

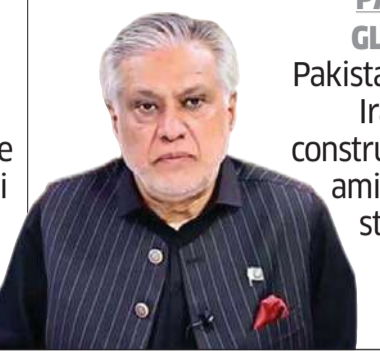




<p><b>PAGE 6 NATION</b>                  Veteran filmmaker, actor Bhagyaraj dies at 73</p> 	<p><b>PAGE 7 NATION</b>                  Tripura CM inaugurates Global Pineapple Festival in Delhi</p> 	<p><b>PAGE 8 GLOBAL</b>                  Pakistan assures Iran of constructive role amid fresh strikes</p> 	<p><b>PAGE 11 SPORTS</b>                  Vaibhav Sooryavanshi plays unreal shots: Vengsarkar</p> 	<p><b>AGENDA</b></p> 
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## Champat Rai, Anil Mishra resign Ram Temple Trust to meet on July 7 to decide future action

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 ■ Ayodhya/New Delhi

Champat Rai, general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, and trustee Anil Mishra have resigned for moral reasons amid growing controversy over alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya.

Trust Treasurer Swami Govind Giri confirmed their resignations on Friday and said the trust will review them at its next meeting.

A day after Uttar Pradesh Police arrested all eight people named in an FIR, the resignations happened. This followed a preliminary report by a Special Investigation Team (SIT) that examined how devotees' offerings were managed at the temple.

VHP chief Alok Kumar said on Saturday that the Ram



Champat Rai and Ram Mandir Trust member Anil Mishra

Temple Trust will meet in Ayodhya on July 7 to decide on the next course of action following the resignation of the two senior Trust functionaries. He said he hopes that a chief executive officer is appointed to manage the affairs of the Ram Temple.

In early June 2026, news emerged of possible financial irregularities in the collection, counting, and storage of donations to the Ram Temple. The Trust asked for an investigation to clarify the facts and address rumours.

On June 13, 2026, the UP Government set up a three-member SIT led by Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant. The team checked donation procedures, financial records, and CCTV footage.

After the SIT's initial findings, Trust member Krishna Mohan filed an FIR at the Ram Janmabhoomi police station. Eight people were named as accused, and police arrested all of them between Thursday night and Friday morning. They appeared in court in Ayodhya on Friday and were sent to judicial custody until Monday.

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## Indian diaspora welcomes PM Modi in Seychelles

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received an enthusiastic welcome from the Indian community upon his arrival in Seychelles on Saturday for a three-day State visit, during which he will attend the island nation's National Day celebrations as the guest of honour.

At Seychelles International Airport, President Patrick Herminie personally welcomed the Prime Minister along with senior Government officials. Modi was accorded a ceremonial Guard of Honour, underscoring the importance of the visit and the strong ties between the two countries.

Members of the Indian diaspora gathered in large numbers outside the airport, waving Indian flags and greeting the Prime Minister with great enthusiasm. Modi interacted briefly with

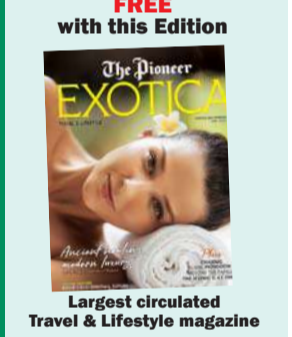


Prime Minister Narendra Modi feeds an Aldabra Giant Tortoise during a visit to the Seychelles National Botanical Garden in Victoria, Seychelles

several members of the community as they celebrated his arrival. The welcome ceremony also showcased India's rich cultural heritage through traditional dance performances. One of the highlights was a folk dance from Kutch, reflecting the enduring cultural connections maintained by the Indian diaspora in Seychelles.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

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## Uttar Pradesh opens land bank for investors: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
 ■ Noida/Lucknow

In a slew of developmental measures in the State, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday invited domestic and global investors to invest in the State, saying Uttar Pradesh offers a 75,000-acre land bank, sector-specific policies, timely incentives and a single-window clearance system.

Addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of SAEL Industries' manufacturing plant in Jewar, CM said Uttar Pradesh is currently generating around 6,000 MW of electricity from renewable sources. He said the State aims to increase its renewable energy generation capacity to 20,000 MW over the next two to three years and highlighted the rapid expansion of solar power and other green initiatives under the Central and State Governments.



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath receives a memento from Amber Enterprises India Ltd CEO Jasbir Singh in Jewar, Uttar Pradesh on Saturday

travelled to Korea by sea. During the visit of the First Lady of Korea to UP, we developed a memorial park in Ayodhya in her memory," he said.

He referred to the stone memorial honouring the Korean Queen Heo Hwang-ok, which stands within Ram Katha Park in Ayodhya. Situated near the ghats along the Sarayu River, the memorial bears an inscription recounting the legend of Queen Heo and is housed within the park premises.

Yogi also announced that the fourth edition of the Uttar Pradesh International Trade Show (UPITS) will be held at the India Expo Centre and

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Indians among 8 sanctioned by US over Sudan links

SAGAR KULKARNI  
 ■ Washington

The US imposed sanctions on eight persons and entities, including an Indian national associated with an explosives manufacturing firm, for allegedly fuelling the civil war in Sudan.

The US Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) on Friday said the targeted networks enabled both the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) to expand and intensify civil war in the African nation. Among the sanc-



tioned individuals is Alok Choudhari of Raipur, the Chief Executive Officer of SBL Energy Limited, also known as Amin Explosive Private Limited, which allegedly supplied over 200 shipments of explosives and explosive-

related materials to a company that maintained the SAF's arsenal. The Treasury Department also imposed sanctions on SBL Energy Limited and other firms based in Sudan and Egypt. "These networks supply weapons, explosives, and foreign fighters to both the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces. Their support has prolonged a conflict that has created the world's worst humanitarian crisis and provided space for terrorist groups to operate," Tommy Pigott, spokesperson of the US Department of State, said in a statement.

Raipur-based SBL Energy allegedly supplied explosives and related material to Sudan-based Target Multiactivities Company (TMAC), the US Treasury Department said.

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**PIONEER IN SHORT**

**STRONG TREMORS FELT IN DELHI, J&K**

Strong tremors were felt in Delhi-NCR and Jammu and Kashmir on Saturday evening as a 6.2-magnitude earthquake hit Afghanistan. The tremors sparked panic among residents of the Valley, but there are no reports of loss of life or damage to property so far, officials said. According to the National Centre for Seismology (NCS), the earthquake hit Afghanistan at 7.04 pm, with its epicentre located at a depth of 215 km. The United States Geological Survey said the quake hit 43 km south of Jumm in northeastern Afghanistan.

In the foundation stone-laying ceremony for the Amber and Ascend-K Circuits electronics manufacturing plant in Gautam Buddha Nagar's Jewar area, the CM said the historical connection continues to strengthen cultural ties between Uttar Pradesh and South Korea. Union Minister of Railways and IT Ashwini Vaishnav and Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav were also present on the occasion.

"According to the Korean history, their Queen Heo was Ayodhya's Princess Ratna, who

Mart in Greater Noida from September 25 to 29, while urging the Noida Authority to digitise all its services and expedite action against allottees who have failed to develop allotted land.

Addressing a programme marking the curtain raiser of the trade show and the inauguration and foundation laying of 70 development projects worth ₹2,479 crore in Noida and Dadri Assembly constituencies, UP CM said the Noida Authority should now move all its services online and monitor works through an Integrated Command and Control Centre.

## LeT operatives seen at Shoaib Akhtar's brother's funeral

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 ■ New Delhi

On June 24, Shahid Akhtar, the elder brother of former Pakistani fast bowler Shoaib Akhtar, was buried at Islamabad's H-8 graveyard. Videos from the funeral, some shared by the Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML), showed senior Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LeT) members attending the prayers. One of them was Saifullah Kasuri, who Indian authorities say planned the 2025 Pahalgam attack that killed tourists in Kashmir.

The footage also showed PMML president Inam Ur Rehman and other party leaders, including Abdullah Toor and Hafiz Umar. PMML



serves as the political front for LeT, formed after international sanctions targeted Hafiz Saeed's earlier groups, such as Jamaat-ud-Dawa. The United Nations still lists Saeed as the mastermind behind the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

The presence of these individuals at the funeral of a well-known family in

## NIA CHARGES 3 MORE ACCUSED IN RED FORT BLAST CASE

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 ■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has charged three more people in the Red Fort blast case, bringing the total number of accused to 13.

