rely upon these records while identifying lawful claimants for administrative purposes. To continue describing such records as serving merely a "fiscal purpose" is therefore seemingly anachronistic. The consequences of this outdated characterisation are not merely academic. They create a serious jurisprudential vacuum. If updated revenue records do not meaningfully reflect current title, then what exactly constitutes the State's recognition of present lawful ownership in ordinary cases? Consider a parcel of land that has been bought, inherited, partitioned, and mutated several times over decades through registered transactions, with no successful challenge before any competent civil court. If the latest revenue record is treated as carrying little sanctity regarding current ownership, then who precisely is recognised by the State as the lawful holder of that property? Is the land to exist in perpetual uncertainty until a civil court pronounces otherwise?

Such an approach may satisfy doctrinal caution, but it is scarcely compatible with the requirements of orderly land governance in a country where millions of transactions occur outside the direct supervision of courts. India's land administration system cannot function if every citizen is expected to secure a declaratory decree merely to establish day-to-day legitimacy over land that has already passed through registered transfers and procedural mutations.

The State necessarily requires a working administrative framework to identify what may be called the "best current lawful claim" over land unless displaced by superior evidence or judicial adjudication.



This is where Indian jurisprudence perhaps requires a clearer conceptual distinction between "foundational title" and "current title". The original survey-and-settlement framework, backed by cadastral verification and historically prepared Record of Rights, may constitute the foundational layer of title recognition. But land is not a static asset. Ownership evolves continuously through sale, inheritance, gift, partition, acquisition, succession, and lease. A dynamic economy therefore requires a continuously updated mechanism that identifies the present lawful claimant. That role is performed by mutation and updated revenue records. Mutation should therefore not be dismissed as a mere fiscal exercise. It represents the State's formal administrative recognition of the best current lawful claim over land unless displaced by superior evidence. It may not amount to indefeasible title, but neither can it be reduced to administrative insignificance.

Equally important, the institutional assumptions underlying judicial scepticism towards revenue records have themselves undergone substantial change. Across India, land records are increasingly digitised, geo-referenced, integrated, and secured. Mutation processes, today, are largely governed by statutory frameworks, incorporating notice, hearing, objections, and appeals and procedural safeguards rooted in natural justice. Audit trails also do exist.

Registration databases are gradually being linked with revenue databases. GIS systems, digital cadastral maps, electronic signatures, online mutation workflows, and API-based interdepartmental integrations are steadily reducing opportunities for unilateral tampering. The traditional image of a patwari/halka karmchhari casually altering records with impunity no longer accurately captures the architecture of many contemporary land governance systems. Fraud and manipulation certainly remain possible and courts must remain vigilant. But the presumption that revenue records are inherently unreliable is itself becoming increasingly outdated. This gap, between legal doctrine and administrative reality carries serious consequences. First, it weakens transactional certainty. If citizens are repeatedly told that even updated State-maintained records have little value in reflecting current ownership, every land transaction carries latent insecurity. Second, it fuels avoidable litigation. Parties become incentivised to bypass administrative mechanisms and seek civil adjudication even in matters substantially concerning updated records and possession. Third, it undermines public faith in governance institutions. Citizens naturally feel that if the State's own continuously updated records are not to be trusted, what exactly is the purpose of maintaining elaborate land administration systems? Fourth, it complicates developmental governance itself. Land acquisition, infrastructure planning, banking, insurance, urban development, welfare delivery, and disaster response, all depend upon identifiable and administratively reliable ownership records.

None of this intends to imply that revenue records should become conclusive title documents immune from challenge. But there exists a vast conceptual space between two extremes, i.e., treating revenue records as conclusive title on one hand, and dismissing them as merely fiscal on the other. India perhaps now requires a more balanced doctrine suited to contemporary realities - one where updated revenue records enjoy a strong rebuttable presumption regarding current lawful title and possession, particularly when they emerge from procedurally compliant mutation systems and remain unchallenged over time. Such an approach would not undermine civil courts. Rather, it would align judicial reasoning with administrative reality. Land governance cannot function efficiently if law and administration operate on mutually contradictory assumptions. Stability of precedent is valuable. But when the factual foundations underlying precedent undergo structural transformation, jurisprudence too must evolve. Otherwise, legal doctrine risks becoming historically faithful but administratively disconnected.

In a country where land remains the single greatest source of litigation, and developmental friction, outdated assumptions may themselves become obstacles to justice.



THE TRADITIONAL IMAGE OF A PATWARI/HALKA KARMCHHARI CASUALLY ALTERING RECORDS WITH IMPUNITY NO LONGER ACCURATELY CAPTURES THE ARCHITECTURE OF MANY CONTEMPORARY LAND GOVERNANCE SYSTEMS

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World Bee Day: Saving pollinators for food Security



SATENDRA SINGH

Every year on May 20, the world observes World Bee Day to raise awareness about the vital role played by bees and other pollinators in sustaining ecosystems, biodiversity, agriculture, and human welfare. Though tiny in size, bees are among the most important living creatures on Earth. Forests, flowering plants, fruits, vegetables, and agricultural crops all depend significantly on these silent workers for survival through the process of pollination. The growing decline in bee populations across the globe is therefore not merely an environmental concern, but a warning signal about the future of food security, ecological balance, and sustainable development.

While working as a disaster management and climate resilience expert in agriculture sectors across several countries, I witnessed firsthand how climate change, environmental degradation, and unsustainable development practices are affecting agricultural systems. Among the less discussed yet deeply alarming issues is the rapid depletion of pollinators, particularly bees. Their disappearance threatens not only agriculture but also the resilience of ecosystems that sustain life itself. Most people associate bees mainly with honey production. However, their contribution extends far beyond honey. Bees are among nature's most efficient pollinators and are essential for the reproduction of flowering plants. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, more than three-fourths of the world's food crops depend, at least partially, on pollination, while nearly 90 percent of flowering plants rely on animal pollinators. Pollination is a natural process through which pollen grains are transferred from one flower to another, enabling fertilization and seed formation. Bees perform this process with remarkable efficiency while collecting nectar and pollen. Their activities directly support the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, oilseeds, pulses, spices, medicinal plants, and nuts.

In India, crops such as mustard, sunflower, apple, almond, cucumber, pumpkin, litchi, coffee, and cardamom benefit enormously from bee pollination. Several forest trees and wildflowers also depend on pollinators for regeneration and survival. Scientific studies indicate that pollinators influence nearly one-third of global food production. Their contribution extends beyond agriculture to maintaining forests, grasslands, and natural ecosystems that support countless species of wildlife. Healthy ecosystems enriched by pollinators also improve climate resilience by enhancing soil fertility, supporting water cycles, and reducing vulnerability to droughts, floods, and land degradation. Bees are therefore not merely pollinators; they are silent protectors of ecological stability.

The connection between bees and biodiversity is equally significant. Biodiversity ensures ecological balance, and bees play a central role in preserving this balance by enabling the reproduction of flowering plants that sustain food chains and wildlife habitats. A healthy bee population reflects a healthy environment, while declining pollinator populations indicate environmental stress and ecological imbalance. There are more than 20,000 known species of bees worldwide, many of which have evolved alongside local ecosystems and vegetation. Yet urbanization, deforestation, industrial expansion, monoculture farming, and land degradation are rapidly destroying their natural habitats. Monoculture agriculture, in particular, has emerged as a major challenge. Large-scale cultivation of a single crop reduces floral diversity, limiting the availability of nectar and pollen sources throughout the year. Similarly, rapid urbanization and shrinking green spaces deprive bees of nesting and feeding habitats. Such ecological stress weakens the resilience of ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to climate-related disasters.

The importance of bees becomes even greater in the context of food security. A significant proportion of global agriculture depends directly or indirectly on pollination. Pollinator-dependent crops provide essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients necessary for human health. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, nearly one-third of the food consumed by humans depends on pollinators such as bees. For developing nations like India, pollinators are especially crucial for small and marginal farmers. Effective pollination improves crop yield, enhances quality, increases farm incomes, and strengthens rural livelihoods.

Sustainable agriculture cannot succeed without the conservation of ecosystems that support pollinators. Beekeeping and apiculture also provide important livelihood opportunities for rural and tribal communities. Climate change remains one of the most dangerous and complex. One of the most alarming impacts is the mismatch between flowering seasons and pollinator activity. Due to rising temperatures, many plants are blooming earlier than usual, while bees may not adapt quickly enough to these shifts in seasonal cycles. As a result, pollination becomes less effective. Extreme weather events further damage pollinator habitats and reduce nectar availability. Agrochemicals affect bees' nervous systems, immunity, navigation abilities, and reproductive health. Often, bees exposed to pesticides fail to return to their colonies. The decline of bees should therefore be viewed as a warning from nature.

A world with declining pollinator populations will face reduced agricultural productivity, food shortages, nutritional insecurity, biodiversity loss, and increasing ecological instability. Economically, reduced pollination directly impacts farmers' incomes, especially in countries heavily dependent on climate-sensitive agriculture. Ecologically, the disappearance of pollinators weakens soil conservation, carbon absorption, and water regulation systems, making communities more vulnerable to environmental disasters. Protecting bees requires urgent collective action at international, national, and local levels. Agriculture must become more pollinator-friendly by reducing pesticide use and promoting sustainable alternatives such as organic farming and integrated pest management. Conservation of forests, wetlands, and grasslands must become a priority, alongside the plantation of native flowering species that support pollinators. Ultimately, although bees are small creatures, their contribution to sustaining life on Earth is immeasurable. Their declining populations reflect disruption of nature's balance. World Bee Day should therefore not merely be a symbolic celebration, but a global call for sustainable action. Protecting bees means protecting biodiversity, agriculture, climate resilience, food security, and ultimately the future of humanity itself.



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Time for a Citizen-Led Financial Audit System in India to bring Transparency



BIJU DHARAMAPALAN

Every election in India follows a predictable script. A new government comes to power and immediately accuses the previous administration of leaving behind empty coffers, hidden liabilities, financial mismanagement, or corruption. The outgoing government responds with counter-allegations, claiming the accusations are politically motivated. In the end, citizens are left confused, with little awareness of what the financial facts are, of the country or of the State. When these things happen consistently, they do present an important issue before the public: why have the management of public money levied on and paid by the population kept out of their reach?

In today's digital era, where individuals can track bank transactions, online purchases, and investments in real time on their mobile phones, governments still operate with limited financial transparency. Public expenditure is often buried in technical documents, delayed audit reports, and inaccessible bureaucratic systems. Democracy demands accountability to the people, and every rupee payment by the government should be transparent and traceable to the people, as it happens. India already possesses the foundation for such a transformation through the Public Financial

Management System (PFMS), a digital platform used by government departments to monitor fund flow and expenditure. But the next step should be far more ambitious. Every Indian citizen should be able to securely log into a public transparency portal using Aadhaar or PAN credentials and analyse government spending at national, state, district, and local levels.

Imagine the power of such a system. A villager could check how much money was sanctioned for a drinking water project or road construction in the panchayat. Parents could verify allocations made to local government schools. People in towns and cities could understand the government spending on trash collection, street repairs, health, or transportation. Independent researchers, journalists, students, and civil society could conduct their own research on spending patterns and identify inefficiencies or irregularities. Opposition parties or audits, though important, would no longer be the sole means of achieving public accountability; it would be ongoing and democratic, carried out by the people. With the help of technology, this has become possible. The case of Aadhaar authentication, UPI transactions, DBT, GST systems, online governance platforms, and many more initiatives have already proven India's digital prowess. Such a system of public expenditure transparency can be part of this developing digital landscape.

Today, the area where the challenge lies is not in technology; it is in politics-how not to. Technology today is not the problem; political will. The data need to be presented in a simple, user-friendly way



to make their meaning clear to ordinary citizens. Government spending shouldn't come off as a maze-like accounting sheet, complete with codes. Instead, citizens should have access to interactive dashboards, visual charts, maps, and regional language interfaces. Artificial intelligence tools could even allow citizens to ask simple questions such as: "How much money was spent on healthcare in my district this year?" or "Which infrastructure projects in my constituency are delayed?" Such simplification would democratise financial understanding and encourage informed public participation. Such transparency would yield enormous payoffs. First, there would be a marked decrease in corruption. If there is no hiding money from the government, from politicians or from contractors

and officials, it becomes much harder for them to use it to their own benefit. The transparency itself is a disincentive. Secondly, it will make governance more efficient by revealing increases in project costs, ghost beneficiaries, delays and duplicate expenditures. Citizens were even given the opportunity to include images and field observations to verify if the projects posted as "completed" exist on the ground. Thirdly, it would re-establish the public trust in democratic institutions. The majority of citizens today feel alienated from governance because of the financing transactions that take place out of sight. Open financial systems would also give the governments that actually deliver on efficiency the chance compelling the politicians

to do so by producing evidence. Honest administration would be more credible and inefficiency, or corruption would be more difficult to be camouflaged. Safeguards are, of course, required here. Restricted access to sensitive national security expenditures might be required, and data pertaining to beneficiaries of personal expenditure should be protected to safeguard privacy. But the vast bulk of public spending, which includes spending on roads, schools, hospitals, social welfare, infrastructure, public administration and the like, has a perfectly legitimate claim to be made known to the population. Most importantly, transparency should not be based on the political party which governs. Necessary to be enacted in robust laws and autonomous entities of monitoring and supervision. Democracy does not thrive by being elected every five years. Democracy has to be accountable between elections as well. Public money belongs to the people. Therefore, public audit should also belong to the people. If India can make financial transparency a citizen's right rather than a bureaucratic privilege, it can become one of the world's most accountable democracies. In such a system, political accusations after elections would matter far less because the truth about public finance would already be permanently visible in the public domain.

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Order Order

SC extends tenure of all retiring tribunal heads, members

The Supreme Court on Tuesday extended till September 8 the tenure of all tribunal chairpersons, presidents and members whose terms are due to expire before that day to ensure uninterrupted functioning of tribunals.



