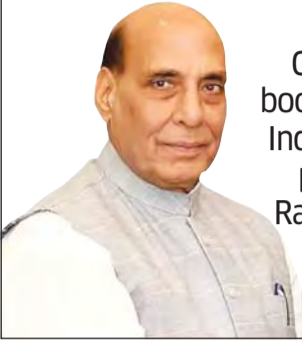


## PAGE 5 NATION

Op Sindoor boosted trust in Indian defence platforms: Rajnath Singh



## PAGE 7 USP

Tripura CM Saha flags-off Northeast's first MEMU train



## PAGE 8 GLOBAL

Fireworks, heat, politics: America celebrates its 250th birthday



## PAGE 10 SPORTS

Lionel Messi scores 20th World Cup goal



## AGENDA



Weathering climate chaos

# PM praises India's proactive energy strategy

## India expanded its energy imports significantly during West Asia crisis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Jaipur/Ahmedabad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that India successfully navigated one of the biggest global energy crises through proactive policies, diversified fuel sourcing, and strong diplomatic ties, with minimal burden on citizens. "When the crisis began, India was importing energy from about 25-26 countries. During the crisis, we increased this to more than 40 countries," the PM said, addressing a gathering in Pachpadra of Balotra district of Rajasthan. Modi, who is on a two-day visit to Rajasthan and Gujarat, also laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth ₹1.06 lakh crore and inaugurated the refurbished Jodhpur Airport and a CG Semi's Outsourced



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the country's first greenfield integrated refinery-cum-petrochemical complex at Pachpadra in Balotra, Rajasthan

Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility in Sanand, Gujarat. Modi said India expanded

its energy imports significantly during the West Asia crisis. He said oil companies incurred losses of over ₹75,000

crore between April and June due to rising global prices, but the Government absorbed the burden. "We reduced

WHEN THE CRISIS BEGAN, INDIA WAS IMPORTING ENERGY FROM ABOUT 25-26 COUNTRIES. DURING THE CRISIS, WE INCREASED THIS TO MORE THAN 40 COUNTRIES

NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

excise duty by ₹10 per litre and ensured that the burden on citizens did not increase significantly," he said.

Some forces were busy spreading fear in public, and political games were played, but "they must be wallowing in the depths of despair today", Modi said. "Rumours

were spread, and people were incited, but those with malicious intentions did not succeed. Those who wished to see India fail had even begun making predictions. Today, they must be wallowing in the depths of despair," he said.

The prime minister said the country has become the world's fourth-largest in refining capacity and continues to expand. He also credited his government's long-term policies with overcoming global disruptions in fuel and fertiliser supply caused by the war between Iran and the US-Israel combine. PM also spoke about how LPG production was maximised, PNG connections increased, and energy imports were sourced from more than 40 countries to shield its citizens from the worst impact of the crisis.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

# 23 named terrorists under UAPA: MHA

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
New Delhi

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has named 23 more people as terrorists under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Government's 'Zero Tolerance Policy' against terrorism.

Led by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, this step is part of ongoing efforts to break up terror groups and protect India and its citizens. The Home Minister highlighted the Government's commitment in a post on X. He wrote, "Pursuing PM Narendra Modi Ji's vision of zero tolerance against terror. The MHA today declared 23 dreaded terror functionaries affiliated with banned organisations as terrorists under the provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The desig-



nated terrorists are involved in anti-India activities, including terror attacks, inciting terror, trafficking arms, infiltrating through the border, facilitating terrorist organisations, raising funds and recruiting terrorists."

Of the 23 people named, 17 are from Pakistan, and 6 are from India. All of them are currently in Pakistan or Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## GREAT OFFERS!



Scan to Subscribe

## PIONEER IN SHORT

### UMAR, SHARJEEL BAIL REJECTED

A city court on Saturday rejected the bail applications of student activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the larger-conspiracy case linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, saying it had "no option but to follow" the Supreme Court's January 5 order and, therefore, could neither entertain the pleas nor grant them the relief. Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai said the bail pleas are not even maintainable in the trial court. The judge said, "This court has no option but to follow the judgment dated January 5, 2026, as passed by the Supreme Court, whereby the petitions of both the applicants were dismissed. Following the said order of the Supreme Court, this court cannot entertain the applications and grant bail to the applicants. In fact, the applications are not maintainable, and they are hereby dismissed."

FULL REPORT ON P3

### DELHI GOVT ENDS WFH POLICY

With the geopolitical situation normalising, the Delhi Government has withdrawn the Work-From-Home (WFH) arrangement for its employees on Wednesdays and Saturdays after the "geopolitical situation has practically normalised". The announcement was made during a press conference at the Delhi Secretariat, attended by all ministers of the Delhi Government. The Government has also announced to revise the office timing for the Delhi Government employees from 10 am to 6.30 pm, which was earlier from 10.30 am to 7 pm. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will continue with its existing schedule of 8:30 am to 5 pm. The measures, part of the city Government's public campaign titled "Mera Bharat, Mera Yogdaan", came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve fuel and reduce foreign exchange outflow amid the ongoing West Asia crisis.

FULL REPORT ON P4

# I&B pulls up Telegram over pirated content

Submit an action-taken report within 15 days



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (I&B) has issued a notice to messaging platform Telegram over the alleged circulation of pirated movies, OTT shows, and other copyrighted audio-visual content on its platform, directing the company to take corrective measures and submit an action-taken report within 15 days. The ministry has asked Telegram to strengthen its mechanisms for detecting, reporting, blocking access to and removing pirated content.

According to the notice, the ministry has also sought details of the platform's grievance redressal system for filmmakers, OTT platforms, content producers and law enforcement agencies. The ministry has directed the instant messaging app to take action against repeat copyright violators, including channels, groups, bots, user accounts, administrators and other associated entities involved in sharing infringing

CONTINUED ON >> P4

material. Previously, the Centre had taken action against more than 3,000 Telegram channels accused of distributing pirated movies, web series and other copyrighted content.

The latest notice indicates that the government now expects the platform itself to proactively prevent copyright violations instead of relying on individual take-down requests. The Government's action is also aimed at protecting India's creator economy and the film industry, along with broadcasters, OTT platforms, producers and distributors.

The notice said it expects Telegram to crack down on the "widespread dissemination" of pirated films, OTT content and other audio-visual material through its platform. Officials pointed out the Government's approach marks a shift from piecemeal takedowns of pirated content to "platform accountability". The notice to Telegram follows the Centre's recent regulatory action against Meta.

# Parliament Monsoon Session to begin July 20

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Centre on Saturday announced the Monsoon Session of the Parliament, which has been scheduled from July 20 to August 13. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said there will be a 25-day Monsoon Session with 19 sittings. The Session is likely to be stormy after the ruling BJP's victories in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry Assembly polls and after the rebellion in the TMC, Shiv Sena (UBT) and AAP have lent their support to the NDA.

In a social media post, Rijiju said that on the recommendation of the Government, President



Draupadi Murmu has summoned both Houses of Parliament for the Monsoon Session 2026. "The Session will commence on 20 July 2026 and will continue till 13 August 2026, for meaningful debate, discussion and decisions on issues of national importance," he said. A decision by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on the demands of 20 TMC and six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs seeking recognition as separate groups is

awaited. In the Rajya Sabha, after newly elected and re-elected MPs took the oath, the political numbers further tilted in favour of the ruling NDA. Three rebel TMC MPs from the Upper House have quit, and bypolls will help the BJP gather more strength in the Rajya Sabha. The last session ended in disappointment for the BJP-led NDA Government as a Constitution Amendment Bill to implement reserva-

tion for women in legislatures in 2029 and increase the number of seats in the Lok Sabha was defeated in the Lower House.

Amidst the ongoing permutation and combination to maximise two-third majority in the Parliament, the Centre is keen on bringing three key legislations - the redrafted Delimitation Bill, One Nation One Election and the 'controversial' constitutional amendment seeking automatic removal of a Prime Minister or Chief Minister if they remain under arrest for 30 days or more in connection with specified serious offences, including corruption-related cases in the Monsoon Session.

# Ram Temple trust to meet amid donation row

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
New Delhi/Ayodhya

Members of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust will meet on Monday for the first time since reports of large-scale theft of cash and valuables donated to the Ram Temple came to light earlier this year.

The meeting, scheduled for 3 pm at Mani Ramdas Chavni, the Ayodhya ashram of Trust president Mahant Nriyaya Gopal Das, will cover a preliminary SIT report on the theft and a proposal to create a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) position to professionalise temple administration.

The five-point agenda, shared by treasurer Govind Dev Giri, also includes the res-

ignations of general secretary Champat Rai and trustee Anil Mishra, a review of the un-audited income-expenditure statement and balance sheet for 2025-26, and approval of other financial matters.

This will be the first time Trust members have met in person since the controversy began. Mahant Nriyaya Gopal Das is now recovering from illness at a hospital in Lucknow. The 88-year-old spiritual leader, who has led the Trust since it was formed, had attended earlier meetings online because of health issues related to age and is expected to be discharged soon. The Ram Temple, consecrated in January 2024, has attracted massive offerings from devotees in cash, gold,



silver, and other valuables. An SIT, constituted by the UP Government at the request of the Trust itself, submitted a preliminary report that led to an FIR against eight individuals, mostly lower-level staff involved in counting and handling donations. Eight accused have been arrested, and police have recovered approximately ₹79.85 lakh in cash linked to

the alleged embezzlement. The investigation now covers the Trust's accounts over the past five years, land deals, hiring practices, and the handling of donations. Investigators believe there may have been systematic siphoning, with some reports saying daily losses reached several lakhs of rupees before the issue was discovered.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

# After Ayodhya row, BKTC launches probe into Badrinath donations



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Dehradun

Amid the Ram Mandir donation controversy, allegations have been levelled regarding irregularities in donations made to Badrinath Dham. Following allegations of embezzlement of donations, the Badrinath Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) has ordered the formation of a committee to probe the allegations while stressing that strict action will be taken against anyone found guilty.

Meanwhile, Uttarakhand Congress Vice President Suryakant Dhasmana has demanded that the alleged irregularities in Badrinath donations be probed under the supervision of a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

The Uttarakhand Char Dham Teerth Purohit Mahapanchayat has also expressed concern at the allegations levelled regarding the donations, stating that this will affect the BKTC's image. Recently, an outfit named Bhairav Sena wrote a letter to the BKTC Chief Executive Officer, accusing some committee employees of irregularities in handling donations made to the temple.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

# Historic feat: Sooryavanshi becomes youngest to represent India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Boy wonder Sooryavanshi became India's youngest international debutant at 15 years and 99 days, breaking Sachin Tendulkar's long-standing record, but his debut did not go as planned as he managed 14 off 10 balls, including two sixes.

At 16 years and 205 days, Tendulkar walked into the nation's collective consciousness with a game that was built on solid defence and artistic offence, defined by Mumbai's school of 'Khadoos' batsmanship. At 15 years and

99 days, Sooryavanshi seems unfamiliar with the concept of defence, his style tailor-made for the demands of cricket's slam-bang T20 version. And he fittingly made his India debut in the same format, against England here in the second context of the five-match series.

While Tendulkar's maiden international game was a grainy live PTV footage in that 1989 Test against Pakistan, Sooryavanshi has entered the cauldron with 4k cameras tracking his every move since he landed in the UK. The chubby Gen Z teenager is already staring out from the screens of



Vaibhav Sooryavanshi dons the Indian colours as he made his debut in Manchester, England on Saturday

high-end smartphones, a testimony to the immense growth of the Indian cricket establishment that has traversed several miles to become a behemoth. It's fair to say that Tendulkar was the cause. Sooryavanshi is the effect.

On that Wednesday of November 1989, Tendulkar stepped out at the National Stadium in Karachi to face an attack that comprised Imran Khan, Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis and Abdul Qadir.

It was a time when the Berlin Wall was still intact, and the Soviet Union was very much in existence. Rajiv Gandhi was still two and a

half weeks away from losing a Lok Sabha election and stepping down from the post of India's Prime Minister.

The era of economic liberalisation ushered in by Dr Manmohan Singh was still a year and a half away. Tendulkar was from the age of floppy discs, while Sooryavanshi's generation is looking towards a future run by Artificial Intelligence.

A lot has changed, but one thing has remained common — finding joy in an aspirational 'Make in India' story.

Not since Tendulkar's emergence has there been such hype around a young cricketer,

whose debut is being anticipated by an entire nation. Since he landed in this part of the world, fans have been making a beeline for selfies.

In fact, such is the craze that a fan was seen taking a selfie with Sooryavanshi's Rajasthan Royals-appointed guardian Romi Bhinder, happy to be clicked even if it's with his manager. Everyone wants a piece of Sooryavanshi just like everyone once wanted a bit of Tendulkar. Just that it was the pre-internet era in India, and now every fan armed with a smartphone is a digital reporter.

RELATED REPORT ON >> P11



# Govt orders transfer of 52 finance officers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Delhi Government on Saturday issued transfer orders of 52 finance officers who had served at the same posting for five years or more. These include 23 Deputy Controllers of Accounts and 29 Senior Accounts Officers.



In addition, 19 senior accounts officers have been promoted as deputy controllers of accounts, expanding their responsibilities in recognition of their performance. All 71 officers have been directed to assume charge at their new places of posting immediately and carry out their responsibilities accordingly.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the transfers and promotions have been made purely on administrative grounds to promote integrity and transparency in the system. "The government's objective is to establish an administrative system that meets the highest standards of transparency, accountability, efficiency and good governance. There is no place for laxity, negligence or corruption at any level," she said.

"Under the new arrangement, 19 senior accounts officers serving in various departments of the Delhi Government have been promoted as deputy controllers of accounts in recognition of their performance. To make the administration more efficient, the government has assigned new responsibilities to 23 Deputy Controllers of Accounts and 29 Senior Accounts Officers," a statement said.

The chief minister said the extensive reshuffle is part of the government's commitment to build a more accountable, result-oriented and public-centric work culture. The Government believes that timely decision-making, effective financial management and accountable administration will accelerate implementation of Government schemes and ensure public services are delivered in a more transparent and efficient manner," the chief minister said.

The extensive reshuffle in the Finance & Accounts Department is part of this approach and is intended to build a more accountable, result-oriented and public-centric work culture. The Government believes that timely decision-making, effective financial management and accountable administration will further accelerate the implementation of government schemes and ensure that public services are delivered in a more transparent and efficient manner.

# Amit Shah to inaugurate Govt's mega plantation drive on July 7

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will inaugurate the Delhi Government's mega drive to plant 70 lakh trees across the national capital on July 7. Announcing this, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday encouraged residents to participate in the campaign by enrolling through the Green Drive Portal.



In a statement, the chief minister said residents can use the portal to book plantation slots, collect free saplings from government nurseries, invite the 'Vriksh Rath' (tree chariot) that will assist them in community plantation drives and register themselves as "Delhi Green Warriors".

"We had promised to plant 70 lakh trees in Delhi. Now it is time to fulfil it together. The Green Drive Portal is now live. You can select a location and time, book your plantation slot, or visit any nearby Government nursery to collect saplings," she said.

The chief minister said residents planning plantation drives in housing societies or institutional areas can invite the Vriksh Rath

through the portal, and it will assist them. She said those registering as Delhi Green Warriors may be invited by the government to participate in future plantation drives.

The plantation drive is part of the Government's efforts to tackle pollution in the city, she said, adding, "We had said that we would surround pollution from all sides. The EV policy has come, the number of garbage dumps is continuously decreasing, and this mega plantation drive will help make Delhi greener."

Earlier this week, the Delhi government launched the Green Drive Portal, enabling residents to participate in the plantation of 70 lakh saplings under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign. Launching the portal, the chief minister stated the initiative offers online plantation bookings, free saplings and volunteer registration through a single digital platform. The portal allows residents to book slots for plantation drives, register as 'Environmental Saviours', and obtain free saplings from the nearest government nursery.

The Chief Minister urged the residents of Delhi to join this public participation campaign and contribute towards building a cleaner, greener and healthier Capital.

# Police bust organised mobile-snatching gang

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Delhi Police has busted an organised mobile-snatching gang operating in the ITO-IP Estate area and arrested two accused, including a habitual offender involved in 23 criminal cases.



Asif (26), a resident of Uttar Pradesh's Bijnor district, and Tarik alias Danish (22) were arrested on July 1 and July 2, respectively, officials said.

The action followed four mobile-snatching incidents reported within an hour on June 27 in the ITO-IP Estate area, prompting police to invoke Section 112 of the BNS, which deals with organised crime. The case was registered at the IP Estate police station after a Gwalior resident alleged that two men on a black motorcycle snatched his mobile phone near the IP flyover while he was heading towards Kashmiri Gate on a bike.

During investigation, police found that the same module was behind multiple similar incidents in the area within a short duration.

Police analysed more than 750 CCTV camera footage, which led them to Asif, who was arrested from Mahdood village in Bijnor on July 1.

During interrogation, Asif disclosed the involvement of his associate Shahrukh, who remains absconding. Based on Asif's disclosure, police recovered a stolen motorcycle used in the crime from Zakir Nagar in south-east Delhi. The two-wheeler was found to be linked to a theft case registered at the Wazirabad police station.

Based on Asif's disclosure, police later arrested Tarik alias Danish (22) from Shastrī Park on July 2. Investigators said Tarik played a key role in arranging stolen motorcycles, facilitating the disposal of snatched mobile phones, and helping gang members evade police.

Police said the gang operated in a structured manner, with each member assigned specific roles and a fixed share in the proceeds of crime. Shahrukh allegedly drove the bike while Asif snatched phones from unsuspecting commuters on busy roads and flyovers.

# NCRTC holds interactive session to familiarise commuters with Namō Bharat operations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) on Saturday organised an interactive session at the Begumpur RRTS Station in Uttar Pradesh's Meerut to familiarise commuters with ticketing, safety systems, train operations and travel guidelines.



The session, titled 'Know Your Namō Bharat', was organised under the NCRTC's 'Namō Bharat Champions' programme. During the event, daily commuters associated with the 'Namō Bharat Champions' group interacted with NCRTC officials, allowing them a glimpse into operations of Namō Bharat trains, stations and allied processes.

Through interactive discussions and a guided station tour, officials explained the systems and procedures that help ensure safe travel for passengers, the NCRTC said in a statement.

Detectors (DFMDs), artificial intelligence-enabled dual-view X-ray baggage scanners and the items prohibited on station premises.

Officials also informed participants about various passenger safety measures, including a dedicated coach for women, reserved seating for women, children, senior citizens and persons with disabilities, and round-the-clock CCTV surveillance in trains and stations, it added.

According to the NCRTC, commuters were also informed about measures taken to improve safety around station premises, including well-lit station areas, CCTV coverage and better last-mile connectivity.

Participants were briefed about the recently launched gender sensitisation campaign 'Aakankshaon ke Pankh', which aims to promote a safe, respectful and inclusive public transport environment, the corporation said.

# Man kills wife by hitting her with battery, dies by suicide in Ranhola

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

A 28-year-old man allegedly murdered his wife by repeatedly striking her on the head with a battery before dying by suicide after consuming poison in Delhi's Ranhola area, police said on Saturday.



The incident took place on July 2 in Tilangpur Kotla village, where the couple had been living as tenants for the past six or seven months. According to police, officers reached the spot after receiving information about an attempted murder.

Inside a rented ground-floor room, officers found Nisha, 23, with severe head injuries. She was rushed to Sanjay Gandhi Memorial Hospital (SGMH), where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

Police said the accused, Vinay, 28, allegedly attacked his wife with an Exide battery after suspecting her of talking to someone on the

phone. Following the assault, he allegedly consumed Sulphas (aluminium phosphide) tablets.

Investigators said Vinay then took the couple's three-year-old daughter to his mother's rented accommodation in nearby Kotla Vihar Phase-I, around 150 metres away. There, he allegedly told his sister, Priya, that he had killed Nisha around 6 pm because she had been speaking to someone on the phone and that he had also consumed poison. Priya rushed to the couple's rented room and found Nisha lying in a pool of blood. She ran out in panic, and neighbours then alerted the police.

Vinay was also taken to

SGMH but was declared dead on arrival. Police said the couple had been married for about four to five years and had a daughter aged about three.

Vinay worked in a private job in the Uttam Nagar area. Post-mortem examinations of both deceased individuals have been conducted, and the bodies have been handed over to their family members for the last rites.

Police have registered an FIR under Section 103(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita at Ranhola police station. Further investigation is underway to ascertain the exact sequence of events and the motive behind the crime.

# NDMC organises Suvīdha Camp to address citizen complaints

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) organised a Suvīdha Camp on Saturday at the NDCC Convention Centre, where 60 public grievances were registered and taken up for action as part of its citizen outreach and grievance redressal initiative.

The single-window camp enabled residents and service users to directly interact with senior officials from various departments, allowing them to raise complaints, seek information about civic services, and receive guidance on the resolution process.



# The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, W Ronibala Devi, W/o Mayanglambam Surjit Singh, No. 15138719X, Rank: Havildar, Record Office: RO, ARTY NASHIK, a permanent resident of Urup Mahka Leikai P.O. Lilong, P.S. Irlbung, District: Imphal East, Manipur, do hereby declare that my correct name is Waikhom Ronibala Devi, and hence will be used it in all future purposes.

I, Shivam son of Sh. Ram Chander R/o H. No. 46-47, First Floor, Street No. 9, Sarojini Park, Shastrī Nagar, Delhi - 110031, do hereby declare that my son's actual & correct name is Krishna Chandra and his date of birth is 09/05/2019 and both the names Krishna and Krishna Chandra are one and the same person and his name should be known as Krishna Chandra for all future purposes.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform to all concern that Sh. Subhash Chander Chawla S/o Sh. Babu Ram Chawla R/o M-18, Malka Ganj, Subzi Mandi Delhi-7, who is the original allottee/owner of Residential Plot No.005, Block-B, Sector-56, Noida(U.P.), had sold the said plot on the basis of GPA to the following person(s):-  
A GPA was executed in favour of Sh. Manoj Dhingra S/o Sh. R.R. Dhingra R/o C-127B, Sector-20, Noida, GPA which is duly registered of Sub Registrar Delhi, Dt. 05/05/1995. The agreement to sell was not registered. So it is informed to all concern that the said property is going to be transferred in favour of Shri Tarun Chauhan S/o Dharamvir Singh R/o Vill.-Chhalera, Gali No.3, Sector-44, Noida(U.P.) If any one has/have any objection he/she may file his/her objection along with the sufficient proof in the Residential Plot Department of the Noida Authority within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. Sh. Manoj Dhingra

# Mayor Pravesh Wahi directs strict action against spas, hotels flouting MCD norms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Delhi Mayor Pravesh Wahi on Saturday directed officials to step up inspection of spa centres, hotels and other commercial establishments and take strict action against any violation of civic rules.



Chairing a review meeting with senior officials of Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) Public Health Department, Wahi asked deputy health officers of all 12 zones to hold weekly review meetings and intensify surveillance and enforcement drives across the city, according to a statement.

The directions come in the wake of recent fire incidents in Lucknow and Delhi's Malviya Nagar, with the mayor asking officials to ensure that such cases are not repeated. Later, Wahi said that the

corporation has received many complaints regarding unauthorised spa centres, hotels and motels.

"In order to ensure that no untoward incidents occur in the future, officials have been instructed to ensure commercial establishments, including motels, hotels and spa centres, adhere to local laws," he said.

At the meeting, he directed officials to keep a close watch on spa centres falling under the MCD's jurisdiction and said violation of municipal rules would not be tolerated. He also urged the Delhi Police to strengthen

surveillance and take action wherever required.

The mayor also ordered stricter monitoring of hotels and motels operating under the civic body's jurisdiction and instructed officials to initiate action against establishments found violating MCD norms.

He further directed sanitation inspectors to carry out joint enforcement drives at bulk waste generators, including restaurants, hotels and banquet halls, to ensure proper waste management and cleanliness within their premises as well as in surrounding areas.

According to NDMC, the grievances received were largely related to the personnel, civil engineering, horticulture, public health, enforcement, commercial, tax and estate departments. Officials said that while complaints requiring immediate action were forwarded to the concerned departments, they explained policy-related issues to citizens along with the prescribed procedures and expected timelines for disposal. More than 100 officers and officials representing 30 NDMC departments participated in the camp. Departmental help desks were supervised by the respective heads of departments to ensure quicker coordination and accountability in addressing public concerns.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the general public that Suresh Kumar, Smt Suresh, Jitender Kumar S/o W/o S/o Late Raj Kumar Resident 401, Dhansa Village Delhi 110055, have executed a GPA on 13-11-2017 in favour of Babita W/o Suresh Resident 294 Jitayan Phirni Road, Dhansa Village, Delhi for security purpose which was revoked in the second week of August, 2021 and also inform in the case of Babita vs Suresh & Ors. In the court of Sh. Manoj Kumar- II DJ/ SW, Dwarka Court, CS(DJ)/580/2020 and canceled by executing a Deed of Revocation dated 22.06.2026 and certificate issued on 03.07.2026 by Registrar, Consequently, the said GPA holder has no authority whatsoever to represent us or to Sell, transfer, mortgage, lease, created any third-party interest, execute any documents, receive consideration, or otherwise deal with our undivided 1/6th share in the suit property i.e. total land measuring 9 bigha 12 biswas out of kharsa no, 114/22 (4-16), 114/23(4-16) situated in the revenue estate of village Issapur, Tehsil Najafgarh, New Delhi, from the Second week of August, 2021. The general public, banks, financial institutions, government authorities, and all concerned are hereby cautioned not to enter into any transaction with the said GPA holder in respect of our share in the aforesaid property. Any person dealing with her shall do so entirely at his/her own risk, cost, and consequences, we shall not be bound by or responsible for any such act or transaction. Ashwani Kumar (Advocate)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client i.e. ICGI Home Finance Co. Ltd. that Mr. Suresh Singh and Mr. Subhash Chand Sharma are joint owners of Entire Second Floor, without roof right, area measuring 99 Sq. Yds. of Property No. A-59 (Southern Portion), area measuring 303 Sq. Yds., out of Recd. No. 38, Killa No. 6, Situated at Radhey Shyam Park Extn. Village-Khunjri Khn, Shahdara, Delhi- 51 vide Sale deed dt.21.07.2015, executed by Mr. Kalish as attorney of Mr. Pawan Gupta, having no SMC con- firming Mr. Navon Gupta, Mr. Pradeep Gupta, Mr. Ajay Kumar Gupta, Mr. Pawan Gupta are surviving member of late Usha Gupta. All Persons are hereby informed that above owners want to sell the Second Floor to a person who is taking a loan facility from our client for purchase of said floor. If anybody has any objections upon the ownership of above owner's title, sale mortgage & any other kind of objection/interference, charge etc., kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of the present. Legal & Associates (Advocates & Consultants) 200, Indr Fir. 23, Shivaji Marg, Moti Nagar, N Delhi-15 kumar@knalegal.com Ph: 011-4112527-28

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Notice is hereby given to the public at large that Mr. N.K. Jairath has retired from the partnership firm M/s Nidhish Farms, having its principal place of business at 13-A, Ever Shine Apartment, D-Block, Vikas Puri, New Delhi-110018, with effect from 04/07/2026. It is further notified that Mrs. Aanchal Jairath has been admitted as a partner in the said firm with effect from the same date. The business of the firm shall continue under the same name and style, M/s Nidhish Farms. All concerned are requested to take notice of the above reconstruction of the partnership firm.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
My clients Mr. D.N.S. Chandra Rao, his wife Dasari Srigowri both residence R/o 73A/Pocket A-14, Himgiri Apartments, Kalkaji Extension, South Delhi-110019, severed all relation and disowned/debarred their son namely Mr. Dasari Praveen Kumar and his wife Dasari Monica from all movable and immovable (3) properties situated at Faridabad Haryana (1) Andhra Pradesh and At (1) Delhi assets due to their continuous disobedience, misconduct, and unbecoming behavior, anybody dealing with the aforesaid persons shall do so at his/her own risk, cost, and consequences. Pradeep R. Panchal (Advocate), 1427/13, Govindpuri Kalkaji New Delhi-19

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Retail Lending and Payment Group (Local Office/Branch): Axis House, Tower-2, 2nd Floor, 1-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens, Noida - 201303, Uttar Pradesh. Axis Bank Ltd., 3rd Floor, Gigaplex, NPC-1, TTC Industrial Area, Mughalsan Road, Airoli, Navi Mumbai 400708. Registered Office: "Trishul", 3rd Floor, Opp. Samarsheshwar Temple, Law Garden, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad - 380006.  
**CORRIGENDUM TO E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**  
This Corrigendum is issued with reference to the E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Property published in this newspaper on 28.06.2026 in respect of the secured asset of M/s NAMDHARI TIMBER PVT. LTD. It is hereby informed to the Borrower(s), Guarantor(s) and the public at large that due to administrative reasons, the following dates mentioned in the aforesaid E-Auction Sale Notice stand revised:  

Particulars	Earlier	Revised
Last Date, Time and Venue for Submission of Bids/Tender with EMD	27.07.2026 (Latest by 05.00 PM)	10.08.2026 (Latest by 05:00 P.M.)
Date, Time and Venue for Public E-Auction	28.07.2026 between 11:00 A.M. and 12:00 Noon	11.08.2026 between 11:00 A.M. and 12:00 Noon

  
The Venue for submission of Bids/Tender with EMD shall remain unchanged. All other terms and conditions contained in the E-Auction Sale Notice shall remain unchanged and continue to be in full force and effect.  
Date: 05.07.2026 Sd/-, Authorized Officer Place: Noida

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform the public at large that the Authorised Officer of ASREC (India) Ltd, having its office at Solitaire Corporate Park, Building No. 2, Unit No. 200A-201, Ground Floor, Andheri Ghatkopar Link Road, Andheri (East), Mumbai - 400093, has issued on 24.06.2026 the Terms of Sale by way of Private Treaty under Rule 8(8) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 in the account of M/s Johal & Company (Wine Sales) Pvt. Ltd., the secured creditor of the said company. The said Terms of Sale relate to Apartment No. H-2-E-083, Block 'E', 8th Floor, "Westend Heights", Building No. 2, Phase-V, DLF City, Village Wazirabad, Gurugram, Haryana - 122002 ("the Secured Property"), in favour of my client Mr. Dinesh Ralli, resident of S-247, Panchshila Park, New Delhi - 110017. The upfront token amount has also been duly paid by him as per the Terms of Sale by way of Private Treaty dated 24.06.2026. In case any person, public institution, or bank has any objection, they may come forward and inform the undersigned.  
Ravinder Singh (Advocate), R-191, Basement Greater Kailash-I, New Delhi-110048 Email: e215.raa@gmail.com

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Form No. INC-26  
(Pursuant to rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014) Advertisement to be published in the newspaper for change of registered office of the company from one state to another  
Before the Central Government/Regional Director Northern Region, New Delhi  
In the matter of the Companies Act, 2013, Section 13(4) of Companies Act, 2013 and Rule 30(6) (a) of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014 AND  
In the matter of DHANPATI AGRO ENERGY PRIVATE LIMITED having its Registered Office at FG-1/38-A, VIKAS PURI, West Delhi, India, 110018, Applicant Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the Company proposes to make application to the Central Government under Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on May 11, 2026 to enable the Company to change its Registered Office from National Capital Territory of Delhi to State of Uttar Pradesh. Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the registered office of the Company may deliver either by the MCA portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing, investor complaint form or cause to be delivered and sent by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director, Northern Region, New Delhi at the address B-2 Wing, 2nd floor, Pt. Deendayal Artyodaya Bhawan, 2nd Floor, CGO Complex, New Delhi - 110003 within (14) fourteen days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant Company at its registered office at the address mentioned below: "Dhanpati Agro Energy Private Limited, FG-1/38-A, VIKAS PURI, West Delhi, India, 110018" For and on behalf of the Dhanpati Agro Energy Private Limited Sd/- RAJEEV KUMAR Director Place: 05.07.2026 Date: DELHI DIN: 08847079



## 2020 DELHI RIOTS CASE

# Court rejects fresh bail pleas of Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

A city court on Saturday rejected the bail applications of student activists Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the larger-conspiracy case linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots, saying it had "no option but to follow" the Supreme Court's January 5 order and, therefore, could neither entertain the pleas nor grant them the relief.