The NIA has filed a supplementary chargesheet naming three fresh accused in last year's vehicle bomb blast near the Red Fort, taking the total number of people charged in the case to 13. The agency has named Zameer Ahmad Ahanter, Tufail Ahmad Bhat and Muzafar Ahmad (also known as Faraz or Zafar) as accused. All three are from Jammu and Kashmir, and Muzafar Ahmad, a paediatrician, remains untraceable.

## 'Road Safety Wala' exposed: The man who 'bumped into' women on Delhi streets

KHUSHI MEHROTRA  
 ■ New Delhi

For months, Gurman Singh cruised Delhi's streets on his motorcycle, deliberately ramming into scooters ridden by unsuspecting women and minor girls.

He would then stalk them, record their shock and distress without consent, and upload the footage under his 'Road Safety Wala' handle, all to chase likes, followers and money. The 32-year-old from Subhash Nagar, who posed as a road safety crusader, turned the city's roads into his personal hunting ground.

Gurman would spot women riders, speed up and slam into their vehicles from behind. As the terrified victims struggled to

regain balance, he would approach with a fake apology, "Sorry, Didi, before discreetly filming their reactions and fleeing the scene. These clips were later edited and posted on YouTube (@bikeronroad33) and his Facebook page.

The disturbing pattern came crashing down on Saturday when Delhi Police's Cyber Cell (West) arrested Singh. The trigger was when a complaint was filed on June 2 by Sunny Arora, whose minor daughters were riding their scooter when two bikers, allegedly including Gurman, deliberately rammed them from behind. The riders then followed the frightened girls, hurling abusive and inappropriate remarks. Days later, Arora discovered the humiliating



footage of his daughters uploaded on Singh's channels.

Police investigations revealed Singh had targeted multiple women and young girls across Delhi. He allegedly chose female riders specifically because their fear and distress generated higher engagement, helping his videos go viral faster and earn monetisation revenue. During interrogation, Singh reportedly confessed that the thrill of targeting women and the rush of online attention had become addictive.

Police officers recovered his mobile phone, which contained dozens of such videos, screenshots, and account data. A case has been registered under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the POCOA Act, as minors were among the victims. Deputy

Commissioner of Police (West) Harehsvar Swami confirmed that Singh featured in multiple complaints of road harassment. A team led by Inspector Vikas Buldak used digital forensics to trace the content back to him. Singh, who is pursuing an open graduation from Khalsa College, had built a deceptive online persona.

Police have now moved to take down his accounts and are examining whether more women and girls were victimised. The arrest has sent shockwaves through Delhi, exposing how the quest for viral fame turned an ordinary man into a calculated road predator who exploited women and children for content. Further investigation is underway to uncover the full scale of his activities, the DCP added.



Officials said the new chargesheet was filed in a special NIA court at Patiala House Courts on Saturday after further investigation. The agency explained that the three new names were added based on fresh evidence collected since the original chargesheet was filed against the first 10 accused.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



NEW DELHI | SUNDAY | JUNE 28, 2026

## EOW of Delhi Police arrests man on run for 9 years in ₹18 cr bank fraud

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Economic Offences Wing (EOW) of the Delhi Police arrested a proclaimed offender who had evaded arrest for 9 years. He allegedly masterminded a property and bank fraud, using forged documents, impersonation and shell companies to cheat multiple banks of more than ₹18 crore.

The accused, identified as Sanjeev Dixit (53) alias Sanjay Sharma, was arrested on June

25 while lodged in Tihar Jail in connection with another criminal case. He had been absconding since 2017 after escaping from Uttar Pradesh Police, and a court subsequently declared him a proclaimed offender.

According to the EOW, the case dates back to 2013 when complainant Usha Rani Sethi alleged that Dixit and his associates fraudulently transferred ownership of her property in Vivek Vihar by executing a forged sale deed without

her knowledge. Investigators said the accused first gained access to the property by placing his associates as tenants, which enabled them to gather details about the property's ownership.