A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi passed the order during the mentioning of a pending case.

The matter was mentioned in the context of a National Green Tribunal judicial member, whose term is expiring in June. His tenure was also extended till September 8. During the proceedings, Attorney General R Venkataramani, appearing for the Centre, agreed to the extension on behalf of the Centre.

SC collegium approves names for appointment to Madras HC

The Supreme Court collegium has approved a proposal for appointment of nine judicial officers and 10 advocates as judges of the Madras High Court.



The collegium headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant approved the names for appointment in a meeting held on May 18.

The judicial officers whose names have been approved are Dr P Murugan, MD Sumathi, S Alli, C Thirumagal Chandrasekar, Dharmalingam Lingeswaran, Karthikeyan Balathandayutham, Shanmugam Karthikeyan, Baluchamy Murugesan, and N Gunasekaran.

The advocates whose names have been approved are Natarajan Ramesh, GK Muthukumar, Ramakrishnan Rajesh Vivekananthan, Sankaranarayanan Raveekumar, Nagarajan Dilip Kumar, Ellappan Manoharan, Krishnaswamy Govindarajan, Rajnish Pathiyil, K Appadurai and Ramasamy Anitha.

Court rejects Umar Khalid's bail plea to care for mother

A Delhi court on Tuesday dismissed the bail plea of jailed activist Umar Khalid, accused in the 2020 northeast Delhi riots. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai was hearing Khalid's application seeking 15 days of interim bail to attend the 40-day post-death ritual (Chehlum) of his uncle and take care of his mother who has to undergo a surgery. Khalid and others were booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), an anti-terror law, and provisions of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) for allegedly being the "masterminds" of the 2020 riots that left 53 people dead and more than 700 injured in northeast Delhi.



SC terms SHANTI Act a sensitive legislative issue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

This is a "very sensitive legislative policy issue", the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while hearing a plea challenging the provisions of a 2025 law that caps the liability at ₹3,000 crore in the event of any unfortunate incident at a nuclear power plant.



A bench of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi observed that the issues raised in the plea challenging various provisions of the Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India (SHANTI) Act, 2025, touches on the "economic policy".

"Our concern is that if an unfortunate event or any accident takes place and any person suffers an injury or damage, do we have a robust compensatory mechanism for that purpose," the bench said during the hearing.

Representing the petitioners in the court, advocate Prashant Bhushan said there are three main issues, including the capping of the total liability.

takes place, the damage done is hundreds of times higher than that," Bhushan argued, while referring to the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant accident that occurred in Japan in 2011.

He argued that the government can do whatever it wants by way of a policy, but it cannot sacrifice the rights of citizens. "This is a very sensitive legislative policy issue," the bench said.

It also observed that technology has to come from outside and wondered that if the liability is not capped, then who will come to operate here.

It said the State will also compensate if any such unfortunate incident takes place.



Contempt case: Delhi HC seeks response from Kejriwal, others

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday sought the stand of AAP leaders Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Durgesh Pathak, Sanjay Singh, Saurabh Bhardwaj and others in a criminal contempt case initiated against them for their "vilifying" social media posts against Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma.

A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Ravinder Dudeja issued notice to the politicians on the suo motu contempt case initiated against them by Justice Sharma and granted them four-week time to file their response.

"Issue notice. The alleged contemnors will file their response within a period of four weeks from the receipt of notice," the bench stated,

as it listed the case for next hearing on August 4.

The court also said it would appoint an amicus curiae in the case and directed the registry to preserve a copy of the alleged offending publications. Justice Sharma had on May 14 initiated criminal contempt proceedings against Kejriwal, Sisodia and other AAP leaders, including Vinay Mishra, over their "vilifying" social media posts against her in relation to the excise policy case.

The judge also initiated contempt proceedings against 'X' user Devesh Vishwakarma.

Justice Sharma had asserted that the former Delhi chief minister "orchestrated a calculated campaign of vilification" against her on social media instead of pursuing his legal remedies and clarified that the CBI's petition against



the discharge of all accused persons would now be taken up by another bench.

The judge took exception to several social media posts by the proposed contemnors that attributed "political allegiance" and "affiliation" to her and allegedly targeted her by posting a misleading

"edited" video of a speech she gave at an educational institution in Varanasi.

She also noted the wide circulation of clips from the court proceedings in the case, stating that the proposed contemnors were creating a "parallel narrative", and that "remaining silent"

was not judicial restraint but a "surrender before a powerful litigant".

On February 27, the trial court discharged Kejriwal, Sisodia and 21 others in the liquor policy case, as it ruled that the case was wholly unable to survive judicial scrutiny and stood discredited in its entirety.

After Justice Sharma dismissed their applications seeking her recusal in the CBI's petition against their discharge in the case on April 20, Kejriwal, Sisodia and Pathak had written a letter to Justice Sharma, stating they would not appear before her personally or through a lawyer and would follow "Mahatma Gandhi's path of Satyagraha".

After Justice Sharma released the CBI's petition from her court, the case is now before Justice

Manoj Jain. Meanwhile, the Delhi High Court on Tuesday listed for hearing on May 25 the CBI's petition against the trial court order discharging all accused persons in the liquor policy case and asked the agency to inform former Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, his deputy Manish Sisodia and former MLA Durgesh Pathak about the change of bench.

"Let them be intimidated that the case has been allocated to this court. So if they have to say anything or respond to the present petition. Let them be served. Once everybody is here, we will draw a schedule of hearing," Justice Manoj Jain said. The CBI's petition assailing the trial court's decision was listed before Justice Jain after Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma released it from her court last week.

SC refuses to recall order on sterilisation of stray dogs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The right to live with dignity encompasses the right to move freely without the threat of harm from dog bite attacks, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while dismissing pleas seeking a recall of its earlier order on the relocation and sterilisation of stray canines.

"The court cannot remain oblivious to harsh ground realities where children, international travellers and old age people have fallen victim to dog bite incidents," a bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria said in response to the petitions by animal rights activists and others.

The court also issued a slew of directions to states, union territories and other statutory bodies to augment infrastruc-



ture to deal with stray dogs. On November 7 last year, the court took note of the "alarming rise" in dog-bite incidents in areas such as educational institutions, hospitals and railway stations and directed that stray dogs be relocated to designated shelters after sterilisation and vaccination. Stray dogs picked up shall not be released back to their original place, the court said.

On Tuesday, the apex court rejected petitions challenging

the validity of SOPs on dealing with stray animals issued by the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI). It observed that there has been a "discernible absence" of sustained efforts on the part of states and UTs to build infrastructure to deal with the rising population of stray dogs.

Implementation of the Animal Birth Control (ABC) framework, it said, remains largely sporadic, underfunded and uneven across jurisdictions. The framework includes sterilisation, vaccination, sheltering, and overall scientific management of state arms. Prolonged inaction coupled with the absence of institutional commitment to the effective implementation of the ABC framework has led to aggravation of the problem, which has now assumed dimensions "warranting urgent," the SC said.

SC ALLOWS EUTHANASIA FOR RABID DOGS

New Delhi: The Supreme Court for the first time on Tuesday allowed euthanasia for rabid, incurably ill, or demonstrably dangerous stray dogs to curb the threat to human life



A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria issued a slew of directions to deal with the rising population of stray dogs in the country. The bench emphatically stated that ordering the euthanasia of stray dogs is the most important direction it is issuing to authorities and officials of civic bodies.

It said the civic authorities may resort to euthanasia in areas where the stray dog population has reached alarming proportions and where frequent dog bites or aggressive attacks pose a continuing threat to public safety.

The action, as well as other legal measures, may be taken after an assessment by veterinary experts and in strict accordance with the provisions of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960, the Animal Birth Control Rules 2023 and other applicable statutory protocols, the bench said. The top court passed the order in a suo motu case, initiated on July 28 last year, over a media report on stray dog bites leading to rabies, particularly among children, in the national capital.

On Tuesday, it dismissed pleas seeking a recall of its earlier order on the

relocation and sterilisation of stray canines, as it observed that the right to live with dignity encompasses the right to move freely without the threat of harm from dog bite attacks.

It directed the states and Union Territories to ensure the implementation of its earlier direction not to return dogs picked up from public places to the same spot after vaccination/sterilisation. It also directed the states and UTs to take steps to enhance the Animal Birth Control framework.

"Ensure establishment of at least one fully functional ABC centre in each district duly equipped with requisite infrastructure and trained personnel, surgical facilities and supporting logistics," the bench said.

"The court cannot remain oblivious to harsh ground realities where children, international travellers and old age people have fallen victim to dog bite incidents," it added. (PTI)

Do NGOs, activists claiming to care for stray animals accept liability, asks SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked whether animal welfare organisations, NGOs and individuals, who claim to care for or exercise control over stray dogs in a given locality, would be willing to accept tortious liability in respect of any injury, harm or damage caused by the canines to members of the public.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and NV Anjaria said while considerable emphasis has been placed on the protection, feeding and continued presence of

community dogs in public and institutional spaces, a pertinent question arises as to whether such individuals, organisations and associations would be willing to assume the corresponding legal responsibility for the consequences arising therefrom.

"The issue assumes significance inasmuch as the assertion of a right to protect or maintain stray dogs in public spaces cannot be divorced from the obligation to ensure that such actions do not result in harm to others," the bench said in its 131-page order.

It noted that the National Academy



of Legal Studies and Research (NALSAR), University of Law, Hyderabad, has argued that it has

institutionalised humane treatment of stray dogs on its campus by creating the Animal Law Centre and all stakeholders, including the students and the staff, are being sensitised towards the dogs present on the campus.

The bench said in case the Animal Law Centre wishes to carry out the work in terms of the Capture-Sterilise-Vaccinate-Release (CSV) model inside the campus of the NALSAR University of Law, Hyderabad, such activity can be allowed on an experimental basis, subject to the pre-condition that the centre shall furnish an undertaking

to the vice-chancellor that, in the event of any incident of stray-dog bite on the campus, it shall be liable to face tortious liability for the injury caused to the individuals concerned.

The court said it is of the considered opinion that any framework concerning the management and protection of stray dogs must necessarily be accompanied by clearly defined principles of accountability.

"The assertion of rights or interests in favour of such animals cannot operate in isolation, divorced from the corresponding responsibility to safeguard human life and safety.

SC refuses to entertain plea over renaming Navi Mumbai International Airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to take a time-bound decision on the Maharashtra Government's proposal regarding the renaming of the Navi Mumbai International Airport.

The Maharashtra Government had forwarded a proposal to rename the Navi Mumbai International Airport as 'Lokneta DB Patil Navi Mumbai International Airport'.

"This will amount to



indulging in policy making," a bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi told the counsel appearing for the petitioner organisa-

tion 'Prakashjhot Samajik Sanstha'. The bench said it was not inclined to entertain the plea challenging a November 2025 order of the

Bombay High Court, which had dismissed the petition. The bench granted liberty to the petitioner to pursue the case before the competent authority.

"Is it the function of the court that what should be the name of an airport?" the bench observed during the hearing.

The counsel appearing for the petitioner said there was a demand to rename the airport in the name of DB Patil.

The counsel said the state government had sent a proposal to the Centre for renaming the airport but nothing has been done yet.

SC asks SpiceJet to move Delhi HC for extension of time

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked SpiceJet to approach the Delhi High Court with its plea seeking extension of time to deposit ₹144 crore in connection with its legal dispute with media baron Kalanithi Maran and Kal Airways.

A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Alok Aradhe took note of submissions made by senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Spicejet, that the ongoing West Asia crisis has impacted the airline's operations and finances.

Referring to a recent gov-



ernment's bailout programme for airlines, which has an outlay of ₹5,000 crore, Rohatgi sought three months time to deposit the amount.

The top court, however, refused to grant time and asked the budget airline to move the high court.

SC asks MeitY to examine PIL on personal data of citizens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday asked the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) to consider a PIL as a representation seeking a robust mechanism to recover or destroy the personal data of Indians allegedly stolen and stored on foreign servers.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was hearing a PIL filed by Nitish Kumar, a cyber security consultant.

While refusing to entertain the PIL on grounds that it pertained to information

technology and hardly anything to do with legal aspects, the CJ asked the petitioner to approach the government with his grievances.

The plea sought the court's intervention to operationalise the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, 2023, and to mitigate the rise of "digital arrests" and extortion linked to data breaches.

While acknowledging the gravity of the concerns raised, the CJ-led bench observed that the issues were "highly technical" and required administrative and technological expertise rather than judicial intervention at this stage. "The issue being highly technical in nature, it seems



to us that an effective course will be to approach the Ministry of Electronics and IT. Let this plea be given as a supplementary representation.

They shall consider it," the bench said.

Kumar, who argued the case, submitted that the data stolen by entities in at least

five foreign countries is being weaponised against Indians.

He highlighted that sensitive information, including fingerprints and personal identifiers, is being used to facilitate transnational crimes like digital arrests.

The bench said "Unless there's an extradition treaty" the accused cannot be brought here to face the law. "If we cannot bring the data back, we can at least restructure and save it," the petitioner said.

The plea sought a direction to the Centre to recover or destroy stolen personal data from foreign jurisdictions.

It also sought immediate operationalisation of the

Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and constitution of a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to monitor data theft investigation.

Disposing the plea, the bench granted the petitioner liberty to submit the petition as a supplementary representation to MeitY.

"The petitioner is said to have brought the matter to the notice of the Union through representations as to how a comprehensive mechanism can be operationalised for the future protection of data and for destruction of such data which has been stolen to prevent misuse," it said.



Stocks end lower on fag-end selling in blue-chips

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Stock market benchmark indices ended lower on Tuesday due to fag-end selling in blue-chip stocks. HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries, as concerns rose over the rupee hitting a new record low.