Additional Sessions Judge Sameer Bajpai said the bail pleas are not even maintainable in the trial court. The judge said, "This court has no option but to follow the judgement dated January 5, 2026, as passed by the Supreme Court, whereby the petitions of both the applicants were dismissed. Following the said order of the Supreme Court, this court cannot entertain the applications and grant bail to the applicants. In fact, the applications are not maintain-



Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam

able, and they are hereby dismissed."

The court said although the applicants had argued that there was a change in circumstances following a division bench judgement of the top court in the case of Syed Iftikhar Andrabi, the issue concerning the divergence of opinion between that verdict and the Supreme Court's judgement in Gulfisha Fatima versus State has already been referred to a larger bench.

"Unless the issue is settled, the court cannot consider

the present applications on any ground," the judge said.

The court further said it cannot even examine whether there is any change in circumstances, as it is bound by the Supreme Court's January 5 order dismissing the bail pleas of both applicants. "Since then, there are no substantial change of circumstances as pleaded by the applicants and there arises no question to re-consider the bail of the applicants," it said.

The court, however, clari-

fied that nothing stated in the order should be construed as an expression of opinion on the merits of the case.

Khalid's lawyer, Trideep Pias, told the court that there was a change in circumstances after the Supreme Court's January 5 judgement. He also relied on the subsequent Syed Iftikhar Andrabi ruling, which reaffirmed the principles in the K A Najeeb case on prolonged incarceration, and questioned the reasoning adopted in the case of Gulfisha Fatima.

Imam's lawyer, Talib Mustafa, pointed to the apex court's interim bail orders for co-accused Tasleem and Khalid Saifi, as well as the Delhi High Court's bail order in Khuram Parvez's case.

He argued that since both applicants had spent more than six years in custody and the protected witnesses are unlikely to be examined soon, they should be granted regular bail or, alternatively, six months' interim bail.

# Gymkhana Club members, staff move Delhi HC against show-cause notice for eviction

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Delhi Gymkhana Club and its Staff Welfare Association have moved the Delhi High Court against the Government's decision to initiate proceedings to evict them from the club's premises at 2, Safdarjung Road in Lutyens' Delhi, a VIP zone.

The matter is listed before Justice Avneesh Jhingan on July 6. The petitions come after the Centre, through the Estate Officer under the Public Premises (Eviction of Unauthorised Occupants) Act, 1971, initiated eviction proceedings following the termination of the club's perpetual lease, alleging that it had become an "unauthorised occupant."

The pleas by Vijay Khurana and Delhi Gymkhana Club Ltd Staff Welfare Association form part of their pending lawsuit following the Land and Development Office's (L&DO) May 22 order asking the colonial-era club to return its land by June 5 on grounds of "strengthening



and securing defence infrastructure." The two suits pending before the High Court challenge the Government's earlier order to vacate the premises.

On June 29, the Estate Officer recently issued a show-cause notice asking the club to explain why an eviction order should not be passed against it. It has been directed to file its response by July 7 and appear before the Estate Officer the same day at 2.30 pm. According to the notice, issued through the Land & Development Office (L&DO), the club's continued occupation of the 27.3-acre prop-

erty after the lease was terminated amounts to "unauthorised occupation" under the Public Premises Act.

The Centre has contended that President Droupadi Murmu exercised powers under Clause 4 of the perpetual lease deed, which permits resumption of the land if it is required for a public purpose.

It has been argued that once the lease stood terminated and the land resumed, the Club ceased to have any legal right to remain in possession, rendering its continued occupation unauthorised. The show-cause notice directs the club to appear through its office-bearers or an authorised representative and produce all documentary and oral evidence it seeks to rely upon. It also cautions that failure to appear or submit a response may result in the proceedings being decided ex parte.

The move came more than a month after the Centre told the Delhi High Court on May 26 that it would not take forcible possession of the 27.3-acre premises by June 5, which is required for "strengthening and securing defence infrastructure".

Vijay Khurana, a Gymkhana Club member, has said in his lawsuit that the "vague and generalised reasons" of defence infrastructure and security given by the Centre were just a "sham". The move, he claimed, was an "attempt to effect forced eviction" instead of following the due process of law. Khurana's lawsuit is stated to be supported by more than 500 members of the club.

# DU gets over 1.42 lakh UG admission registrations for 2026-27

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Delhi University has received more than 1.42 lakh registrations for undergraduate admissions for the 2026-27 academic session, with over 43,500 aspirants submitting their programme and college preferences under the second phase of the admission process.

Dean of Admissions Haneet Gandhi said that 1,42,733 candidates had registered under Phase I of the Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS), with 43,547 applicants filling in their programme and college preferences under Phase II.

The second phase of the undergraduate admission process began on July 3 and will remain open till 11.59 pm on July 11.

Admissions to over 71,000 seats, covering 73 undergraduate programmes and over 100 BA programme combinations across 67 colleges, will be based on CUET

UG 2026 scores, subject to programme-specific eligibility criteria. During Phase II, candidates are required to map their Common University Entrance Test subjects with those studied in Class 12 before submitting their preferred programme and college combinations, he said.

According to the admission schedule, simulated ranks will be displayed on the CSAS portal at 5 pm on July 12, following which candidates can reorder their programme and college preferences till July 13.

The first seat allocation list will be released on July 16. Candidates allotted seats will have to accept them by July 18, while colleges will complete verification by July 20. The last date for payment of admission fees under the first round is July 21.

The second allocation list will be announced on July 25. Candidates allotted seats in this round can accept them by July 26, with colleges



completing verification by July 27. The last date for payment of fees under the second round is July 28.

The academic session is scheduled to commence on July 28.

Candidates are required to register on the CSAS portal using their CUET-UG 2026 application number. The university has integrated candidates' basic details via the Government of India's API Setu to minimise data-entry errors and enhance security.

A one-time, non-refundable registration fee of Rs 250 is applicable for candidates in the unreserved, OBC-NCL and EWS categories, while SC, ST and PwBD candidates are required to pay Rs 100.

Meanwhile DU is likely to begin physical trials for admissions under the Extra-Curricular Activities (ECA) quota from July 15, with the schedule to be notified on the university admission portal. The notification said that no individual communi-

cation would be sent to candidates regarding the trial schedule and advised applicants to regularly check the varsity admission website for updates on category-wise trial centres and tentative dates. Candidates must report only at the centre allotted for their respective ECA category with the original copies of all ECA certificates uploaded during registration, along with their CUET scorecard at the time of reporting, the notification said, advising outstation candidates to make their own travel and accommodation arrangements.

The university has directed candidates to bring all equipment, instruments, costumes, props or stationery required for their performances, adding that no borrowing or sharing of such items will be allowed. There will be no prescribed syllabus for the trials, and assessment will be based solely on proficiency in the relevant ECA category.

# DDA unveils eight-point plan to transform Delhi into green city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is working on an eight-point development programme to transform Delhi into a sustainable and green city, with a focus on affordable housing, mobility, environment and heritage conservation.

The roadmap was discussed at a recent meeting of the DDA's advisory council chaired by Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu, which reviewed gaps in the urban challenges such as affordable housing, slums, their relocation, traffic congestion, unauthorised colonies and water security.

During the meeting, key urban challenges, including traffic congestion, pollution, urban flooding, heat islands, redevelopment of existing areas, planned development in land pooling and low-



density zones, were also flagged. "The council adopted a four-pillar roadmap aimed at building a sustainable, green and liveable Delhi, with the Lieutenant Governor stressing the need for planned growth across housing, mobility, environment and heritage," an official said.

"Critical issues like the deterioration of heritage structures and water shortages that need immediate intervention for orderly growth of the city were also discussed," the official said

further.' Outlining the way forward, the LG said the vision rests on four key pillars. "On environmental sustainability, the focus will be on achieving the highest per capita green cover in the country, developing vibrant riverfronts, and creating an interconnected green and blue infrastructure network across the city," he added.

For good quality living, the emphasis will be on strengthening disaster resilience, ensuring water security, and making roads safer for all users.

# DMRC plans in-train audio ads on 4 metro lines

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

A brief pause between Delhi Metro announcements could soon be followed by an advertisement, with the Delhi Metro planning to roll out in-train audio commercials across the Red, Yellow, Blue and Magenta lines to boost its non-fare revenue.

The move is aimed at strengthening the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation's (DMRC) non-ticketing earnings, while turning its trains into a premium advertising platform, an official said.

The initiative also seeks to position the metro along-side leading global transit systems and airports for audio advertising, he added.

To take the plan forward, the corporation has floated a tender inviting agencies to secure, market and manage in-train audio advertisement slots across six trains each on the Red (Line 1), Yellow



(Line 2), Blue (Line 3) and Magenta (Line 8) corridors, the official said.

The Yellow Line, one of the capital's oldest and busiest metro corridors connecting Kashmere Gate and Sultanpur, offers the largest uninterrupted advertising inventory among the four routes after the Red Line's cumulative inventory, with 596 seconds of audio slots available in both directions, the official said.

The Red Line, connecting

Dilshad Garden and Rithala, has the highest overall inventory at 721 seconds, followed by the Blue Line between Dwarka and Yamuna Bank with 634 seconds. The Magenta Line between Janakpuri West and Botanical Garden has 300 seconds, the official explained.

He specified that advertisements will be aired only during silent intervals between routine operational announcements, with

passenger information and safety messages receiving absolute priority.

It also requires adequate gaps between commercials to ensure convenience for commuters.

According to the official, the system follows international practices adopted by major metro networks, where commercial announcements are carefully integrated, without disrupting essential travel information. The sound quality, volume and frequency of the advertisements will also be regulated.

The DMRC first introduced in-train audio advertisements on six trains operating on the Violet Line between Kashmere Gate and Badarpur in December 2023. The proposed expansion indicates that the corporation now intends to extend the model to several of its busiest corridors, the official added.

# CM launches infra projects in Shalimar Bagh, Pitampura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday inaugurated a series of civic infrastructure projects and reviewed ongoing development works in Shalimar Bagh and Pitampura, directing officials to ensure timely completion of all projects while maintaining quality standards.

The chief minister also inaugurated a 500 kW solar power plant at the Air Force and Naval Officers Enclave in Dwarka Sector-7 under the Palam Assembly constituency. During the visit, the Chief Minister inspected works related to park beautification, drainage and sewerage infrastructure, healthcare services, irrigation facilities and technical education institutions.

She began the visit by inaugurating the redevelopment and beautification of BD-FD Park in Pitampura,



along with 93 newly installed electric poles and a modern lighting system. She said the Delhi Government was working to make public parks across the city safer, more attractive and accessible, adding that well-maintained green spaces contribute to environmental conservation and improve residents' quality of life.

She also inaugurated multiple projects undertaken by the Public Works Department and the Delhi Jal Board aimed at strengthening the rainwa-

ter drainage and sewerage network in the Shalimar Bagh area. The projects include new precast drainage systems from DT Mall to CA Block, from CA Block to the Shalimar Village Chowk underpass, from the railway underbridge to GT Karnal Road near the Azadpur Mandi gate, and from Shalimar Chowk to DA Block.

An additional sewage pumping station and its delivery line were also inaugurated to address long-pending sewerage issues in Shalimar

Village, Sahipur Village and nearby localities.

The Chief Minister said the Government was developing long-term infrastructure to provide a permanent solution to waterlogging and sewerage problems.

She instructed officials to ensure proper operation and regular monitoring of the projects, particularly during the monsoon season.

She later inspected the NP Block Dispensary, where she reviewed the availability of medicines, medical equipment and healthcare services. She directed health department officials to ensure timely and quality treatment for patients, warning that negligence would not be tolerated.

She also visited the Munak Canal at Singhalpur and reviewed water flow, maintenance and cleaning arrangements with officials from the Irrigation and Flood Control Department.

# As SIR picks up, many residents in Shaheen Bagh, Jasola unaware of exercise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The anganwadi on the main road in Delhi's Noor Nagar has become one of the collection points for the Election Commission's Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. Residents walk in to collect enumeration forms; booth-level officers stop by the day while party workers help people fill out paperwork.

Barely a few lanes away, however, the exercise appears to fade into the background. In pockets of Shaheen Bagh and Jasola in the Okhla Assembly constituency of southeast Delhi, many resi-

dents were either unaware that the month-long voter roll revision had begun in their neighbourhood or knew of it only vaguely, without knowing where forms were being distributed or how the process worked.

The gap, however, is not necessarily one of documentation or of information.

For years, migrant families from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Assam and West Bengal have made these neighbourhoods their home.

They drive cabs, work as domestic helps, stitch garments, run small businesses and take up daily-wage jobs. Many have voted in successive Delhi Assembly and Lok

Sabha elections, their voter identity cards carrying local addresses. Yet, in the first week of the SIR exercise, conversations in these neighbourhoods often began with a simple question: "SIR? What is that?"

Firoz, who moved to Delhi from Assam around 15 years ago and now lives in a makeshift house in Okhla's Noor Nagar, had heard that SIR was underway but did not know it had reached his locality. "If there is a camp, we'll go. But where is it? Nobody has come to our lane or explained anything," he said, adding that his family already has voter identity cards, Aadhaar cards, PAN cards and driving



licences. "We know SIR is happening, but we don't know where," Firoz said.

Not far away, Bibi Ajmera, who migrated from Bihar's Purnia around 18 years ago and works as a domestic worker, was hearing about

the exercise for the first time. She recalled voting in Delhi elections and replacing a lost voter identity card with the help of her Aadhaar card at a local government school.

Like many others in the locality, she leaves for work early in the day and returns only by evening. Nobody, she said, had approached her about the ongoing revision.

The contrast is visible within a short walk.

While forms are being distributed from the anganwadi on the main road, awareness becomes patchier inside the densely populated lanes beyond it, where information often travels by word of mouth.

Residents living in nearby concrete houses said announcements about the exercise were being made through mosque loudspeakers. But many said people either did not pay attention to them or did not realise the

announcements referred to the voter roll revision. "The process has just begun. People will gradually become aware," one resident said.

The SIR exercise began on June 30 and will continue till July 29. During the exercise, BLOs are to provide every elector with two copies of the enumeration form - one to be submitted and another to be retained by the voter as an acknowledgement. No supporting documents are required to be submitted along with the form.

However, residents and local political workers said the outreach has not always been door-to-door. Anis Khan, a Delhi Block

Congress office-bearer in the area, claimed that in several pockets, BLOs were asking residents to collect forms from specific locations such as anganwadis or mosques instead of visiting every household.

He added that practical constraints, including large elector lists, irregular house numbering in some neighbourhoods and the physical challenge of carrying hundreds of forms, have made door-to-door distribution for women BLOs difficult in parts of the area.

The party, he said, has begun conducting its own outreach to bridge the information gap.



## IN FOCUS



Pilgrims proceed towards the holy cave shrine of Amarnath, during the ongoing annual Amarnath Yatra, near Baltal, Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday

# Delhi Government ends WFH arrangement for employees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

With the geopolitical situation normalising, the Delhi Government has withdrawn the work-from-home (WFH) arrangement for its employees on Wednesdays and Saturdays after the "geopolitical situation has practically normalised".

The announcement was made during a press conference at the Delhi Secretariat, attended by all ministers of the Delhi Government. The Government has also announced to revise the office timing for the Delhi Government employees from 10 am to 6.30 pm, which was earlier from 10.30 am-7 pm. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will continue with its existing schedule of 8:30 am to 5 pm.



The measures, part of the city government's public campaign titled "Mera Bharat, Mera Yogdaan", came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to conserve fuel and reduce foreign exchange outflow amid the ongoing West Asia crisis. In May, the chief minister had ordered work from home for twice a week for Government offices, days after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's austerity

ment's 90-day 'Mera Bharat, Mera Yogdaan' campaign. Private companies and institutions were also advised to adopt a similar arrangement wherever feasible.

To support implementation, the labour department had set up a single window help desk and call centre to address operational issues. Earlier this week, the Government lifted all temporary restrictions on the sale of petrol, diesel, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) effective July 1, 2026, signalling a return to normal fuel supply conditions across the country. This removes the 200-litre daily cap on diesel at retail pumps and allows industrial consumers to purchase fuel at regular outlets. Additionally, non-domestic LPG supplies were restored to pre-crisis levels.

# CBI arrests ex-CFO of Reliance Capital Ltd



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The CBI has arrested the former chief financial officer of Reliance Capital Limited, Amit Bapna, in connection with its ongoing investigation into Reliance ADA Group cases, officials said on Saturday.

The federal agency has alleged that Bapna, who served as the CFO of Reliance Capital Limited from August 2014 to December 2019, was "one of the key decision makers responsible for managing the financial affairs of the company".

"He allegedly facilitated and approved loans to intermediary and conduit companies despite being aware that such lending was contrary to RBI guidelines and the sanction conditions governing borrowings from Public Sector Banks," a spokesperson of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) said in a statement. No immediate reaction was available from the company.

The CBI probe has shown that funds borrowed by Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL) were diverted through such intermediary entities to various Reliance ADA Group companies, including Reliance Capital Limited, Reliance Infrastructure Limited and Reliance Power Limited, thereby causing wrongful loss to the lending banks and corresponding wrong-

ful gain to the accused persons and related entities, the spokesperson said.

Bapna was already in judicial custody in a case being probed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and was lodged in the Tihar jail here.

"In order to secure his custody in the present case, the CBI obtained a production warrant from the Special Judge for CBI cases, Mumbai. Accordingly, he was produced before the CBI Special Court, Mumbai, and arrested on 04.07.2026," the spokesperson said.

Bapna has been sent to four days of police custody by the special court, the spokesperson added.

The CBI has registered seven FIRs against Reliance Communications Limited (RCom), Reliance Home Finance Limited (RHFL), Reliance Commercial Finance Limited (RCFL) and Reliance Telecom Limited (RTL) based on complaints received from various public sector banks and the Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC).

The CBI filed its first chargesheet in the RCom case on May 29 against 16 accused, including the company, five senior executives of RCom and 10 bank officials.

"With the arrest of Amit Bapna, the CBI has so far arrested six accused persons in the Reliance ADA Group cases," the spokesperson of the agency said.

# Assam Govt continues efforts to address waterlogging in Guwahati

TONY DAS  
■ Guwahati

The Assam Government continues its efforts to ensure a lasting solution to the problem of waterlogging in Guwahati, which causes inconvenience to citizens during the monsoon season.

As part of this initiative, the Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs, Kaushik Rai, visited Maligaon and its adjoining areas under the Jalukbari constituency this morning to assess the overall condition of drains, water drainage systems, and other related issues.

During the inspection, the Minister emphasised the need to make the drainage system more effective and directed officials of the Guwahati Municipal Corporation (GMC), Guwahati Metropolitan



Development Authority (GMDA), Indian Railways, Public Works Department (PWD), and other concerned agencies to take necessary measures.

He stated that various departments are working in a coordinated manner to ensure that the residents of the city do not face unnecessary hardship during periods of heavy rainfall. Highlighting the importance of public cooperation, the Minister

said that active participation and support from citizens are essential for the success of the Government's efforts.

During his inspection the minister was accompanied by Commissioner and Secretary of the Housing and Urban Affairs Department, Kavita Padmanabhan; Chief Executive Officer of GMDA, Ambatun MP; GMC Commissioner, Chinmoy Phukan; and other departmental officials.

# SP, Congress resorting to negative politics in UP: BJP chief Nitin Nabin

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Lucknow

Bharatiya Janata Party national president Nitin Nabin on Saturday accused the Samajwadi Party and Congress of lacking substantive issues and resorting to "negative politics" to distract the public, asserting that the BJP's sole focus remains Uttar Pradesh's development.

During his two-day visit to the party's state headquarters here to fine-tune the BJP's strategy for the 2027 assembly elections, Nabin addressed a meeting of the BJP's UP office-bearers and district presidents and said the opposition was attempting to divert public attention instead of discussing development.

"The SP and the Congress have no issues. They are



UP CM Yogi Adityanath with BJP national president Nitin Nabin attends a meeting of BJP State office-bearers in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh

indulging in negative politics to distract the people. We should not fall into the opposition's trap. Our focus must remain on working for Uttar Pradesh's development," the BJP president said.

The meeting was attended by BJP national general secretary (Organisation) B. L. Santhosh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, state BJP presi-

dent Pankaj Chaudhary, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, and state general secretary (Organisation) Dharampal Singh, among other senior leaders.

Calling upon party workers to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots, Nabin said BJP leaders should visit every village and reach every household.

# Revanth Reddy bats for Rahul Gandhi as PM in 2029, targets KCR over wealth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Hyderabad

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Saturday strongly pitched for Rahul Gandhi to become the Prime Minister in the 2029 Lok Sabha elections, while questioning the alleged wealth amassed by former Chief Minister K Chandrasekhara Rao's family.

Addressing a thanksgiving public meeting at Midjil in Mahabubnagar district to mark 20 years of his public life, Reddy described making Rahul Gandhi Prime Minister

as a "historical necessity" for the country.

He was elected as Zilla Parishad Territorial Constituency (ZPTC) member from Midjil on July 4, 2006.

Recalling that Sonia Gandhi played a key role in granting statehood for Telangana, he appealed to the people to express their gratitude by supporting Rahul Gandhi's leadership at national level.

"The first step to make Rahul Gandhi PM should begin in Midjil."

The CM highlighted the sacrifices made by Rahul Gandhi's family, saying his

grandmother Indira Gandhi and his father Rajiv Gandhi laid down their lives for the country.

In a scathing attack on BRS, he said KCR "failed" to implement his election promises, including double bedroom houses, jobs and three acres of land to Dalits.

Referring to comments by BRS leader K T Rama Rao and others that KCR should return as Chief Minister, he said KCR's family members want him to become CM again as he gave posts to all of them, including his son KTR, daughter Kavitha,



nephews and relatives. Listing the Congress government's welfare schemes, including distribution of fine variety rice, farm loan waiver, he sought to know why the

Congress regime should go.

He alleged that the family of KCR and BRS leaders want Chandrasekhara Rao to return as CM as their "income and loot stopped" after Congress came to power.

"How did you (KCR) get a 1,000-acre farmhouse in Erravelly? Did you inherit it from your ancestors, or was it due to the loot of four crore Telangana people? Your son got a 100-acre farmhouse. Your nephew Harish Rao got a 50-acre farmhouse. Your daughter Kavitha got a 25-acre farmhouse. It is difficult to account for the assets

of your other nephew, Santosh Rao. How did you get all these assets?" Reddy asked.

KCR imposed a debt burden of Rs 8.21 lakh crore on Telangana and he should explain how his "family owns Rs one lakh crore", he said adding that Gen Z should think about how "KCR earned Rs one lakh crore in 10 years" while Telangana became debt-ridden.

Taking a swipe at the previous BRS regime over allegations of phone-tapping, he wondered if KCR should become CM again just for

tapping phones.

Expressing gratitude to the people of Midjil for electing him as ZPTC member 20 years ago, the Chief Minister said it would be inadequate even if he sacrifices his life for their sake.

He urged Deputy CM Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka to "adopt" Midjil to carry out development activities with special focus.

During his visit, the CM offered prayers at a Lord Hanuman temple and interacted with well-wishers who supported him in his election 20 years ago.

## FROM PAGE - 1

# PM praises India's proactive energy...

He mentioned nearly 70 per cent of India's LPG requirement was met through imports, and about 90 per cent of those supplies came from Gulf countries through the Strait of Hormuz.

"The United States has not built a new refinery in the last 50 years. Europe's refining capacity has continuously declined. India has now become the world's fourth-largest country in refining capacity, and this capacity will continue to grow," he said.

The conflict had nearly halted those supplies. He said the Government immediately decided to maximise domestic refining capacity for LPG production. The Government simultaneously ensured that PNG connections expanded rapidly so that domestic demand for LPG remained under control, Modi said. Domestic consumers were also protected from the burden of rising prices. Experts believed a domestic LPG cylinder could cost Rs 2,000. Today it is available at around ₹950," he said.

Talking about the refinery project, Modi accused the Congress Government in Rajasthan between 2018 and 2023 and because of the government's lack of cooperation, work on the project almost came to a standstill. He also accused the Congress of neglecting the interests of Rajasthan and not resolving the water crisis. He noted that Rajasthan and Haryana have signed an agreement to provide Yamuna water to Rajasthan's Shekhawati region.

Later, Modi arrived in Jodhpur and was received at the airport by Governor Haribhau Bagade, Union Minister and Jodhpur MP Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, and Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma. He also launched the Modified UDAN Scheme. With an allocation of ₹28,840 crore over the next 10 years, the scheme aims to accelerate the next phase of aviation-led development. Union Minister for Electronics and IT, Railways and Information Broadcasting, Ashwini Vaishnav, was present at the Sanad facility launch. Speaking after the inauguration in Sanad in Gujarat, Modi said the semiconductor India programme is gathering rapid momentum step by step, brick by brick and chip by chip.

"Expansion of the semiconductor industry in India next step of the electronics revolution that took place during the last decade," Modi said in Gujarat. On the occasion, he also mentioned that India has become the second-largest mobile phone manufacturer and exporter in the world.

# Ram Temple trust to meet amid donation row

The SIT's term has been extended until the end of July, and police are also investigating. Both the SIT and police have recorded statements from key figures, including Champat Rai, Anil Mishra, and special invitee Gopal Rao. No FIR has been filed against senior office-bearers yet, but complaints have been made seeking action. The resignations of Champat Rai and Anil Mishra are expected to be formally discussed and accepted at Monday's meeting.

The idea of creating a CEO position stems from calls for structural reforms and greater professional oversight of the Trust's operations. Supporters believe that having a dedicated administrative head with corporate-style accountability could improve financial controls, make donation management more transparent, and protect the Trust from future controversies, all while keeping its spiritual focus.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) described the incident as "deeply unfortunate" and urged strict action against those responsible. They also asked the Hindu community to stay united and not let "anti-Hindu forces" take advantage of the situation. Opposition parties, including Congress, have called for greater accountability and questioned how quickly and thoroughly the investigations are being conducted. They have remained robust.

Trust sources say they remain committed to a transparent investigation and have confirmed that all silver bricks and jewellery donated by pilgrims are accounted for. Monday's meeting is considered an important step in regaining public trust. Members will discuss the SIT's initial findings, pending resignations, and long-term plans, such as appointing a CEO, to strengthen the Trust. As the Trust prepares to meet at the historic Mani Ramdas Chavni, the main focus will

be on accountability, reform, and preserving the spirit of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement that led to the temple's construction. The outcome of these talks could influence how the temple is managed for years to come.

# 23 named terrorists under UAPA: MHA

The UAPA allows the Government to freeze assets, restrict travel and financial activities, and take other measures to stop terrorist operations.