They allegedly procured the PAN details of another woman who shares the complainant's name. They arranged for a female impersonator to appear before the Sub-Registrar's office as the property's owner. Using the forged sale deed, the accused



mortgaged the property to obtain loans and credit facilities from multiple banks.

Police said the fraud involved credit facilities exceeding ₹18 crore, including ₹10 crore sanctioned by Chinatrust Commercial Bank, as well as cash credit limits and vehicle loans from other financial institutions. Most of the loan accounts later turned into non-performing assets (NPAs).

Investigators further alleged that the accused

routed the loan proceeds through a network of shell companies and fictitious bank accounts to conceal the money trail before siphoning off the funds through cash withdrawals and personal expenses. The EOW said sustained technical surveillance, repeated searches and local enquiries eventually revealed that Dixit was lodged in Tihar Jail.

Additional Commissioner of Police (EOW) Ravi Kumar Singh said the accused is a

habitual economic offender with 12 criminal cases registered against him by various investigating agencies, including the CBI and Delhi Police, involving cheating, forgery, criminal conspiracy and corruption. Police have advised property owners to periodically verify their property records for any unauthorised transactions and urged banks to conduct stringent verification of ownership documents and borrowers before sanctioning loans.

## CM Rekha attends Viksit Bharat Sankalp Sammelan in Narela

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday attended the grand Viksit Bharat Sankalp Sammelan held at Comfort Zone, Ramdev Chowk in Narela. The special event was organised to mark 12 years of dedicated leadership, good governance, public service and welfare initiatives under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said that the country has emerged as a strong economic and diplomatic force on the global stage, while the benefits of the digital revolution, expanding modern infrastructure and people-centric welfare policies are reaching even the last person in the queue.



North West Delhi MP Yogendra Chandolia, Narela MLA Raj Karan Khatri and other distinguished guests were present on the occasion.

The Chief Minister highlighted schemes such as Ayushman Bharat, PM Awas Yojana, Ujjwala Yojana and PM SVANidhi, saying they have made the lives of crores of citizens across the country more dignified and convenient.

Speaking about the development of Narela and Outer

Delhi, she reiterated the Government's commitment to strengthening regional connectivity, promoting industrial growth and improving civic amenities. She said development works worth nearly ₹600 crore are currently underway in the Narela Assembly constituency within just over a year, covering roads, drains, healthcare, education and public transport.

The Chief Minister said Narela is one of Delhi's largest Assembly constituencies and had remained deprived of development for a long time. She said the present Government is working swiftly to change that. Work is progressing rapidly on eight Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, two Atal Canteens, road construction in villages, improved public transport and other key infrastructure projects in the area.

She also said the Delhi Government has purchased land worth ₹1,350 crore to establish a world-class university in Narela, ensuring that students from villages and rural areas do not have to travel far to pursue higher education. In addition, she said ₹5,000 crore has already been released following the approval of the Rithala-Kundli via Narela Metro corridor to

ensure that the project is completed without delay.

The Chief Minister assured residents that local priorities such as a bypass, a foot overbridge, a girls' college and other infrastructure projects would be taken up on priority. She said that in coordination with the Member of Parliament, the MLA, councilors and the district organisation, every development project in the region would be completed within the stipulated timeline.

Calling upon the youth, women and party workers present at the event, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta urged them to contribute towards the Viksit Bharat 2047 mission and work together to build a fully developed, self-reliant and prosperous India.

## DJB adds 82,117 tanker trips this year amid pipeline shortfall

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Jal Board (DJB) has increased water tanker trips by 82,117 this year compared to last year in the city, officials said on Saturday.

Usually, water tankers are deployed in areas where the DJB cannot supply water through a pipeline, but in water emergencies, they are also deployed. "While 1,06,501 tanker trips were recorded in May 2025, this number rose to 1,88,618 tanker trips in May 2026," a DJB officer said.

Additionally, the average number of water tankers in service daily increased from 726 in May 2025 to 1,098 in May



2026, he said. "More than 372 additional water tankers have been continuously engaged in water services compared to the previous year," he said.

Officials said, this year, small tankers have also been deployed to ensure water supply in densely populated areas and narrow lanes.

To meet peak water demand in the summer season, the Delhi Government rolls out its

annual summer action plan, setting a water production target of 1002 million gallons per day for this year.