Elevated global crude prices amid geopolitical uncertainties also impacted market sentiment.

Markets pared all intraday gains and ended lower, with the 30-share BSE Sensex declining 114.19 points, or 0.15 per cent, to settle at 75,200.85.

During the day, it surged 431.23 points, or 0.57 per cent, to 75,746.27 after US President Donald Trump said he had halted fresh strikes on Iran at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, asserting that serious discussions were underway with Tehran that could lead to an acceptable deal. The 50-

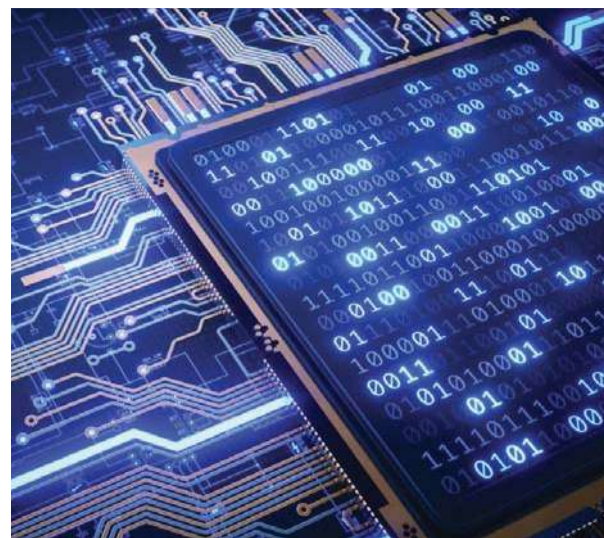
share NSE Nifty dipped 31.95 points, or 0.14 per cent, to end at 23,618.

From the Sensex firms, Kotak Mahindra Bank, UltraTech Cement, Titan, Adani Ports, Bharti Airtel and Sun Pharma were among the biggest laggards.

Infosys, HCL Tech, Tech Mahindra, Eternal and Tata Consultancy Services were among the major winners.

The rupee slipped to a record low of 96.60 against the US dollar before settling at 96.52 (provisional) on Tuesday. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 1.80 per cent lower at \$110 per barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth ₹2,813.69 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

The majority of Adani group stocks ended higher after the US Department of Justice permanently dropped all criminal charges against business tycoon Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar,



bringing a high-profile securities and wire fraud case in New York to a complete close after prosecutors concluded they could not sustain the allegations.

"Domestic equity indices pared early gains to close in the red, despite an initial upswing fuelled by optimism

surrounding a temporary halt in US military operations against Iran.

"IT stocks stood as a notable exception, registering robust advances on the back of anticipated tailwinds from an accelerating rupee depreciation and compelling valuations," Vinod Nair, Head

of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi and Japan's Nikkei 225 index ended lower, while Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled higher.

Markets in Europe were trading in positive territory.

"Despite a powerful rally in IT stocks and supportive global cues during the first half, benchmark indices failed to sustain higher levels as rising currency concerns, elevated crude oil prices, and aggressive derivative unwinding dragged the market lower into the close," Hari Prasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

The biggest pressure point remained the continued collapse in the Indian rupee alongside persistently elevated crude oil prices, he added. US markets ended on a mixed note on Monday. Trump had made the announcement on

Truth Social on Monday late afternoon.

"I have been asked by the Emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, and the President of the United Arab Emirates, Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, to hold off on our planned Military attack of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which was scheduled for tomorrow (Tuesday)," Trump said. "We were getting ready to do a very major attack tomorrow. I've put it off for a little while, hopefully, maybe forever, but possibly for a little while, because we've had very big discussions with Iran and we'll see what they amount to," Trump told reporters at the White House.

In the previous session on Monday, the BSE benchmark increased by 77.05 points, or 1.10 per cent, to settle at 75,315.04. The Nifty edged higher by 6.45 points, or 0.03 per cent, to end at 23,649.95.

Gold rebounds ₹800 to ₹1.63 lakh/10g



Gold prices rebounded by ₹800 to ₹1.63 lakh per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday, as signs of a breakthrough in US-Iran negotiations eased concerns over inflation pressure.

According to local marketmen, the yellow metal of 99.9 per cent purity rose ₹800 to ₹1,63,600 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes) from Monday's closing level of ₹1,62,800 per 10 grams. However, silver prices dropped by ₹5,000 to ₹2,71,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) due to weak industrial demand and subdued trends in the global markets. "Gold prices rebounded on Tuesday as hopes for renewed US-Iran negotiations improved, easing some concerns over prolonged energy-driven inflation pressures," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst - Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

Sentiment improved after US President Donald Trump said that he had suspended a planned military strike on Iran, indicating that a diplomatic resolution with Tehran might still be achievable, he added.

"The easing of geopolitical tensions led to a slight decrease in crude oil prices, which provided support to precious metals following recent sharp declines.

"Additionally, bargain buying and short covering in the aftermath of last Friday's significant sell-off have contributed to the recent recovery in precious metals," Gandhi said. In the international market, spot gold was trading 0.47 per cent lower at \$4,544.78 per ounce, while silver declined 2.01 per cent to \$76.12 per ounce.

Spot gold prices are trading lower at around \$4,540 per ounce as oil prices, though having eased slightly, remain elevated, Praveen Singh, Head of commodities at Mirae Asset ShareKhan, said.

Investors are now awaiting the minutes of the US Federal Open Market Committee (FOMC) meeting for further cues on the interest rate cycle and its impact on bullion prices, he added.

Singh said bullion prices may remain volatile in the near-term amid uncertainty over global interest rates, crude oil prices and geopolitical developments in West Asia.

Goyal asks industry to turn global uncertainties into opportunities

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday said Indian businesses should turn the current global economic uncertainties into opportunities for growth and not panic over the situation.

He said the present global situation and geopolitical uncertainties should be viewed as an opportunity for India to strengthen business processes, undertake faster reforms, build greater resilience and strengthen supply chains.

"India and Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi have never let a crisis go by and the situation in the world is truly an opportunity, a moment of uncertainty that we should engage more deeply with. Find ways to strengthen our business processes and prepare ourselves on these uncertain times for brighter and better future," he said here at ASSOCHAM's India Business Reform Summit 2026.

He added that lessons learnt during the COVID period had demonstrated the effectiveness of digital engagement and remote working models.

"In such a situation, we do not need to panic," Goyal said adding the West Asia crisis, and emerging technologies like AI bring opportunities for Indian industry to seize.



Shares of oil marketing companies rally more than three per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Shares of oil marketing companies (OMCs), including HPCL, ended higher on Tuesday after petrol and diesel prices were raised by about 90 paise per litre — the second increase in less than a week.

The stock of Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd climbed 3.27 per cent, Indian Oil Corporation edged higher by 2.39 per cent, and Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd went up by 2.03 per cent on the BSE.



Petrol and diesel prices were raised about 90 paise per litre on Tuesday — the second increase in less than a week — as state-run fuel retailers moved to narrow mounting losses triggered by a sharp surge in global crude oil prices following the Iran conflict.

PepsiCo India to invest ₹5,700 cr by 2030 on capacity expansion

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Food and beverages major PepsiCo will invest up to ₹5,700 crore in India by 2030, mainly to ramp up the manufacturing capacity of its foods business, its India and South Asia CEO Jagrut Kotecha said on Tuesday.

PepsiCo India, which posted a profit after tax of ₹905 crore in the 12 months ended December 2025 with a total revenue of ₹9,789 crore, will invest mainly in three manufacturing facilities in Madhya Pradesh, Assam and

Tamil Nadu, he told reporters in an interaction here.

India, being one of the top 13 markets for PepsiCo, continues to commit and invest, he said. "We are committed, and as a result, from 2025 to 2030, we have committed almost ₹5,700 crore of investments," Kotecha said.

The investment is primarily for the concentrates plant in Madhya Pradesh and snacks plants in Assam and Tamil Nadu, he added.

"Some of this is going live in the next few months, like the concentrates plant in Madhya

Adani group stocks rally; NDTV surges over 7%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Adani group stocks were trading higher on Tuesday, with NDTV surging over 7 per cent, after the US Department of Justice permanently dropped all criminal charges against Gautam Adani and his nephew Sagar, bringing a high-profile securities and wire fraud case in New York to a complete close after prosecutors concluded they could not sustain the allegations.

Shares of NDTV surged 7.34 per cent in intraday, Adani Green jumped 4.27 per cent,



Adani Total Gas rallied 3.51 per cent, Adani Enterprises Ltd climbed 3.12 per cent, Adani Energy edged higher by 2.53 per cent, Adani Power advanced 2.48 per cent, ACC

went up by 1.66 per cent, Adani Ports rose by 0.93 per cent and Ambuja Cements was up 0.93 per cent on the BSE.

The 30-share BSE Sensex

traded 345.44 points higher at 75,660.48 in morning trade. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 85.45 points to 23,740.15. With this, multiple US regulatory and legal investigations involving the group have all closed.

Last week, the US Securities and Exchange Commission settled civil allegations against the two men tied to disclosures made to investors in connection with solar energy projects in India. Court filings showed Gautam Adani agreed to pay US\$ 6 million and Sagar Adani \$12 million, without admitting or denying wrongdoing.

Ind-Ra projects GDP growth to slow to 6.7% in FY27

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India Ratings & Research (Ind-Ra) on Tuesday projected India's economic growth to decelerate to 6.7 per cent in the current fiscal year on slowdown in demand and supply and retail inflation is expected to stay within the RBI's tolerance band at 4.4 per cent despite recent fuel price hikes.

Ind-Ra's projection compares to 6.9 per cent GDP growth and 4.6 per cent inflation projection by the RBI. The agency believes higher fuel and food prices due to the West Asia conflict's uncertainty and the likely impact of evolving El Nino on agriculture from mid-2026 will pull down GDP growth in FY27 to 6.7 per cent.

Indian economy is estimated to have grown 7.6 per cent in FY26.

"Major headwinds include



geopolitical developments, particularly the West Asia conflict, high headline inflation, a depreciated currency from weak capital inflows, weaker-than-expected capex especially by the Government to reduce fiscal risks, weak global trade growth, strong FY26 growth (base effect), low industrial production as measured by the Index of Industrial

Production (IIP), and notably, the likely El Nino weather pattern from mid-2026," India Ratings & Research Director — Economics Megha Arora said.

Ind-Ra has assumed average oil prices at \$95/bbl in FY27 and expects the Government, oil marketing companies and consumers to share the burden of high global oil prices with con-

sumers sharing the least burden. The agency estimates that a \$10/bbl increase in crude oil prices could reduce GDP growth by 44 bps, while a 10 per cent reduction in capex could lower GDP growth to 6 per cent, Arora said.

Ind-Ra expects the government to announce easy access to credit and measures like credit guarantees as opposed to direct cash transfers to shield people and small industries from the impact of the West Asia crisis.

For the April-June quarter of the current fiscal year, Ind-Ra estimates GDP growth at 6.7 per cent and said the El Nino impact is likely to be felt more in July-September quarter, as against the June quarter. Ind-Ra estimates rupee-dollar exchange rate to average ₹94.28, a depreciation of 6.7 per cent year-on-year in FY27. The Indian rupee touched a record low of 96.47 to a dollar on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump has said he halted fresh strikes on Iran at the request of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, asserting that serious discussions were underway with Tehran that could lead to an acceptable deal. Trump said he was asked by Saudi Arabia, Qatar, the UAE and some others if the US could put it off for 2 or 3 days, a short period of time, because they think that they are getting very close to making a deal.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex declined 114.19 points to settle at 75,200.85, while Nifty dipped 31.95 points to 23,618.

India's edible oil imports rise three pc in FY26



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India's edible oil imports rose 3 per cent to 166.51 lakh tonnes in the 2025-26 fiscal year, driven largely by a sharp jump in duty-free imports from Nepal, industry body Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEA) said on Tuesday.

Imports had stood at 161.82 lakh tonnes in the prior fiscal year.

Nepal, which enjoys zero-duty access to Indian markets under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) agreement, exported 7.36 lakh tonnes of edible oils to India during the year, more than double the 3.45 lakh tonnes shipped in the previous fiscal, a rise of 113 per cent.

Refined soybean oil made up the bulk of Nepal's exports to India, with smaller volumes of sunflower oil, RBD Palmolein and rapeseed oil also traded. "The surge in duty-free imports of refined oils from Nepal substantially contributed to the increase in India's total edible oil imports during the year," SEA said in a statement.

The association said that without the SAFTA arrangement, overall imports would likely have fallen short of the previous year's level despite rising domestic demand, even as higher international prices and a weaker rupee against the dollar increased import costs.

India remains heavily dependent on overseas supplies, with domestic production meeting only around 40 per cent of total edible oil requirements.

Low oilseed yields, fragmented landholdings, limited irrigation and a policy tilt toward wheat and rice cultivation have constrained domestic output growth, SEA said.

The association called for steps to boost oilseed productivity and encourage domestic value addition to reduce long-term import reliance. It also flagged Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent appeal for consumers to moderate edible oil consumption, saying that curbing excess use alongside raising domestic output would help lower import dependence and ease pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Rupee falls to 96.60 in intraday trade; settles at all-time low of 96.52/\$

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

The rupee slipped to a record low of 96.60 against the US dollar before settling at 96.52 (provisional) on Tuesday, weighed down by soaring crude oil prices, persistent foreign capital outflows, and a resilient dollar buoyed by global risk-aversion.

The rupee is Asia's worst-performing currency in 2026, having tumbled to a historic intraday low of 96.60 against the US dollar. The currency has depreciated 1.5 per cent this month and more than 7 per cent this year.

Forex traders said the

rupee remains vulnerable to rising crude oil prices and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 96.38 against the US dollar, then lost further ground and touched a record low of 96.60, before settling at 96.52 (provisional), registering a fall of 32 paise over its previous close.