Naming Indian nationals who operate from outside the country shows how cross-border radicalisation can spread and the problems caused by people joining hostile groups abroad. This move shows that Indian law will act against such people, wherever they are. It is part of a strategy that uses intelligence and legal action to fight terrorism. By targeting those involved in funding, recruitment, and support, authorities hope to break the networks that help terrorist groups continue. The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act equips the Government with powerful tools to combat terrorism. Designation as a terrorist enables authorities to freeze assets, restrict travel and financial transactions, and impose other stringent measures. These provisions are designed to cripple the operational and financial backbone of terrorist networks.

According to the official Government notification, the 23 designated individuals are linked primarily to banned outfits including Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT), Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) and The Resistance Front (TRF). They are accused of a range of activities such as planning and executing terror attacks, cross-border infiltration, arms smuggling (including through drones), recruitment of youth, fundraising, and providing logistical support to terrorist modules.

Specific cases linked to some of the designated persons include the 2016 Nagrota Army camp attack and the April 2022 Sunjwan attack in Jammu.

The complete list of the 23 individuals designated as terrorists under the UAPA (primary names as per the official notification) is as follows: Masood Ilyas Kashmiri, Mohammad

Musadiq, Mufti Mohammad Asghar Khan, Hafiz Abdul Shakoor, Abdullah Jihadi, Firdous Ahmed Bhat, Ghulam Farid, Haroon Rashid Ganai, Bilal Ahmed Mir, Abid Qayoom Lone, Nazir Ahmed Gujjar, Abdul Rauf, Ashfaq Ahmed, Hafiz Khalid Walid, Maulana Imdad, Ullah Makki, Maulana Saifullah Khalid, Mohammad Yaqoob, Maulana Yusuf Taibi, Owais Farooq, Qari Yaqub Sheikh, Rana Iftikhar, Wasim Noor Jat and Mohammad Shahid Faisal. This brings the total number of individuals designated as terrorists under the UAPA to 80. The designations are based on credible intelligence inputs and will enable legal, financial, and investigative action against these individuals and their support networks at both national and international levels.

This step is part of the Centre's broader strategy to address terrorism comprehensively. By targeting key functionaries responsible for critical aspects of terror operations, the MHA is working to disrupt the chain of command and support system. Such proactive measures neutralise current threats and deter potential recruits and supporters of terrorism.

"The commitment to zero tolerance has been a hallmark of the current administration's security policy. Through consistent, firm actions, it seeks to create an environment where terrorism cannot thrive. The safety and well-being of citizens remain paramount, and these designations contribute significantly to that goal," a senior official said. The international community is also likely to take note of such firm steps against terror, strengthening India's position in global counter-terrorism efforts, he added.

# I&B pulls up Telegram over pirated content

Telegram was recently banned in India till June 22 — a block that was seen as an attempt to prevent any possible irregularities ahead of the June 21 re-exam of NEET-UG, which was originally held on May 3 but got cancelled on May 12 after overlaps emerged between a leaked question paper and the actual one, triggering a CBI probe and 13 arrests.

The Government-imposed block on Telegram, used widely by students to share study mater-

ial, later reached the Delhi High Court, which on June 19 upheld the Government's decision to block Telegram for six days ahead of the NEET-UG re-exam. Reminding Telegram that, as an intermediary, it is required to observe due diligence under the Information Technology Act and the Information Technology Rules, the Ministry has stated that Telegram should not be waiting for the Government to identify each of the piracy channels and also emphasised that a purely reactive, channel-by-channel takedown approach may not be sufficient to demonstrate due diligence as required under the IT Act, 2000, and the IT Rules, 2021. The Ministry is learnt to have told Telegram, which was temporarily blocked in India in June as a precautionary measure to prevent any paper leak during the NEET re-examination, that copyright infringement is not merely a civil violation, but also a criminal offence under the Copyright Act, 1957, and the Cinematograph Act, 1952.

Telegram has been reminded that, as an intermediary, it is required to observe due diligence under the IT Act and the IT Rules, they added.

# After Ayodhya row, BKTC launches probe...

The letter was widely circulated on social media, following which the BKTC ordered a probe into the matter. The BKTC chairman, Hemant Dwivedi, said that if the allegations levelled against any employee are found to be true, strict action will be taken against the guilty.

The BKTC CEO, Sohan Singh Rangal, said that based on the matter which went viral on social media on July 2, the CCTV camera footage of the Badrinath Dham compound was checked. Though the footage is not clear, the BKTC chairman was informed about the entire issue, considering the seriousness and sensitivity of the subject. A clarification has also been sought from the employees in question. The CEO said that unconfirmed allegations and counter-allegations should be avoided till the allegation is confirmed through a proper inquiry. He appealed to the public to respect religious sentiments and observe patience to prevent any impact on the image of the holy pilgrimage centre.



## Op Sindoor boosted trust in Indian defence platforms : Rajnath Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Saturday said that after Operation Sindoor, the trust in "made-in-India" defence platforms has received a boost.

In his address at an event in New Delhi, he also reiterated that "today, our defence production has reached over ₹1.78 lakh crore, and about 8-9 years ago, it stood at approximately ₹46,000 crore". The Union minister asserted that after Operation Sindoor, "trust in made-in-India defence platforms has been enhanced".

Operation Sindoor was India's decisive military action conducted in May 2025 in response to the Pahalgam terror attack. Several defence platforms built in India had played a key role in it.

Singh said, "Defence exports too have reached a record over ₹38,000 crore, and in 2013-14, it stood at just ₹686 crore, and it has grown



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaks during Navbharat Times (NBT) Utsav in New Delhi on Saturday

today 57 times. And, I have not sought the full report, but currently it should be hovering around ₹40,000 crore, which is my estimate."

In his address, he also spoke of India's journey in various sectors in the last 12 years, the advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) and the importance of human sensitivity in the age of AI, including in the field of journalism.

The event was hosted in Delhi to mark 80 years of the

nology" is the "biggest strength of the country in the 21st century".

Underlining that AI has touched nearly all aspects of human existence today, he cautioned that while AI can read and analyse data, it "cannot feel the pulse" of the people, which is where the human sensitivity comes into the picture.

Singh pointed out that journalism, too, has been impacted by technological advancements such as AI, but they won't be able to surpass human creativity and intellect.

"The future success of journalism will depend on how well it establishes the balance and synergy between the capabilities of AI and human empathy. While AI will make journalism faster and more precise, emotional intelligence will ensure that it remains humane and credible," he said.

The Union minister also emphasised maintaining credibility in journalism in the era of fake news and misinformation.

national Hindi daily Navbharat Times.

"India's journey over the last 12 years has been a progression from shortages to self-reliance, from self-reliance to self-confidence, and from self-confidence towards building a Viksit Bharat," Singh said.

He said India lays emphasis on both technological development and celebrating its traditions, and this confluence of "tradition and tech-

## Assam outpaces national average with 15% GST growth in June

TONY DAS  
Guwahati

Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam has recorded a strong fiscal performance by registering 15 per cent growth in GST collection in June 2026, significantly higher than the national average of 9 per cent. The State has emerged among the top-performing major States in the country in terms of monthly GST growth, reflecting improving economic activity and stronger revenue administration.

The achievement comes in the very first month after Finance Minister Jayanta Mallabaruah assumed charge of the Finance Department.

Immediately after taking over, the Minister held a series of review meetings with senior officials and stakeholders to plug GST leakages, strengthen compliance, enhance digital tax administration and tighten enforcement against tax evasion. The department also intensified efforts to widen the tax base and improve revenue mobilisation in line with the Chief Minister's vision of transparent and efficient financial governance.



These focused interventions have begun yielding results. Assam collected ₹182 crore more GST than in June last year, with collections rising sharply over the corresponding month of 2025.

Significantly, the State's cumulative GST growth up to June in the first quarter of the present Financial Year has also increased 14 per cent more compared to the corresponding period of the previous financial year, indicating a clear acceleration in revenue momentum.

Assam's performance also surpassed several larger States, including

Maharashtra, Karnataka, Delhi, Haryana and West Bengal, while some States witnessed negligible growth or even a decline in GST collections.

The latest figures reinforce Assam's strengthening fiscal position and reflect the positive impact of sustained governance reforms. Higher revenue mobilisation will further enhance the State's capacity to invest in infrastructure, public services and welfare initiatives, supporting the Government's vision of sustained and inclusive economic growth under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

## TMC's West Bengal chief resigns a month after appointment



West Bengal TMC President Chandrima Bhattacharya steps down from the post, barely a month after her appointment, and relinquishes all other party responsibilities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Kolkata

In yet another setback for the Mamata Banerjee faction of the Trinamool Congress, the party's West Bengal State president Chandrima Bhattacharya stepped down from her position on Saturday, barely a month after she was entrusted with the crucial organisational responsibility in the aftermath of the party's Assembly election debacle.

In a letter addressed to the Trinamool Congress chairperson, Bhattacharya also relinquished responsibilities from all other posts she held in the party, triggering speculations on whether she had severed her ties with the Mamata Banerjee-led wing of the party for all practical purposes.

Bhattacharya was named State president at the party's national working committee meeting held at Mamata Banerjee's Kalighat residence on June 3, replacing senior leader Subrata Bakshi.

She also withdrew herself as the authorised signatory of the accounts of the TMC and its associate organisations maintained in various banks and as Mamata Banerjee's authorised point person to handle the party's affairs before the Election

Commission. A former minister in the erstwhile Mamata Banerjee Government – in charge of key departments like Finance and Health as Minister of State, and a prominent leader of the party who led its women's wing – Bhattacharya had remained one of the closest aides of the TMC supremo and her long-term associate.

"At the end, I would like to State that I have the highest regard for you and will remain ever respectful to you," she stated in her resignation letter.

Talking to reporters, Bhattacharya later clarified that her decision was triggered by Banerjee's over-the-phone admonishment, blaming her for "allowing the Ritabrata Banerjee-led rebel faction of the party to take control of the party's Trinamool Bhavan operational headquarters" in Kolkata.

Bhattacharya was present at her office when the Ritabrata-led rebel faction walked into the Trinamool Bhavan on Friday, but left the building shortly after. The rebel faction leaders held a meeting at the premises before changing the locks of the main gate and declaring they would henceforth operate from the premises.

## Andaman LG, MoEFCC meet to discuss Great Nicobar Project

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Sri Vijaya Puram

Andaman and Nicobar Islands Lt Governor Admiral DK Joshi (Retd) held a meeting with Chandra Prakash Goyal, chairman of the high-level committee of the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), to review the sustainable development of Great Nicobar Islands, an official said on Saturday.

Goyal and Dr Satya Prakash Yadav, permanent member of the committee, called on the Lt Governor on Friday and held detailed discussions on conservation and regulatory framework under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) notifications, diversion of island forest cover, compensatory afforestation and non-dis-



Andaman and Nicobar Islands Lt Governor Admiral DK Joshi (Retd)

placement of tribal communities at Great Nicobar Islands, the official said.

In the meeting, it was discussed that during the construction and operational phases of mega strategic and infrastructure projects, mitigation measures must be implemented to eliminate environmental damage, protection of wildlife and socio-cultural ecosystems in the Great Nicobar Islands.

सत्यमेव जयते  
Government of India

This Monsoon,  
Let's come together for

**Catch the Rain**  
campaign  
take pledge for water  
conservation ...

As we cannot live without water.

**Tasks, we have to perform**

- Adopt Rain Water Harvesting system in every home, society and workplace.
- Install Recharge Pit and Shaft at appropriate places and repair the unused borewells for enabling ground water recharge.
- Restore Baolis, Wells and traditional Water Bodies and make them usable.
- Enhance water retention capacity by removing silt from ponds and water reservoirs in your vicinity for maximum Monsoon water conservation.
- Please ensure maximum tree plantation to enhance green coverage in water retention areas.

**"Catch the Rain-Through this mission, we have to collectively save every drop of rainwater. My special appeal to save every single drop of rainwater collectively."**

**- Prime Minister Narendra Modi**

CBC 45101/13/0010/2627



## Conman who duped 300 luxury hotels held after 36 years

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
■ New Delhi/Raipur

A 69-year-old man from Tamil Nadu, identified as Bingson John, has been arrested in Bhubaneswar, Odisha, ending what police describe as one of India's longest-running hotel fraud operations. According to Raipur Police, he targeted more than 300 luxury hotels across the country since around 1990, spanning 36 years.

The latest complaint came from the Hyatt Hotel in Raipur, Chhattisgarh. John allegedly checked in on June 25, 2026, used the five-star facilities, and left on the morning of June 27 without settling his bill of ₹63,755. He also took a laptop worth around ₹1.48 lakh that the

hotel had provided. The stolen laptop was later recovered from him.

His modus operandi involved charm and false identities. During interrogation, he reportedly told investigators that he drew inspiration from Charles Sobhraj, the French-Vietnamese serial killer and conman known as "The Serpent." Like Sobhraj, who used fake identities and deception in luxury hotels across Asia in the 1970s, John allegedly used similar tactics, but focused on financial fraud rather than violence. He often posed as a foreign tour guide, an English teacher and a yoga instructor. These respectable personas helped him build instant trust with hotel staff. He would check into



premium properties, avail room service, spa treatments, and other luxuries, then vanish without paying, sometimes stealing small valuables on the way out.

John is no stranger to the law. Raipur Police claim criminal cases against him exist in

more than 10 states, including several major metropolitan cities. He was found to have spent over 15 years in various prisons, including Tihar Jail in Delhi, where he allegedly came into contact with other notorious criminals, without paying or prop-

erly checking out on the morning of June 27.

The arrest followed a complaint from the Hyatt Hotel. After that complaint, Raipur's Anti-Crime and Cyber Unit, along with the staff of Telibandha Police Station, used technical analysis of documents and mobile numbers to track him to Bhubaneswar. He was apprehended there by Raipur Police in coordination with local authorities in Odisha. A case has been registered under Section 318(4) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Telibandha Police Station. Further investigation is ongoing to verify the full scale of his alleged crimes and link him to other pending cases.

This case highlights vulnerabilities in the hospitality

sector, where trust-based check-ins and the desire to provide excellent service can sometimes be exploited. It also shows how digital footprints, including mobile numbers and documents, can help identify even experienced offenders which remains in custody as police piece together the decades-long trail of unpaid luxury bills and alleged thefts.

Whether his Sobhraj-inspired methods will land him behind bars for the rest of his life remains to be seen, but his long run of luxury on someone else's tab has finally come to an end. This reads like a real-life crime story: one man, one shrewd conman, decades of luxury living, and an ending shaped by modern policing.

## MP Congress chief hit with defamation notice over trust row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Bhopal

Veer Bharat Nyas Secretary Shriram Tiwari has served a ₹5 crore defamation notice on Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari over his recent allegations regarding the trust, demanding that he publicly apologise within three days or face legal action.

The notice, issued through advocates Harish Mehta and Supreme Court lawyer Gunjan Chouksey, follows Patwari's remarks made during a press conference in New Delhi, where he alleged that the Madhya Pradesh Government had handed over Government land and a building in Ujjain worth nearly ₹500 crore to Veer Bharat Nyas on a lease of just ₹1. Patwari had also claimed that the trust was closely linked to the Chief Minister and had been favoured in violation of established rules.

Addressing mediapersons here on Saturday, advocate Harish Mehta said Patwari made the allegations despite being aware of the relevant facts. He said the notice demands that Patwari withdraw his statements, issue a public clarification and tender an unconditional apology through the media within three days. Failing this, legal proceedings for defamation will be initiated.

Mehta said the allegations had damaged the personal and public reputation of Shriram Tiwari. He maintained that Veer Bharat Nyas functions in accordance with the law and



Madhya Pradesh Congress President Jitu Patwari

works for people across all communities and religions. He accused Patwari of attempting to tarnish the image of both the trust and its secretary through baseless allegations.

Advocate Gunjan Chouksey said Veer Bharat Nyas is a legally registered public trust and not a private organisation. She noted that the Chief Minister serves as its chairperson and that the trust, established in 2012, was also headed by Congress Chief Ministers during previous Congress Governments.

Chouksey further said that if the ₹5 crore sought through the defamation notice is awarded, the entire amount would be donated to a non-Governmental organisation.

The legal notice comes five days after Patwari alleged that the State Government had leased Government property worth around ₹500 crore in Ujjain to Veer Bharat Nyas for ₹1, claiming the trust had received undue benefits in violation of rules.

## VETERAN JOURNALIST AMALENDU KUNDU PASSES AWAY



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Kolkata

Veteran journalist Amalendu Kundu, one of India's most respected chroniclers of Sikkim and the Eastern Himalayan region, passed away on Saturday evening at his native residence in the Howrah Maidan area of West Bengal. He was 80+ and had been ailing due to age-related health conditions for the past few years. Surrounded by his family in his final moments, Kundu peacefully departed for his heavenly abode, bringing to a close an illustrious journalistic career that spanned more than five decades.

His passing marks the end of an era in Indian journalism — one defined by integrity, quiet perseverance, geographical depth, and an unwavering commitment to reporting from one of the country's most strategically significant yet often underrepresented frontiers. Through decades of meticulous reportage, Kundu elevated the stories of Sikkim and the Eastern Himalayas from regional developments to matters of national importance, earning the respect of colleagues, policymakers, and readers alike. Kundu, who spent over five decades chronicling the socio-political landscape of Sikkim and the Eastern Himalayan region, was among the rare journalists who transformed a remote frontier into a subject of national strategic discourse.

His work consistently bridged the gap between regional realities and national consciousness.

## PM Modi unveils NHPC's 300 MW solar plant in Rajasthan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi/Bikaner

NHPC's 300 MW Karnisar solar power plant at Bikaner, Rajasthan, was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi through virtual mode on Saturday. The project marks a significant addition to India's renewable energy capacity and underscores the nation's commitment to clean energy.

The virtual inauguration was held in the presence of Rajasthan Governor Haribhau Kisanrao Bagde, Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, Union Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri, and Deputy Chief Ministers Diya Kumari and Prem Chand Bairwa.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister emphasised that renewable energy is the cornerstone of India's energy security and sustainable future. He highlighted



that Rajasthan is witnessing the development of world-class solar power infrastructure, reinforcing its position as a key contributor to the nation's clean energy ambitions.

Bhupender Gupta, CMD, NHPC, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Ministry of Power, the

Ministry of New and Renewable Energy, and the Rajasthan government for their continued guidance in the successful execution of the project. He reaffirmed NHPC's commitment to contributing towards India's green energy goals.

Aligned with the vision of Aatma Nirbhar Bharat, the

mega project was developed using approximately 7.75 lakh domestically manufactured solar PV cells and modules.

The solar power plant is expected to generate around 75 crore units of clean electricity annually. It will significantly bolster the nation's renewable energy basket while helping offset nearly 6.4

lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions every year.

Besides producing clean energy, the project has contributed to the socio-economic development of the region by creating direct and indirect employment opportunities for over 40 local residents, generating sustainable livelihoods in remote areas of the State.

## CBI raids Northern Railway office in bribery case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The CBI has conducted searches at the Northern Railway office in Baroda House in New Delhi in connection with an alleged bribery case involving Narendra Singh, Chief Materials Manager (Store) and others, officials said Saturday.

The operation was conducted on Friday evening following a tip-off that the officer was about to take a bribe from a businessman from Uttar Pradesh, they said. The CBI has booked Singh, Chief Materials Manager, and Lenin Sharma, Senior Clerk (Store) — all three posted at Northern Railways (HQ), Baroda House, New Delhi.

The FIR has also named businessman Shariq Ali and Ejaz Ali of Mash International Pvt Ltd (Mash & Co), Jajmau, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh. The company has also been named as an accused. The CBI alleged in the FIR that Shariq regularly obtained "valuable and confidential



information" relating to railway tenders, along with other official favours, through Sharma and his associates in exchange for illegal gratification.

A purchase order for the Safety Shoes was issued in favour of Mash International Pvt Ltd in April this year, for which Shariq asked Ejaz to visit Delhi to pay bribes to the concerned officers, the FIR alleged.

"The source has further informed that Singh and his deputy, Maity, act in tandem and close coordination, further extending undue favours to Mash International Pvt. It's either of the two that receives the pecuniary advantage/illegal gratification on the other's behalf," the FIR alleged.

## Warehouse collapse: CM Suvendu praises Army, NDRF rescuers

SAUGAR SENGUPTA  
■ Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari on Saturday lauded the agencies involved in the rescue work of the Taratala warehouse collapse last week, which prompted their coordinated efforts, asking for better vigilance and Stricter monitoring so that "a similar incident never happens again."

Sixteen 16 people died, and about 17 were left seriously injured when a three-storey warehouse building under construction at Taratala, adjoining Kolkata port, collapsed, burying the victims underneath, raising questions on the way the plans were sanctioned by the then Trinamool Congress-ruled Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

"We must ensure that such incidents do not happen again. We have started a special audit of



buildings and construction-related issues following the Taratala tragedy, and a series of measures have been taken. We ask all the departments to remain vigilant and exercise strict control," the Chief Minister said, "saluting the rescuers", including the local youth and the agencies like NDRF, Army, Fire Brigade and Kolkata Police, who are doing a "marvellous job."

Adhikari was speaking at a felicitation programme organised by the Kolkata Police to honour personnel involved in the rescue operation at the collapse site.

## CPI(M) condemns Allahabad HC ruling on mosque land acquisition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Polit Bureau of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Saturday strongly condemned the Allahabad High Court's recent judgment in the Syed Rashid Ali v. State of UP case, alleging that the ruling severely undermines secularism, minority rights, and the livelihoods of ordinary citizens.

Termining the court's interpretation of the Places of Worship Act, 1991 "deeply flawed," the CPI(M) stated that allowing the acquisition of mosques for "public purposes" renders vital secular safeguards meaningless. "When a mosque is demolished for a road, its religious character ceases to exist. This is conversion through acquisition, precisely what the Act was meant to prevent," the party stated in a press release issued by its Central Committee office.

The Left party also criticised the court's dismissal of tenants' rights. It noted that 97 per cent of the petitioners are



Allahabad High Court

Muslims who have run businesses for generations in Varanasi's Dalmandi area. Pointing to a Social Impact Assessment Report, the CPI(M) highlighted that 50 per cent of the affected families reside there and 45 per cent depend on the area for their livelihood, making the displacement a direct violation of their right to livelihood under Article 21.

The Polit Bureau alleged that the decision fits into a wider, systematic assault on minorities to serve the BJP-RSS agenda. It argued that the State Government inten-

tionally targeted the Muslim-majority Dalmandi area, ignoring viable alternative sites like Sonar Gali, which is located much closer to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple and would cause far less displacement.

Accusing the court of failing to enforce the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013, the CPI(M) demanded that the Supreme Court immediately intervene and overturn the judgment.

## J&K recalls books glorifying separatists as legends; 8 officials suspended

MOHIT KANDHARI  
■ Jammu

A controversial book glorifying separatist leaders and convicted terrorists as 'great personalities' and 'legends' has been immediately recalled by the Jammu and Kashmir Government from all Government school libraries following massive backlash.

So far, eight officials of the School Education Department (SED) have been suspended over the approval and procurement of a controversial library book. The suspension orders were issued on the directions of the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha. A high-level probe has been initiated into the matter.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly, Sunil Sharma, also launched a scathing attack against the Omar Abdullah-led Government for promoting "academic jihad" by allowing a controversial book in Government school libraries.

The BJP leader alleged that the publication promotes the narrative of separatist leaders such as Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Masrat Alam, Shabir Shah and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and described it as an attempt to spread hatred against India and its armed forces.

Sharma also demanded an immediate ban on the publication, a judicial probe into the matter, and the dismissal of the Education Minister.

The controversy surfaced after the Jammu and Kashmir Peoples' Forum (JKPF) alleged that a book supplied to Government school libraries under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme glorified separatist leaders and terrorists by portraying them as "great personalities" and "legends" of Jammu and Kashmir.

Initially, the School Education Department (SED) withdrew the two books following widespread backlash from the BJP and other quarters over the inclusion of the books in Government school libraries under the Samagra

Shiksha programme. As per the Government Order number 257-JK(Edu) of 2026, the Government observed that there was "serious negligence, dereliction of duty and lack of proper due diligence" on the part of members of the Series-4 Sub-Committee and supervisory officers who recommended the books despite their "highly inappropriate content" related to separatism, "which had the potential to create law and order issues."

The SED order reads that Samagra Shiksha had received a library grant for the procurement of age-appropriate books for 18,328 Government schools and 394 PM SHRI schools, following which an Expression of Interest (EOI) was floated.

"Four expert sub-committees comprising academicians from Jammu and Kashmir divisions were constituted to evaluate and recommend books for different school levels," it reads.



J&K Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha

It reads that the committees selected 463 books submitted by 364 publishers.

"However, two books were found to contain objectionable material and were withdrawn by the department on July 3," the order reads. "The books are titled 'Personalities and Legends of J&K,' authored by Hilal Ahmad and Santosh Meena and published by Oberoi Book Service, Jammu, and 'Great Personalities of Jammu and Kashmir', authored by Dr Sushant Giri

and published by Anurag Prakashan, Delhi.

As per the order, 123 copies of the first book were supplied to schools in Jammu, Ramban and Udhampur districts, while 128 copies of the second book were distributed in Jammu and Baramulla districts before they were withdrawn.

In the wake of this, the Government placed eight officials under suspension with immediate effect under Rule 31(1)(a) of the Jammu and Kashmir Civil Services

(Classification, Control and Appeal) Rules, 1956.

The officials suspended include Coordinator Library, Samagra Shiksha Fazil Imran Saddiqui, Assistant Coordinator Gurjeet Singh, Principal Sanjeev Sharma, Academic Officer Shazia Kouser, Lecturers Imtiyaz Ahmad Mir, Niranjan Sharma, Renu Mengi and Rajmohini. "During the suspension period, all of them will remain attached to the Administrative Department of the School Education Department," the order reads.

The Government also ordered the immediate disengagement of Sheikh Suheel Ahmad, a contractual Computer Assistant assisting the Coordinator Library in Samagra Shiksha.

Also, the Government appointed Additional Chief Secretary, Power Development Department, Ashwani Kumar, as the inquiry officer, while the Additional Secretary in the General

Administration Department, Rohit Sharma has been appointed as the Presenting Officer.

The inquiry officer has been directed to submit his report to the competent authority within 30 days.

As per the order, the Government also ordered that the authors and publishers of the two books be banned and blacklisted in J&K UT.

"Any printed material authored or published by them should be withdrawn from the UT," the order reads.

Earlier, addressing a press conference in Jammu, LoP Sunil Sharma alleged that the book titled "Personalities and Legends of J&K" contains no educational or historical value but instead glorifies terrorists, separatists, stone-pelters and anti-national elements while portraying security forces and those who fought terrorism in a negative light.

He claimed that the book, authored by Hilal Ahmad and Santosh Meena and published

by Paradise Press, was not a genuine historical account but an attempt to legitimise terrorism, separatism and anti-national ideology.

Sharma alleged that the use of expressions such as "Indian Occupied Kashmir" and the presentation of separatist narratives amounted to a direct challenge to India's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He said such content sought to distort history, undermine national institutions and mislead young readers.

Former Director General of J&K Police SP Vaid also reacted sharply. He said, "It is a matter of shame for me that my name is being linked with Masarat Alam and Maqbool Bhat, given that Masarat Alam was a detainee in my custody when I served as Director General of Prisons. The truly shameful thing is that the Jammu & Kashmir Government has approved a book for inclusion in all libraries and Government schools that hails Maqbool Bhat as a martyr."

PROSPECT

Labour unrest in India: Rights, regulation, and emerging security concerns in a changing industrial order



Nagaland BJP State President Benjamin Yephthomi called on to Anil K Antony, BJP National Secretary and spokesperson in Delhi



Pijush Hazarika, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Government of Assam accompanies Habbey Teron, MLA from Amri (ST) Hills, as he files nomination for the post of Deputy Speaker of the Assam Legislative Assembly



DG CRPF GP Singh, IPS, met DGP Uttar Pradesh Rajeev Krishna, IPS during his ongoing tour to Uttar Pradesh



LAXMI SINGH

Labour unrest in India continues to be a defining feature of its industrial economy, but its nature has changed significantly over the past decade. Unlike in past conflicts that saw widespread and nationwide shutdowns of industries, recent trends have been towards the decline of intensity of conflict, reduced size of strikes, and fragmented strikes, largely due to informalisation of labor markets and wage constraints. The other end of the spectrum says the law surrounding strikes has not deviated from the interpretation of the constitution and jurisprudence from the Supreme Court, where it is held that although labour rights are safeguarded, strikes are not sacrosanct.

The statistics released by the Labour Bureau of the Ministry of Labour & Employment speak volumes about this transition. India saw a total of 41 industrial disputes comprising strikes and lockouts in 2021 which led to nearly a million man-days being lost. India experienced roughly the same number of disputes, that is, 41 cases again in 2022 involving about 3 lakh workers, although man-days lost increased to over 10 million. By 2023, the number of disputes increased slightly to 50, but the scale of participation fell sharply to just over 22,000 workers, with man-days lost dropping to around 590,000. This sharp divergence between the number of disputes and worker participation reflects a structural shift: industrial conflict is becoming more dispersed, localised, and sector-specific, rather than centralised or economy-wide.