According to the latest Economic Survey, Delhi has a daily water requirement of 1,290 MGD, whereas the DJB only produces between 990 and 1,000 MGD.

This leaves the capital with a persistent demand-supply gap of around 290 MGD, with residents complaining of water shortage in some parts of the national Capital.

Also, the DJB's two major water treatment plants at Wazirabad and Chandrawal were severely affected due to a reduction in water supply from the neighbouring state of Haryana.

## NDMC to set up 5 ETPs at dhobi ghats to recycle water for parks

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) to set up five effluent treatment plants (ETPs) at major dhobi ghats in the New Delhi area to recycle wastewater for irrigation of parks and other green areas under its jurisdiction, officials said on Saturday.

The project will be implemented on a Hybrid Annuity and Build and Operate and Transfer (BOT) model, under which private developers will design, build, operate and maintain the plants for five years before handing them over to the civic body, they said.

The civic body manages an area of over 42 sq km with a resident population of



around 3.5 lakh and a floating population of nearly 15 lakh.

"The five ETPs will be set up at Dhobi Ghat No. 5 near Pt Pant Marg (20 KLD), Dhobi Ghat No. 4 near Talkatora Road (70 KLD), Dhobi Ghat No. 15 near South Avenue Lane (25 KLD), Hailey Lane near Ugrasen Baoli (35 KLD) and Princess Park Part-II near

Bhagwan Das Road (30 KLD)," the tender document read.

The treated water will be used for horticulture and irrigation purposes to help meet the growing water requirement for maintaining parks, lawns and other green spaces in the NDMC area, the officials said. The tender document also stated that the increasing demand for water for irrigation, particularly during summer and winter months, requires sustainable solutions.

It further added that the treated water will meet prescribed environmental standards for parameters such as pH, biological oxygen demand (BOD) and

suspended solids. The document also stated that no trees will be cut for the construction of the treatment facility. The design and layout of the facilities will have to be modified, if required, to protect existing trees.

Under the financial model, 50 per cent of the construction cost will be paid after completion of the project, while the remaining amount and operation and maintenance charges will be released annually over the five-year contract period based on performance.

The operators will be liable to pay a penalty ranging from ₹2,000 to ₹3,000 per day for failing to supply the required quantity of treated water or for not informing the department in advance about maintenance work.

The tender process has begun, with a pre-bid meeting scheduled for July 2 and the last date for submission of bids fixed for July 17. The selected developer will be required to make the plants operational within six months of the award of the contract.

## Heat persists at 41.3°C; IMD predicts rain, gusty winds ahead

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The capital saw a slight spike in minimum temperature on Saturday while the maximum settled at 41.3 degrees Celsius, with the India Meteorological department (IMD) forecasting light rainfall and gusty winds over the city in coming days.

"On Sunday, partly cloudy skies are expected to persist and there is possibility of thundery development towards afternoon or evening. Strong surface winds of speed 20-30 kmph, occasionally gusting to 40 kmph, during the day is also expected," an IMD official said, adding that the conditions may intensify on Tuesday-Wednesday, when thunderstorms along with rainfall is likely.

The monsoon is now expected to reach Delhi-NCR during the first week of July, according to the latest update from the IMD. Earlier forecasts



People cover themselves on a hot summer day in New Delhi on Saturday

had indicated that the monsoon would arrive by June 27, but changing weather conditions have pushed back its expected onset.

On the day, Safdarjung — the city's base weather station — recorded a minimum temperature of 30.8 degrees Celsius, 2.9 degrees below normal — a 2.1-degree rise since the day before.

Other weather stations also marked a similar increase in the minimum temperatures. Palam recorded a minimum of 28.4 degrees Celsius, 0.9 degrees higher than the

Friday minimum, Lodhi Road recorded 29.8 degrees Celsius, a 2.4-degree rise, and Ridge and Ayanagar recorded 26.8 degrees and 29.3 degrees Celsius, respectively, showing a 0.2-degree and 2.3-degree rise since Friday.

The maximum temperature was logged at 41.3 degrees Celsius, 4.1 degrees above the normal, and did not see any major change across stations.

According to IMD, trace amount of rainfall was recorded in parts of Delhi early Saturday. However, no

further rain was recorded through the day. IMD has issued an alert for rainfall and thunderstorms for Tuesday and Wednesday.