On Monday, the Indian rupee settled at a record low of 96.20 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid a strong dollar and rising US treasury yields. Ongoing geopolitical tensions



and FII outflows may also put pressure on the rupee.

"However, any intervention by the RBI and certain restrictions on the import of gold and silver may support

the rupee at lower levels. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 96 to 96.60," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Commodities

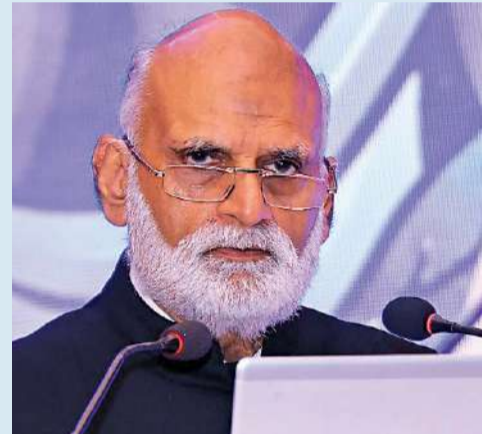
Lifestyle changes trigger rising hypertension among youth, says Minister Prataprao Jadhav

HEALTH EXPERTS CALL FOR EARLY DETECTION, PREVENTIVE CARE AND LIFESTYLE ACTION AHEAD OF WORLD HYPERTENSION DAY 2026



Non-communicable diseases impact GDP significantly across countries, and therefore prevention and timely intervention are critical

Mr. Rajesh Bhushan, Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Govt. of India & Chairperson, Governing Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation



AI should not only be viewed through the lens of automation or job displacement, but also as an opportunity to improve the quality of human life

Mr. Anil Rajput, Chairperson, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation



Hypertension is one of the biggest public health challenges today because most people do not take it seriously until complications arise

Dr. Ripen Gupta, Vice Chairman & Unit Head - Cardiology, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket



Hypertension is no longer limited to the affluent or elderly; it is now affecting all sections of society, including children and young adults

Prof. Rakesh Yadav, Cardiologist and Head - Department of Emergency Medicine, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi



Hypertension should never be taken lightly and people must follow medical advice seriously to avoid long-term complications

Dr. Sanjeev Singh, Chairperson, FICCI Medical Education Task Force



Mr. Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Ayush & MoS for Health and Family Welfare, GOI, said, Government of India, under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NPCDCS), is actively promoting population-based screening, early detection and management through Health and Wellness Centres across the country

"In today's time, it is essential that we make our communities more sensitive and aware, and strengthen awareness about hypertension. Due to changing lifestyles and reduced attention to physical and mental health, hypertension is rapidly increasing even among the youth," said Mr. Prataprao Jadhav, Union Minister of State (I/C), Ministry of Ayush & MoS for Health and Family Welfare, GOI, in a special video message during the 'Illness to Wellness Conference on Transforming Hypertension Care: Prevention to Wellness' organised on the occasion World Hypertension Day 2026.

Calling hypertension, a "silent killer", the Minister said that the condition often progresses without visible symptoms and can lead to severe complications such as heart attacks and strokes. He highlighted that the Government of India, under the National Programme for Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NPCDCS), is actively promoting population-based screening, early detection and management through Health and Wellness Centres across the country.

The conference was organised by the Illness to Wellness Foundation and brought together leading policymakers, cardiologists, healthcare experts and public health leaders to deliberate on the growing burden of hypertension and the need to move from illness-centric treatment towards wellness-driven healthcare approaches.

Addressing the gathering, Mr. Rajesh Bhushan, Former Secretary, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India & Chairperson, Governing Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, said, "The problem of hypertension is as prevalent in rural India as it is in urban India, but because we live in metro cities, we often believe it is only an urban problem. Early detection is extremely important because without early detection, early treatment becomes difficult. At the same time, non-communicable diseases impact GDP significantly across countries, and therefore prevention and timely intervention are critical."

In his welcome address, Mr. Anil Rajput, Chairperson, Advisory Council, Illness to Wellness Foundation, said, "Modern lifestyles marked by long working hours, constant connectivity, poor sleep, sedentary habits and rising stress are significantly contributing to the growing burden of hypertension and lifestyle disorders. Another emerging concern is the growing anxiety surrounding Artificial Intelligence. Across the world, many employees increasingly fear that AI may replace jobs or reduce human relevance in the workplace."

However, Mr Rajput stressed, "AI should not only be viewed through the lens of automation or job displacement, but also as an opportunity to improve the quality of human life. In that sense, AI, if deployed responsibly, can become a powerful enabler of healthier and more balanced living. The true promise of innovation lies not only in making industries smarter, but in making human lives healthier and happier."

Speaking during the inaugural session, Dr. Ripen Gupta, Vice Chairman & Unit Head - Cardiology, Max Smart Super Speciality Hospital, Saket, said, "Hypertension is one of the biggest public health challenges today because most people do not take it seriously until complications arise. Nearly one in four adults is affected by hypertension, yet awareness and blood pressure control remain very low. Annual BP screening, aerobic exercise, resistance training, reduced desk time, proper sleep, yoga and meditation are critical lifestyle interventions for prevention and management."



L to R: Dr. Partha Bose, Senior Consultant Pulmonologist & Medical Director, SSB Hospital; Dr. Nitin Kumar Sethi, Chairman, Institute of Neurosciences, PSRI Hospital, Delhi; Dr. Dipankar Bhowmik, Professor & Head, Department of Nephrology, AIIMS New Delhi; Dr. Udgeeth Dhir, Principal Director - Cardio Thoracic Vascular Surgery, Fortis Gurgaon; Dr. Anurag Gupta, Director-Dialysis Unit, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital; Dr. Avinash Goswami, Consultant Neurologist, Apollo Hospitals; and Dr. P Venkata Krishnan, Director and Senior Consultant, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram



L to R: Dr. Alka Chaudhary, Senior Consultant, Madhukar Rainbows Children Hospital, New Delhi; Dr. Himsweta Srivastava, Director Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University College of Medical Sciences & Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital; Dr. Renu Raina Sehgal, Chairperson, Department of Obstetrics, Artemis & Daffodils Hospitals, Gurugram; Dr. Pikee Saxena, Director Professor & In-charge of Assisted Reproductive Services, Lady Hardinge Medical College & SSKH, New Delhi and Dr. Shikha Sharma, Scientific Mentor, Ranfort Wellness.

Addressing the issue of awareness and treatment adherence, Prof. Rakesh Yadav, Cardiologist and Head - Department of Emergency Medicine, AIIMS, New Delhi, said, "The biggest problem is that despite increasing awareness, people still do not monitor their blood pressure regularly or continue treatment consistently. Hypertension is no longer limited to the affluent or elderly; it is now affecting all sections of society, including children and young adults. Obesity remains one of the major underlying causes, and regular monitoring of blood pressure and sugar levels, affordable lifelong medication, healthy dietary practices and weight management are essential to reducing mortality associated with hypertension and related diseases."

Giving the concluding remarks, Dr. Sanjeev Singh, Chairperson, FICCI Medical Education Task Force and Medical Director, Amrita Institute of Medical Sciences & Research Centre, said that hypertension should never be taken lightly and people must follow medical advice seriously to avoid long-term complications. He also underlined the importance of monitoring BMI, waist circumference and

other lifestyle indicators as part of preventive healthcare.

The conference featured two sessions focused on critical aspects of hypertension management and prevention. The first session on "Managing Hypertension During Pregnancy: From Risk to Safe Motherhood" highlighted the importance of early identification of hypertensive disorders during pregnancy, timely recognition of warning signs, prevention of maternal and fetal complications, pregnancy-safe therapies, multidisciplinary antenatal care and postpartum follow-up. The session was moderated by Dr. Renu Raina Sehgal, Chairperson, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, Artemis & Daffodils Hospitals, Gurugram, and featured insights from Dr. Himsweta Srivastava, Director Professor, Department of Obstetrics & Gynaecology, University College of Medical Sciences & Guru Teg Bahadur Hospital; Dr. Pikee Saxena, Director Professor & In-charge of Assisted Reproductive Services, Lady Hardinge Medical College & SSKH, New Delhi; Dr. Alka Chaudhary, Senior Consultant, Madhukar Rainbows Children Hospital, New Delhi; and Dr. Shikha Sharma, Scientific Mentor, Ranfort Wellness.

The second session on "Impact of

Hypertension on Heart, Brain & Kidney: From Damage to Prevention" focused on the importance of early screening for target organ damage, routine blood pressure monitoring, lifestyle interventions, cognitive risk awareness and the need to move from disease management towards preventive wellness and organ protection. The session was moderated by Dr. Nitin Kumar Sethi, Chairman, Institute of Neurosciences, PSRI Hospital, Delhi, and included participation from Dr. Dipankar Bhowmik, Professor & Head, Department of Nephrology, AIIMS New Delhi; Dr. Udgeeth Dhir, Principal Director - Cardio Thoracic Vascular Surgery, Fortis Gurgaon; Dr. Anurag Gupta, Director-Dialysis Unit, Sir Ganga Ram Hospital; Dr. Partha Bose, Senior Consultant Pulmonologist & Medical Director, SSB Hospital; Dr. Avinash Goswami, Consultant Neurologist, Apollo Hospitals; and Dr. P Venkata Krishnan, Director and Senior Consultant, Narayana Hospital, Gurugram.

The conference concluded with a collective call for stronger public awareness, regular screening, healthier lifestyles, early intervention and a people-centric preventive healthcare approach to tackle the growing burden of hypertension and build a healthier India.



FROM THE WORLD

KENYA Fuel strike suspended

Public transport operators in Kenya on Tuesday suspended a nationwide strike for one week to allow consultations with the Government, marking an end to two days of protests that left four people dead and more than 30 others injured. Talks collapsed on Monday as transport operators demanded that fuel prices be reduced to cushion them and commuters from increased transportation costs. Commuters were stranded for the second consecutive day on Tuesday as public transport operators kept their vehicles off the roads. Protesters took to the streets, engaging police in running battles and setting tyres on fire along major highways, making them impassable. Kenya's fuel prices hit a record high on Friday, with the diesel price increasing by 23.5 per cent and gasoline by 8 per cent.

SYRIA Soldier killed in blast

A bomb exploded outside a Defence Ministry building in the Syrian Capital on Tuesday, killing one soldier and wounding about a dozen other people, the ministry and state media reported. The Defence Ministry said in a terse statement that soldiers discovered a bomb that was ready to be detonated in the central Bab Sharqi district of Damascus. As they were dismantling it, a car exploded nearby, killing a member of the military and wounding the others. The ministry said the blast occurred outside a building linked to the Defence Ministry but gave no further details. State TV reported that the blast killed one person and wounded 12 others, including civilians. IS has claimed such attacks since the Assad family was removed from power after five decades of rule by insurgent groups that marched into Damascus in December 2024.

Ebola outbreak growing rapidly in eastern Congo, warns WHO

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Kinshasa (Congo)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) director-general openly worried on Tuesday over the "scale and speed" of an outbreak of a rare Ebola variant in eastern Congo, where authorities reported a sharp increase in suspected deaths - to at least 131 - and over 500 suspected cases.

The virus spread undetected for weeks after the first known death as authorities tested for a more common strain and came up negative, health experts and aid workers said. This Bundibugyo virus, a rare variant, has no approved medicines or vaccines.

Congo's health minister, Samuel Roger Kamba, said investigations were underway to determine whether the deaths and 513 suspected cases were "actually linked to the disease." WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he is "deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic," adding the UN health agency will convene its emergency committee later Tuesday. He pointed to the emergence of cases in urban areas, the deaths of health-care workers and significant population movement.

The WHO has declared the Ebola outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, requiring a coordinated response. Resources were being rushed to the two affected provinces near the border with Uganda,



which has reported one death in a person who travelled from Congo.

The head of the WHO team in Congo said authorities haven't identified "patient zero" in the outbreak.

Dr Anne Anca also said the Ervebo vaccine, used against a different Ebola strain, was among those being considered for possible use. But even if that or another is approved, it would take two months to become available.

Inside Congo, cases have been confirmed in the capital of Ituri province, Bunia; North Kivu's rebel-held capital, Goma; and the localities of Mongbwalu, Nyakunde and Butembo - home to well over a million people in all.

Dr Peter Stafford, an American doctor, is among the Bunia cases, said the Christian organisation he works for, Serge. He had been treating patients at a hospital. Three other Serge employees were working there, including Stafford's wife, but were not showing symptoms. Congo

has said the first person died from the virus on April 24 in Bunia, and the body was repatriated to the Mongbwalu health zone, a mining area with a large population. "That caused the Ebola outbreak to escalate," said Kamba, the health minister.

When another person fell ill on April 26, samples were sent to Congo's capital, Kinshasa, for testing, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control. Bunia is more than 1,000 kilometres (620 miles) away in a country with some of the world's worst infrastructure.

Samples from Bunia were initially tested for the more common type of Ebola, Zaire, Congolese officials said.

They came back negative, said Dr Richard Kitenge, the health ministry incident manager for Ebola, and local authorities assumed it was not the virus. Only laboratories in Kinshasa and Goma, which are now controlled by the M23 rebel group, have the capacity to test for the

Bundibugyo virus. It was not clear what measures the Rwanda-backed rebels were taking in the outbreak.

On May 5, the WHO was alerted to about 50 deaths in Mongbwalu, including four health workers. The first confirmation of Ebola came on May 14. "Our surveillance system didn't work," said Jean-Jaques Muyembe, a virologist at the National Institute of Bio-Medical Research. "The Bunia laboratory ... should have continued searching and sent the samples to the national laboratory. Something went wrong there.

That's why we ended up in this catastrophic situation," he said, and asserted that members of parliament and senators were aware "there were deaths, and nothing was being said." Matthew M. Kavanagh, director of the Georgetown University Centre for Global Health Policy and Politics, criticised the Trump administration's earlier decision to withdraw from the WHO and make deep cuts in foreign aid - "the exact surveillance system meant to catch these viruses early," he said.