This five-year trend fits a broader pattern in which India has seen a gradual decline in large-scale strikes compared to earlier decades. Instead of coordinated nationwide labour actions, contemporary unrest tends to emerge in specific industrial clusters such as manufacturing hubs, logistics corridors, construction sites, and emerging gig economy platforms. The fragmentation of the workforce, driven by the expansion of contract labour and informal employment, has weakened traditional trade union

structures and altered the nature of collective bargaining. As a result, industrial disputes today are less about system-wide shutdowns and more about localised grievances related to wages, working conditions, job security, and contract terms. The emerging trend follows a clear constitutional and legal structure. Indian labor enjoys the protection provided by Article 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b) and 19(1)(c) of the Constitution, granting them freedom of speech, peaceful assembly, and association. However, the exercise of these rights is limited and is subjected to certain restrictions for the sake of maintaining public order, sovereignty and essential services. Under such a legal structure, the Supreme Court of India has repeatedly made it clear that strikes are not a fundamental right.

In Radhey Shyam Sharma v. Post Master General (1964), the Court upheld restrictions on strikes in essential services, reinforcing the State's authority to regulate industrial action in the interest of public welfare and administrative continuity. This principle was further strengthened in TK Rangarajan v. Government of Tamil Nadu (2003), where the Court held in categorical terms that Government employees have no fundamental, statutory, moral, or equitable right to strike, and that participation in illegal strikes can invite disciplinary action.

The landmark Syndicate Bank v. K. Umesh Nayak, (1994) 5 SCC 572 judgment examined the legality of strikes and recognised that the right to strike is not a fundamental right, but a legal recourse subject to statutory restrictions under the Industrial Disputes Act and other labor legislations. The judgment balanced workers right to strike against larger public interest considerations. Therefore these judgments establish a clear constitutional doctrine: while association and peaceful protest are protected, strike action is a regulated legal privilege rather than an absolute entitlement. The doctrine of essential services remains central to India's industrial relations framework. Courts have consistently upheld the State's authority to prevent disruption in sectors critical to public life, including transport, communications, utilities, and emergency services. The underlying legal principle is that collective bargaining rights cannot extend to a point where they undermine essential public functions. This is reinforced in statutory



law, particularly through the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, which consolidates earlier labour legislation and introduces stricter procedural requirements for strikes, including mandatory notice periods, conciliation mechanisms, and additional safeguards in public utility services. Alongside questions of legality and industrial regulation, labour unrest also raises concerns regarding violence and public order. The Supreme Court has consistently held that while peaceful protest is protected under Article 19, any form of coercion, intimidation, or violence removes constitutional protection. Courts have upheld disciplinary and legal consequences in cases where industrial action crosses into unlawful disruption, reinforcing a core principle of Indian constitutional law: rights exist within the bounds of lawful conduct and public order.

In recent years, policy discourse has also acknowledged a narrower security dimension linked to labour unrest, particularly in relation to Left-Wing Extremism, commonly referred to as Naxalite or Maoist activity. The formal labour ecosystem operates within a regulated legal framework and remains institutionally distinct from extremist networks. However, internal security assessments and policy literature have occasionally highlighted limited and context-specific risks. In certain fragmented labour environments, particularly in economically or geographically vulnerable regions, individuals with ideological sympathies may attempt to engage with protest movements rooted in genuine economic grievances. Security doctrine on Left-Wing Extremism has also historically referenced the use of issue-

based mobilisation platforms or "front organisations" as a means of extending ideological influence into civic and labour spaces. More commonly, however, the concern is not organisational control but narrative amplification, where labour disputes are selectively highlighted or reframed within broader ideological messaging ecosystems, particularly through digital platforms. This is exactly what has happened in more than one state in recent times. The perils of creating a false narrative with an anti establishment amplification has successfully been carried out. The funding and organisational control from beyond the national frontiers has emerged as a major headache for security agencies.

The incident has brought to light the attempt of certain factors to create an omnipresent group which can professionally and effectively cause protests against anything under the sun. Ideology and preach — ability have long been rendered redundant. After certain conflicts in certain parts of the State, in May 2026, the Uttar Pradesh Government strengthened its commitment to labour welfare by expanding social security benefits for workers. The Government announced wider health insurance coverage under the Ayushman Bharat scheme for registered construction workers and their families, with over 12 lakh workers already covered. It also reaffirmed support for pension schemes for unorganised workers, affordable housing initiatives, and improved access to welfare benefits through Labour Facilitation Centres. The state emphasised universal registration of eligible workers to ensure timely delivery of health, pension, insurance, and

other social security benefits, thereby enhancing financial protection and social inclusion for the workforce.

The Uttar Pradesh Government has taken steps to strengthen wage protection and labour governance through the implementation of labour law reforms and periodic revision of minimum wages. The state continues to align its labour administration with the four Central Labour Codes, which seek to simplify labour laws, ensure timely payment of wages, improve occupational safety, and extend social security benefits to a larger workforce. The Government has also emphasised regular revision of minimum wage rates based on recommendations of the competent wage authorities, ensuring fair remuneration for workers across different sectors while promoting industrial harmony and compliance with labour standards.

Labour welfare can be further strengthened by expanding social security coverage to all unorganised and gig workers, ensuring universal registration on labour welfare portals, and improving portability of benefits for migrant workers. Regular revision of minimum wages based on inflation, effective implementation of the Labour Codes, and stronger enforcement of occupational safety standards can enhance workers' well-being. Establishing more skill development and upskilling programmes, affordable worker housing, accessible healthcare facilities, and childcare services can improve quality of life. Additionally, digital grievance redressal systems, greater awareness of welfare schemes, and increased participation of workers' representatives in policy formulation can promote inclusive and sustainable labour welfare.

The central policy challenge is therefore not suppression of labour unrest, but strengthening institutional mechanisms for dispute resolution, improving protections for informal and contract workers, and ensuring that any security concerns are addressed strictly through evidence-based legal processes. In a rapidly transforming economy, India's labour landscape is less defined by confrontation than by transition, requiring a careful balance between rights, regulation, and stability.

(The writer is an IPS officer and the views expressed are based on research towards finding solutions and are a personal opinion)

CCRAS holds 5th Executive Committee meeting; launches 3 research initiatives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Central Council for Research in Ayurvedic Sciences (CCRAS), the apex research body under the Ministry of Ayush, convened its 5th Executive Committee (EC) Meeting today under the chairmanship of Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush.

The meeting marked a significant step towards further strengthening the country's evidence-based Ayurveda research ecosystem through the launch of three major initiatives aimed at promoting research, education, scientific writing and digital transformation. Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, Secretary, Ministry of Ayush, appreciated the significant contributions of CCRAS in advancing evidence-based Ayurveda research, education and public health. He lauded the Council's sustained efforts in strengthening the national research ecosystem and encouraged the organisation to continue pursuing innovation.

The Secretary congratulated



CCRAS on several achievements, including securing 21 NABH and NABL accreditations across its institutes, establishment of the Ayush Diksha platform, successful international collaborative research initiatives, and the large-scale study on anaemia among adolescent girls.

Welcoming the Chairman and members of the newly reconstituted Executive Committee, Prof (Vaidya) Rabinarayan Acharya, Director General, CCRAS and Member Secretary of the Executive Committee, presented agenda of the meeting and highlighted the Council's major achievements.

Prof Acharya said, "CCRAS remains committed to building a globally respected, evidence-based Ayurveda research ecosystem. The

Council's achievements in scientific research, institutional excellence, digital transformation, international collaborations and capacity building reflect our unwavering commitment to advancing Ayurveda through innovation, quality and scientific validation."

The meeting was attended by Hoveyda Abbas, AS&FA, Ministry of Ayush; Satyajit Paul, Senior Statistical Advisor, Ministry of Ayush; Dr A Raghu, Advisor (Ayurveda), Ministry of Ayush; Vaidya Jayant Deopujari, Former Chairman, NCISM; Prof (Dr) Sanjeev Sharma, Vice Chancellor, National Institute of Ayurveda; Dr N Srikanth, Deputy Director General, CCRAS; Deepak Kochhar, Deputy Director (Administration), along with other members.

Tripura CM Saha flags-off Northeast's first MEMU train

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) ushered in a new era of passenger rail transportation in Tripura and the Northeast with the inauguration of the region's first Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU) train service.

Chief Minister of Tripura, Professor (Dr) Manik Saha, flagged off the inaugural run of Train No 75679/75680 (Agartala-Karimganj-Agartala) MEMU at Agartala Railway Station on 4th July, 2026.

The train, which had been operating earlier as a Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) service, has now been successfully replaced and upgraded by a new Mainline Electric Multiple Unit (MEMU), marking a major technological advancement following the electrification of the route.

The historic event marks another significant milestone in NFR's continued efforts towards modernisation, sustainable transportation and enhanced passenger convenience following the rapid electrification of railway routes across the region. The



flagging-off ceremony was held in the august presence of dignitaries like Sushanta Chowdhury, Minister of Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs, Transport and Tourism, Govt of Tripura, Rajib Bhattacharjee, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), Mina Rani Sarkar, MLA along with the Divisional Railway Manager of Lumding Division of NFR and other senior railway officials.

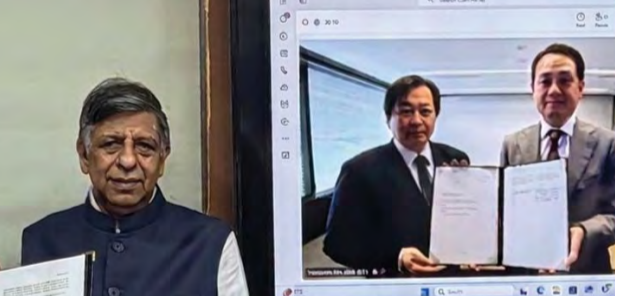
The introduction of the first MEMU service in Tripura as well as the entire NE is a landmark achievement for NFR in its mission to provide faster, cleaner and more efficient rail connectivity. Unlike Diesel Electric Multiple Unit (DEMU) trains, MEMU services operate on electric traction, making them environmentally friendly, energy-efficient and economical to operate.

POWERGRID and JBIC partner to advance India's renewable energy transition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Gurugram

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna Central Public Sector Enterprise under Ministry of Power, Govt. of India has secured a landmark green loan of JPY 80 billion from Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC), underscoring its pivotal role in India's renewable energy transformation. The loan agreement was signed by POWERGRID and JBIC on June 17, 2026.

The facility is intended to support financing of Khavda-Nagpur HVDC transmission project highlighting the strategic collaboration between POWERGRID and JBIC to develop critical infrastructure for renewable energy integration. The green loan emphasises POWERGRID's continued commitment to supporting India's energy transition goals while adhering to the environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards. In line with its commitment to sustainable development, POWERGRID has integrated ESG principles into its core business operations and adopted



ESG vision and targets. POWERGRID is actively working towards achieving its goals of net zero emissions by 2047, zero waste to landfill by 2030, and being net water positive by 2030. Headquartered in Tokyo, Japan Bank for International Cooperation (JBIC) is Japan's policy-based financial institution, wholly owned by the Japanese Government. Established in 1999, JBIC plays a pivotal role in supporting the sound development of Japan and the international economy by complementing the financing

provided by private-sector financial institutions. POWERGRID, India's premier electric power transmission utilities, is a key enabler in India's renewable energy integration. As on May 31, 2026, it owns and operates 185,750 ckm transmission lines and 291 sub-stations with power transformation capacity of 630,516 Mega Volt Amperes (MVA), company's EHV power transmission network is spread across India and includes cross-border interconnections.

Assam Skill University commences internship programmes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE Guwahati

Assam Skill University has commenced its Internship Programmes from 1st July onwards across various departments, with the objective of providing students practical exposure, hands-on learning, and skill-based training in emerging and industry-relevant areas.

The internship programmes include various training programs in Electric Vehicle, Solar Energy, Semiconductor Assembly and Testing, IoT and PCB Design, Python Programming, Machine Learning, Speech Technology, Food, Nutrition & Diet Management, Soft skills and professional etiquette, Mushroom Technology, Advanced Surveying, CNC Milling and few more.



Vice Chancellor Subhas Chandra Das, IAS (Retd) acknowledge efforts made by all the concerned Head of Departments in commencing these industry relevant internship programmes.

Hanif Noorani, ACS, Registrar, Assam Skill University, stated, "The commencement of these internship pro-

grammes marks an important step towards strengthening skill-based education at the University. We are committed to ensuring smooth academic coordination and providing students meaningful opportunities for practical and industry-oriented learning."

Highlighting the academic importance, Prof (Dr) Manoj Deka, Dean of Academics at Assam Skill University, stated, "Internships are an important bridge between classroom learning and real-world application. Through these programmes, students will gain hands-on exposure, develop confidence, and strengthen their knowledge with practical experience."

A total of more than 200 students have enrolled in the internship programmes across seven departments

of the University. With participants drawn from various districts of Assam, the internship programmes reflect Assam Skill University's commitment to expanding access to quality skill education and creating inclusive, industry-oriented learning opportunities for students.

Prof (Dr) Vikas Singh Bhadoria Director of Industry Engagement and Outreach, Assam Skill University, said, "Assam Skill University is committed to upskilling students from various parts of Assam so that they are better prepared to meet present industry needs. These internship programmes are designed to provide practical exposure, improve employability, and help students understand the skills required in today's professional world."

Advertisement for Dr. Ambedkar Foundation, Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India. Includes details about the Chair Professor position and application process.

## FROM THE WORLD

### PERU

#### Fujimori wins presidential poll

Conservative politician Keiko Fujimori on Friday was declared the winner of the presidential runoff election in Peru, which was dominated by people's concerns over surging crime. Fujimori, 51, the daughter of a disgraced former president, was running for the presidency for the fourth time. She will be Peru's ninth president in 10 years when she takes office later this month. The election win was certified Friday by the country's top election authority. Figures released by election officials earlier in the week showed that with 100 per cent of ballots tallied, Fujimori received 9,223,000 votes, or 50.135 per cent of the total, while nationalist congressman Roberto Sanchez earned over 9,173,000 votes, or 49.865 per cent. (AP)

### MALI

#### Rebels target northern towns

The Malian army said on Saturday that several northern towns, including Gao and Sevare, were targeted by rebels. The statement came as a rebel group announced a new offensive to capture a northern town. Mohamed Elmaouloud Ramadan, a spokesperson for the Azawad Liberation Front (FLA), said in a Facebook post that the town of Anefis was being targeted by the separatists. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Mali has previously faced insurgencies by militants affiliated with al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, as well as a separatist rebellion in the country's north. The separatists have been fighting for years to create an independent state in northern Mali. Along with Mali, neighbouring Niger and Burkina Faso have also been battling al-Qaida and IS affiliates. (AP)

# Fireworks, heat, politics: America celebrates its 250th birthday

STEVEN SLOAN ■ Washington

The 250th anniversary of American independence is colliding with a country gripped by political polarisation and a heat wave bearing down on millions of people across multiple states as celebrations get underway across the United States on Saturday.

The signing of the Declaration of Independence, one of history's most celebrated articulations of democratic ambitions, is being marked in myriad ways. President Donald Trump, set to take a central role in festivities, plans to speak on the National Mall in Washington ahead of what's being billed as a historically enormous fireworks show that will rain down over the nation's capital.

The president was in South Dakota at Mount Rushmore on Friday, where he delivered a dark speech about the threat of communism in the US as the chiselled images of four of his most prominent predecessors



A US Coast Guard vessel sits with other pleasure craft below the Statue of Liberty in the New York harbor ahead of Sail250, a gathering of tall ships and military ships honoring America's 250th Anniversary on Saturday in New York. PTI

loomed behind him. Elsewhere, fireworks are scheduled to be set off Saturday over Navy Pier in Chicago and against the skyline of New York City, which also hosted a ball drop at midnight to usher in the holiday with the same fanfare as New Year's Eve. Bristol, Rhode Island, describes itself as the home of the nation's

oldest Independence Day celebrations, dating to 1785. In Los Angeles, Queen Latifah will host a concert featuring performances by The Smashing Pumpkins and Chris Stapleton. Chaka Khan is billed as a special guest.

Anticipation for the milestone holiday has been building for much of the year, serving as an

opportunity for Americans to reflect on their complicated history as onetime colonists of an empire who became a superpower of their own. Celebrations months in the making had to adjust or cancel activities entirely as much of the East Coast sweltered under heat that approached and in many cases surpassed triple digits.

Heat is defining the big weekend in many places

In Washington, the Great American State Fair was closed for several hours Friday afternoon during the worst of the heat. The city's Independence Day parade scheduled for Saturday was cancelled. To the chagrin of many on the East Coast, the weather was downright pleasant on the other side of the country. The Pacific Northwest enjoyed temperatures in the 60s on Friday with a few light showers.

In the Seattle suburb of Issaquah, Megan Kurowski, 31, brought her two dogs to the dog park so they could get some exercise before she

went to work. Kurowski said she was feeling positive about America's 250th anniversary and was planning a possible paddleboard to watch the fireworks.

"Everyone's just, from what it seems, been pretty excited about celebrating 250 years," she said.

Other American pastimes overlap with the holiday.

More than a dozen Major League Baseball games are on the schedule for Saturday. The World Cup, being hosted in the US for the first time in 32 years, will have matches in Houston and Philadelphia on Saturday, following a nail-biter overtime win by Argentina over Cape Verde on Friday outside Miami. Pop culture enthusiasts can obsess over Taylor Swift's Friday wedding to football player Travis Kelce at New York City's Madison Square Garden. And Madonna released her 15th studio album, a collection of dance tracks.

An uneasy nation gets ready to celebrate

The celebrations are unfolding against the backdrop of a deep divide that has been expanding for years, visible in everything from political expression to cultural norms to age-old questions over race, class and immigration.

At Mount Rushmore on Friday, Trump spoke of communism as a "mortal threat to American liberty."

"It is the greatest threat to our country, including World War I, World War II, Pearl Harbour, or even 9/11," the Republican president said.

Without naming Trump, New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a Democrat who is also a democratic socialist and recently backed several successful congressional candidates in their primaries, appeared to reference Trump during a speech on Friday.

"Those ideals upon which our nation was built — they are strong enough to endure any authoritarian regime, but only if we reach for them," he said. (AP)

## 3 dead, others rescued after boat capsizes on Wisconsin lake

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Lake Geneva

Three people died and seven others were rescued Friday after a boat capsized in Geneva Lake as a strong storm passed through southern Wisconsin, an official said.

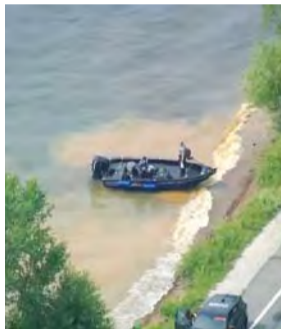
Many injuries were reported in Wisconsin's Walworth County after the storm toppled trees, knocked down power lines and damaged buildings, said Tom Hausner, undersheriff for the Walworth County Sheriff's department.

Hausner said he did not know any other information about the people who died and those rescued.

Police in the city of Lake Geneva are investigating, Hausner said. Officials there didn't immediately respond to an email and voice message from *The Associated Press* seeking more information.

Lake Geneva Mayor Todd Krause declared an emergency and said that one person had minor injuries after being struck by a falling tree. Several areas of the city were experiencing power outages, he said in a statement.

Hausner said county authorities received multiple 911 calls reporting damage and people trapped in buildings and



seeking help. He said deputies responded immediately but were delayed by downed power lines and trees blocking streets.

"Power lines are all over the place. We are urging people to stay away," he said. Hausner said his agency asked for help from law enforcement in nearby counties and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

Geneva Lake, in southern Wisconsin, attracts tourists from the Chicago area and other parts. The population in Walworth County, where the lake is located, nearly doubles during holiday weekends, Hausner said.

The storms that rolled through the Midwest on Friday afternoon and evening prompted multiple cities to cancel holiday festivals and reschedule fireworks displays.

## Trump moots reunion of presidents at White House to watch football

SAGAR KULKARNI ■ Washington

President Donald Trump suggested a reunion of former presidents, including Barack Obama and Joe Biden, at the White House to watch football. Trump made the suggestion on the podcast hosted by US Second Lady Usha Vance which was released on Friday ahead of the 250th anniversary of American Independence.

The episode of "Storytime with the Second Lady" had Trump reading a book "President's Play!" published by the White House Historical Association.

Trump leaves no opportunity to criticise Obama and mock Biden in his public speeches or press conferences. As Trump flipped to a page showing a president hosting a live viewing of the Super Bowl at the White House, he told the Second Lady that it gave him an idea.

"Maybe I should invite Barack Hussein Obama, Joe Biden, with the Bushes - or Bush. Maybe I should invite some of those people to watch a football game together," Trump said.

"Wouldn't that be a nice story? The press would go wild," he added.

"A president reunion? That



would be fun," Vance quipped.

The podcast features Vance interviewing guests as they narrate books to children via YouTube.

The book that Trump read on the podcast showed what presidents throughout American history liked to

do in their spare time. "You know, my attitude is you're at the White House for a short period of time and it's an honour to be here and you should work for the people, right?" Trump said.

Former President Bill Clinton came in for rare praise from Trump. (PTI)

## India envoy seeks more pharma exports, China investment for closer ties

KUM VARMA ■ Beijing

China opening its market to Indian products, especially pharmaceuticals, coupled with investments in New Delhi, will be "good for the larger country-to-country relationship", envoy Vikram Doraiswami said on Saturday.

"Obviously, we would like to be able to export more to China. There is nothing unreasonable about suggesting that, particularly in areas where we believe we have a competitive advantage such as pharmaceuticals," the Indian ambassador said.

The envoy made these remarks during a panel discussion on Protectionism and



Global Economic Governance at the World Peace Forum organised by China's Tsinghua University here.

"For instance, we're one of the world's biggest exporters of pharmaceuticals to advanced markets," he said, answering a question on India, China trade and investment ties.

Trade and commerce constitute an important component of India-China relations. China has overtaken the US to emerge as India's largest trading partner in 2025-26, with bilateral trade reaching \$151.1 billion. However, the country's trade deficit with Beijing widened to an all-time high of \$112.16 billion during the period, according to the Indian Ministry of Commerce data.

India's exports to China rose 36.66 per cent to \$19.47 billion during the last fiscal year, while imports increased 16 per cent to \$131.63 billion.

The trade deficit swelled to an all-time high of USD 112.6 billion in 2025-26 as

against \$99.2 billion in 2024-25. India has long been demanding that China open its IT, pharmaceutical and agriculture sectors, which are the country's strong areas.

Doraiswami recently held talks with Wang Liping, Director General of the Department of Asian Affairs, Ministry of Commerce of China, to discuss initiatives to step up trade ties.

The envoy expressed hope that Chinese partners will work with India to ensure that firms producing high-quality generic medicines, which are exported to the US and other places, can be exported to the Chinese market as well. (PTI)

## Brazil's top candidates clash over US tariff proposal

BELEONORE HUGHES ■ Rio De Janeiro

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and his rival Sen Flavio Bolsonaro clashed over US tariffs this week, as both sought to discourage the Trump administration from following through with its proposal of applying taxes of 25 per cent on Brazilian products despite an extensive US trade surplus.

The two top candidates for October's presidential election traded barbs over their responses, suggesting that they believe how they are perceived as handling the deeply unpopular US tariffs



will be a key factor in the vote.

While Sen. Bolsonaro, son of former President Jair Bolsonaro, emphasised that the tariffs would strengthen Lula, Brazil's government rebuked the argument that its trade policies are unreasonable, discriminatory or burdensome to US commerce. (AP)

The Trump administration first imposed a 50 per cent tariff on Brazilian imports last July, citing a "witch hunt" against Jair Bolsonaro, who was on trial at the time for attempting a coup despite his 2022 electoral defeat to Lula and was later convicted.

In his letter, US President Donald Trump also accused Brazil of unfair trade practices and said he had directed US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer to initiate an investigation, which led the office to charge Brazil with lax anti-corruption enforcement and unfair tariffs, among other things, in June. (AP)

## Decision to resign intensely personal: UK PM Keir Starmer

ADITI KHANNA ■ London

Keir Starmer has spoken of his decision to resign as Labour Party leader and British Prime Minister as an "intensely personal" one, which he took with his wife and children at a family weekend away.

In his first interview since his Downing Street statement that fired the starting gun for a leadership election, Starmer told the BBC on Friday evening that he would complete his current term as a central London member of Parliament.

But, while on the backbenches of Parliament, the 63-year-old politician plans on "keeping his mouth shut" to allow his successor - widely expected to be former Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham - to get on with the job.



"I grappled with what was the best thing to do for me, for the country, for the government," said Starmer. "In the end it became an intensely personal decision. And that's why it was a decision taken ultimately when (my wife) Vic and I were away with the kids," he said.

The weekend before June 22, when he announced his resignation on the steps of 10 Downing Street in London, the

Starmer family was at Chequers - the UK PM's countryside retreat in Buckinghamshire.

"We just spent two days together as a family and that's when I came to my final decision... Taking the decision that your political career is over, it is an intensely personal matter, or at least it was for me," he shared.

In the interview which marks exactly two years since he won Labour a landslide

general election victory, Starmer cautioned his successor that they would be faced with similar global challenges that he had been consumed by during his truncated tenure as PM.

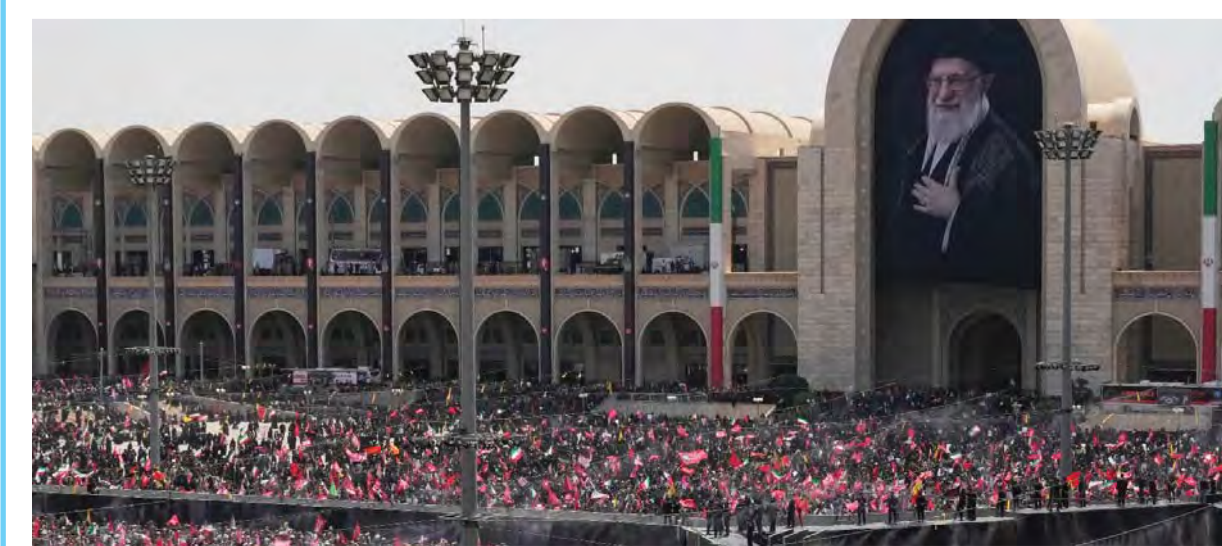
"Whoever is my successor, is going to face the same global conflict. We keep saying, and it's true, we're in a more dangerous and volatile world than we've been in for probably most of my lifetime. That's not just a phrase, that's reality. That's not going to change. And the domestic challenges aren't going to change," he said.

Despite being shunted out of office by what was effectively an internal coup, Starmer insisted he "never had any personal animosity" towards Andy Burnham and

would "do everything I possibly can to make sure" that the next government succeeds.

"(I will be) keeping my mouth shut, rather than giving constant advice to my successor about what they should be doing," he stated.

The caretaker PM also highlighted that his four years as Labour leader in Opposition prior to winning the July 2024 general election were "absolutely core" to his legacy. "The Labour Party arguably could have been lost, but I stepped up as leader and with others we saved the Labour Party," he asserted, admitting that he had been ousted because his party MPs no longer believed he was "the right person to take us into the next election." (PTI)



Mourners gather for the start of the dayslong funeral ceremonies for the slain Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and members of his family at the Imam Khomeini Mosalla Grand Mosque in Tehran, Iran on Saturday. PTI

## Pope marks July 4 by praying in Lampedusa for migrants who died seeking freedom, prosperity

NICOLE WINFIELD/ANDREA ROSA ■ Sicily (Italy)

Pope Leo XIV, who has sparred with the Trump administration over its immigration crackdown, spent the Fourth of July on Saturday in the epicentre of Europe's migration debate to honour the tens of thousands of people who have died trying to reach Europe to find freedom and prosperity.

While the United States marks the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence with rallies, parties and fireworks,



Pope Leo XIV visits the Gateway of Europe monument in Lampedusa, Sicily, southern Italy on Saturday. PTI

history's first US-born pope travelled to the Sicilian island of Lampedusa to pray at a migrant cemetery and celebrate a solemn Mass for the

island's newest arrivals. In doing so, Leo was sending a powerfully symbolic message to the United States and Europe of the

Christian obligation to uphold the dignity of every human being, migrants and the most vulnerable especially, while reminding the United States that it was founded by immigrants.

In a letter sent to Americans on the July 4 anniversary, Leo insisted that protecting the unborn and all human life also means "welcoming, protecting and assisting immigrants, whose hopes, sacrifices and contribution have formed part of the history of this country from its very beginning." (AP)

# From Girit to Glory: How PM Modi reimagined India's relationship with its global civilisational family



**PROFESSOR GOURAV VALLABH**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address to the National Assembly of Seychelles on 28 June 2026 contained a historical reference whose significance extended far beyond diplomacy. Recalling the arrival of five Indians on Sainte Anne Island in August 1770, he reminded the world that India's engagement with countries such as Seychelles predates modern diplomacy by centuries. More importantly, it reflected a larger transformation in India's foreign policy: overseas Indians are no longer viewed merely as expatriates but as an enduring part of India's civilisational family.