"There is a possibility of very light to light rain in the coming days, with weather conditions intensifying on Tuesday and Wednesday," an IMD official said, adding that an alert has been issued in this regard.

According to IMD forecast, the maximum may see a slight drop in the coming days and is likely to hover around 39-41 degrees Celsius on Sunday, and 35-37 degrees Celsius by Wednesday. The minimum temperature is likely to be around 28-30 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Meanwhile, the air quality index (AQI) of the city remained in the 'moderate' category on Saturday and the 24-hour average AQI was recorded at 130 at 4 pm, according to Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) data.

**AXIS BANK LTD.** Retail Lending and Payment Group (Local Office/Branch): Axis House, Tower-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida-201301, U.P. Axis Bank Ltd., 3rd Floor, Gigaplex, NPC - 1, TTC Industrial Area, Mugalsan Road, Airoli, Navi Mumbai - 400708. Registered Office: "Trishul", 3rd Floor Opp. Samaratheshwar Temple Law Garden, Ellisbridge Ahmedabad - 380006.

**E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMovable ASSETS UNDER THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002**

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property is mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor, the physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Secured Creditor will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" on 14.07.2026 for recovery of Rs. 49,78,64/- (Rupees Forty-Nine Lakh Seventy-Eight Thousand Six Hundred Forty-Four Only) dues as on 19-10-23 with future interest and costs due to the secured creditor from Mr. Vinod Prakash, Mrs. Mrs. Shalini Prakash, (Co-applicant). Please refer the appended auction schedule for necessary details:

KNOWN ENCUMBRANCES (IF ANY)	NIL
RESERVE PRICE (IN RS.)	Rs. 59,11,313/- (Rupees Fifty Nine Lakh Eleven Thousand Three Hundred Thirteen Only)
EARNEST MONEY DEPOSIT (IN RS.)	Rs. 5,91,131.31/- (Rupees Five Lakh Ninety One Thousand One Hundred Thirty One Three Paise Only) through DD/PO in favor of Axis Bank Ltd., Payable.
BID INCREMENTAL AMOUNT	Rs. 10,000/- (Rupees Ten Thousand only)
LAST DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR SUBMISSION OF BIDS / TENDER WITH EMD	On 13.07.2026 latest by 05:00 P.M. Axis House, Tower-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida-201301, U.P. Addressed to Mr. Mukesh Singh
DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR PUBLIC E-AUCTION	On 14.07.2026, between 11.00 A.M and 12.00 Noon, with unlimited extensions of 5 minutes each at web portal https://BidDeal.in. e-auction tender documents containing e-auction bid form, declaration etc., are available in the website of the Service Provider as mentioned above.
SCHEDULE-DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:-	Dwelling Unit Bearing No. 1705 Tower "CVS", on 17th Floor, Having Super Area 930 Sq. Feet (i.e. 85.40 Sq. Meters) with sanitary, Electrical, and other fittings, in the Group Housing Scheme "CAPETOWN" at Group Housing Plot No. GH-01/A, Sector-74, Noida, District Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. East; As per the Floor Plan, West; As per the Floor Plan South; As per the Floor Plan, North; As per the Floor Plan.

**Public Notice**

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Devidar Kumar is the GFA Holder of Property bearing plot No.32, area measuring 60 sq. yds, out of khata No.803, situated in the revenue estate of village Nawada Delhi State Delhi in the Abadi known as Mohan garden in Block extn, Uttam New Delhi-110059. He is in Possession through Notarized GFA, AT& WILL, dated 18-07-2016 executed by S. Chotey Lal in favour of his son Mr. Devidar Kumar in respect of said property. Mr. Devidar Kumar intends to transfer the ownership of above said Property by way of Sale Deed to Mr. Ajay Kumar Joshi and Kusum Joshi, Subsequently, Mr. Ajay Kumar Joshi and Kusum Joshi intend to mortgage the said property with SFRG India Home Finance Ltd. Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 7 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 7-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our clients.

If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 7-day period by contacting Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at office No. 32, 1st Floor, Building No. A-4/A, Sector-6, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301; Landlines: +91022-04499721; e-mail: accounts@lvnorthern

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## Van Mahotsav to livestream plantation drives at 50 locations

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

For the first time, the Van Mahotsav, beginning July 7, will feature live telecasts of plantation drives across 50 locations at its inaugural event, officials said on Saturday. This is part of a mega campaign of the Delhi Government to plant 70 lakh saplings throughout the city in phases.

easy-to-use green drive portal will be launched on July 8. Through this portal, residents can register for the plantation drive by choosing a location, date and time slot, he said.