The US State Department pushed aside criticism on Monday, saying it sprang into action immediately and has provided \$13 million in assistance for the response.

Ebola is highly contagious and can be contracted via bodily fluids such as vomit, blood or semen. The disease it causes is rare but severe and often fatal.



PM Narendra Modi with Nordic leaders, Norwegian PM Jonas Gahr Store, Finnish PM Petteri Orpo, Swedish PM Ulf Kristersson, Icelandic PM Kristrún Frostadóttir and Danish PM Mette at the Nordic-India Summit in Oslo

Video and satellite photos show Iran's oil spill on Persian Gulf island

JON GAMBRELL
Dubai

A mysterious attack on an Iranian oil refinery during the Iran war caused an oil spill that affected a nearby Persian Gulf island that's a protected breeding ground for wildlife, videos and satellite photos show.

The oil-soaked waves lapping onto Shidvar Island, an uninhabited island, represent yet another sign of the ecological damage wrought by the war.

Oil rain has also fallen on the Iranian Capital, Tehran, after airstrikes targeted oil facilities there. Iranian attacks on ships passing through the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf of Oman also caused environmental damage. Mobile phone footage shot April 9 by an Iranian named Ehsan Jalali shows thick



black smoke rising after the strike on an oil refinery on Lavan, an island just off mainland Iran near Shidvar.

The footage corresponds with known features of both islands and was posted by Jalali to Instagram in the last few days as Iran's theocratic Government has shut off access to the wider internet for weeks. Other footage shot by Jalali shows a lifeless bird and crab covered in oil, while a man holds up a dead swordfish.

"Poor birds, look how they are stuck in oil. Look at

the herd of dolphins. Poor things come to the surface to breathe, but they swallow oil," Jalali narrates in the footage. "Look what they did to this island.

Look what they have done. The corpses of fish are coming to the surface one by one." Photographs taken on April 10 from an Airbus DS Pleiades Neo, a high-resolution optical satellite, and analysed by *The Associated Press* on Tuesday show the fire still burning at the refinery two days after the attack. (AP)

Manoj Sharma sworn new Chief Justice of Nepal SC

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
Kathmandu

Manoj Kumar Sharma was on Tuesday sworn in as the new Chief Justice of Nepal Supreme Court. His name was unanimously endorsed by the Parliamentary hearing committee and forwarded to President Ramchandra Paudel on Tuesday.

Paudel then appointed Sharma as the chief justice of the Himalayan nation's apex court. Sharma was recommended for the position by the Constitutional Council headed by Prime Minister Balendra Shah on May 7. The position of the chief justice had remained vacant since the retirement of Prakash



Man Singh Raut in April. Senior Justice Sapana Pradhan was steering the judiciary in the capacity of acting Chief Justice for the time being. President Paudel, in a special ceremony held at the President's Office, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the newly appointed Chief Justice Sharma. (PTI)

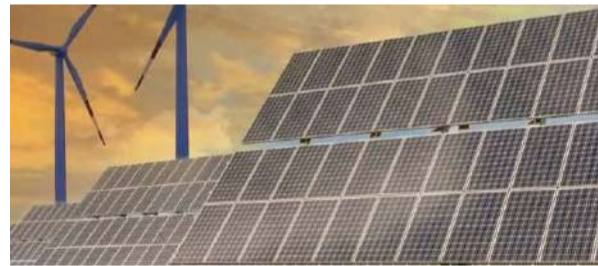
UK, Denmark launch \$300m Indian green energy project

ADITI KHANNA London

The UK's development finance institution and a Danish global fund manager on Tuesday launched a project to support India's clean energy transition.

British International Investment (BII) joined hands with Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners (CIP) for the 300-million-dollar renewable energy platform, North Star, that will invest across solar, wind and hybrid as well as storage projects.

BII and CIP, through their Growth Markets Fund II (GMF II), will each commit up to \$150 million for the platform designed to address the funding gap required to build and scale renewable projects in India



and crowd in additional private capital.

This marks the first investment made through British Climate Partners (BCP), a 1.1 billion pounds climate finance initiative launched by BII last month as part of its new five-year strategy.

"British Climate Partners is about mobilising institutional capital at scale to accelerate the energy transition in developing Asian economies,

including India, where the need and opportunity are greatest," said Rohit Anand, BII's MD and Head of Asia Infrastructure.

"Building on BII's extensive experience in both energy investing and India, the launch of North Star reflects the country's strong renewable growth, supportive policy momentum, and the role catalytic capital can play

in delivering clean power at pace," he said. North Star is expected to generate more than 4 million MWh of clean energy annually and avoid about 4 million tonnes of carbon emissions each year.

Peter Jannik Sjøntoft, Partner in CIP's Growth Markets Funds, said: "India is one of the most important renewable energy markets globally. Partnering with British International Investment allows us to build on our existing India investments and combine deep

local insight with global investment expertise to accelerate project delivery and support the build-out of renewable energy infrastructure at scale."

BII's British Climate Partners (BCP) is designed to mobilise large-scale institutional capital into climate solutions across fast-growing and coal-dependent economies in Asia, including India, as well as the Philippines, Indonesia, Vietnam and other South-East Asian countries. (PTI)

Security officer found dead at Indian mission in Bangladesh

ASHOKE RAJ New Delhi

A security protocol officer working at the Assistant High Commission of India in Chattogram in Bangladesh was found dead inside the mission premises on Tuesday morning, according to police officials.

The deceased was identified as Narendra, 35, a resident of Haryana, India, and son of Ram Niwas. He had been serving as a security protocol officer at the Indian mission located in the Khulshi area of Chattogram. Officials said embassy staff became concerned after receiving no response from Narendra's room. Following



repeated unsuccessful attempts to contact him, local police were informed.

Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) Commissioner Hasan Md Showkat Ali said law enforcement officers later recovered the body and prepared an inquest report before sending it to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

According to police, no visible signs of injury or abnormalities were initially found on the body. Authorities stated that the exact cause of death would be determined after the post-mortem examination is completed. CMP Deputy Commissioner (North Zone) Amirul Islam said an unnatural death case would be filed in connection with the incident.

After the autopsy process is finished, the body will be handed over to officials of the Assistant High Commission of India. Police are continuing to investigate the circumstances surrounding the death.

UK's Police appoints Indian-origin finance expert to bolster investments

ADITI KHANNA London

The Metropolitan Police on Tuesday appointed Hardev Virdee as the new Chief Strategy and Investment Officer of the UK's largest police force.

The Indian-origin finance expert is expected to play a pivotal role in shaping the Met Police's future, leading its long-term strategy, investment and commercial functions. Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley welcomed Virdee's deep experience as the police force works to close a "significant financial gap". "I am delighted to be joining the Met at such an important time," said Virdee, who has previously worked in the National Health Service



Hardev Virdee

(NHS). "Having worked in the NHS for many years, I am excited to continue my commitment to public service. This is a challenging role, and I look forward to working closely with colleagues and partners to deliver the Met's vision and bolster investments and resource to support the

Met's frontline policing," he said. As Group Chief Financial Officer at Barts Health NHS Trust, Virdee is credited with playing an instrumental role in putting the health trust's finances on a sustainable footing for the long-term, including steadily reducing their deficit and delivering a financial recovery plan that balanced the books in 2025-26.

LOST & FOUND
I, S SUDHAKAR S/O Late M.T. Selvam R/o Flat No 311 D, PKT C MV 2, DELHI, 110091 HAVE LOST MY ALLOTMENT LETTER, LEASE DEED, POSSESSION SLIP, LETTER ACCEPTING REQUEST FOR CONVERSION, ELECTRICITY WATER NOC BY DDA AND ORS ARE MISSING. I have reported the loss of these documents vide PCR No.162766/2026 dated 13.03.2026 at P.S. Pandav Nagar, Delhi. EARLIER MY FATHER USED TO RETAIN THEM. HE Expired on 08.07.2025 UNABLE TO TRACE THEM.

PUBLIC NOTICE
My client Sh. Shivam Sharma R/o H.No. A-102, Sector 47; Noida, U.P., hereby clarify that he is working only as a Cricket Coach with carpadium India, Sector-10, Noida and Carpadium Cricket Academy, Sector-74, Noida, Near Noth Eye Building, and providing cricket coaching to children on independent basis. Ankit Tripathi R/o H.No.18, D-Block, Sector-36, Noida was independently involved in scrap-related and financial dealings in the market. Many persons, including himself, have pending payments against him. My client have no concern, connection or responsibility regarding any investment, borrowing, financial transaction or liability undertaken by Ankit Tripathi. My client association is limited only to cricket coaching and academy related work.
Ranjana Singh (Advocate)
Ch. No.G-514, Karkardooma Court, Shahdara, Delhi-110032

NORTHERN RAILWAY
NOTICE INVITING TENDER

| | |
|--|---|
| Name of Work and its location | 79-SRDEE-G-DLI-2026-27 Electrical work in connection with "Provision of booster pump with associated electrical work for watering facilities at TKJ in c/w train shifting from NSLS to TKJ station". |
| Approx Cost of the works | Rs. 59,31,279.00 |
| Address of the office | Sr. Div. Elect. Engineer/General, DRM Office, Delhi Division, Northern Railway, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055 |
| Earnest Money | Rs. 1,18,600.00 |
| Last Date & Time of Submission of Tender | 10.06.2026, 16:00 Hrs. |
| Opening of Tender | 10.06.2026, 16:00 Hrs. |
| Website & Notice Board | www.ireps.gov.in & Sr. Divt. Elect. Engineer/General, New Delhi. |

1680/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

MODI RUBBER LIMITED
CIN: L25199UP1971PLC003392
Registered Office: Modinagar - 201204; Dist. Ghaziabad, (U.P.)
Corporate Office: 4-7C, DDA Shopping Centre, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025; Website: www.modirubberlimited.com
Email: investors@modigroup.net; Phone: +91-11-47107398, 41619905

NOTICE

Pursuant to regulation 29 of SEBI (LODR) 2015, Notice is hereby given that a 313rd Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company is scheduled to be held on Friday on 29th day of May, 2026 at 12.00 Noon at Corporate Office: 4-7/C, DDA Shopping Centre, 4th Floor, New Friends Colony, New Delhi-110025 to inter-alia approve the following:

- Audited Standalone and Consolidated Financial Statements along with the Auditor Reports thereon of the Company for the year ended on March 31, 2026.
- Review Financial Statements of Subsidiary Companies/Joint Venture Companies for the year ended March 31, 2026.

For Modi Rubber Limited
Sd/-
(S K Bajpai)
Place : New Delhi
Date : 19.05.2026
Head - Legal & Co. Secretary

The Pioneer Classified
CHANGE OF NAME

I, Vipin Kumar Gupta, S/O Late Shri Gopal Agarwal, R/O Street No.13, Brahmपुरi Delhi-110053, Have Changed My Name Vipin Kumar Gupta S/O Late Shri Gopal Agarwal To Vipin Kumar Aggarwal S/O Late Shri Gopal Aggarwal For All Future Purposes.
PD(1346)C

I, Anuj Yadav S/o Manoj Kumar Yadav R/o F 33, Janta Flat Swaran Nagar Greater Noida, G B Nagar, have changed my father name from Manoj Yadav to Manoj Kumar Yadav for all future purposes.
PD(1347)C

I, Anjuman, W/o. Rashid Ahmad, R/o. G-4/1, Flat No.502, Abul Fazal Enclave-2, Shaheen Bagh, Jamia Nagar, New Delhi-110025, have changed my name from Anjuman to Anjum Begum for all future purposes.
PD(1348)C

I, Shushila Kumari, W/o. Raj Kumar, R/o. 9/365, Khichri Pur, East Delhi-110091, declare that my name has been wrongly written in my 10th class certificate as Sushela Devi instead of my actual name, Shushila Kumari.
PD(1349)C

Putin arrives in China for talks with Xi after Trump's visit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Beijing

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing on Tuesday night on a two-day state visit for talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, days after US leader Donald Trump travelled to China. Putin was received by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi at the airport.

Ahead of his arrival, Putin said Russia-China relations have reached "a truly unprecedented level."

In a video address on Tuesday delivered before his state visit to China, Putin noted that "regular mutual visits and Russia-China top-



level talks are an important and integral part of our joint efforts to promote the entire range of relations between our two countries and unlock their truly limitless potential." The special nature of Russia-China rela-

tions is reflected in the atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust, a commitment to pursuing win-win and equitable cooperation, conducting respectful dialogue, and supporting each other on matters affect-

ing the core interests of both countries, including protection of sovereignty and state unity, he said. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Xi and Putin will exchange views on bilateral ties, cooperation in various fields, as well as international and regional issues of mutual interest.

This is Putin's 25th visit to China, foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun told a media briefing here on Monday, emphasising close strategic ties between Russia and China as well as strong friendship and rapport between the two leaders. "The two sides will take this visit as an opportu-

nity to continue to promote the development of China-Russia relations to a higher level, which will inject greater stability and positive energy into the world," Guo said. Since Xi took power in 2012, the two leaders have met dozens of times, frequently referring to each other as "dear friend" and emphasising mutual trust.

Their ties have strengthened through cooperation in trade, energy, security, and efforts to counter Western influence and observers view the Xi-Putin relationship as one of the most significant political partnerships in contemporary global affairs.

They have met dozens of times, frequently referring to each other as "dear friend" and emphasising mutual trust. Their ties have strengthened through cooperation in trade, energy, security, and efforts to counter Western influence and observers view the Xi-Putin relationship as one of the most significant political partnerships in contemporary global affairs.



When flexibility becomes a barrier: The ground reality of NEP 2020



ANANYA TIWARI

In any rational education system, a single examination would be weighed against years of sustained academic performance. But under the present framework, that one score becomes decisive. Everything else — the years of hard work, the consistency, the academic rigor — suddenly becomes irrelevant.