This shift is best understood through the history of the Giritiyas. After the abolition of slavery in the British Empire, over a million Indians were transported as indentured labourers to Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, South Africa, Réunion, Jamaica and other colonies. The word 'agreement' became 'giriti', and those who signed these exploitative contracts became known as Giritiyas. Yet the story of Giriti is far more than a collection of statistics. These men and women endured deception, dangerous voyages, disease, discrimination and forced labour. They were insulted as

'coolies', 'jahajis' and 'contractees', yet they preserved India's civilisation. With little more than copies of the Ramcharitmanas, the Bhagavad Gita, Tulsi beads and memories of home, they ensured that Diwali, Holi, Chhath, Bhojpur traditions, Tamil culture and the Hindi language flourished across distant lands. Despite hardship, discrimination, and separation from their homeland, they preserved India's languages, faiths, and cultural traditions with extraordinary resilience.

The world knows this history because courageous reformers such as Pandit Totaram Sanadhya, Barrister Manilal Maganlal Shah, AD Patel, Lokmanya Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Mahatma Gandhi exposed the realities of the indenture system and campaigned for its abolition. Their descendants today occupy the highest constitutional offices across many countries, as presidents, prime ministers, judges, parliamentarians, entrepreneurs, and scholars. Few communities in world history have travelled such a remarkable journey from bondage to leadership.

After Independence, overseas Indians, including the Giritiya community, did not become a central pillar of foreign policy. The government at the time, and Jawaharlal Nehru, emphasised that overseas Indians owed complete allegiance to their adopted countries. This policy continued for decades. However, while the Giritiya community remained emotionally connected to India, it remained institutionally distant. Fiji's political crises in 1987 and 2006



heightened insecurity among Indo-Fijians and prompted an important question: Was India only a memory of their ancestors, or would it also stand beside them in the present?

Over the past decade, India has answered that question in a fundamentally different way. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, overseas Indians, particularly the Giritiya community, have become natural partners in India's global journey. Earlier, the message was: 'Your country of residence is your nation; your loyalty belongs there.' Today, India adds an equally important dimension: 'Be exemplary citizens where you live. India does not seek your political allegiance. It remains the civilisational home of your heritage and will

always stand by your culture, identity and dignity.' India reassures them that it will always stand as the custodian of their civilisational heritage, culture and dignity. This subtle yet profound shift has transformed the emotional relationship between India and its global diaspora.

This transformation is evident not only in symbolism but also in policy. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas has gained renewed prominence. The Overseas Citizen of India framework has been strengthened. High-level visits to Giriti countries have become more frequent, while the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Cooperation has given small island nations an unprecedented place in India's strategic thinking. Together, these initiatives reflect the understand-

ing that cultural bonds can strengthen diplomatic partnerships.

The COVID-19 pandemic offered perhaps the clearest demonstration of this philosophy. Through Vaccine Maitri, India supplied vaccines, medicines and humanitarian assistance to Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Suriname, Seychelles and several other partner countries. Mission SAGAR further expanded cooperation in maritime security, disaster relief, healthcare, digital public infrastructure, renewable energy and capacity building. These initiatives reinforced India's reputation as a dependable development partner while deepening people-to-people trust.

This outreach also advances India's long-term strategic interests. The Giriti countries occupy an increasingly important place in the Indo-Pacific, the Blue Economy and Global South cooperation. Stronger engagement with them strengthens India's maritime partnerships, expands its diplomatic footprint and creates new opportunities for trade, technology and multilateral collaboration. Civilisational diplomacy and strategic diplomacy therefore complement rather than contradict each other.

Perhaps the most striking feature of this transformation is that India has never asked the Giriti diaspora to choose between citizenship and civilisation. Instead, it has become the moral guarantor of their identity without interfering in the sovereignty of their adopted nations. This balance has enabled India to build trust across continents while remaining faithful to its

democratic values and international commitments.

Across Mauritius, Fiji, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Indian Arrival Day and Giriti commemorations are now celebrated with national honour. Communities once dismissed as indentured labourers are recognised as nation-builders.

Prime Minister Modi's Seychelles speech was therefore not merely an act of historical remembrance. It reflected a broader vision of India's place in the world. The story of the Giritiyas is no longer confined to museums or archives; it has become part of India's contemporary diplomatic narrative. The journey from Giriti to glory mirrors India's own transformation, from a nation preoccupied with survival to one confident enough to draw strength from its civilisation while engaging the world with purpose. In that sense, India's evolving diaspora policy represents more than an adjustment in foreign policy. It is the rediscovery of a civilisational responsibility. History carried the Giritiyas across the oceans. Contemporary India has brought them back to the centre of its national consciousness. By blending strategic realism with cultural confidence, the Modi government has redefined India's relationship with its global family. It may well prove to be one of the most enduring legacies of India's twenty-first-century diplomacy.

*(Writer is a PT Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM))*

## Ukrainian drones hit St Petersburg oil terminal in latest long-range attack on Russia

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
■ Moscow

A Ukrainian drone attack struck an oil terminal in St Petersburg on Saturday, Russian officials said, as Kyiv presses on with bombardment of Russia's oil infrastructure.

Almost daily long-range attacks on Russian oil facilities have created a fuel crisis and heaped political pressure on the Kremlin as its all-out invasion of Ukraine stretches into its fifth year.

Gov. Alexander Beglov said the city's Kirovsky district on the Baltic Sea was hit. He also said that air defences shot down 72 Ukrainian drones across Russia's second-largest city and the surrounding region. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attack as part of Ukraine's "long-range sanctions" against Russia. He said that Ukrainian forces also hit a military target on the island of Kronstadt, just off the coast of St Petersburg.

"The Ukrainian defence forces hit the port oil infrastructure, which earns money for the Russian war, and there were also hits on Kronstadt - an important military target," he said in a post on Telegram.



The First Deputy Chief of the General Staff of Russian Armed Forces Col Gen Sergei Rudskey holds a news briefing in Moscow on Saturday (AP)

St Petersburg's Kirovsky district was previously hit in June, ahead of Russia's flagship St Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The Crimean peninsula, which Russia annexed in 2014, has suffered particularly from heavy strikes, causing local authorities to suspend gasoline sales to civilians. A Ukrainian attack on Saturday killed one person and injured two more, including a 10-year-old child, the Moscow-installed Gov. Sergei Aksyonov said.

**Ukrainian attacks bring the war home**

Russian President Vladimir Putin has shrugged off Ukraine's strikes on Russia's energy facilities as "not critical," and insisted the war will continue until his goals are met. He has described the

attacks on Russian energy as an effort by Ukraine to distract attention from its losses on the battlefield, although analysts say the advance of Russian forces has been stymied in recent months.

On Friday, Putin visited the Russian military headquarters directing the war in Ukraine and received a report on the capture of the city of Kostyantynivka, after weeks of intense street battles. He hailed it as a key step toward capturing the nearby cities of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the key remaining strongholds in the so-called "forest belt" of heavily fortified cities in the Donetsk region that remain in Ukraine's hands.

The capture of Kostyantynivka, a big transport and industrial hub, is of "major strategic importance,"

Putin, clad in military fatigues, said in televised comments.

Zelenskyy denied that Russia took control of the city. "It is just another Russian lie, an attempt to generate some kind of a news story," he wrote on social media Saturday. "If Kostyantynivka were under Russian control, then perhaps Putin would have no problem meeting me there to find a diplomatic way to finally end this war. But the fact is, he won't cross the front line - reality is very different from Putin's words."

Zelenskyy's post also seemed to appeal to US President Donald Trump. "Now, on the eve of America's Independence Day, Putin has chosen to lie to the world and to the President of the United States about the situation on the front."

Putin appears to believe his government can keep the fuel crisis from eroding his authority and support for the war he launched more than four years ago. At the very least, the attacks have brought the war home even more poignantly for millions of Russians, shattering Putin's narrative of the conflict as something that doesn't affect the lives of ordinary people in his country. (AP)

## Mango festival in Houston aims to boost trade with US

**SEEMA HAKHU KACHRU**  
■ Houston

A two-day event organised here to promote Indian mangoes and other premium agricultural products into mainstream Texas retail channels brought together exporters, importers, distributors and retailers as part of the trade diplomacy with the US.

"Mango Festival India Showcase" was organised by the Consulate General of India in Houston in collaboration with the Indo-American Chamber of Commerce of Greater Houston (IACCGH), and the Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) on Thursday and Friday.

The event that combined trade diplomacy with market outreach through a two-stage format was organised with the support from the India Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO).

The first day featured a business-to-business (B2B) briefing at the Consulate premises, while the second day transitioned to a business-to-consumer (B2C) public showcase at Keemat Store in Hillcroft, Houston.

Stating that events like this enable the Texas business community to engage



Consul General DC Manjunath addresses a two-day Mango festival organised by the Consulate General of India in collaboration with APEDA and the ITPO in Houston, United States (PTI)

directly with India's trade promotion institutions and explore concrete opportunities," Consul General DC Manjunath also underscored efforts to improve access to India's trade ecosystem.

"We want to make India's trade ecosystem as accessible as possible. I encourage industry leaders to use the India-USA Trade Portal as a direct gateway to trusted suppliers." Jagdip Ahluwalia, Executive Director and IACCGH founder, said, "Houston is the logistical heart of the American South. We are connecting Texas infrastructure with Indian export capabilities to build steady, high-volume supply chains."

The opening programme also included a fireside chat on logistics and trade infrastructure with Neeraj

Kharwal, Managing Director of ITPO and a presentation by C B Singh, Deputy General Manager of APEDA.

The second day opened the India Showcase to the public at the Keemat Store, allowing distributors and retailers to gauge consumer response firsthand.

Asserting that this format was designed to connect trade discussions with market feedback, Manjunath said: "The first day brought exporters and importers together. On the second day, we partnered with the grocery venue to bring Houstonians a taste of select varieties."

While Indian mangoes have traditionally relied on niche pre-orders and specialty ethnic grocers, the public tasting demonstrated

growing interest among a broader consumer base as it attracted large, diverse crowds. Despite the sweltering Texas heat, the festival drew a strong, diverse turnout; cultural nostalgia brought out the South Asian diaspora, while other visitors sampled premium Kesar, Chausa, Langra, and Banganapalli varieties for the first time.

Officials told PTI they hope to build on the momentum by expanding the range of Indian agricultural products available in the region, including pomegranates, apples, organic honey, and Kashmiri saffron. The Consulate later posted on X that the event drew enthusiastic participation from Consular corps, local families, community members, and business leaders across Houston.

"Attendees enjoyed premium varieties of Indian mangoes, mango based products, and India's globally renowned Basmati rice were on display, showcasing India's strength as a reliable partner in the global agri export value chain," it said.

Similar mango festivals have been organised at Seattle, New York and Washington earlier in the month showcasing a variety of the tropical fruit. (PTI)

## India-Australia ties never been more consequential: PM Albanese

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Canberra

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Saturday announced his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi's visit to the Pacific nation next week, saying the bilateral relationship has "never been more consequential".

"I am honoured to welcome my friend Prime Minister Modi to Australia for our Annual Leaders' Summit," Albanese said in a statement. Modi will visit Melbourne from July 8-10 as the second leg of a three-nation tour beginning in Indonesia on July 6 and concluding in New Zealand on July 11.

"The Australia-India relationship has never been more consequential, and our partnership fosters peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific," Albanese said.

"Our cooperation on trade, defence and security, and technology is delivering benefits for both countries," Albanese's office added.

Albanese last met Modi on the margins of the G20 Summit in Johannesburg in 2025. "As the world's fourth largest and fastest growing economy, India is a critical economic partner for Australia," the statement said.



"Our relationship is underpinned by our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and supported by deep economic and cultural connections," it said. The Indian High Commission in Canberra welcomed Australia's announcement in a post on X.

"The visit reflects the depth of the India-Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and our shared commitment to advancing peace, prosperity and stability in the Indo-Pacific. We look forward to a productive and memorable visit," the High Commission said.

The leaders will meet in Melbourne for bilateral discussions. Modi will also call on Governor General Sam Mostyn AC during the visit, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a press release in New Delhi on Friday.

Modi will also participate in the India-Australia CEOs Forum and address a gathering of the diaspora, it said. (PTI)

## Egypt uncovers lost Byzantine-era city in western desert

**SAMY MAGDY** ■ Cairo

A well-preserved Byzantine-era residential city in the western desert is one of two major archaeological finds announced by Egypt on Saturday.

The recent discoveries at the Dakhla Oasis and at the Marina el-Alamein archaeological site, near Alexandria, are the latest findings which the Egyptian government hopes will boost the country's vital tourism sector, partially driven by antiquities sightseeing.

Along with the strategic Suez Canal, tourism is a major source of foreign cur-



rency in the cash-strapped country. The Tourism and Antiquities Ministry said that the first discovery reveals details of daily life, urban development and economic activities in the Dakhla Oasis in the fourth century,

when Egypt was part of the Byzantine empire.

The unearthed quarters included north-south thoroughfares intersected by east-west streets, forming open squares and public spaces, said Hisham el-

Leithy, secretary general of the supreme council of antiquities.

A basilica church, dating back to the mid-fourth century, stands at the settlement's head, overlooking its main streets, along with remains of two watchtowers to safeguard the outskirts, said Mahmoud Massoud, who chairs the archaeological mission.

The oasis, located in Egypt's western province of New Valley in the western desert, is on UNESCO's Tentative List, a step away from being added to the agency's World Heritage List. (AP)

## America in focus: Consumers still gloomy about economy; US hiring falls in June

**MICHELLE CHAPMAN**  
■ Washington

The economy, inflation, and how those forces could impact the lives of Americans were front and centre over the past week. Trips to the grocery store or gas station are more painful than they were last year, and rising costs are impacting the decisions of both households and businesses.

Here's a snapshot of prominent economic data



and news that occurred over the past week, and what it potentially means for you.

**Consumers are still gloomy about the economy** Americans' attitudes

toward the economy improved slightly this month as gas prices declined, but their outlook is still mostly negative by historical standards.

The Conference Board said Tuesday that its consumer confidence index rose 0.6 points to 91.2 in June, a figure that is still below its year-ago reading of 95.2. Consumer attitudes worsened after the Iran war caused oil and gas prices to spike, accelerating inflation and causing

Americans' inflation-adjusted incomes to decline. Before the pandemic, the index regularly topped 120.

The report suggests that consumer confidence is recovering only slowly from the hit caused by the Iran war.

**US hiring drops in June** US employers pulled back on hiring last month and added only 57,000 jobs, less than half the previous month's total and a sign that companies still have a cautious economic outlook. (AP)

## Pakistan announces compensation for bus accident victims' families

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Peshawar

Families of the victims of a bus accident in northwest Pakistan will receive a financial assistance package, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi announced on Saturday.

At least 40 people, including women and children, were killed when the bus they were travelling in fell into a ravine in Dera Ismail Khan district of the province on Friday. The Peshawar-bound bus had started from Quetta in Balochistan province.

The provincial government will give Pakistani rupees (PKR) 2 million and PKR 1 million to the families of the deceased and the injured respectively, an official statement said.

Victims from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province alone would be eligible for the compensation package. Afridi also directed the relevant authorities to complete all necessary formalities without delay to ensure immediate disbursement of compensation.

Preliminary investigation suggested that the brakes of the bus failed, causing the driver to lose control while navigating a difficult bend on



Rescue workers and volunteers cover bodies after recovering them after a passenger bus plunged from a highway into a rocky ravine in Dana Sar, a remote area near the border of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces in southwestern Pakistan (PTI)

the mountainous terrain. The bus skidded off the road and fell into the ravine killing 40 and injuring eight passengers.

Road accidents are common and often fatal in the mountainous regions of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa because of a combination of factors such as treacherous terrain, extreme weather, frequent traffic violations, poor road conditions, poor vehicle conditions and untrained drivers. (PTI)



## BRIEFLY

### Africa's WC surge fades as Ghana falls to Colombia

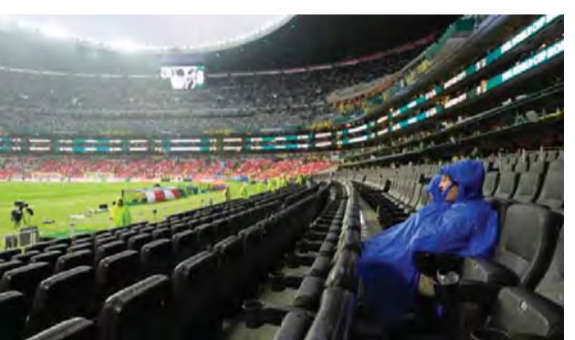


Africa set a record by sending nine of its teams to the knockout rounds of the World Cup. Seven of them were KO'd in the first round. Ghana was the last African team to play in the Round of 32 on Friday night, and the white-clad Black Stars went down with a whimper in a 1-0 loss to Colombia. That left only Morocco, which made a surprising run to the semifinals four years ago in Qatar, and Egypt to carry the hopes of the continent when they play for a spot in the quarterfinals. Morocco faces Canada in the first Round of 16 matchup on Saturday in Houston.

Egypt survived a shootout with Australia earlier on Friday to earn a date with Lionel Messi and defending champion Argentina on Tuesday in Atlanta. La Albiceleste nearly made history of their own at the expense of Cape Verde on Friday, when the tiny island nation off the western coast of Africa took them to extra time. Argentina ultimately prevailed 3-2 in one of the best matches of the tournament. "It's a source of great pride so many African teams qualified for the round of 32," Congo coach Sebastien Desabre said. Africa has never sent three teams to the Round of 16. The most is two, when Senegal advanced alongside Morocco four years ago, and at the 2014 tournament in Brazil, when Algeria and Nigeria both made it — and were promptly beaten.

"For a long time, African nations have been doubted in what they can do at major competitions," Ghana forward Brandon Thomas-Asante said earlier this week, "and I'm glad to see so much success among all the African nations, and it just shows much talent there is all across the world, and Africa is no different." Indeed, even in defeat, African teams acquitted themselves well at the World Cup. Congo led most of its match against England before Harry Kane scored two late goals to rescue the Three Lions. Belgium needed two goals in the waning minutes of regulation before the eventual winner with seconds left in extra time against Senegal. (AP)

### Start time for Mexico vs England unchanged despite bad weather



The World Cup match between Mexico and England on Sunday will remain at the original scheduled time despite concerns about a potential afternoon thunderstorm.

FIFA had been looking at the possibility of starting the round of 16 game at the Azteca Stadium earlier than the scheduled 6 pm local time, a person with knowledge of the situation told The Associated Press. The person spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak publicly. But a Mexican federation official told the AP that after deliberation FIFA decided the match would remain unchanged. That person also spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to comment publicly. Among the reasons for exploring the change was because of possible disruption caused by flooding.

Mexico coach Javier Aguirre criticised the proposed change earlier Friday. "It's a kick in the gut; now we must change everything. It's not that all the work goes down the drain — though it's close — because you're having to scrap six hours of scheduled planning. I don't like it at all," Aguirre told Radio Formula. "Obviously, we'll abide by what FIFA says, but neither my players nor I are happy about it."

Rescheduling the match also could have affected England's preparations. The Three Lions are scheduled to arrive late Friday and hold their Saturday training session at the grounds of UNAM Pumas in the southern part of the capital, leaving them with significantly less time to acclimate to Mexico City's high elevation.

The Azteca Stadium sits at more than 7,300 feet above sea level. For elite athletes to perform at their peak at high altitude, a period of adaptation is required to reduce fatigue caused by lower atmospheric pressure and reduced oxygen availability, experts say. Sports scientists generally recommend an extended acclimation period of at least two weeks, or the "fly-in, fly-out" method of arriving as close to game time as possible before acute symptoms set in. England coach Thomas Tuchel has already spoken about the difficulties his team faces in Mexico City. "My understanding is that we cannot adapt to the altitude. That is just a huge advantage that Mexico will have," Tuchel said this week. "It just takes too much time." The game will be Mexico City's fifth and final match of this year's World Cup. (AP)

# Lionel Messi scores 20th World Cup goal

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Miami Gardens

Lionel Messi's goal-scoring streak lived on, and he made it look easy. His hopes of a second consecutive World Cup title also lived on — and that accomplishment was anything but easy.

Messi's goal in the 29th minute was the 20th of his World Cup career, extending his record and moving him two ahead of France's Kylian Mbappe on the all-time list. It was the opener of what became a wild night, with Argentina escaping with a 3-2 win over Cape Verde in extra time against a huge underdog. Messi was pictured later at his media conference with a large bump on his head after apparently being hit with a knee during a collision with a Cape Verde player. "It hurts a little but I'm good," he was quoted in comments translated from

Spanish about the goose-egg over his right eye.

Messi — who now has goals in a record eight consecutive World Cup games going back to Argentina's run to the 2022 title — seemed relieved after the match, and lauded Cape Verde's defense for giving his club fits. "We did good things," Messi said in his native Spanish, "and we have to correct the bad things."

Messi has seven goals in this World Cup — one more than Mbappe in the race for the Golden Boot as the top scorer of the tournament — and has scored 12 times during his eight-game World Cup streak. He has been great, and Argentina has needed him to be great.

"For me, it represents a lot to be friends with him," said Rodrigo De Paul, Messi's teammate with Argentina and Inter Miami. "For me, friendship is one of the most



important things that we all have and I consider myself fortunate to be there, to share these moments with him." And there has been no shortage of moments.

Messi had the game's first good chance Friday, his all-world left foot sending a shot skidding across the goal mouth but outside of the right post in the 15th minute. After getting taken down, he had a 25-yard free kick

three minutes later that was easily gobbled up by Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha.

But the momentum was shifting, and before long, Messi broke through for a 1-0 lead. He timed his run perfectly on a ball played into the box by defender Lisandro Martinez to stay onside, controlled the pass and then lifted a shot over Vozinha's left shoulder from close range for his 124th interna-

tional goal. Only Portugal's Cristiano Ronaldo, with 146, has more.

Messi stretched his arms and pointed to Martinez, saluting the pass, before teammates mobbed him in celebration.

Argentina was a huge favorite — some sportsbooks had the defending champions at minus-3500 to win, meaning bettors would have to wager \$3,500 to profit \$100 — and the Messi goal probably had some thinking the scoring dam was about to break. It wasn't.

Cape Verde scored to knot the game at 1-1 and 2-2, and Messi set up the eventual winner with a corner kick that bounced off some heads and into the net midway through the second half of extra time.

"As this team has demonstrated many times, and as I've said many times, it competes," Messi said. "And we

competed to the end." The Golden Boot race may go down to the end as well, with the four leaders now all safely into the Round of 16.

Messi and Mbappe are far from the only contenders in the Golden Boot race: Norway's Erling Haaland and England's Harry Kane each had five goals entering Friday, while four players — France's Ousmane Dembele, Spain's Mikel Oyarzabal, Brazil's Vinicius Junior and Senegal's Ismaila Sarr — had four. Sarr is out of the running since Senegal has been eliminated.

Norway, England and France have advanced to the Round of 16; Argentina and Messi, the Inter Miami star who is widely considered the greatest player ever, now join them — barely. "Our team did everything we could to win the game," Cape Verde goalie Vozinha said.

## Egypt wins against Australia on penalties

SCHUYLER DIXON  
■ Arlington

No matter what Mohamed Salah decides about his future with Egyptian soccer — more World Cups or not — the star striker can say he was the captain for the country's first victory in the knockout round.

Hossam Abdelmaguid scored the deciding goal in a shootout, and Egypt won its debut in the elimination round of the World Cup by beating Australia 4-2 on penalty kicks after a 1-1 draw in the round of 32 Friday.

Australia goalkeeper Mathew Ryan didn't stop any of Egypt's four shots after replacing starter Patrick Beach late in extra time. The victory comes in Egypt's fourth World Cup, the first one with an expanded field of 48. Australia is now 0-3 in the knockout round.

Egypt will next face

defending champion Argentina, which beat Cape Verde 3-2 in extra time Friday night, in the round of 16 on Tuesday in Atlanta.

"Me feeling today is that it's incredible," said Salah, the 34-year-old former Liverpool player who is one behind national team coach Hossam Hassan's Egyptian record of 69 international goals. "I always like seeing the boys happy and enjoying the moment. Nothing can match that. So today was one of the best days of my life."

Harry Souttar opened the shootout by missing high for Australia, and 18-year-old Lucas Herrington hit the crossbar with the fourth attempt to set up Abdelmaguid's clincher for the Pharaohs. The 25-year-old Abdelmaguid, who doesn't have an international goal in 15 appearances, went low left as Ryan dived to the defender's



right, setting off a raucous celebration among 70,244 fans at the sold-out home of the Dallas Cowboys, plenty of them wearing Egyptian red. Egypt didn't even have a victory in the World Cup before beating New Zealand 3-1 in the group stage less than two weeks ago.

"I was only thinking about the Egyptian fans," Hassan said through an interpreter. "During the entire time and

during the penalty shootout, I was just praying, God, please make the Egyptian people happy.' Even before the penalty shootout, to be honest." Egypt's other shootout scorers were Mahmoud Saber, Ramy Rabia and Salah, who played every minute of regulation and extra time despite a hamstring injury sustained in the team's group finale. (AP)

## Jhon Arias scores and Colombia beats Ghana

DAVE SKRETTA  
■ Kansas City

The plan for Colombia against Ghana probably did not involve making a substitution just minutes into the match. That plan also went by the wayside when Jhon Cordoba appeared to hurt his groin.

Forced into making a rare early move, Colombia coach Nestor Lorenzo sent Luis Suarez onto the field, and he promptly delivered a sharp cross that Jhon Arias flicked into the net, resulting in the only goal on a sweltering Friday night at Arrowhead Stadium and sending Los Cafeteros into the Round of 16 at the World Cup with a 1-0 victory over the Black Stars. "I think football is a team sport," Lorenzo said. "Ultimately you do have little groups in certain areas, but you have to have a unit — a whole — and I think our squad has been working on that from the very onset. That was the goal from the very beginning."

The early goal was a good omen: Colombia has won 11 consecutive World Cup matches when scoring first. Now, it will play Switzerland on Tuesday in Vancouver, British Columbia, for a spot in the quarterfinals. "We



have won absolutely nothing," Colombia star Luis Diaz said. "These games are very difficult. Every game we've seen has been tight. The good thing and the positive thing is that we're playing very well, we feel comfortable, we are being a family, we are working as a team, and that will work for what is coming." Los Cafeteros thought they had doubled their lead in the 56th minute, when Diaz found the back of the net only to see the offside flag raised, and the fleet-footed Colombia forward had a point-blank shot saved by

Lawrence Ati Zigi a few minutes later.

Zigi wound up making seven saves to keep Ghana in the game. "Sometimes it happens in football," Ghana defender Jerome Opoku said, "that it doesn't go your way." It was 88 degrees Fahrenheit (31.1 Celsius) with a heat index of 96 when the game kicked off at 8:30 p.m. local time, the late start intentional due to the expected heat of Midwestern summers. The hydration breaks that have been controversial in so many matches suddenly became a blessing as

players from both sides fought through dehydration and cramps.

Ghana was one of a record nine teams from Africa to escape the group stage of the World Cup. And while many gave fits to some of the tournament favorites — hello, Cape Verde against Argentina — only Morocco and Egypt were able to reach the Round of 16. "It's always great to get out of your group," Opoku said. "Obviously we wanted to go further." Colombia had breezed through the group stage, conceding only a single goal in wins over Uzbekistan and Congo and a draw with Portugal. In fact, Los Cafeteros had been so impressive that Spain coach Luis de la Fuente — whose own team is considered among the tournament favorites — tapped them as "a candidate to win the World Cup." Their fans certainly believe in them.

The home of the NFL's Chiefs has three levels of seats with a band of yellow ones sandwiched between red. Yet the entire bowl of the stadium just east of downtown Kansas City was awash in the vibrant yellow of Colombia some 2 hours before kickoff. (AP)

## Magical ride of Vozinha and Cape Verde ends

TIM REYNOLDS  
■ Miami Gardens,

All that Vozinha wanted out of this World Cup was for his mother to see him play.

He got that — and so much more. Cape Verde didn't win a match at the World Cup, and somehow, that didn't seem to matter. The African team's debut on this stage was unforgettable, thanks largely to the 40-year-old goalkeeper who nearly engineered a soccer story that would have been counted among the greatest upsets in sports history.

Cape Verde's magical ride ended Friday in the Round of 32, with the Blue Sharks falling to Lionel Messi and defending World Cup champion Argentina — as most expected. Final score: Champions 3, Cinderellas 2, in extra time — as probably very few expected.

"We have dignified Cape Verde as a national team in most parts of the world," Vozinha said in Portuguese. "Today, we fought on an equal footing against Argentina." Fight, the Blue Sharks did. But the journey still ended. There was a scoreless draw against Spain to open the tournament, with Vozinha leading the way, which led to the captivating tale surrounding the global collaborative effort it took to get his mother to the U.S. to watch matches in the group stage. There were two more dramatic draws that were good enough for Cape Verde to reach the knockout round.

It took a goal from Messi, then a corner kick from the legend midway through the second half of extra time that set up what became the game-winning tally, to save mighty Argentina. The match lasted more than 2.30 hours

in real time after the David-vs.-Goliath showdown started. Goliath was pushed to the brink, with Vozinha standing tall against the team that entered the tournament ranked No. 1 in the world — and the player regarded by many as the best ever — time and again.