This is not a hypothetical concern. It is the lived reality of many students today, particularly those whose lives are shaped by circumstances beyond their control. As the daughter of transferable civil servants, frequent relocations disrupted my academic preparation and created uncertainties that no centralised examination system accounts for.

When I filled out the CUET PG form, I had no idea that my family would be transferred to Delhi later that year. At the time, I was pursuing a BA in English Literature with a minor in History at Mumbai University. Had I known I would need to pursue higher studies in Delhi, I would have chosen differently while applying for CUET PG. But life rarely unfolds according to administrative timelines.

Today, despite having studied History extensively as a minor subject during my undergraduate degree, despite excellent academic records, and despite colleges informally appreciating my credentials, I am being denied admission to MA History programmes at the University of Delhi. The reason is astonishingly simple: I did not



appear for the History paper in CUET PG. My academic record carries no meaningful weight. My years of study are secondary to a single centralised test.

This raises a larger and uncomfortable question: what exactly is the value of academic performance anymore? Why do universities calculate CGPAs, encourage interdisciplinary learning, and celebrate holistic education if none of it matters at the point of admission? A student may maintain a stellar 9+ CGPA across three years, yet still be denied the opportunity to pursue higher studies because of one procedural technicality. The contradic-

tion becomes even sharper when the NEP itself repeatedly speaks about multidisciplinary flexibility and academic freedom.

For students from transferable families — especially children of government employees, armed forces personnel, and civil servants — the problem becomes even more severe. Every transfer potentially disrupts university systems, credit structures, registration processes, and academic continuity. Different universities follow different credit frameworks under the NEP.

Shifting institutions often means navigating bureaucratic chaos,

unresolved equivalence issues, delayed registrations, and administrative limbo. The vision may sound elegant on paper, but the implementation remains fragmented and deeply student-unfriendly.

The most troubling aspect of this system is its growing dependence on centralised testing as the sole gatekeeper of educational opportunity. The CUET PG has effectively become a once-a-year bottleneck for access to prestigious institutions like Delhi University. One examination now decides academic futures irrespective of long-term merit or intellectual capability. This approach may simplify administra-

tion, but it does not necessarily improve education. In contrast, universities like the University of Mumbai still place significant emphasis on cumulative academic performance and departmental evaluation. Such systems recognise that education is not merely about performance under exam pressure but about sustained intellectual engagement over time. Colleges should ideally function as spaces that welcome learners, not institutions that mechanically filter them out.

This becomes particularly problematic in the humanities and social sciences, where knowledge cannot always be meaningfully reduced to objective multiple-choice questions. Literature, philosophy, history, and political thought thrive on interpretation, nuance, and critical reasoning. Yet students are increasingly evaluated through standardised MCQ-based examinations designed primarily for administrative convenience. In the process, subjective understanding is being sacrificed for mechanical efficiency.

At a time when artificial intelligence is rapidly mastering objective tasks and standardised information processing, human creativity, interpretation, and critical thought should become more valuable — not less. Instead, the education system appears to be moving in the opposite direction. Students are being forced into rigid evaluative structures that privilege speed and

conformity over depth and intellectual individuality. None of this is to deny that reform in education was necessary. The older system had flaws, and the NEP does contain several commendable ideas, including broader curricular exposure and attempts at interdisciplinary learning. But policy cannot be judged merely by vision statements or official rhetoric. It must ultimately be evaluated by how it affects ordinary students on the ground.

And for many students today, the transition has come at a heavy cost. An education system should expand possibilities, not narrow them. Universities should not operate as scarcity-producing institutions where deserving students are excluded because they failed to tick the correct procedural box at the correct moment. Seeking admission is not equivalent to applying for a job.

Students enter universities to learn, evolve, and discover their intellectual direction. Systems that leave no room for unpredictability, mobility, or human error risk becoming detached from the realities of student life itself. The NEP promised flexibility.

But unless institutions begin valuing sustained academic performance alongside entrance examinations that promise risks remaining little more than an administrative slogan.

Ananya is pursuing English Literature in Mumbai University

CM Himanta inaugurates Assam Cricket Museum

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday inaugurated the Assam Cricket Museum established within the premises of the Barsapara ACA Stadium in Guwahati and also unveiled a documentary titled "The Golden Innings: Legacy of Assam Cricket."

It may be noted that the museum has been set up to preserve the glorious history of the Assam Cricket Association, important archival records, and memorable moments from different phases of Assam's cricketing journey.

The museum stands as a proud symbol of the rich legacy of cricket in Assam. From the pre-independence era to the present day, it commemorates the pioneers and distinguished personalities who shaped Assam cricket and reflects



the deep respect and admiration of the people of Assam towards these celebrated cricketers.

The museum is expected to inspire the younger generation by acquainting them with the long and eventful journey of cricket in Assam.

Meanwhile, the documentary beautifully captures the growth of cricket in the state over the decades, highlight-

ing the contributions of eminent cricketers and several landmark moments through rare photographs and detailed narration. The documentary serves as a unique record of the illustrious journey of the Assam Cricket Association since its establishment in 1948. The film has been directed by Samujit Kashyap.

Chief Minister Dr. Sarma expressed his appreciation to the office-bearers and well-wishers of the Assam Cricket Association for undertaking these two significant initiatives.

BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia, Assam Cricket Association President and MLA Taranga Gogoi, along with several other distinguished guests were present on the occasion.

Muthoot Finance ranked India's No 1 most trusted financial services brand for 10th consecutive year

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kochi

Muthoot Finance Ltd, India's largest gold loan NBFC, has been ranked as the No 1 Most Trusted Brand in the Financial Services category in TRA Research's Brand Trust Report 2026, marking its 10th consecutive year of achieving this distinction.

The TRA Brand Trust Report is one of India's most comprehensive syndicated studies on consumer trust, evaluating brands across sectors based on a robust framework that combines both rational and emotional drivers of trust, ultimately influencing buying intent.

This continued recognition reflects Muthoot Finance's strong legacy of trust, customer-first approach, and consistent focus on delivering



reliable, transparent, and accessible financial solutions to millions of customers across India.

As India's largest gold loan NBFC, the company has built deep-rooted relationships across urban and rural markets, supported by its extensive consolidated branch network of over 7,500 branches and presence across 29 States and union territories, reinforcing its position as a dependable and widely accessible finan-

cial partner. The company now serves over 2.5 lakh customers every day across India, reflecting its deep reach and strong trust among households.

Commenting on the achievement, Alexander George Muthoot, Joint Managing Director, Muthoot Finance, said, "Being recognised as India's most trusted financial services brand for the 10th consecutive year is a matter of immense pride and responsibility for us. This milestone is a reflection of the unwavering trust our customers have placed in us across generations, and it inspires us to continue raising the bar in everything we do."

"At Muthoot Finance, trust is not just a value but the foundation of our business. We have consistently focused on delivering transparent,

customer-centric financial solutions while embracing innovation to meet evolving customer needs. As we move forward, we remain committed to strengthening this trust, expanding access to credit, and empowering individuals and businesses across India to achieve their financial goals," he added.

As a pioneer in formalising the gold loan segment in India, Muthoot Finance has played a pivotal role in transforming gold loans from an informal borrowing option into a structured, transparent, and widely accepted financial product. This recognition further reinforces how gold loans are increasingly being perceived as a smart, reliable, and trustworthy credit solution, particularly for households seeking quick and secure access to funds.

DAILY SUDOKU

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

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.



SOLUTION (19.5.26)

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

DOUBLE CROSSWORD WEDNESDAY | MAY 20, 2026

| | | | | | | | |
|----|----|---|---|----|---|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
| | | | | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | 11 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 13 | 14 | | | | | 15 | 16 |
| | | | | | | | |
| 17 | | | | 18 | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 20 | 21 | | | | | 22 | 23 |
| | | | | | | | |
| 24 | | | | 25 | | | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 27 | | | | | | 28 | |
| | | | | | | | |
| 30 | | | | | | | 31 |

ACROSS

- Unhappy about a chap not getting a hot meal (5)
- Many a well-ventilated shop (5)
- Ragtime jazz from a fictional character (7)
- In the home, the French make an appeal (5)
- Briefly, for instance, a sop?(5)
- Tough material to work in (5)
- The parson, good fellow, failed to follow suit (7)
- What a parliamentarian becomes when he goes out East? (3)
- Work two ways, to be honest (4)
- Dignified way to get an appointment (6)

DOWN

- Unaware that there's a new sale for an old record (6)
- Female with a very big mouth (6)
- Parent getting up to a certain duplicity (3)
- Looked a bit odd about a broken leg (5)
- Gadgets one frees of faults? (7)
- Little article on a cat (4)
- The din at tennis? (6)
- Exclude from trade barriers (5)
- Searches under ground? (5)
- In boxing matches, one may include her! (5)

- Being dishonest, they're obviously not on the level (5)
- Stagger around like old Steptoe? (6)
- Hurt more than a little (4)
- Spring in Spain (3)
- Can they cast with geometric precision? (7)
- Like strong meat? (5)
- He's good enough to organise a fair for mid March (5)
- Musical lines from "14 Down" (5)
- Eradicate spronging? (4,3)
- Separate ideas, possibly (5)
- Are its players often on the green side? (5)
- Her mount is out of line (5)
- Dogs discovered wild by Speke? (5)
- Look out for a measure that's thorny (5)
- Dream always in part of a series (7)
- A prose product of dramatic nature (6)
- To bolt wildly, being sozzled (6)
- Go, devious varlet! (6)
- In search of singular desserts (5)
- Mistress Overdone, for instance, is wicked out West! (4)
- Bus coming up from down under (3)

| | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| ACROSS | 28, H-ish | DOWN | 22, Pills |
| 9, At any rate | 29, Stu-pid | 31, Crosses | 23, Snooks |
| 10, Impair-ines | 30, Disc-overs | 32, Ra-ti-ng | 25, Gathersway |
| 12, Hall (hale) | 33, Me-re-ly | 34, Dis-covers | 26, Bad |
| 13, Reve-a-l | 35, Sitter | 35, Sitter | 27, Shadows |
| 14, Beeline | 36, Astern | 36, Astern | 30, Pe-s-tered |
| 15, Tiger lily | 37, I-MP-Ed-e | 37, I-MP-Ed-e | 32, Sincure |
| 17, Garni-she'd | | | |
| 18, Curtail | | | |
| 20, Spells | | | |
| 21, Open | | | |
| 24, Be-sought | | | |
| 26, Boringly | | | |

IIT Madras BS Degree opens admissions for next batch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) BS Degree Programmes have opened admissions for the 2026 academic cycle, with May 31, 2026 being the last date to apply. Designed to make high-quality IIT education accessible to a wider and more diverse learner base, the programmes are open to anyone who has completed Class 12, with no age restrictions.

Offered as four distinct programmes, namely, BS in Data Science and Applications, BS in Electronic Systems, BS in Management and Data Science, and BS in Aeronautics



and Space Technology, the degrees are uniquely structured to be pursued either as standalone qualifications or alongside a regular college degree.

The programmes are delivered primarily online, with in-person examinations conducted at centres across India to ensure academic rigour and flexibility. Learners can

progress at their own pace and benefit from multiple exit options, including certificate, diploma, or degree pathways, depending on their academic and career goals.

Students and parents interested in applying can visit the official portal for more details. With the application deadline approaching on 31st May 2026, interested

learners can apply through <https://study.iitm.ac.in>

Speaking about the programmes, Prof. Prathap Haridoss, Dean (Academic Courses), IIT Madras, said, "These BS Degree Programmes are designed to give students flexibility without compromising on quality. We are seeing a growing need for learners to build strong foundations in data, technology, and interdisciplinary thinking, regardless of their primary degree. This programme allows students to access IIT Madras-level learning while pursuing other academic or professional paths, thereby significantly enhancing their career opportunities."

Almawakeing Foundation, Dr Shroff Hospital empower 26 visually impaired with AI smart vision glasses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Almawakeing Foundation, in collaboration with Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital, has organised a special empowerment programme at Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital under the Foundation's "Enable Programme", which supports persons with disabilities through technology-based assistive solutions.

As part of this programme, 26 visually impaired beneficiaries have received AI-enabled smart vision glasses that assist with mobility, reading support, object recognition, navigation, and independent living through advanced assistive technology.

The event was attended by Dr Alma Chopra, founder of the Almawakeing Foundation, motivational speaker and life coach & Dr Shroff's Charity Eye



Hospital officials, and other distinguished guests. The event had beneficiary interactions and live demonstrations of the AI-enabled Smart Vision Glasses.

The devices offer features such as navigation support, reading assistance, facial recognition, currency recognition, calling support, emergency SOS, voice assistance, and surroundings detection, helping visually impaired individuals live with greater inde-

pendence, safety, and confidence. Representatives from the Almawakeing Foundation share that the initiative aligns with the foundation's vision of creating meaningful social impact through its five pillars and ensuring that no individual is left behind due to physical limitations.

Dr Alma Chopra said, "This program is to build accessibility, inclusion & innovation." Further, Dr Umang said this programme is not only to

provide visual aid but also to provide dignity to such beneficiaries. Almawakeing Foundation & Dr Shroff's Charity Eye Hospital continue to contribute towards accessible eye care and community service, supporting initiatives that improve the quality of life for visually impaired individuals across India.

This initiative reflects the commitment of both organisations to building an inclusive society where technology becomes a tool for dignity, confidence, accessibility, and equal opportunity.

The event was witnessed by Dr Alma Chopra, Almawakeing Foundation; Vishal Masih, COO; Anil Verma, Associate Director, Almawakeing Foundation; Dr Umang, CEO, SCEH; Shantanu, COO, SCEH; Dr Sonia Srivastava, In-charge low vision clinic, SCEH; Dr Nasim Akhtar & Senior Faculty Low Vision, SCEH.