"He's a quality, quality goalkeeper," said Cape Verde defender Pico Lopes, who was recruited to the team with a LinkedIn message — another made-for-Hollywood story for this squad. "Probably hasn't gotten the recognition he deserves before this. ... He's a legend in Cape Verdean football."

There were no fewer than four elite saves by Vozinha against Messi alone in the final 60 minutes:

A point-blank stop in the 63rd minute after Messi tried to power a right-footed shot past the keeper, who came off his line to cut down the angle and absorbed the shot with his body. "Not many people stop Lionel Messi from three or four yards out," Lopes said.

A free kick from Messi in the 73rd seemed destined to curl into the right side of the net; Vozinha got just enough of an outstretched gloved hand on that one to knock it away to preserve what was then a 1-1 score. Messi went low with a free kick in stoppage time; Vozinha managed to see the ball through a wall of bodies and dropped to his knees to make a save.

Late in the first 15-minute extra time period, Messi collected a deflected ball at the top of the penalty area and fired. Vozinha dove to his left, punching that one aside as well. He did all he could. Everyone in his country's colors did. It was almost enough. (AP)



# Harry Kane has been World Cup's best player so far: Bhaichung

SUMAN RAY ■ NEW DELHI

England captain Harry Kane has been the most outstanding player of the FIFA World Cup so far and he has done more heavy lifting of his team than Argentine wizard Lionel Messi and French superstar Kylian Mbappe, says former India captain Bhaichung Bhutia.

England finished on top of Group L with two wins and a draw, and then beat DR Congo 2-1 to advance to the Round of 16. Kane has scored five out of England's eight goals. He is in the third spot in the goal scorers' chart behind Messi (seven) and Mbappe (six). "So far for me, Harry Kane has been the most impressive because he has really carried England and delivered when it really counted. They've had

some big, tough matches and Kane is one player who delivers in tough situations," Bhutia told PTI in an interview on Saturday.

"Obviously, France, in terms of Mbappe, has also been very good, he's delivered, as has Messi. But when it comes to one person really lifting the team, carrying the team on his shoulders, it has been Kane." Bhutia felt that Kane could emerge as the tournament's best player or highest scorer, winning either the golden ball or golden boot. "I think it depends on which team goes further. If England reaches the final, definitely Kane. If France go to the final, I think Mbappe. So yeah, Kane, Mbappe would be two front runners for me for the maximum goals and best player as well. I think it's going to



be between two of them. "Messi hasn't faced difficulty yet. So Round of 16 onwards, Argentina will also start facing a bit of challenge," he said. Bhutia, an expert on the Zee 5 panel for the World Cup, high-

lighted four teams — France, Argentina, Spain and England — as being head and shoulders above the rest. "Four teams right now that have really impressed so far are France, Spain, Argentina and

England. France is one of the teams playing the most attacking football. If you're looking to pick one team, definitely France.

"The kind of four forwards they have, they are very dangerous. Mbappe can make the difference because he has quality players like Dembele around him. If anyone has to compete with Messi for the highest goal scorer, I think Mbappe can do that," the former India striker pointed out

"But if they meet Spain in the semi-finals, I have doubts about France. Spain is picking up its game slowly. If they meet France, then I think France would have difficulty. If France and Spain play, I think Spain would be in much more better position because they can take the wind out of their

opponents' sails." Comparing the strength of last edition's finalists France and Argentina, Bhutia said: "Because of the teammates, Mbappe is better placed compared to the Argentina side. France has much better attacking teammates. So Mbappe is definitely somebody who can compete against Messi. They have Dembele, who is equally good with his attacking style and passes.

Dembele has already got four goals. "But more than anything, I think he's going to create a lot of problems. He's going to have quite a good assist. Dembele will be one player who does a lot of hard work for the team. And that hard work is where players like Mbappe is going to take a lot of advantage to it and will benefit quite a lot." The

'Sikkimese Sniper' described five-time champions Brazil as more of a dark horse than a title favourite this time. "Brazil is going to get better. For the first time, Brazil is more a dark horse kind of a thing. Usually, when the World Cup happens, we always put Brazil as favourite but for the first time I think they are put as dark horses."

For Bhutia, neither Messi nor Cristiano Ronaldo is the "GOAT" (Greatest of All Times). "At the moment, based on the way he's playing, Messi is definitely better (than Cristiano Ronaldo of Portugal). In this World Cup, at least up to World Cup 2026, if you're comparing only with Cristiano, obviously, based on delivery, results, and everything, Messi is far, far better. (PTI)

## Praggnanandhaa, Alireza on top spot

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Zagreb (Croatia)

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa won three matches in a row on the final day to tie for the first place with Firouzja Alireza of France on 12 points as the rapid section of the Croatian leg of the Grand Chess Tour ended here.

Having fallen a little behind after the second day, Praggnanandhaa reserved his best for the last three rounds and defeated Ivan Saric of Croatia, Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania and Anish Giri of the Netherlands to finally catch up with Alireza.

The other Frenchman Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan remained within



striking distance of the two leaders with a fine finish in the rapid section to reach 11 points while world champion D Gukesh of India and Vincent Keymer of Germany are right on their toes with 10 points each. With 18 rounds

things started moving right after the opening against Saric who has been struggling in the event.

The Caro Kann defense gave the Indian an active position right from the beginning and though it took a long time to convert, Praggnanandhaa was always in command.

In the second game, Praggnanandhaa crashed through the defenses of Deac out of a Petroff defense and by move 15, the writing was already on the wall. The Romanian lost a piece soon and never recovered.

In the final game of the day, Praggnanandhaa was on fire against generally dependable Anish Giri as he won a pawn out of a Catalan opening and then ended the

game efficiently with fine tactical manoeuvres. The game ended in a mere 34 moves. For Gukesh, this turned out to be a contrasting day compared to Praggnanandhaa as the youngest ever world champion could only draw all the three games to fall behind a little. Abdusattorov, Keymer and Alireza all split points with Gukesh.

**Standings after Round 9 Rapid:** 1-2: Firouzja Alireza (Fra), R Praggnanandhaa (Ind) 12 each; 3-4: Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra), Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb) 11 each; 5-6: D Gukesh (Ind), Vincent Keymer (Ger) 10 each; 7: Anish Giri (Ned, 8); 8-9: Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rou), Jorden van Foreest (Ned) 7 each; 10: Ivan Saric (Cro, 2).

## England beat India by four wickets to take 1-0 lead in T20I series



England's Jacob Bethell plays a shot during the second T20 cricket match between England and India in Manchester, England on Saturday

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Manchester

Ravi Bishnoi became the perfect party pooper on Vaibhav Sooryavanshi's much-hyped debut, conceding 29 runs in an over as England romped home by four wickets against India in the second T20 International here on Saturday.

The 17th over, bowled by a profligate Bishnoi, saw him deliver two no-balls in the first two deliveries. Jacob Bethell (76 not out off 46 balls), keen to make amends for the T20 World Cup semi-final defeat, capitalised on the opportunity, smashing three towering sixes to ensure England completed the chase of 191 with an over to spare.

The afternoon began with anticipation over a 15-year-old Indian's debut and ended with a 22-year-old talented Englishman's swift counter-offensive that gave the hosts a 1-0 lead in the five-match series. The chase could not have started on a worse note for the hosts, as Phil Salt and Jos Buttler were snapped up by Arshdeep Singh. However, to his horror, skipper Harry Brook (39 off 15 balls) was brutal on the seasoned seamer, smashing him for 27 runs, which included three sixes and two boundaries.

While Axar Patel (1/19 in 4 overs) had Brook caught down the leg side by Ishan Kishan, the England skipper had already set the platform for the counter-offensive. Bethell was then joined by Tom Banton (39 off 32 balls), and the duo handled the Indian spinners with relative ease during their 67-run stand for the fourth wicket. It also helped that India's spinners Ravi Bishnoi (0/60 in 4 overs)

and Varun Chakravarthy (1/37 in 4 overs) did not match the English spinners, who were slower through the air and off the pitch. Only Axar Patel held his own.

Bishnoi and Chakravarthy bowled flat and quick on a skiddy surface, which made it easier for both Bethell and Banton to rock back and execute their shots. However, Chakravarthy did redeem himself in the final over when he removed Will Jaks which turned out to be an important moment in the game.

However skipper Shreyas Iyer's tactical move to bring in Arshdeep in the 13th over for his second spell, worked wonders as Banton picked the fielder at deep extra cover to bring India back in the game. But Bishnoi's over dashed all hopes of a win.

Earlier, Tilak Varma's last-over heroics ensured a decent 190 for 7 for India after Iyer opted to bat first.

Tilak (24 n.o. off 11 balls), whose batting approach has been heavily criticised, smashed Jofra Archer (1/40 in 4 overs) for 17 in the 20th over to take India to a respectable total even though it might have slightly below the par score of 200. The extra bounce and cross winds on a skiddy surface did make batting difficult as the world saw the first glimpse of a 15-year-old debutant, who broke Sachin Tendulkar's nearly 37-year-old record, at international stage.

However, his stay was restricted to 10 balls in which he collected two sixes and a couple of singles to manage 14 before being stumped by Jos Buttler off off-spinner Will Jaks. Abhishek Sharma (43 off 24 balls), skipper Shreyas Iyer (37 off 22 balls) and Ishan

Kishan (49 off 43 balls) all scored some runs but only looked comfortable in patches with England bowlers mixing it up quite nicely. Kishan, in particular, was exceptionally scratchy, failing to pick the slower deliveries and altered length ones bowled by the spinners. While Archer's sheer pace and the bounce extracted off the surface had Abhishek in all sorts of trouble at the onset, it was seamer Sam's (3/33 in 4 overs) pace-off strategy and assortment of slower variations that made life difficult for Indian batters post power play.

Jaks (1/22 in 3 overs) and left-arm spinner Liam Dawson (1/27 in 3 overs) ended with good figures. Even Adil Rashid (0/21 in 2 overs) wasn't exactly taken to the cleaners as boundaries were hard to come by.

In his first 12 balls, Abhishek played and missed around 10 of them. Archer cranked it up to 90 miles per hour, pitching it on hard length and got it to deviate away. At the other end, even Sooryavanshi struggled to cope with the extra bounce but got a six each -- first when Archer tried to cramp him for room and the left-hander played a no-look whip-scoop behind for a six.

The shot against Josh Tongue was a more familiar IPL type hoick over long-on. However, England skipper Harry Brook rightly introduced Jaks and he bowled a wide loopy off-break which Sooryavanshi jumped out and missed by a feet and half to get stumped. Abhishek, after an initial play and miss phase, got his mojo back against bowlers with comparatively lesser pace than Archer.

## Chess federation suspends former world champion

**MATTHEW BROWN**  
■ Billings (USA)

The international governing body for chess suspended former world champion Vladimir Kramnik for at least a year after he leveled unproven allegations of cheating against fellow players, including Daniel Naroditsky, who died last year at age 29.

Kramnik accused Naroditsky of cheating last year and continued to share suspicions on social media. Naroditsky, a prodigious chess player and American grandmaster who helped usher in the game's online boom with educational YouTube videos and

livestreams, denied the allegations. Kramnik said in an email to The Associated Press that he plans to appeal the suspension on Friday.

"I am absolutely confident that this unlawful verdict will ultimately be overturned, and I intend to pursue all necessary instances to the very end in order to restore justice and, in particular, my reputation," Kramnik said in a social media post.

The chess federation said Kramnik publicly alleged cheating without "adequate evidentiary support," violating its rules against cyber bullying. The federation said combating cheating was one of its priorities, but that allegations must be

addressed through its procedures and supported by appropriate evidence. "He exposed identifiable players to unjustified reputational harm and undermined the safeguards established by the disciplinary framework," federation representatives said in their decision.

Naroditsky was found dead at his North Carolina home in October. He was killed by an abnormal heartbeat caused by an accidental overdose, according to a toxicology report. Naroditsky had said before his death that Kramnik's allegations had taken a toll on him. "Ever since the Kramnik stuff, I feel like if I start doing well, people assume the worst of



intentions. The issue is just the lingering effect of it," Naroditsky said in his last livestream before his death. Kramnik called Naroditsky's death a tragedy. He said there had been a cynical campaign to link him to Naroditsky's death without any factual basis. (AP)

## We can beat any team if we stick to our game plan: Hockey coach



**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

India can beat any country in the world if the team sticks to its game plan, asserted the national men's hockey side head coach Craig Fulton after a strong performance in the last leg of its otherwise overall poor campaign in the FIH Pro League.

India registered confidence-boosting victories over the reigning world champions Germany and 2024 Olympics gold medallists Netherlands, while taking the fight against world No. 3 England down to the wire during the European leg of the Pro League.

India, however, finished at the eighth spot out of nine teams with 19 points from 16 matches, one rung above Pakistan (zero point from 16 matches). "One of the biggest takeaways from this Pro League run has been watching the team's confidence grow. Wins over Germany and the Netherlands, plus a strong showing against

England, prove that when we stick to our game plan, we're capable of matching and beating anyone in the world," Fulton said.

"It's a solid stepping stone heading into the World Cup and Asian Games, but we are still focused on tightening up our performance and staying consistent from quarter to quarter."

Fulton was particularly impressed with the team's composure and hunger to do well. "Even more encouraging is how much this group has matured. We've stayed calm under pressure, adjusted to different playing styles and pulled out wins in tight games. That kind of experience is exactly what we'll need."

"The World Cup and Asian Games will test our resilience and belief, and I think we're building the right foundation for it," said the coach in a Hockey India release. India endured a difficult start to the Pro League during the home leg in Rourkela, where they suffered defeats against Belgium and Argentina.

## All four Indians golfers make cut in Belgium

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Hulencourt (Belgium)

Diksha Dagar remained firmly in the title race despite a late stumble as all four Indian golfers made the cut at the Hulencourt Women's Open here.

Diksha, who shared the overnight lead after an opening bogey-free 68, carded an even-par 72 to slip into a tie for third at four-under for the tournament.

She looked set for another strong round before two late bogeys halted her momentum, but she stayed within striking distance heading into the final 36



holes. The left-hander mixed three birdies with three bogeys in an otherwise steady performance and is part of a five-way tie for third place, keeping alive

hopes of adding a third Ladies European Tour title to her resume.

India also had another player inside the top 10 with Aditi Ashok making an impressive return to the Ladies European Tour.

The experienced Indian followed her opening 70 with a composed one-under 71 to move to three-under overall and into a share of eighth place.

Aditi's round was a model of consistency. She made just one birdie while avoiding mistakes for the rest of the day, carding 17 pars to remain well placed heading into the weekend.

## Sanju Samson hails shifting base to Kerala

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi & District Cricket Association has long carried the reputation of "crushing dreams" of deserving talents and they almost did that with Sanju Samson before his father, an erstwhile cop with Delhi Police decided to shift base to his home state Kerala. The rest as they say is history.

The exceptionally gifted Samson by sheer weight of his white ball runs made it to the Indian T20 team and earlier this year was the biggest hero of the T20 World Cup triumph.

However Samson mentioned how the heartbreak in Delhi became a turning point for him and his family. "Back in school, I used to see friends wear the DDCA jacket and talk



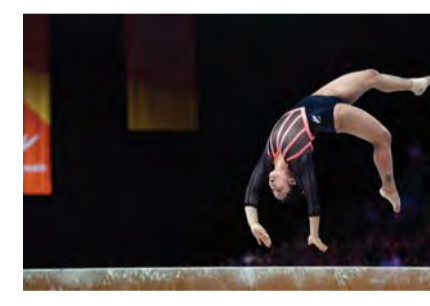
about playing for the state cricket team of Delhi. That motivated me," Samson told 'JioStar'.

"I wanted to represent Delhi too. I went for trials, attended state camps, and scored runs. Two or three times I made it to the camp but never got a breakthrough into the state team. The competition was tough. However his father Viswanath took a split-second decision that proved to be life-

changing for the Samson household. "Then one day, the team list was announced after my trials had ended. My name was not there. We returned home in silence. As soon as we reached home, my father told my mother, 'We will have to move to Kerala. We are shifting,'" he recalled.

"My mother said, 'The kids are only in 6th standard. Let them complete 10th.' My father said, 'No, we have to go now. Pack your things. I am booking tickets in three days.' He took that decision instantly." "I remember, we all boarded the train. Then we reached Kerala and I started playing for Kerala. That is how my cricket journey for the Kerala State Team began," said the man, who made his Ranji Trophy debut weeks before his 17th birthday.

## Artistic gymnastics squad to head to Glasgow after London training



**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

India's artistic gymnastics squad will head to Glasgow on July 20 after completing a three-week training camp in London as part of its preparations for the upcoming Commonwealth Games.

The camp, which began on June 29, was funded by the Sports Authority of India under the Target Asian Games Group and TOPS scheme. The women's squad for the Commonwealth Games comprises Olympian Pranati Nayak, Nishka Agarwal, Eshita Rewale and Protistha Samanta.

The men's squad has Tapan Mohanty, Tapeshwarnath Das, Swatish KP and Yogeshwar Singh. Rakesh Patra is the men's coach, while Payal Bhattacharjee and Ashok Kumar Mishra serve as women's coaches. Pranati, who won a silver medal in the vault event in Tashkent at FIG World Challenge Cup early this year, is currently training in Odisha under Mishra and will head directly to Scotland for the quadrennial event. The overseas camp was aimed at fine-tuning the team's preparations ahead of the Commonwealth Games, with the contingent scheduled to travel directly from London to Glasgow after its conclusion. "The camp has been very productive so far. The athletes are training well and the exposure has been beneficial ahead of a major event like the Commonwealth Games. We will travel directly to Glasgow from London on July 20," Patra said.

## Indian swimmer Sajan Prakash eyes CWG podium

**APARAJITA UPADHYAY**  
■ New Delhi

Competing in his final season, ace Indian swimmer Sajan Prakash has a simple goal for his last hurrah at the Commonwealth Games — a podium finish and a personal best performance. After taking a break post the Paris Olympics due to a "burnout", Sajan returned to swimming last year. He qualified for the Commonwealth Games, starting from July 23 in Glasgow and the Aichi-Nagoya Asian Games in September, breaching the qualification time in the men's 200m butterfly set by the Swimming Federation of India earlier this year. "A medal will

be nice, swimming a personal best time will be nice. I've put in all the work. I'm aiming for a 1:56 or a 1:55s," the soft-spoken butterfly specialist told PTI.

For Sajan, though, success in Glasgow will not be measured solely by the colour of the medal. "But giving my best effort is the most important thing here I just want to do the process right and give my best effort now. What people will see the time, or the medal. But for me to be happy inside, I need to know I gave it my absolute best effort." It's been five years since Sajan clocked his personal best of 1:56.38 at the Sette Colli Trophy in Rome in 2021 that made him the first Indian swimmer to achieve the



Olympic 'A' qualifying standard. While the podium remains his target, Sajan, who clocked 1:57.09 at the Singapore National Age Group Swimming Championships in March, knows the challenge will be formidable. "To make the podium is the goal, but it is going to be very difficult because the Australians and the British swimmers are going to be extremely fast in this event." Sajan is currently in Edinburgh for three-week

speed-training camp, where he hopes to fine-tune himself for the CWG.

"The idea is to get acclimatised to the weather and the conditions, and we are much more prepared for the Games. So, with that 1:57s, I've put in all the work. I'm aiming for a 1:56s or a 1:55s," he added.

If the two-time Olympian manages to dip below 1:56s, he could well find himself in medal contention. At the Birmingham CWG in 2022, Lewis Clareburt won gold in 1:55.60, Chad le Clos took silver in 1:55.89 and James Guy claimed bronze in 1:56.77.

Before heading to Edinburgh, Sajan spent three weeks in Sierra Nevada in Spain for high altitude training. "Coming to a

higher altitude, there is less oxygen in the air and it's very dry, so recovery gets much slower here and it's hard to train," he explained the need for high altitude training.

"We build up that aerobic capacity to train in tougher situations. When we go back down to sea level, the recovery is much better and metabolism works at 2x. So the performance will also get better." Sajan's comeback has also brought an unexpected coaching partnership with former India swimmer and Asian Games medallist Sandeep Sejwal donning the coach's cap. Sejwal is also the last Indian swimmer to stand on top of a podium at a multi-sport event. (PTI)



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

## The city in Strokes

Splashes of vibrant paint are transforming gray Delhi streets into a massive canvas, injecting sudden joy into exhausting daily commutes

**SAKSHI PRIYA**

Bright cyan, splashes of yellow, and deep magenta are currently cutting through some of the grayest corners of this city. It makes you wonder how a wet coat of paint can completely flip a miserable morning commute into a sudden moment of genuine relief. This street art breaks up that monotony completely. It injects a sudden pulse into an otherwise exhausting route, turning giant pillars into an open gallery. It embraces the loud, colourful chaos of Delhi. The walls become a massive canvas showing the actual rhythm of the people who pass by every single day. Following the wall art down the road feels like walking through a living storybook. On one section,



a sleek metro train glides alongside a girl wearing bright blue headphones, totally lost in her own world of music while surrounded by painted green leaves. Keep moving, and the visual volume turns way up. Massive red speakers jump out at you, framing another girl in a deep magenta top, filling a silent roadside space with a visual beat. Then, the rich history of the city takes over. The sharp lines of Jantar Mantar and the wide curves of the old Parliament House blend right into oversized, blooming pink lotuses against a warm orange sky. The daily rush itself gets celebrated here. There are painted commuters checking their mobile phones and locals riding scooters, moving right alongside the real-life traffic. Further down, the wall art shows people cycling through green parks, runners on tracks, and families taking a break on transit benches. Skaters catch air on the plaster, and everyday passengers sit side by side, capturing the fast pace of the transport system.

Narendra Singh is the artist behind this massive face-lift. He spends his weeks balancing on high metal scaffolding with his team, working right through the thick exhaust fumes and endless honking. He spends a lot of time just looking down at the traffic jam from his ladders. You can actually see the toll the city takes on people right through their car windows.

"When I see the faces of people, I feel like

they are in pain," Singh points out, taking a quick break from painting. "They do not seem to be happy. So we try to give them happiness through this painting." Creating art out in the open like this comes with plenty of headaches. Passing crowds easily break the painters' concentration. But the raw energy of the street keeps them going. Singh ties this fast-paced work directly to the speed of modern technology. "What is mobile, computer, metro? It is all about speed," Singh points out, gesturing to the traffic. "Speed is what moves the state, public, mind and thought forward. If it is Delhi, we show Delhi." It takes a lot of institutional backing to clear the way for a project like this, and Singh credits half the success to Government and metro support. But the real payoff happens on the ground. Foreign tourists wander by to offer their blessings, and local families line up to snap photos with the painters.

A forgotten, noisy stretch of road from Rajiv Chowk to Ashram has somehow turned into a spot where total strangers pull over just to look and connect. Take a turn toward that corridor today, get out of your car, and look up. You will see how a few paintbrushes managed to save the city's soul.



### ART TRANSFORMS GRAY STREETS

Seeing them brush bright trees onto dull concrete instantly cheers up the road. It's a beautiful fix for daily traffic stress. Artist Narendra Singh agrees. "I feel like they are in pain," he says, hoping his colours bring drivers happiness.



### ART CORNER

## Painting India's evolving cultural legacy



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

**TEAM VIVA**

A nation carrying centuries of cultural history often struggles to figure out exactly how to handle it. Do we lock it behind glass, or do we let contemporary hands pull it apart and put it back together? Curator Priyanka Banerjee firmly chooses the latter. With 'Panorama 24' at the India Habitat Centre's Visual Art Gallery, she places our massive cultural legacy right next to fresh contemporary ideas. Rather than forcing a strict topic onto the walls, the collection draws its energy from letting wildly different styles clash and complement each other.

You feel this immediately when looking at Amit Kumar's watercolours. Entirely self-taught, Kumar turns his brush to the fragile elegance of bone china and blue pottery, forcing the viewer to find absolute magic in ordinary domestic objects. The crisp blue motifs



sitting against pristine white porcelain are executed with such extreme precision that the flat paper seems to hold physical weight.

A few steps away, Anindita Kishore shifts the room's temperature with *Memories of Spring*. Operating on the belief that art should fundamentally bring joy into a living space, her canvas pays an eccentric, beautiful tribute to the unseen labourers she watched tending the

gardens at Rashtrapati Bhavan. She paints her subjects with blossoms literally bursting from their fingertips, a clever visual trick that turns hard physical work into an act of literal magic.

Then, Purnendu Mandal cracks the gallery open with raw energy. Tackling Varanasi, a city painted entirely too often, he manages to find a fresh angle. Abandoning strict architectural realism, Mandal applies thick layers of colour with a palette knife. His aggressive, loose strokes capture the heavy, chaotic atmosphere of the holy ghats rather than their exact geography.

The exhibition proves that our artistic legacy is no fragile relic. In the hands of these creators, it remains a loud, constantly evolving conversation.

## Finding beauty in Imperfection

**STUTHI NAIR**

What if a break is not the ending but a beginning? 600 years ago, Japanese artisans asked this same question. They practised the art of kintsugi, where broken pottery was repaired carefully with gold lacquer - to honour those cracks, instead of hiding them. Today, this ancient art is quietly resonating again, carrying a philosophy that feels increasingly relevant in a world that is obsessed with chasing perfection.

While at first, Kintsugi appears to be deceptively simple, it is far more than a method of mending pottery. It's a way of seeing. The cracks are not

hidden away, but rather highlighted, celebrated, and woven into the object's identity.

Perhaps that's why Kintsugi resonates so deeply today. In a world that demands perfection, it offers a powerful refuge from the pressures of appearing flawless in society. It provides comfort to embrace our scars rather than hide them away. This philosophy has also inspired a growing number of kintsugi workshops that are emerging across urban India, where people gather in community spaces to break and repair ceramics, finding healing and meaning beyond the finished piece. For Raj Jha, who has been conducting kintsugi and other cre-



**THE CRACKS ARE NOT HIDDEN AWAY, BUT RATHER HIGHLIGHTED, CELEBRATED, AND WOVEN INTO THE OBJECT'S IDENTITY**



ative workshops for several months, the appeal of kintsugi is easy to understand. It isn't simply about its aesthetic beauty, but also about embracing imperfections with resilience, healing, and the idea that our experiences, including our setbacks, become part of our story and can add value rather than diminish it.

His workshops bring people together to step away from the relentless pace of everyday life. As participants carefully glue the fragments they have broken, the process often becomes personal. The broken ceramic reflects their own imperfections, shattered by their frustrations, and repairing it becomes therapeutic. They heal what was once broken, not by replacing it but by highlighting the cracks as strengths instead.

What makes Kintsugi special isn't its aesthetic. It's the invitation to see our imperfections differently and embrace them. Therefore, while the ceramics leave the workshops repaired, the participants often leave with something more.

### CINEMA



**TEAM VIVA**

Summer movie seasons often rely on a single massive hit, but July is shaping up to be an unusually crowded month for cinema in 2026. The schedule is packed with releases looking to completely monopolise the multiplex.

Christopher Nolan is dragging Homer's legendary mythology to the biggest screen with his star-studded epic, *The Odyssey*, while Marvel's *Spider-Man: A Brand New Day* swings back into familiar territory to anchor the superhero crowd.

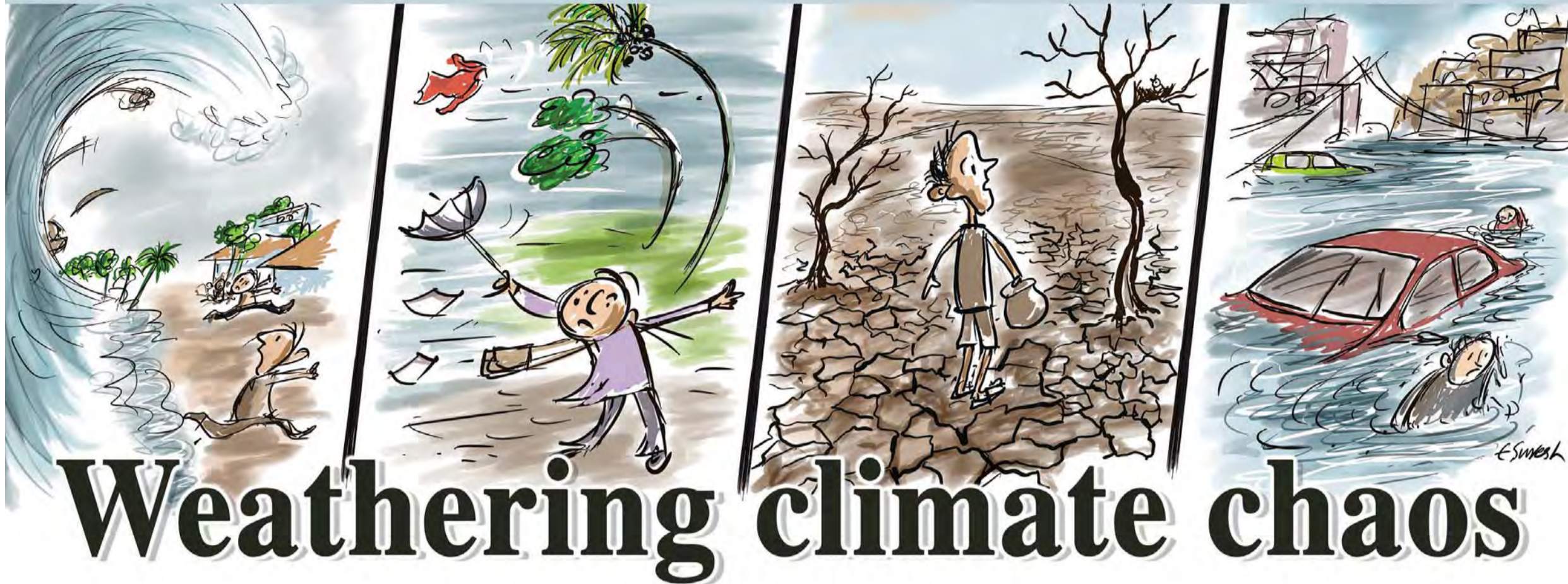
Studios are banking hard on the school break with *Minions and Monsters*, serving up the exact brand of loud chaos kids always queue up to see. On the darker side of the multiplex, 2026 is already having a killer run. *Backrooms* and *Obsession* packed out screens earlier this year, and *Evil Dead Burns* drops right into this mix to deliver an absolute bloodbath. Forget about a quiet weekend this month. Between massive IMAX frames, animated noise, and pure slasher gore, the box office is wide awake. Better start hoarding your ticket money now, because this July is going to eat up all your free time.