BRIEFLY

Praggnanandhaa draws with Wesley So, stays joint second



Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa played out his fourth draw, signing peace with American Wesley So in the fifth round of the Super Chess Classic, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

On a day without any decisive games, Germany's Vincent Keymer maintained his half-point lead, moving up to 3.5 points. Praggnanandhaa shares the second spot with Dutch duo of Anish Giri and Jorden Van Foreest.

France's Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Wesley So share fifth place on 2.5 points each, while Fabiano Caruana of the United States and World Championship challenger Javokhir Sindarov of Uzbekistan trail closely on two points, with the latter having one game in hand. Romanian Bogdan-Daniel Deac is ninth spot on 1.5 points, a half point ahead of Alireza Firouzja of France. In the other games of the day, Keymer drew with the black pieces against Giri, Vachier-Lagrave shared the point with van Foreest, Sindarov drew with Firouzja, and Deac held Caruana to a draw.

Neymar picked for Brazil's WC squad despite injury



Neymar made Brazil's World Cup squad, a selection many local analysts and former footballers deemed unlikely only days ago. The striker will appear at his fourth World Cup.

The 34-year-old Neymar is Brazil's all-time top goal-scorer with 79 but has struggled to return to top fitness since he tore his left ACL in October 2023. He's played eight matches for Santos this year with four goals and two assists.

"He has improved his fitness, he will be an important player in this World Cup," Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti said at a press conference in Rio de Janeiro on Monday.

The coach added he preferred experienced players for some spots in his squad, including Neymar.

"He can still improve his fitness until the first match of the World Cup," Ancelotti said.

"He has experience in this kind of competition, the love of our group, he can create a better environment in this group." Shortly before Ancelotti's squad was announced, Neymar changed his Instagram bio in a revealing way; he had only Santos as a reference of where he is currently playing and added Brazil to it.

Kohli highest grosser in IPL

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Virat Kohli has emerged as the highest earner in the 18-year-old IPL's history, grossing ₹230 crore from his association with Royal Challengers Bengaluru's association, as per a report published on Tuesday.

The combined valuation of all 10 Indian Premier League franchises stands at ₹1.63 lakh crore, the report by Fanatic Sports and Hurun has said.

The Shah Rukh Khan-owned Kolkata Knight Riders leads with a valuation of over ₹19,200 crore, followed by the Ambanis-owned Mumbai Indians at ₹18,400 crore and Chennai Super Kings at ₹18,400 crore, the report said.

Interestingly, the average valuation of an IPL team is projected to jump to USD 15 billion by 2032 from the present USD 1.8 billion, the report, which comes amid a heightened interest in deal-making among franchisees, said. "India is standing at the base of that curve right now. Talent is being manufactured at the grassroots. Capital is arriving at the



top. A billion-plus consumers are about to have the income to participate in between," Hurun India's Founder and Chief Researcher Anas Rahman Junaid said. Rohit Sharma

with earnings of ₹227.2 crore and MS Dhoni at ₹200 crore follow Kohli in all-time IPL earnings, the report said. In contrast, among women cricketers, Smriti Mandhana tops Women's

Premier League with cumulative earnings at ₹13.7 crore till now and the top-10 women players have earned just ₹90 crore till now. In the case of hockey, the country's national sport, the contrasts are even starker.

Defender Harmanpreet Singh commands the highest salary in the Hockey India League with a salary of ₹78 lakh, followed by the ₹72 lakh grossed by Abhishek Nain, a forward, and ₹70 lakh by midfielder Hardik Singh, the report said.

Hockey, however, scores on delivering young talent with players such as 14-year-old Ketan Kushwaha and two 15-year-olds, Purvi Ashish Tani and Rahul Yadav, the report said.

Looked at from a geographical perspective, the sport which has won India big laurels in Olympics, also wins from a grassroots relevance perspective, the report said, pointing out how a single town in Odisha (Sundargarh) contributes 12 athletes in the list. The overall list tracks 1,323 elite athletes from 504 cities, 181 states/provinces, and 53 countries across 59 teams in six leagues across sports.

MI's De Kock, Raj Bawa ruled out of remainder of IPL season



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Mumbai Indians wicketkeeper-batter Quinton de Kock and pace-bowling all-rounder Raj Angad Bawa were on Tuesday ruled out of the remainder of the IPL season due to injuries.

Already eliminated from the playoff race, Mumbai Indians have two matches left this season — against Kolkata Knight Riders here on Wednesday and Rajasthan Royals on Sunday.

De Kock has been ruled out with a tendon injury in his left wrist, which he sustained ahead of MI's home game against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Bawa, meanwhile, suffered a ligament tear in his right

thumb during MI's previous match against Punjab Kings.

De Kock played three matches this season after beginning his campaign with an unbeaten 112 against Punjab Kings on April 16.

He last featured against Chennai Super Kings on April 23 before missing the SRH clash after being hit on the wrist during practice.

Bawa made three appearances for MI this season.

"Both Quinton and Raj Bawa will continue their rehab in their respective homes, with support and guidance from the Mumbai Indians medical team to help them return to play as soon as possible," MI said in a statement.

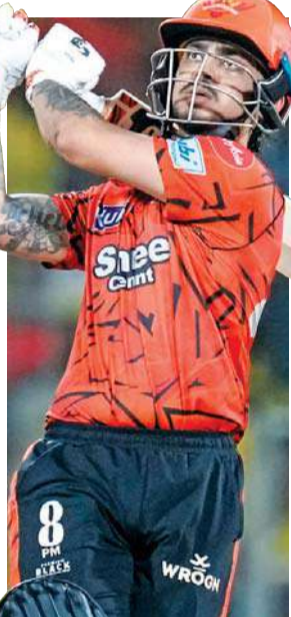
I was feeling blessed, says Ishan Kishan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA <
■ Chennai

Sunrisers Hyderabad top-order batter Ishan Kishan on Monday said he was "blessed from the upstairs" as the family of his bereaved cousin who lost his sister recently watched him play a match-winning knock in the IPL match against Chennai Super Kings here.

Kishan smashed 70 off 47 balls to help SRH chase down the target of 181 for a five-wicket win against CSK and qualify for the IPL play-offs.

"I would just say one thing. Sometimes I feel it's also about motivation, and for me, my motivation was today, my cousin is just standing there. He lost his sister. It was a tough time in our family and they are watching the match for the first time here. So I just wanted to finish the game for them," Kishan said at the post-match presentation.



"I'm glad they were here to witness this innings, and I was able to finish this game. I was just feeling blessed from upstairs. I had that sense of power, like, yes, I can do it if I'm there for the team. We will

qualify, especially. He'll be happy about it."

He said he knew the chase of 181 would be tough on the Chepauk wicket.

"When I was keeping, I felt the wicket was not easy — especially when the spinners were bowling, and the slower balls working really well.

I had to just play till the last over. It was just about being there and believing in yourself. You cannot doubt yourself at any time. Being in the middle, it's difficult for the bowlers to get it right every time.

"We both (me and Heinrich Klaasen) were just playing our shots," he added when asked what transpired between them in the 75-run stand for the third wicket that set up the win.

SRH captain Pat Cummins, who took three wickets for 28 in the CSK innings, lauded the duo of Kishan and Klaasen for setting up the win.

Brazilian artisan crafts replica World Cup trophies for love of sport, money

ELEONORE HUGHES
■ Rio de Janeiro

Brazilian soccer fan and former metallurgist Jarbas Meneghini Carlini has been combining his love for the sport with his business, making replicas of the FIFA World Cup trophy in his workshop in western Rio de Janeiro.

After watching Brazil's then-captain Dunga triumphantly lift the trophy following the team's fourth World Cup win in 1994, Carlini resolved to create his own. "They weren't for sale. So I decided to make the trophies myself. And today, I'm a trophy craftsman," he said, from his workshop in Campo Grande.

The 58-year-old makes the replica World Cup trophies by hand from molds and finishes them off with paint. They range in size and price from about \$1 to \$100.

Carlini sells them to fans



and tourists at the nearby Maracana soccer stadium. But he has also gifted the trophies to stars including Pele, Jorginho and Ronaldinho and sent them across Brazil and around the world.

To explain the emotion so often evident on his clients' faces when they pose for photos with his work, Carlini points to the trophy's meaning.

"Everyone wants to be a world champion, everyone wants to be the best," Carlini said. Like the game's original most-coveted accolade,

Carlini's trophies depict two stylized human figures reaching upward to support a globe. But his are made from plaster, rather than 18-carat gold.

"Yet it brings the same sense of wonder, as if it were made of gold," Carlini said. Over the years, the artisan has branched out, and now creates replicas of the former World Cup trophy used between 1930 and 1970, the Copa Libertadores trophy but also golden balls, gloves and boots.

Arsenal on the verge of Premier League title after beating Burnley

MATTIAS KAREN ■ London

Arsenal closed in on a first Premier League title in 22 years by seeing out a tense 1-0 win over Burnley on Monday in its penultimate game of the campaign, thanks to Kai Havertz's first-half goal.

The result means second-placed Manchester City must end Bournemouth's 16-game unbeaten run on Tuesday to take the title fight into the final weekend. Even so, Arsenal will be crowned champion if it beats Crystal Palace away on Sunday. It would be Arsenal's first league title since 2004, when the "Invincibles" went unbeaten under Arsene Wenger.

Current manager Mikel Arteta is two wins away from delivering the



club's greatest ever season as Arsenal also plays Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League

final on May 30.

"It's been an amazing season so far. We've got one big one left here (in the

league) and then the Champions League final," Arsenal captain Martin Odegaard told the Emirates crowd in an on-field interview. "Just a little bit to go now and we're going to give it all. We have to keep going." Fittingly, the goal against already relegated Burnley came from a corner — the source of so many crucial Arsenal goals this season — as Havertz rose highest to head in a delivery from Bukayo Saka in the 37th.

It was only Havertz's second league goal of an injury-ravaged season, but he was given the start up front ahead of Viktor Gyokeres by Arteta. "I had a feeling that he had to start," Arteta said. "The way they set up, I think he could be really difficult to handle. And he's shown that." Havertz was fortunate

not to be sent off when he received only a yellow card in the 67th for a lunging studs-up tackle from behind on Lesley Ugochukwu, a decision that was upheld after a VAR review. While Arsenal goalkeeper David Raya never had a save to make against a toothless Burnley side, the lead never felt completely comfortable as a second goal never came for the host.

But Arsenal held on through nearly 10 minutes of added time to take another step toward ending its decades-long title drought.

"There is one to go unless something beautiful happens tomorrow night," Arteta said, adding he will be "the biggest ever" Bournemouth fan during the game against Man City.

Billie Jean King, 82, earns a college degree



BETH HARRISAP ■ Los Angeles

Billie Jean King raised her right arm in triumph. Not for another victory on the tennis court. This time, she was celebrating earning a college degree 65 years after she first took classes.

The 82-year-old sports and equality icon received her bachelor's of art in history from Cal State Los Angeles on Monday, walking across the stage in hot pink glasses and royal blue sneakers at the Shrine Auditorium with about 6,000 others in the Class of 2026. "It's never too late, whatever age you are, whatever your abilities are, go for it if you want it," she said afterward.

King's black gown was accented with a gold graduation stole personalized by a friend. One side included her initials and the letters G.O.A.T., referring to greatest of all time. A multi-colored tennis racket was embroidered on the other side.

"It means a lot more to me than I thought," she said afterward. "I am so glad I did it. My hope is that one other person will go back to school." King announced two years ago that she would work on completing her degree at the school where her bronze statue stands

outside the physical education building. She's the first member of her immediate family to graduate from college, similar to the majority of her fellow graduates. The school has a predominantly Hispanic and Latino student body. "Being a student-athlete didn't mean I had a scholarship," she told the crowd. "Financial support wasn't available to women in 1961, even though my friends Arthur Ashe and Stan Smith were both scholarship students on the men's teams at UCLA and USC." King committed to working toward equality and inclusion for all. "We can never understand inclusion unless we've been excluded," she said.

At one point, a screaming baby in the balcony interrupted King. "Is it that bad?" she asked, as the crowd laughed. She punctuated her speech with a cry of "Si se puede!" The audience erupted in cheers and applause to the phrase meaning "Yes you can!" joined by student athletes and the school mascot, King hit autographed tennis balls into the crowd. She initially enrolled at the campus five miles east of downtown in 1961, the same year she won the first of her record-tying 20 Wimbledon titles, this one in women's doubles.

Atlanta bracing to host 8 World Cup matches

MAURA CAREYAP ■ Atlanta

Atlanta is bracing to host World Cup fans from around the globe and has something for everyone to enjoy. Visitors should prepare for June and July temperatures averaging nearly 90 degrees, but the city known for its sports culture and Southern hospitality is ready to host one of the world's largest sporting events.

Mercedes-Benz Stadium, renamed Atlanta Stadium in accordance with FIFA regulations, will host eight matches, starting with group-stage matches in mid-June and ending with a semifinal match on July 15. Landmarks/Places to See: Piedmont Park is known as the "Central Park of the South." Located in midtown, the park boasts nearly 200 acres of green space, walking trails, recreational sport facilities and a lake with a fishing dock.

Ponce City Market is a must-visit for shopping and restaurants ranging from Italian to Michelin-recognized Indian street food. There are several options for fans looking to escape the heat, including the Georgia Aquarium, World of Coca-Cola, College Football Hall of Fame, Center for Human and Civil Rights, the King



Center and High Museum of Art. Food Scene in Atlanta: The "404" is known for its lemon pepper wings, and in a sea of great options, The Local is a fan favorite. Wings sell out early at this dine-in only spot, so be sure to arrive around the 5 p.m. opening. It's not a trip to the South without some good barbecue, either. Fox Bros Barbecue and Sweet Auburn are both within 20 minutes of the stadium — traffic permitting. Fan Zones: Centennial Olympic Park, constructed for the 1996 Olympic games, will host the FIFA Fan Festival from June 11 to July 19. The free event will feature live match broadcasts, concerts, local food vendors, interactive games and cultural programming.

Transportation Options: Atlanta has a reputation for traffic — and with good reason. The city is also home to MARTA, the nation's ninth-largest public transit system, which offers bus, rail and paratransit services. The SEC District Station drops passengers within a short walk of the stadium. Stadium Tips: The Benz, as local fans know it, is no stranger to hosting soccer matches. Opened in 2017, it is the home of Atlanta United of MLS and the Atlanta Falcons of the NFL. The stadium can accommodate up to 75,000 people with expanded seating for special events. The Benz has hosted several major sporting events, including Super Bowl LIII in 2019 and the 2025 College Football Playoff national championship.

North Korean women's soccer team arrives in South Korea



HYUNG-JIN KIM
■ Seoul (South Korea)

A North Korean women's soccer team arrived in South Korea to compete in a regional tournament, the first visit by North Korean athletes in eight years amid political tensions between the two nations.

A total of 39 players and staff with North Korea's Naegohyang Women's FC arrived at Incheon International Airport, just west of Seoul on Sunday, aboard a plane from China.

They didn't make any comments, though some activists shouted "Welcome! Welcome!"

and citizens used their mobile phones to film their arrival.

The North Korean team will face South Korea's Suwon FC Women on Wednesday in the semifinals of the Asian Football Confederation Women's Champions League in Suwon, a city south of Seoul. The two Koreas have occasionally used sports events to create feel-good moments when relations were amicable. But the latest soccer event won't likely signal any thaw in their long-strained ties, with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un maintaining his confrontational stance against South Korea.



Rishabh Pant dropped from ODI squad

KL RAHUL TO BE SHUBMAN GILL'S DEPUTY FOR TEST TEAM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Guwahati

Flamboyant wicketkeeper-batter Rishabh Pant was on Tuesday removed as vice-captain of the Indian Test squad for the upcoming one-off match against Afghanistan and dropped from the ODI line-up for the ensuing three-match series against the same opponents.

KL Rahul replaced Pant as the vice-captain of the Indian Test team that is being led by Shubman Gill.

Pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah has been expectedly rested from both the Test and ODI assignments as part of his workload management but he will be back for the tour of England later this summer. Senior all-rounder Ravindra

Jadeja has also been rested from the upcoming Test match by the Ajit Agarkar-led national selection committee.

The home assignments against Afghanistan include a one-off Test in Mullanpur starting June 6, followed by three ODIs scheduled from June 14 across Dharamsala, Lucknow, and Chennai.

"Bumrah will be back when we tour England. He is working on his workload," Agarkar told reporters after the selection meeting here.

Spin bowler Manav Suthar and pacer Gurnoor Brar have earned maiden call-ups to the Test squad. Both are teammates at IPL franchise Gujarat Titans, while Prince Yadav is the new

face in the ODI line-up, with Ishan Kishan being the second wicket-keeper.

The Squads:

India's Test squad: Shubman Gill (captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, KL Rahul (vice-captain), Sai Sudharsan, Rishabh Pant, Devdutt Padikkal, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Kuldeep Yadav, Mohammed Siraj, Prasidh Krishna, Manav Suthar, Gurnoor Brar, Harsh Dubey, Dhruv Jurel.

India's ODI squad: Shubman Gill (captain), Shreyas Iyer (vice-captain), Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli, KL Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Hardik Pandya, Nitish Kumar Reddy, Washington Sundar, Harsh Dubey, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Prasidh Krishna, Prince Yadav, Gurnoor Brar.

That was Ishan's best innings, says coach Franklin



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Sunrisers Hyderabad assistant coach James Franklin was effusive in his praise for Ishan Kishan after his match-winning knock in the five-wicket victory over Chennai Super Kings, which secured his team a place in the IPL playoffs.

On a difficult, sluggish pitch that caught the batters off guard and made scoring a stern challenge, Ishan produced a sublime 70 off 47 balls.

His innings not only shifted the momentum decisively but also made run-scoring appear effortless on a difficult surface, which ultimately changing the course of the game.

"Yeah, look, I think Ishan's been brilliant for us this season. He's obviously been terrific for India recently as well. And he sort of just carried that form into this IPL. I'd hazard a guess, probably, if you asked Ishan so far in this year's IPL, that was probably his best innings," said Franklin after SRH's five-wicket win over CSK, a result that significantly dented the five-time champions' hopes this season.

"Just for the situation, the game, the surface, we are used to in the IPL playing on a lot of very flat surfaces that are conducive to power hitting. But today, batters had to craft their innings in a different way."

"And I thought Ishan's innings today was just full of maturity, the way that he assessed what he needed to do and how he needed to do it. And obviously, bat, as deep as he could through the 20 overs." Ishan and Klaassen's (47) 75-run partnership stood out for its composure after early jolts, with Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma falling cheaply. On a sluggish surface that made stroke-making difficult, the duo steadied the innings and calmly negotiated testing conditions to rebuild control.

Sooryavanshi takes Rajasthan Royals closer to play-offs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur

Vaibhav Sooryavanshi continued his evening ritual of leaving spectators spellbound with a breathtaking 38-ball 93 as Rajasthan Royals moved closer to a playoff berth with a one-sided seven-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

The 15-year-old, who is all set to board the flight to Dublin with the Indian senior team next month, was once again unstoppable, clobbering 10 sixes in an extraordinary display of bat speed and razor-sharp hand-eye coordination.

By the time, he missed out on his third IPL century by a mere seven runs, he had ensured Royals will make a meal of what could have been a tricky 221 run chase after Mitchell Marsh's 57-ball-96 had taken LSG to 220 for 5.

And certainly, the icing on the cake was Ian Bishop's line on air, one that could well be



remembered for posterity: "He is ready."

Royals are now on 14 points and would need a win against Mumbai Indians

in their last game to make it to play-off.

If Marsh was muscularity pro-max, Sooryavanshi was all about amazing skill-set

where a leg-spinner's slider delivered at an angle could be dispatched into extra cover stands with disdain.

While Marsh hit poor balls for sixes, Sooryavanshi sent the good ones sailing into the stands. And when it came to poor deliveries, he tortured them.

He is well on his way (53) to break Chris Gayle's (59) record of maximum sixes in a season. He is now 26 runs short of completing 600 runs in the season.

Dhruv Jurel completed the chase with an unbeaten 38-ball 53 but the night unquestionably belonged to the teenage sensation.

Mayank Yadav, the man who burst into the 2024 IPL as India's fastest ever bowler, was dispatched for 29 runs in a single over. The short balls were pulled, the fuller ones were driven and anything with width was flayed.

The drooping shoulder of Prince Yadav, who got his maiden India call-up on the day, said it all.

Trying to stay in the hunter mindset: RCB Director



G UNNIKRISHNAN ■ Bengaluru

Royal Challengers Bengaluru director of cricket Mo Bobat says the defending champions' marauding run in the ongoing IPL is because of a "hunter mindset" which prevented complacency from creeping in after the team's maiden trophy win last year.

RCB was the first team to seal a berth in the knockout stage this year, garnering 18 points. With a game in hand, they will be eager to finish atop the points table. The side has logged nine wins in its 13 matches so far and will be up against Lucknow Super Giants in the final league stage engagement on May 22.

"I didn't want it to feel like we had climbed Mount Everest (winning the title

last year). We wanted to just keep climbing, keep hunting. We've talked with that language a little bit internally, just trying to stay in that hunter mindset," Bobat told a select media gathering as part of the third edition of RCB Innovation Lab's Indian Sports Summit. "For myself and even the senior players, quickly adapting, resetting mindsets and going, right, what are we going after next is really important," he added.

So, how easy was it to inculcate that mindset within the players?

"Most of it is just that psychological shift really, just making sure that people are all aligned and motivated to go through the next thing. Now, sport is quite unforgiving. You win a trophy and very quickly the world moves on.

India squad in good shape for T20 World Cup: Smriti Mandhana



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Unwilling to divulge much about the Indian women's cricket team's preparations for the T20 World Cup next month, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana on Tuesday said all she can reveal is that the players are in good shape for the 12-team tournament. The women's T20 World Cup will be played in England and Wales from June 12 with ODI World Cup winners India set to take on arch-rivals Pakistan in their tournament-opener on June 14.

"The camp has gone well and I would like to keep it at that. I would not like to say any specifics of what we have worked on because we are heading to a World Cup," Mandhana said at a press conference organised by feminine care brand Pee Safe here.

"But what I would say is that all the girls are looking in good shape, they have been practising really well and a lot of hard work has gone behind it," she added. The 15-member Indian squad underwent a training camp at the Centre of Excellence (COE) in Bengaluru and is set to depart for England on May 22 for a three-match T20I series against the hosts before the World Cup.

KKR face must-win test; MI out to spoil party

TAPAN MOHANTA ■ Kolkata

Their campaign hanging by a thread, Kolkata Knight Riders will have no option but to go all out against an already-eliminated Mumbai Indians in a crucial IPL match, here on Wednesday.

A defeat will officially end KKR's playoff hopes for the second successive season under Ajinkya Rahane after their disappointing eighth-place finish in 2025, a year after lifting the title under Shreyas Iyer.

Even a win, however, may not be enough for the Rahane-led side as KKR's fate will still depend on Punjab Kings' away match against Lucknow Super Giants on Saturday.

If Punjab win that game, KKR's final league fixture against Delhi Capitals here on Sunday will become a dead rubber.

As things stand, defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru, Gujarat Titans and Sunrisers Hyderabad have already sealed playoff berths, while Lucknow Super Giants and Mumbai Indians



are out of contention.

That leaves five teams — Punjab Kings (13 points), Rajasthan Royals (12), Chennai Super Kings (12), Delhi Capitals (12) and Kolkata Knight Riders (11) — battling for the lone remaining playoff spot.

Among them, only Rajasthan Royals and KKR have two

matches left.

Rajasthan have the simplest equation — win both remaining games against LSG and MI to finish on 16 points and seal qualification.

KKR, on the other hand, not only need to win both their matches but also hope Punjab stumble against LSG, as Punjab can still finish on 15 points with a significantly superior net run rate.

In hindsight, KKR would rue their poor start to the season. The Shah Rukh Khan-owned franchise has now won five of its last six matches, but the turnaround came too late after a disastrous opening stretch of six-match winless run.

It took captain Rahane and coach Abhishek Nayar nearly seven games to settle on a winning combination, something marquee overseas signing Cameron Green also admitted after their victory over in-form Gujarat Titans in the previous match here.

"I think it just took us a while, maybe a bit too long, to figure out the right roles and get the right people in the right positions."

CSK in transition phase post-Dhoni era: Ashwin



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chennai

Former India cricketer Ravichandran Ashwin has backed Chennai Super Kings skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, stressing that leadership in a high-pressure tournament like the IPL comes with a heavy burden that is often underestimated.

He also noted that CSK are currently undergoing a transition phase following the end of the MS Dhoni captaincy era, with Ruturaj stepping into the role in 2024. He urged patience from all stakeholders — including fans — emphasising that building a new leadership core in a successful franchise takes time.

"The added responsibility of captaincy seems to have affected Ruturaj Gaikwad's batting. T20 cricket is already demanding, and carrying the burden of leadership alongside expectations from a franchise like CSK can have a significant impact on a player," Ashwin, who had two separate stints with CSK spanning a total of nine years — first from 2008 to 2015 and later returning in 2025 before

announcing his retirement in August — told JioHotstar.

CSK suffered a five-wicket defeat to Sunrisers Hyderabad on Tuesday, a result that has left their playoff hopes hanging by a thread. With just one league match remaining, CSK now face an uphill battle and will need other results to fall in their favour to stay in contention for qualification.

"Chennai Super Kings are clearly in a transition phase in the post-Dhoni era, and it's important for everyone around the franchise, fans, stakeholders, and the team itself, to recognise that rebuilding takes time."

"The standards and expectations associated with CSK are incredibly high because of their legacy, but this group needs space and patience as they evolve," added Ashwin, who shared a long association with Dhoni during his stay with the joint successful team in the IPL.

Former Australia captain Aaron Finch urged restraint in judging Ruturaj's leadership, noting that the demands of captaincy naturally add pressure on any player.

Women's coach Tim White praises hockey talent pool



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bhopal

Indian junior women's hockey team head coach Tim White has praised the growing talent pool in the country's age-group national pathway during his scouting visit to the ongoing India-Australia U-18 exposure series here.

White, who took charge of the U-21 national setup in Bengaluru six weeks ago,

emphasised the importance of building a strong connection between the youth tiers and the senior national team.

Speaking on his observations from the stands and his collaboration with the U-18 coaching staff, White said, "I was incredibly curious to come to Bhopal and evaluate the U-18 group because this is our direct talent pipeline. I've had some excellent interactions

and connections with Rani (Rampal), who is doing a stellar job with this young unit." Rani is the U-18 women's team coach.

"This is a youthful squad with several 15 and 16-year-olds who have immense room for physical and tactical maturation. The progression and adaptability they showed between the first and second matches against Australia are highly encouraging.

Indian Open of Surfing from May 29 to 31



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mangalore

The seventh edition of the Indian Open of Surfing will be held from May 29 to 31 at Blue Bay Tannirbhavi Eco Beach here, which will serve as vital preparation ahead of the country's Asian Games debut later this year.

Organised under the aegis of the Surfing Federation of India (SFI), the championship is expected to serve as a

preparatory platform for surfers vying for places in India's contingent for the 2026 Asian Games, to be held in Japan's Aichi-Nagoya. SFI announced the launch of the event on Tuesday.

The event, presented by the New Mangalore Port Authority, will be organised by the Surfing Swami Foundation and Mantra Surf Club in association with the Karnataka Surfing Association.