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

Climate change knows no borders. It will not stop before the Pacific islands  
— Angela Merkel

New Delhi  
July 5, 2026



## Weathering climate chaos

At a time when climate change dominates global discussions, one fundamental truth remains overlooked: It can only be addressed by restoring humanity's relationship with nature. Aligning with nature not only mitigates climate change but also transforms human behavior, creating societies rooted in wisdom, harmony, and sustainability. For centuries, India's civilizational philosophy has understood this principle. True sustainability can be achieved by reviving age-old sustainable practices

### Adapting with nature: The missing solution to climate change



RAJENDRA SINGH

Today, discussions on addressing climate change are taking place across the world, yet it has not been effectively resolved through discussion alone. However, by conserving water on the Earth, we increased greenery, and that greenery absorbed carbon from the atmosphere and stored it in the soil. As a result, vegetation grew even more rapidly. Therefore, climate change can be addressed and ultimately eliminated through adaptation. When we devoted our lives to working with nature and supporting its processes, water returned to the land, greenery flourished, and people experienced greater happiness, contentment, and peace. They then began solving problems through a way of life rooted in wisdom and harmony with nature. Thus, climate change adaptation and mitigation occur through changes in human behaviour. Encouraging people to work with water, soil, and greenery transforms behaviour. This is true sustainable development (sustainability).

The concept of sustainability originates from India's ancient idea of "Shubh" (auspicious and beneficial), which has existed for thousands of years. The term "sustainability" became globally prominent in 1992 at the Second Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In India, it has been associated with concepts such as Sanatan (eternal) and Satat Vikas (continuous, auspicious development). The word Shubh has traditionally been linked with Labh (profit) so that individuals do not become so greedy that they harm nature.

Preparations for the Second Earth Summit took place in Paris in December 1991. I attended along with Om Thanvi, Shubhu Patwa, and others. I also participated in the Rio de Janeiro Summit in 1992 as a representative of voluntary organizations. What follows is based on what I personally saw, heard, and experienced.

In India, sustainability is guided by the belief that:

"Nature has not been inherited from our ancestors; it has been borrowed from our children. Protecting and conserving it is our responsibility."

Whatever we take from nature is a debt owed to future generations. While we are alive, we must return it through our efforts. The Vedas contain a prayer asking the Earth to punish anyone who harms it for selfish gain:

"O Earth, destroy those who hate you, attack you, or seek to harm you for their own benefit." (Atharva Veda, Book 12, Hymn 1, Verse 14)

Similarly, before placing their feet on the ground each morning, Indians traditionally seek forgiveness from Mother Earth:

"O Goddess Earth, clothed by the oceans and adorned by mountains, consort of Lord Vishnu, I bow to you. Please forgive me for touching you with my feet."

In the Indian knowledge tradition, sustainable development is synonymous with Sanatan—that which has no end and continually renews itself. True development is that which involves continuous creation without destruction, degradation, or displacement. Economists, industrialists, and environmentalists can all unite around this path.



When society lives in harmony with nature, no environmental degradation occurs. But when human greed disrupts nature's regenerative processes, nothing remains sustainable or enduring. Human development should therefore preserve and strengthen nature's ability to regenerate. Such development leads to stability and permanence, which is what sustainability truly means.

To understand and define sustainability, scientists and engineers must incorporate nature's regenerative processes into technology and design. Whether renewal is brought about by human innovation or by nature itself, both contribute to stability. Human-created systems should never damage nature's ability to regenerate. This principle has been embraced by Tarun Bharat Sangh and forms the basis of regenerative and sustainable development. Non-violent development is the only truly sustainable development.

Industrial development becomes sustainable when it supports nature's regenerative capacity. Production should not degrade nature. If some degradation occurs, efforts must simultaneously restore ecological balance through regeneration. This principle aligns with internationally accepted sustainability concepts recognised by UNCED.

Sustainable development requires attention to permanence and long-term balance in all human and natural activities. Development that ignores sustainability does not endure. Economic growth and industrial production should be managed in ways that do not damage nature. Excessive pursuit of profit causes society to forget Shubh (the principle of sustainability). Greed destroys sustainability, while ethical thinking preserves it.

Today, not only India's industrial sector but also agriculture, weather patterns, and ecological systems face instability. Sustainable development requires ensuring that nature's regen-

erative processes are never interrupted and that principles supporting regeneration are consistently followed.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the world's population reached six billion and is expected to stabilize between ten and eleven billion over the next fifty years. Major challenges include access to drinking water, availability of arable land for food production, and poverty. Nearly one-quarter of the world's population lives on less than one U.S. dollar per day.

Key priorities include reducing mortality among children under five by two-thirds and reducing maternal mortality among young mothers by 75 percent. Energy consumption is another major challenge. Demand for all forms of energy continues to rise. Expanding access to reliable, sustainable, and environmentally friendly energy sources, while improving energy efficiency, will remain crucial in the coming decades.

Deforestation is also a serious challenge. Forests are shrinking primarily because of agricultural expansion. Forest restoration and improved management will therefore be critically important in the years ahead.

Appropriate technology should be locally adaptable, environmentally friendly, resource-efficient, and culturally suitable. It should rely on local resources and labor wherever possible. Indigenous technologies are often more useful, cost-effective, and sustainable. Nature itself should be treated as a model for design, an approach often described as "designing with nature."

Technology should use fewer resources and generate minimal waste. The principles of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle help reduce resource consumption, minimise waste, and lower pollution. These practices reduce pressure on natural systems and allow regeneration to continue.

Environmental education should be at the center of all learning processes. Beginning envi-

ronmental education at the school level can foster a deep connection between children and the Earth. Over time, "thinking like the Earth" can become part of our values, decisions, and lifestyles, making society more sustainable.

Every system has a carrying capacity—the number of organisms it can support over the long term. For humans, carrying capacity is more complex because quality of life depends on many factors beyond food alone. Sustainability depends heavily on respecting ecological carrying capacity. If it is exceeded through overexploitation of resources, environmental degradation begins and may eventually become irreversible.

Achieving sustainability requires ensuring that consumption never exceeds regeneration and that environmental change remains within the limits a system can tolerate. Development should improve quality of life across social, cultural, and economic dimensions rather than benefiting only the already privileged.

Population growth must also be stabilized. In India, the government released the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) on 30 June 2008 to address climate challenges. The plan emphasizes adaptation to climate change and the ecological sustainability of India's development pathway. In India today, water and climate change are inseparable—water scarcity is effectively a climate crisis.

The NAPCC stresses that maintaining high economic growth is essential for improving living standards and reducing vulnerability to climate impacts. It identifies measures that advance sustainable development while simultaneously addressing climate change. The plan is built around eight national missions that form a long-term, multidimensional strategy. By 2024, India had begun implementing serious climate adaptation and mitigation programs in agriculture and industry.

Long-term energy and ecological security

are also essential. Fossil fuel resources are declining globally, and access to oil, gas, and coal is becoming increasingly constrained. As a result, renewable energy has gained importance. India has placed significant emphasis on solar and wind energy. Given the country's high levels of solar radiation, solar power offers a particularly promising long-term solution.

The national missions also encourage private-sector innovation in technologies for adaptation and mitigation. Alongside these missions, the government supports regional development initiatives, clean technology programs, grants for voluntary organizations, green architecture initiatives, sustainable mining frameworks, and other sustainability-oriented efforts.

Sustainable development is ultimately a vision and a way of thinking and acting that protects resources and the environment for future generations. It cannot be achieved through policies alone. Society must embrace sustainability as a guiding principle for both everyday choices and major political and economic decisions.

Environmental degradation affects future generations most severely. They may inherit a poorer quality of life despite having no voice in today's decisions. Therefore, planning and policymaking must consider their interests. Sustainable development can only improve when citizens and stakeholders are actively involved.

Ultimately, sustainability will become reality only when everyone contributes to a world where economic freedom, social justice, and environmental protection advance together. Sustainable development is not easy, but it is an unavoidable responsibility. Through better planning, stronger policies, and effective implementation, it can be achieved. Governments can no longer approach environmental issues through narrow, short-term perspectives. Integrating sustainability into both public and private decision-making is not merely desirable—it is essential.

My ancestors left me the fertile, life-giving agricultural traditions of the Ganga and Yamuna regions. During my lifetime, agriculture and industry increasingly abandoned the path of Shubh and pursued profit-driven growth. I left government service and dedicated myself to restoring nature through respect and love for the Earth.

For the past 51 years, Tarun Bharat Sangh has mobilized communities and helped construct more than 15,000 water conservation structures. These efforts have made over 1,500 villages water-secure. As a result, 23 rivers—including the Arvari, Ruparel, Sarsa, Maheshwara, Sabi, Tevar, Sairni, Parbati, Noura, Bhawani, Kotwari, and others in Rajasthan; the Agrani and Mahakali in Maharashtra; and the Ichanhalla River in Karnataka—have been revived.

The impact of this work extends across approximately 10,600 square kilometers, where significant success has been achieved in climate adaptation and mitigation. This remains one of the world's most remarkable examples of community-led ecological restoration. In the 21st century, we continue working to bring water back to dry landscapes and rivers.

As long as nature allows me to serve, I will continue working for nature and future generations with sustainability as my guiding principle. The entire world must do the same. Only then can our planet become a true center of sustainable development.

Dr. Rajendra Singh is an acclaimed water conservationist and environmentalist. He is dubbed as "Waterman of India" or "Jal Purush," for reviving dried rivers. In 2001 he was awarded the Ramon Magsaysay Award for community leadership for his pioneering work in community-based efforts in water harvesting

## MAJOR CLIMATE DISASTER IN THE RECENT TIMES THAT PLAYED HAVOC IN THE COUNTRY

### Cyclone Fengal (2024)

Striking the southern coasts of India, Cyclone Fengal brought severe coastal flooding, strong winds, and infrastructure damage. It highlighted a growing regional pattern of late-season tropical storm intensification.

### Sikkim Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (2023)

Triggered by extreme rain over the Himalayas, a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) breached the South Lhonak Lake. The resulting torrent washed away the Chungthang Dam and devastated downstream communities

### Cyclone Biparjoy (June 2023)

Forming in the Arabian Sea, Cyclone Biparjoy became one of the longest-lived tropical storms in recent memory. It sustained maximum wind speeds up to 195 km/h before making a destructive landfall in Gujarat.

### Cyclone Tauktae (2021)

Classified as an extremely severe cyclonic storm, Cyclone Tauktae battered India's western coast. It intensified rapidly due to warming in the Arabian Sea, directly impacting Mumbai and making landfall in Gujarat.

### Cyclone Amphan (2020)

A catastrophic Category 5-equivalent Super Cyclone that struck West Bengal and neighboring Bangladesh. It was the costliest cyclone recorded in the North Indian Ocean, causing widespread destruction to the Sundarbans mangrove ecosystem and urban infrastructure in Kolkata

### Cyclone Fani (2019)

As the strongest tropical storm to hit Odisha in two decades, Cyclone Fani packed winds of up to 250 km/h. Timely mass evacuations saved thousands of lives, but

the storm caused massive economic damage to coastal energy networks.

### Kerala Floods (2018)

Abnormally high rainfall during the monsoon season led to the worst flooding in Kerala in nearly a century. The disaster caused over 400 fatalities, displaced over a million people, and served as a major warning regarding Western Ghats environmental degradation. Heavy rains in Wayanad and Idukki caused severe landslides and left the hilly districts isolated.

"I HAVE NEVER KNOWN MUCH GOOD DONE  
BY THOSE WHO AFFECTED TO TRADE FOR  
THE PUBLIC GOOD"  
— ADAM SMITH

# Will the Middle East transform into a strategic node in global trade?



Dr KHALED HANAFY

Since the announcement of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) on the sidelines of the G20 Summit in New Delhi on 9 September 2023, the discussion has no longer been limited to a new logistics connectivity project. It has expanded into a broader vision for redrawing the lines of trade, investment, energy, and data flows between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. The Memorandum of Understanding signed by India, the United States, the European Union, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, France, Germany, and Italy stated clearly that the project consists of an eastern corridor linking India to the Gulf region and a northern corridor linking the Gulf region to Europe. It also made clear that the initiative is not limited to transport alone, but also includes railways, port connectivity, data cables, electricity lines, and clean hydrogen infrastructure.

However, what is being discussed in some analytical and policy circles under what may be described analytically as "IMEC Plus" reflects an important evolution in the understanding of the project. The idea is no longer merely a corridor for moving goods, but a broader platform for integrating trade, industry, energy, Digitalisation, value chains, and strategic investment within a single route. In other words, the project in its expanded form is not only about shortening the distance between India and Europe. It is about reorganising the economic geography of the region between them - the Arab world and the Middle East - as part of a new structure of production and connectivity, rather than as a mere transit zone. This interpretation is also clearly reinforced by the joint EU-India strategic agenda adopted on 27 January 2026, which linked IMEC directly to the objectives of diversifying trade routes, strengthening supply chains, and enhancing maritime, digital, and energy connectivity.

### Why Is the Project Gaining Such Importance Now?

The answer is linked, first, to the transformation of the global trade environment. International trade is no longer driven only by the logic of efficiency and cost. It is increasingly shaped by economic security, risk diversification, logistics resilience, and the repositioning of supply chains. The disruptions in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal since late 2023 revealed the vulnerability of the global trading system when it depends on a limited number of sensitive corridors. According to estimates by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the Suez Canal carried between 12 per cent and 15 per cent of global trade in 2023, before the volume of trade passing through it declined by 42 per cent in just two months with the onset of the Red Sea disruptions in early 2024.

In its latest report on maritime transport, issued on October 22, 2024, UNCTAD explained that the situation had deteriorated further by mid-2024. Cargo volumes transiting the Gulf of Aden had fallen by 76 per cent, while cargo volumes transiting the Suez Canal had declined by 70 per cent. At the same time, arrivals via the Cape of Good Hope increased by 89 per cent. More importantly, this shift was not merely a change of route. Because alternative routes are longer, it increased global demand for ship "tonne-miles" by 3 per cent and raised demand for container ships by 12 per cent.

These figures explain why thinking about alternative or complementary corridors such as IMEC has become more urgent. The issue is not simply the creation of a new route, but the establishment of a broader structure that can reduce excessive dependence on a single bottleneck, particularly at a global moment marked by increasing geopolitical disruption and pressure on maritime transport. UNCTAD also estimates that disruptions in the Red Sea and Panama pushed the China Containerized Freight Index (CCFI) up by around 120% between October 2023 and June 2024, revealing the direct impact of maritime corridor bottlenecks on global prices. Its estimates also indicate that these shocks could increase global consumer price levels by around 0.6% by the end of 2025.

### IMEC Is Not a Theoretical Idea: It Rests on an Existing Trade Base

If we examine the current trade figures among the parties that this corridor is expected to connect, the importance of the project becomes even clearer. The European Union now describes India as a clearly growing trading partner. Trade in goods between the European Union and India reached EUR 120 billion in 2024, including EUR 71 billion in European imports from India and nearly EUR 49 billion in European exports to India. The European Commission confirms that the European Union is India's largest trading partner in goods, that this



### al Infrastructure & Investment (PGII)

### ast-EU Economic Corridor



THIS LINKAGE BETWEEN PREFERENTIAL TRADE, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND GEOGRAPHIC CONNECTIVITY IS EXACTLY WHAT GIVES THIS EXPANDED ANALYTICAL FRAMING OF IMEC ITS REAL WEIGHT

exchange now represents 11.5% of India's total trade, and that trade in goods between the two sides has increased by around 90% over the past decade.

From the Indian side, official data issued on 27 January 2026 indicate that merchandise trade between India and the European Union reached approximately USD 136.54 billion in 2024-2025, while trade in services reached USD 83.10 billion in 2024. These figures do not merely reflect the intensity of commercial exchange. They also mean that any improvement in connectivity between India, the Middle East, and Europe could affect one of the largest emerging trade circles in the global economy.

At the Gulf level - the presumed Arab heart of the corridor - the picture is even clearer. According to India's official data, bilateral trade between India and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council reached USD 178.56 billion in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, including USD 56.87 billion in Indian exports and USD 121.68 billion in imports. This represents 15.42 per cent of India's total global trade. In addition, Gulf investments in India exceeded USD 28.28 billion as of December 2024. These are not marginal figures. They mean that the Gulf is not merely a station within IMEC, but already a heavyweight economic partner in the system on which the project is built.

When the picture is examined in greater detail within the Gulf, we see, for example, that trade between India and the United Arab Emirates exceeded USD 100.06 billion in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, an increase of 19.6%, according to the official statement of the third meeting of the Joint Committee under the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement between the two countries on 27 November 2025. Trade between India and Saudi Arabia also reached USD 41.88 billion in the 2024-2025 fiscal year, including USD 11.76 billion in Indian exports and USD 30.12 billion in imports, making Saudi Arabia India's fifth-largest trading partner.

These figures mean that discussing a corridor linking India to the Gulf and then to Europe is not a leap beyond reality. Rather, it is an attempt to build an infrastructure and institutional framework on top of existing, large-scale trade relationships. Therefore, IMEC does not emerge from a vacuum. It emerges from a network of exchange, investment, and partnerships that already exists, giving it an economic foundation more solid than many geopolitical projects that remain confined to conceptual visions.

### The Middle East Is Not Merely a Transit Space

The central point here is that the success of IMEC, or what may be described analytically as IMEC Plus, will not be measured only by the speed at which shipments move. It will be measured by the extent to which the Middle East is transformed from a "corridor" into an economic node with added value. If goods merely pass through the region's ports without being connected to industrial zones, advanced logistics services, digital connectivity, medium or light manufacturing, and distribution and re-export centers, the local return will remain limited. However, if the project is used to build new links in value chains, the region will move from being a bridge

development in this context was the conclusion of the EU-India Free Trade Agreement negotiations in January 2026, pending ratification; according to the European Commission, the agreement would reduce customs duties on more than 90% of goods. Reliable reports also indicated that the agreement would cover 96.6 per cent of the value of goods exchanged on the European side and 99.5 per cent of Indian goods over a transitional period, with expectations that European exports to India would double by 2032.

This linkage between preferential trade, infrastructure, and geographic connectivity is exactly what gives this expanded analytical framing of IMEC its real weight. When trade expands, the need for more efficient and secure routes, as well as more integrated logistics nodes, becomes more urgent. When this is coupled with energy links, hydrogen infrastructure, and digital cables, the project is transformed from a traditional corridor into a multifunctional strategic structure.

### The Most Important Arab Idea Lie?

The most important idea is that the Arab region - particularly the Gulf, the Levant, and the major ports on the Red Sea and the Mediterranean - could be either the greatest beneficiary or the greatest loser, depending on how this transformation is handled. If the region's role is limited to receiving and passing through goods, the benefits will remain confined to limited fees and services. However, if the project is linked to national and regional strategies for manufacturing, advanced logistics services, special economic zones, clean energy, and the digital economy, it could become a genuine instrument for repositioning Arab economies within global trade chains.

Here, it should be noted that what may be described analytically as IMEC Plus is not an automatic alternative to the Suez Canal or to existing corridors. Nor is it a fully implemented project yet. It remains in a political and strategic phase that requires financing, implementation agreements, operational details, institutional arrangements, and greater clarity on the timetable. Its real value, however, lies in the fact that it reflects a clear global trend: the world is rethinking economic corridors, and the Middle East is at the heart of this reassessment, not on its margins.

What may be described analytically as IMEC Plus, in the broader sense of the term, is not merely a transport project between India and Europe through the Middle East. It is an expression of a new phase in which trade, energy, digitisation, economic security, value chains, and geopolitics intersect within a single equation. The figures confirm that the project is not based on a theoretical vision: trade relations between India, Europe, and the Gulf are already large and growing; EUR 120 billion in goods trade between India and the European Union in 2024, USD 178.56 billion in trade between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council in 2024-2025, and more than USD 100 billion in trade between India and the United Arab Emirates alone, alongside Arab port infrastructure that includes ports ranked among the best in the world. At the same time, however, the figures related to the Suez Canal and the Red Sea disruptions show that geography alone is no longer sufficient, and that trade corridors now require more than location. They require stability, resilience, connected infrastructure, regulatory integration, and the capacity to absorb shocks. Therefore, the real question is not whether IMEC will pass through the Arab region, but whether the region will succeed in turning that passage into added economic value, industrial and logistics positioning, and a new strategic place within the global economy.

These figures do not diminish the importance of the Suez Canal. Rather, they clarify something else: the value of major trade corridors has become more closely linked than ever to security, stability, resilience, insurance, and political readiness. Accordingly, if this expanded IMEC framework is to become an actual project, it must move beyond reliance on geography alone and toward building a system that includes regulatory coordination, customs clearance, port-to-rail connectivity, upgraded digital services, harmonised standards, secured investments, and reduced risks of disruption.

### Why Do Europe & India Seem More Interested in Than Ever Before?

Because the project aligns with the ongoing shift in both sides' policies toward what is known as de-risking. For years, the European Union has sought to reduce unilateral dependence on specific routes, markets, and supply chains. India, in turn, is working to consolidate its position as an alternative manufacturing and trading power capable of deeper integration with European markets. This explains why IMEC has become part of the official European-Indian agenda in 2026. The most prominent

WEEKLY MOON SIGN FORECAST | 5-11 JULY

### Fresh Perspectives, Decisive Steps and Steady Progress

Dr Shanker Adawal  
Astrologer, Author & Researcher



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

#### Moon Watch

This week moves from thoughtful observation towards practical action. As the Moon travels from Aquarius to Taurus, ideas gradually become decisions, encouraging steady progress built on greater clarity, confidence and emotional balance.

#### Weekly Overview

The week begins under the Aquarius Moon, encouraging fresh ideas, wider perspectives and meaningful conversations. As the Moon moves into Pisces, intuition and emotional awareness quietly deepen. The second half of the week brings Aries energy, encouraging initiative and decisive action.



**Aries (Mesh):** The week begins with opportunities to step back and review situations from a broader perspective before moving ahead. Discussions with friends, colleagues or professional contacts may offer useful insights that were previously overlooked. As the Moon enters Pisces, quieter reflection becomes more valuable than immediate action.

**Taurus (Vrishabh):** Professional matters or long-term ambitions may gradually gather momentum during the opening phase of the week. Fresh ideas could emerge through teamwork or conversations with experienced people. Midweek encourages emotional clarity and thoughtful planning rather than rushing important decisions.



**Gemini (Mithun):** Learning, travel, communication or future planning may shape much of the opening week. Conversations can become more meaningful as different viewpoints help broaden your perspective. Midweek encourages trusting intuition, particularly where personal relationships or family discussions are concerned. The Aries phase brings fresh enthusiasm and greater willingness to move forward with pending ideas.

**Cancer (Karka):** Shared responsibilities, financial planning or long-pending matters may require careful attention during the opening days. Rather than searching for immediate answers, the week encourages understanding situations more deeply. Midweek may bring emotional conversations that strengthen trust rather than create conflict.



**Leo (Simha):** Relationships and important partnerships remain central during the early part of the week. Others may offer perspectives that help resolve situations more smoothly than expected. As the Moon enters Pisces, attention shifts towards shared responsibilities, financial commitments or practical planning. Midweek is better suited for thoughtful decisions than dramatic reactions. The Aries Moon restores confidence and encourages visible action, particularly in professional matters.

**Virgo (Kanya):** Daily routines, work responsibilities and practical organisation receive greater attention during the opening phase. Small improvements introduced now could make future tasks much easier. Midweek encourages listening carefully to both facts and feelings before reaching conclusions. Once the Moon enters Aries, financial planning or shared commitments may become more important than expected.



**Libra (Tula):** Creative interests, personal projects or family activities may provide quiet satisfaction during the beginning of the week. There may also be opportunities to reconnect with hobbies or ideas that had been set aside. Midweek supports emotional understanding and meaningful conversations with those close to you. As Aries energy develops, relationships require patience, particularly where different expectations exist.

**Scorpio (Vrishchik):** Home, family matters or domestic responsibilities may naturally attract your attention in the opening days. Some unfinished conversations may finally move towards resolution. Midweek encourages reflection before making decisions that affect others. Once the Moon enters Aries, daily routines become more active and productivity begins improving steadily.



**Sagittarius (Dhanu):** Communication, meetings and useful exchanges of ideas remain active throughout the first half of the week. New information could help simplify matters that recently appeared complicated. Midweek strengthens intuition, making it easier to recognise what truly deserves your attention. The Aries Moon encourages movement, confidence and renewed enthusiasm for future plans.

**Capricorn (Makar):** Financial planning, personal resources or practical responsibilities remain important themes at the beginning of the week. A measured approach may prevent unnecessary complications later. Midweek encourages emotional balance before making important commitments. As the Moon enters Aries, family matters or home-related decisions may become more noticeable. By the weekend, Taurus energy supports creativity, enjoyment and meaningful personal connections. The week gradually becomes lighter than it began.



**Aquarius (Kumbh):** With the Moon beginning the week in Aquarius, confidence, independence and fresh thinking naturally increase. You may feel more willing to explore new ideas or approach familiar situations differently. Midweek encourages emotional honesty and greater compassion, especially within close relationships. The Aries phase supports communication, travel and practical movement, helping pending work gather momentum. By the weekend, attention returns to home, comfort and emotional security. Simple routines may prove surprisingly satisfying.

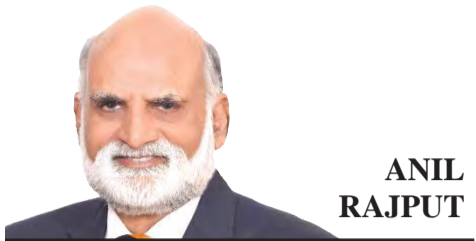
**Pisces (Meen):** The opening days encourage quiet observation and thoughtful preparation rather than immediate action. Once the Moon enters Pisces, emotional awareness and intuition become stronger, helping you understand situations with greater clarity. This is a favourable period for meaningful conversations and personal reflection. The Aries phase gradually shifts attention towards finances, practical responsibilities and future planning. By the weekend, communication becomes easier and confidence grows naturally.



"TO EAT IS A NECESSITY, BUT TO EAT INTELLIGENTLY IS AN ART"  
— FRANÇOIS DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD

### DEEP AMAVASYA

# Illuminating tradition through the food of Maharashtra



**ANIL  
RAJPUT**

On the darkest night of Ashadha, when the moon withdraws from the sky and the monsoon clouds deepen the silence of the evening, Deep Amavasya brings the quiet radiance of the lamp into the centre of worship. Observed on Ashadha Amavasya, just before the sacred month of Shraavan begins, this Maharashtrian observance, also known as Divyachi Amavasya or Divyanchi Avas, is a festival of cleansing, light, renewal and preparation. Lamps made of brass, copper, silver or clay are taken out, washed, polished, worshipped and lit with devotion. Their flames are seen as symbols of knowledge, auspiciousness, protection and the removal of darkness. Around this sacred act, a distinctive food tradition has grown, where the kitchen also participates in the language of light. The most meaningful example is not an actual lamp that is eaten, but an edible lamp-shaped naivedya made from dough, offered during the puja and later shared as prasad.

Deep Amavasya, in its present Maharashtrian form, is best understood as a living regional tradition rather than a festival traceable to one single ancient textual command. Its exact name and household form are preserved more strongly in Maharashtrian folk practice, but its foundations rest on much older Hindu ideas: reverence for Agni, the sacred fire; Surya, the cosmic source of light; Lakshmi, the giver of prosperity and auspiciousness; Shiva, the deity especially worshipped in Shraavan; and the spiritual importance of Amavasya as a time of inwardness, cleansing and renewal. The Vedic world gave deep significance to fire and light, while later Puranic and domestic traditions expanded the symbolism of lamps in worship. Deep Amavasya therefore stands at the meeting point of scriptural imagination, folk memory and household practice. It may not be a grand public festival, but its age lies in the continuity of habits passed from one household altar to the next.

The cultural background of Deep Amavasya lies in the intimate world of the home rather than in public spectacle. Unlike festivals marked by processions or large community gatherings, this observance is rooted in the prayer space, the kitchen, the courtyard and the family. The lamps that have illuminated daily worship through the year are cleaned with care and arranged before the deity. They are decorated with haldi, kumkum, flowers, akshata and sandalwood paste, filled with oil or ghee, and lit as a prayer for clarity and well-being. Elders often explain to children that the lamp is not merely a household object. It represents wisdom over ignorance, hope over fear and divine presence within the home. On Amavasya, when the sky itself is without moonlight, the lighting of lamps becomes especially meaningful because human effort answers cosmic darkness with sacred illumination.

Its association with Ashadha Amavasya gives the festival an even deeper meaning. Ashadha is a threshold month in the agrarian and devotional calendar. The rains have arrived, the fields are being renewed, the air is damp, the earth is fertile and households prepare to enter Shraavan, a month

associated with vrat, Shiva worship, restraint, prayer and seasonal discipline. In older agrarian communities, this was also a time to clean and reorder the home. Lamps, kitchens, storage vessels, grain spaces and prayer areas needed attention after the first force of the monsoon. The cleaning and worship of lamps can therefore be seen as a monsoon purification ritual, both practical and sacred. It removed dust, dampness and neglect from the objects of worship, while symbolically removing tamas, stagnation and inner darkness from the home. Maharashtra preserved this observance strongly because its domestic ritual culture has long given importance to household vrats, seasonal food, women-led puja traditions, local grains and the continuity of family worship. Deep Amavasya survived not because it required grandeur, but because it could be practiced with devotion inside the home.

This is why the cuisine of Deep Amavasya must be approached carefully. It is not a pan-Indian Amavasya meal, nor should it be reduced to common festive dishes that could belong to any occasion. Its strongest culinary identity comes from Maharashtra, where the food reflects the symbolism of lamps, the seasonal rhythm of Ashadha and the devotional mood before Shraavan. The most distinctive preparation is Kankeche God Dive, literally wheat flour lamps, but in culinary practice these are small edible diyas shaped from dough. They are not lit like ordinary lamps. Instead, wheat flour is mixed with jaggery water, ghee, cardamom and sometimes nutmeg, then kneaded into a firm dough. Small portions are shaped like tiny lamps, with a hollow centre pressed gently by the thumb. They are steamed until cooked, brushed with ghee, offered as naivedya during the worship of actual lamps and then eaten as prasad. Their importance lies in symbolism. The shape recalls the diya, while the ingredients turn that symbol into something sweet, nourishing and shareable.

In some homes, the same idea appears through millet or rice flour variations, but these should be understood as versions of the edible lamp-shaped offering rather than separate ritual lamps. Bajrichya God Dive use bajra flour, jaggery and ghee, giving the prasad an earthy monsoon warmth, while Jwariche Dive reflect Maharashtra's older millet traditions. Tandalachya Ukadiche Dive are made from cooked rice flour dough and offer a softer, more delicate version. Some families also prepare Puranache Dive, where a little sweet chana dal and jaggery filling is enclosed within the



dough before steaming. In each case, the preparation is edible because it is made as a dough offering shaped like a lamp, while the actual ritual lamps that are cleaned and lit remain separate sacred objects of worship.

The sweet naivedya of Deep Amavasya extends from this lamp-shaped prasad into the wider Maharashtrian festive kitchen, but it should remain close to the spirit of the observance rather than become a general festival spread. Coconut-based sweets such as Naralachi Vadi add fragrance and softness to the naivedya thali, while Besan Ladoo and Rava Ladoo offer familiar festive sweetness made with patience, ghee and grain. Garge, sweet pumpkin puris made with red pumpkin, jaggery, wheat flour and cardamom, add a golden warmth that quietly echoes the glow of the lamp flame. These sweets are not merely indulgences. They carry the softness, warmth and auspiciousness expected from food offered before the sacred lamps.

The savoury side of Deep Amavasya should be understood as Maharashtrian festive and seasonal food rather than as one compulsory ritual menu. Since the day comes just before Shraavan, many families prepare satisfying vegetarian dishes that can be offered and enjoyed before the more restrained food practices of the coming month begin. Pithale, made from gram flour cooked with turmeric, green chilli, mustard, cumin and asafoetida, reflects the resourcefulness of the monsoon kitchen. Varan, a gentle toor dal preparation served with rice and ghee, brings a sattvic softness to the meal. Seasonal vegetables also matter deeply. Bhople Bhaji, made from pumpkin with mustard, curry leaves,

chilli, jaggery and sometimes coconut, balances sweetness and spice, while Shevgyachya Shenganchi Bhaji uses drumstick pods in a simple, nourishing preparation. Steamed Seasonal Vegetables, served with coconut, sesame, peanut chutney or a light tempering, keep the meal rooted in freshness and restraint.

More elaborate savoury dishes bring festive depth to the table. Bharli Mirchi, green chillies stuffed with peanut, sesame, coconut, gram flour and spices, adds sharpness and richness. Patwadichi Rassa, made with gram flour rolls simmered in a spiced curry, shows how besan can become a complete dish with texture and body. Alu Vadi, prepared from colocasia leaves layered with spiced besan paste, steamed, sliced and shallow-fried, brings the sweet-sour-spicy balance of Maharashtrian cooking. Kothimbir Vadi turns fresh coriander, besan, sesame and spices into a fragrant steamed and fried snack, while Bhajani Thalipeeth, made from roasted multigrain flour, honours the grain diversity of Maharashtra. Matki Usal, cooked from sprouted moth beans with goda masala and coconut, adds protein, warmth and the symbolic suggestion of renewal on a dark lunar night. Rice and curry preparations may also appear when they remain regionally rooted. Masale Bhaat, made with rice, goda masala, coconut, sesame and vegetables such as brinjal or peas, gives the meal a festive centre without becoming ordinary. Bharli Vangi, small brinjals stuffed with peanut, sesame, coconut, goda masala, jaggery and tamarind, adds richness and depth. Ambat Goda Amti, a sweet-sour dal flavoured with tamarind or kokum, jaggery, goda masala and a traditional tempering, balances the thali and prevents the meal from becoming too heavy.

The accompaniments complete the Deep Amavasya meal and show how sacred food is built through attention to detail. Kakkidchi Koshimbir, made with cucumber, curd or peanut powder, coconut, coriander and green chilli, cools the palate and suits the monsoon table. Tilachi Chutney and Shengdanyachi Chutney bring the nutty warmth of sesame and peanuts, while Dodkyachi Chutney, made from ridge gourd peels, reflects the no-

waste wisdom of traditional kitchens. These dishes may not be the central ritual offering, but they belong to the food world in which the festival is lived.

Beverages for Deep Amavasya are seasonal, digestive and soothing rather than elaborate ritual drinks. Taak, or spiced buttermilk, cools the body and balances sweets, ghee and fried dishes. Kokum Saar brings a tart, refreshing note, while Solkadhi, made with kokum and coconut milk, gives the meal a coastal Maharashtrian presence. Some families may prefer Warm Haldi Doodh with nutmeg at night, especially when the monsoon air is damp and the body seeks comfort.

What makes the cuisine of Deep Amavasya beautiful is the way it allows devotion to pass through domestic labour. The family cleans and lights actual lamps as sacred objects, while the kitchen prepares edible lamp-shaped offerings as prasad. The two are connected by symbolism, but they are not the same thing. This distinction matters because it helps us understand the intelligence of tradition. The lamp that is lit represents divine light. The dough lamp that is steamed represents the same idea translated into food. When children watch elders prepare Kankeche God Dive, they learn that a festival is not only something to be seen, but something to be shaped by hand. Grain becomes offering, jaggery becomes sweetness of intention, ghee becomes sacred warmth and food becomes memory.

Preserving Deep Amavasya is not merely about saving an old custom. It is about protecting a complete way of thinking that younger generations urgently need. This one observance alone holds many lessons. Lessons of sustainability, zero waste, seasonal eating, family bonding, mindfulness, respect for local grains, culinary heritage and slow food. A cleaned lamp teaches care. A reused brass diya teaches continuity. A chutney made from vegetable peels teaches that nothing given by nature should be wasted. A meal built from millets, pulses, pumpkin, cucumber, drumstick and coconut teaches that food must follow the season, not fashion. A family gathered around the puja teaches that culture survives through participation, not performance.

Deep Amavasya offers a powerful reminder that tradition is not backward. It is ecological, emotional and deeply intelligent. In an age of instant food and fading household rituals, this festival asks us to slow down, cook together, listen to elders, understand ingredients, honour local produce and recognise the sacredness of everyday objects. The younger generation will inherit its meaning not by seeing lamps in photographs or reading about them in calendars, but by helping clean them, light them, shape the sweet edible diyas, taste the naivedya and feel the glow of tradition passing from one hand to another. To carry forward Deep Amavasya through its cuisine is to ensure that the flame of memory does not fade. It is to teach our children that even on the darkest night, a home that remembers its food, its faith and its values can remain full of light.

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)

## Delhi celebrates World Chocolate Day 2026



**GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

Every July 7, World Chocolate Day honors a history far deeper than its 1550 arrival in Europe. Ancient Mesoamerican civilisations like the Mayans and Aztecs cherished cacao as a ceremonial drink long before it transformed into the beloved treat we know today. The modern observance of World Chocolate Day is a relatively recent addition to the calendar, first marked in 2009, and it has since grown into a global occasion for bakers, chocolatiers, hotels, and home cooks alike to put cacao at the centre of the table. In Delhi, that global occasion has taken on a distinctly local flavour. The capital's dessert and hospitality scene—from neighbourhood patisseries to five-star hotel lobbies—treats the day as an

opportunity to showcase craftsmanship. This year is no exception, with cafés and hotels across the city rolling out limited-edition menus, live chocolate counters, and immersive tasting experiences through the first two weeks of July.

At Lavonne Café in Defence Colony, the celebration continues until July 10. Known as one of India's most meticulous patisseries, Lavonne has built its Chocolate Day edit around precision and restraint rather than spectacle. Leading the lineup is 7 Seven, Lavonne's signature dessert and a nod to the date itself. Released only during this annual window, it layers rich chocolate sponge, silky mousse, creamy ganache, and a crisp chocolate crunch—a dessert built to be a once-a-year, worth-the-wait indulgence.

Rounding out the edit are three more chocolate-forward creations:

- **Triple Choco Chip Hazelnut Cookie:** Served warm and gooey, loaded with dark, milk, and white chocolate chips, roasted hazelnuts, vanilla ice cream, and chocolate sauce.
- **Mind-Blowing Salted Caramel Chocolate Cake:** A moist chocolate teacake layered with silky salted caramel, Belgian dark chocolate ganache, and a gourmand glaze.

● **Decadent Chocolate Slice:** A deeply layered chocolate cake finished with semi-sweet Belgian dark chocolate frosting, built with no distractions beyond the chocolate itself.

Lavonne's approach captures a theme running through much of Delhi's Chocolate Day offerings: turning a familiar favourite into something considered and craft-led.

**The rhythm of origin**  
Across town, Le Méridien New Delhi is marking World Chocolate Day with The Rhythm of Origin, an evening event on July 7. The hotel has, in recent years, built a reputation for turning celebrations into full-scale sensory experiences—past editions have included towering hand-sculpted chocolate installations, live DIY stations, and gatherings that brought together diplomats, chefs, and guests around the shared language of cacao.

This year's edition promises to continue that tradition of storytelling, with the hotel describing an evening built around "exceptional chocolate, immersive experiences, and delightful discoveries." Guests can expect the celebration to lean into both craftsmanship and theatre, featuring curated tastings and design-led presentation that turn the humble bean into the centrepiece of the room.

## Peru marks 205th Independence Day with its exotic food and culture



Ambassador of Peru to India, Javier Paulinich, with Prashant Tewari of The Pioneer

Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Pabitra Margherita, at the Embassy of Peru's Independence Day reception in New Delhi

### TEAM AGENDA

On June 23, the Embassy of Peru in India successfully hosted the commemorative ceremony marking the 205th Anniversary of the Independence of Peru at the prestigious Hyatt Regency Hotel in New Delhi.

The Guest of Honour at the ceremony was Pabitra Margherita, Minister of State for External Affairs of India. Her participation was of particular significance in the current context of strengthening relations between Peru and India, as it reflected the high level of attention and appreciation that the Government of India accords to the bonds of friendship and cooperation with Peru.

The event brought together more than 400 distinguished guests, including senior government officials, members of the diplomatic and consular corps, business leaders, representatives of the media, social media influencers, and members of the Peruvian community in India. During the evening, guests enjoyed Peru's signature cocktail, the Pisco Sour, along with an exquisite buffet featuring

representative dishes of Peruvian cuisine in both vegetarian and non-vegetarian varieties, specially prepared by renowned Peruvian Chef Julio Castillo. The cultural programme, conceived as a tribute to the cultural complementarity between Peru and India, featured performances by Ananga Manjari, a distinguished Peruvian dancer based in India, trained in contemporary ballet and Bharatanatyam. Holder of the prestigious title of *Nrita Mayuri*, she has performed extensively across India and internationally. She was joined by Ricardo Delgado, who captivat-

ed the audience with live performances of traditional Peruvian instrumental music using the *zampoña* (Andean pan flute) and flute. Together, the artists presented an innovative performance that seamlessly blended Peruvian and Indian artistic traditions, highlighting the rich cultural affinities shared by the two nations.

The ceremony also marked the inauguration of the fifth edition of the "Taste of Peru in Delhi" Gastronomic Festival, which is being held from June 23 to 28 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. The growing interest in and recognition of Peruvian cuisine in India reflects the sustained efforts of the Embassy of Peru to position its gastronomy as an instrument of cultural diplomacy and as a bridge for further strengthening the enduring friendship and cooperation between Peru and India. Ambassador of Peru to India, HE Javier Paulinich, proved to be a gracious and exceptional host, warmly welcoming a large gathering of distinguished Indian and Peruvian dignitaries, diplomats, business leaders, and other eminent guests. Through his sustained diplomatic efforts, he has played a pivotal role in making Peru a familiar and respected name across a vast and diverse country like India.

### COCOA CULTURE

Whether it's a once-a-year layered dessert in Defence Colony or an immersive evening celebration in the heart of the capital, the message from Delhi's chocolate makers this July is the same: chocolate deserves to be taken seriously, and celebrated properly.



## Who You Already Are

What beats in the heart of every single human being is a bliss that neither words nor the mind can reach

AMMA (SRI MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEVI)

Children, many people ask Amma, "What is the true dharma of humankind?" In fact, the goal of human birth is simply to know oneself to realise the answer to the question "Who am I?"

Fulfilling this dharma is what makes our lives different from those of animals. Animals-even worms and insects-are born, grow, reproduce and die, just like humans. However, because they adhere to their dharma and live according to the laws of nature, they are not creating new tendencies and karmic bonds.

On the other hand, humans do just the opposite, and because of this, we are constantly making ourselves and those around us unhappy. This goes on and on until one day we finally fall prey to death. In this sense, human beings can be said to have fallen below the level of animals.

A mahatma once asked a visitor, "What do you do for a living?" The man replied, "I'm a clerk." "What is your next level of promotion?" "I'll be promoted to senior clerk." "And after that?" "I will become the assistant to the department chief." "And after that?" "I could become the department chief." The mahatma said, "That is great. What will happen after that?" "I can become the vice president." "Great!" exclaimed the mahatma, patting the man's shoulder. The mahatma paused, thought for a while, and then said, "Hmmm... I was just thinking what could you become after that?"

By this time, the visitor's patience had started to fray. He began to speak a little louder, "If I'm fortunate, work hard, and am able to muster a little political influ-



ence, I could probably become the president. Is that enough?"

The mahatma did not miss a beat. "What about after that?" Finally, the visitor lost all his patience. "What do you want me to say?" he shouted. "Do you want me to become God?" The mahatma burst out laughing, "Child, finally you gave me the right answer! But know that you don't have to become God. You already are God. You just have to realise it." Thinking that we are this body, mind, and intellect, we have become completely identified with them. We have to go beyond and experience the truth, "I am the omnipresent consciousness of God that pervades within and without."

You may wonder, "If that is true, does a dead body also have consciousness?" Children, even if an electric bulb goes out, the electricity flowing into the bulb is not destroyed. The tool that manifests the electricity has stopped functioning-that is all. Similarly, a dead body cannot manifest consciousness, but it is utterly incorrect to say that the all-pervading Atma is

not present in the dead body.

Atma has neither beginning nor end. It is imperishable and unchanging. It is our true nature. Understanding and experiencing this truth is the ultimate dharma-the real goal of human life. The more we imbibe and become one with this truth, the more peace and happiness we will experience in life. This will lead us closer and closer to a bliss neither words nor the mind can reach.

Sri Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, known simply as Amma, is a spiritual master and humanitarian who has given her darshan in the form of a motherly embrace to more than 4 crore people. Listening to the cries of the suffering, Amma leads an NGO that reaches across more than 50 countries, working in the areas of healthcare, disaster relief, education, gender equality, and environmental restoration

leader in some capacity; it is only a question of scale. Whether you are managing and leading two people or one billion people, everybody is some kind of a leader.

Any leader, if they do not feel a deep sense of inclusion, if they do not feel that people around them are a part of them and grasp the fundamentals of who the people are, not just in understanding or as an intellectual process, but experientially if they do not feel a certain sense of oneness and inclusiveness with the people around them, they cannot be a genuine leader. They can only manipulate situations for a little betterment or worse.

**Bringing Out the Best**  
I was conducting a program for the top executives of a major company. We had our volunteers there who were going about doing things. These executives saw the way our people were going around and asked, "Sadhguru where do you get these people?"  
I replied, "You don't get them. You have to make them." "How do you



## Inclusiveness - A prerequisite for leadership

There is a lot of talk today about leadership and wanting to become leaders. I don't think anyone should try to become a leader. Leadership is not about you wanting to become a leader?

SADHGURU

Usually, people understand leadership as a position of power. But those leaders who were truly successful and loved by people lived in a position of continuous sacrifice, because a leader means your life and activity are no longer about yourself. Every thought and emotion that you generate, every action that you perform has an impact on millions of people. It is

a certain privilege and a responsibility, that you can touch the lives of people around you in many ways. When I say a "leader," I am not just talking about the leader of a nation or large group of people. Whatever sphere we are in, whether spiritual, political, economic or social, or even within the family, everybody is a leader in some capacity; it is only a question of scale. Whether you are managing and leading two people or one billion people, everybody is some kind of a leader.

Any leader, if they do not feel a deep sense of inclusion, if they do not feel that people around them are a part of them and grasp the fundamentals of who the people are, not just in understanding or as an intellectual process, but experientially if they do not feel a certain sense of oneness and inclusiveness with the people around them, they cannot be a genuine leader. They can only manipulate situations for a little betterment or worse.

**Bringing Out the Best**  
I was conducting a program for the top executives of a major company. We had our volunteers there who were going about doing things. These executives saw the way our people were going around and asked, "Sadhguru where do you get these people?"  
I replied, "You don't get them. You have to make them." "How do you

make them?" they asked. "You have to make them fall in love with you." Then they asked, "Okay, how do we make them fall in love with us?" I said, "First you have to fall in love with them." They replied, "Oh! They don't pay us for that."

If you want to lead any group of people and want everyone to function at their best, first you must make sure all of them fall in love with you. If you want everyone to fall in love with you, first you must fall in love with all of them. This is not a trick - "If I fall in love with you, you will fall in love with me, then you will work better for me." The moment you do that, no one will cooperate. If you genuinely fall in love with everyone around you, slowly everyone falls in love with you. Different people may take different amounts of time but slowly, they will give in. Once they are in love with you, they will naturally do their best.

It is the ability to bring out the best in others that makes you a leader. Leadership essentially means that you are capable of creating the necessary atmosphere, where people can go beyond the limitations that they have set for themselves.

In the presence of the leader, people are able to do things that they would not have done by themselves, that they would not have imagined they could do.

People are willing to put their lives into your hands because they believe you can make them achieve something that they would not be able to achieve



by themselves. You open up a dimension for them that they would have never opened up by themselves. Only then people gather behind a leader.

You should never aspire to become a leader. Whatever the nature of activity that we have chosen for our life, if we wish to be leaders in those situations, the first thing is we must be able to lead by example. Not by words, trickery or cunning, but by example.

If you commit yourself, dedicate yourself, devote yourself to a particular cause which is inclusive in nature, or in other words if you address human wellbeing, not just your wellbeing, depending upon the level of your dedication and devotion, people will recognize you as a leader. If you have not included the people that you wish to lead as a part of yourself, you will become a slave driver. With slave driving, you may get some work done, but you will be the most hated creature on the planet. Without embracing the people that you lead absolutely, you cannot really lead them. You can only lead if you are truly inclusive.

(Ranked amongst the fifty most influential people in India, Sadhguru is a Yogi, mystic, visionary and a New York Times bestselling author. Sadhguru has been conferred the Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India in 2017, the highest annual civilian award, accorded for exceptional and distinguished service. He is also the founder of the world's largest people's movement, Conscious Planet- Save Soil, which has touched over 4 billion people)

## When Terror Lost Its Greatest Battle

The terrorist attack on Akshardham (Gujarat) was meant to leave more than shattered lives; it was designed to shatter a nation's harmony. Yet the guru's extraordinary calm changed history. As Pramukh Swami Maharaj appealed for peace instead of revenge, terror lost its greatest battle, proving that humanity's strongest response to violence is unwavering compassion



DR SWAMI GYANANANDDAS

The afternoon of 24 September 2002 appeared no different from countless others at the Akshardham Mandir Complex in Gandhinagar. Visitors from across India and abroad leisurely explored the magnificent sandstone monument, families admired its intricate carvings, children eagerly made their way towards the exhibitions, while devotees paused in silent prayer. Volunteers, as always, moved unobtrusively through the campus, guiding guests with warmth and devotion. It was an atmosphere defined by serenity; a place built to inspire peace, faith and harmony.

Then, at 4:45 p.m., tranquility gave way to terror. A white car halted outside Gate No. 3. Two men stepped out carrying what appeared to be ordinary luggage. Within moments, sleeping bags and jackets concealed an arsenal of automatic rifles and grenades. When volunteer security personnel attempted to carry out a routine security check, the men vaulted over the barricade and opened indiscriminate fire. The sound of bullets echoed across the peaceful complex, replacing laughter with screams and turning an ordinary afternoon into one of the darkest days in India's recent history.

The terrorists moved swiftly towards the sanctum of Akshardham. Their intention was unmistakable, not merely to kill, but to desecrate a sacred monument that symbolized peace and spirituality. Yet their plan encountered its first unexpected obstacle. Alert volunteers, having instantly grasped the gravity of the situation, rushed visitors into the main monument and secured its doors from within. By the time the attackers reached the entrance, they had missed their objective by only a few precious seconds.

Denied access, the terrorists redirected their fury towards the exhibition halls, where they unleashed a ruthless barrage of bullets upon innocent visitors. Within barely fifteen minutes, a sanctuary of devotion had been transformed into a scene of unimaginable horror.

Police, security personnel, volunteers and later the National Security



Guard responded with remarkable courage. Throughout the long night, commandos searched every corner of the sprawling campus while doctors battled tirelessly to save the wounded. By sunrise, after nearly fourteen hours of intense operations, both terrorists had been eliminated.

The battle lasted through the night. But as history would later reveal, the most decisive battle was not fought with guns. It was fought in the hearts and minds of millions who watched the tragedy unfold.

History tells us that terrorism does not conclude when the firing stops. Often, its real success depends upon what society does next. The attackers had not selected Akshardham by accident. They had struck at one of Hinduism's most revered cultural landmarks in Gujarat, a state already emotionally fragile after months of communal tension. Their calculation was painfully simple: attack a sacred place, provoke outrage, ignite revenge, and allow society to destroy itself from within.

This was about to come true. Within a few minutes, the horrifying images from Akshardham travelled across India and around the world through the media. The entire Sanatan community was deeply shaken and was thinking of severe retaliation.

Amid this storm of grief and uncertainty stood one man whose response would profoundly influence the nation's next chapter- Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the creator of Akshardham! Yet his response defied every expecta-

tion. There were no words of hatred. No calls for revenge. No attempt to identify communities with criminals. Instead came an appeal that was astonishing in its simplicity: maintain peace, preserve harmony, pray for the victims, and allow no further bloodshed.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj understood something fundamental about terrorism; it feeds upon emotional reactions. Violence seeks another act of violence. Hatred longs to multiply itself. Every retaliatory riot would have become a delayed victory for the attackers. If anger had erupted into widespread retaliation, the terrorists would have achieved far more than they ever could with guns alone. Swamiji refused to grant them that victory.

His appeal spread rapidly across Gujarat and throughout India. Devotees listened. Citizens exercised restraint. The atmosphere remained tense, yet remarkably controlled. A tragedy that could have spiraled into prolonged communal unrest gradually gave way to a collective peace assembly instead of collective vengeance.

The significance of Pramukh Swami Maharaj's response did not end with the tragedy itself. It travelled far beyond India's borders. World-renowned security experts and counter-terrorism professionals began referring to it as the 'Akshardham Response', a model of how moral leadership can prevent terrorists from achieving their ultimate objective. Brigadier Raj Seetapathy, who led the NSG operation, later presented this case at military and police institutions, describing it as a benchmark in crisis management. The response was also discussed at international forums on terrorism in Europe, where scholars and security professionals highlighted it as a timeless example of defeating violence not merely through force, but through restraint, compassion and social responsibility.

The lesson was profound: while security forces neutralize terrorists, only wisdom can neutralize terrorism's intended consequences.

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

## Seeing Through the Illusion of Heartbreak

It is wisdom alone that gives you strength to move on. Not anger, not revenge

GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

When a bud breaks, it becomes a flower. When a heart breaks, it becomes divine. A flower cannot break. What breaks is the bud. And it breaks for good. What you thought was love was not love. In true love, there is no heartbreak. A broken heart means broken demands, broken expectations, broken hopes. How can love break? Can water break? Water is fluid. Love is also fluid, not brittle. Something stiff is brittle. It can be broken.

What happens when you fall in love? After a while, you start demanding, and the love diminishes. The joy fades away.

And then you say, "Oh, I have made a mistake by getting into this relationship," and you struggle to get out of that relationship. After getting out of it, you get into one more, and the same story repeats. In love, you don't expect anything. If you want something in return, you can't call it love.

A separation can feel so devastating that you believe you cannot exist anymore. In such times, it is wisdom alone that gives you strength to move on. Not anger, not revenge, not even the passing of time. It is wisdom that carries you through.

You do not have to call the other person names to heal. You do not have to call him a cheater or a rogue. That can only get you more upset, and sometimes it may just backfire. The other person might say something hurtful back instead. You cannot correct the other person. But you can always correct yourself. Move on with a fresh heart, a lighter heart, a happier heart.

Just have a deep sleep. When you sleep well and deeply, where is that person then? Nobody troubles you in deep sleep at all. You actually get over everybody, every single day, the moment you fall asleep. But the moment you wake up, they return. He has left you, but you have not left him. They come right back into your mind. This happens because you have rented out your mind to him. You did this without collecting any rent at all. You must learn to own that space back.

Nothing in the world can bother you as much as your own mind. Others seem to be bothering you, but it is not the other person at all. It is your own mind doing this to you.



Remind yourself also that nothing in your life has ever stayed. Look back at all the years behind you. So many incidents have happened. Some pleasant, some unpleasant, some horrible, some wonderful. Did any of it actually stay with you forever? None of it did, not even once. Life keeps moving ahead regardless, like a flood of events passing through. Realising this truth, even briefly, brings immediate freshness to the mind. This very temporary nature of things can become your strength rather than your sorrow.

See also the freedom that follows a broken relationship. It is like stepping out of a cage you had built for yourself. There are billions of people on this planet. Among them, there are better choices waiting to be found. Why mourn an exit you yourself wanted into a freer and happier life? Before this relationship, you were alive and kicking. You were laughing, smiling, perfectly happy. Remember those days clearly. Life was okay then. It will be okay again now.

This pattern of letting go has repeated itself many times in your own life. It happened even when you were a small child. You did not want to let go of even a single toy back then. You wanted to bring home the entire shop. You wanted every toy in it, refusing to leave anything behind. Yet you outgrew that grip naturally. You moved on, made new friends, and found new joys instead. The old attachment gradually faded away without you noticing. Life teaches you the art of letting go in every event. When you have learned to let go, you will be joyful. As you start being joyful, more will be given to you.

Emotion is what makes us all human,

and there is nothing wrong with feeling deeply. But emotion should never overshadow our intellect or our wisdom. Emotions can take over your entire sense of reasoning. The moment you recognise this happening, you are already one step out of it. Events in life give rise to both emotions and lessons. We often hold onto the emotions and forget to learn the lesson. Wisdom is to drop the emotion and move on with the lessons.

Everyone wants their relationships to last, isn't it? Three things are essential in any relationship: right perception, right observation, and right expression. Often, people say nobody understands them. Instead of saying, "No one understands me," you can say that you haven't expressed yourself properly. If you speak Russian to a Spanish person, they won't understand. Right perception can emerge when you put yourself in the shoes of the other person and look at the situation from the other person's point of view as well.

You may have perceived right but how do you react? How do you feel within yourself? Observing your own mind is the second important aspect. This observation within you: observation of sensation, observation of tendencies, observation of patterns within you is also essential.

Perception of the other, observation of oneself, and then, right expression is important. The whole life is a lesson of just these three things: perception, observation, and expression. Any mistake you make is really not a mistake; it is a learning in the three vital aspects of life.

Perception needs to be expanded. Don't just see someone from outside. If someone is grumpy or a little finicky, you hold them responsible for their behaviour. But if you see from a wider lens, the person might be grumpy for various reasons. Then you have the quality of reflection in the relationship. Not just accusing someone for what they did, but accommodating them and seeing it in a larger context.

And lastly, when you meet the friend or ex-partner again, talk to them as though nothing has happened in the past, as though this is the first time you are meeting them. You don't need to give any explanation. Be friendly from your side as though nothing happened. Live as though you have no enemies.