Officials said people who complete the plantation process and submit the required details through the portal will receive a "Paryavaran Rakshak"-e-certificate carrying the chief minister's signature.

This year's plantation drive will spread across different parts of the city, unlike previous years when the inaugural event focused mainly on the Ridge, an official said. The official said an

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KNOWN ENCUMBRANCES (IF ANY)	NIL
RESERVE PRICE (IN RS.)	Rs. 3,71,00,000/- (Three crore seventy one lakh),
EARNEST MONEY DEPOSIT (IN RS.)	Rs. 37,10,000.00/- (Rupees Thirty Seven Lakh Ten Thousand Only) through DD/PO in favor of Axis Bank Ltd., Payable.
BID INCREMENTAL AMOUNT	Rs. 50,000/- (Fifty thousand only)
LAST DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR SUBMISSION OF BIDS / TENDER WITH EMD	On 27.07.2026 latest by 05:00 P.M. Axis House, Tower-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida-201301, U.P. Addressed to Mr. Mukesh Singh
DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR PUBLIC E-AUCTION	On 28.07.2026, between 11.00 A.M and 12.00 Noon, with unlimited extensions of 5 minutes each at web portal https://BidDeal.in. e-auction tender documents containing e-auction bid form, declaration etc., are available in the website of the Service Provider as mentioned above.
SCHEDULE-DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY:-	Entire Third Floor With Roof/Terrace Rights, Out of Built-Up Property, Built On Free Hold Plot No. 164 in Block F, Situated in Residential Colony Known As Mansarovar Garden, Delhi Along With Proportionate Undivided, Indivisible And Impartible Ownership Rights Of The Land Measuring 297 Sq. Yards Beneath The Said Building, With Common Right Of Staircase And Passage, With All Other Common Facilities Of The Said Building, Within The Limits Of Delhi Municipal Corporation, West Zone, New Delhi In The Name Of Shri Vaibhav Singh Son Of Shri Manoj Singh And Smt. Harmeet Kaur Wife Of Vaibhav Singh. Bounded As Under:- North - Road, South - Lane East - Property No. F-165, West - Property No. F-163.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**THE HON'BLE PRINCIPLE COMMERCIAL COURT AT CHENNAI**  
DOS 77 OF 2026

Timescans Logistics (India) Limited, Represented by its authorized representative Mr. T Umashai,

No.18/3, Rajah Annamalai Buildings, Annexe 3rd Floor, Rukmani Lakshminagar, Road, Egmore, Chennai, Tamil Nadu - 600038

... Plaintiff

- Versus -

1. Rad Hawk Freight Solutions LLP, Represented by its Designated Party 117D, Aravali Apartment, Near Sak Mandir, Sector-52 Noida, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201301

2. Lehal Exports Private Limited, Registered by its Director No - 302, 3rd Floor, Express Tower, C1/2, Nanwanabagh, Azadpur, North Delhi-110011

... Defendants

It is hereby informed that our client, Timescans Logistics (India) Limited, has instituted a Commercial Suit for recovery of money against Rad Hawk Freight Solutions LLP and Lehal Exports Private Limited.

In this regard, the Hon'ble court has directed us to issue a paper publication to the 1st Defendant (Rad Hawk Freight Solutions LLP). Accordingly, we hereby inform that the above case is posted for hearing on 09.07.2026 before The Hon'ble Principle Commercial Court, Egmore, Chennai for the appearance of the 1st Defendant (Rad Hawk Freight Solutions LLP), failing which the matter will be decided on merits.

T.V.Suresh Kumar  
ADVOCATE  
TSK Legal  
Temple Tower, H-5, 7TH Floor, #672, Anna Salai, Nandanam, Chennai-600035

PD(1493)C

**The Pioneer Classified**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I, Anish Kumar S/o Sh. Shivjee Yadav, R/o Plot No. 5, UGF, Block-B, Hastals Vikas Nagar Extn., Uttam Nagar, New Delhi- 110059, do hereby declare that my date of birth has been mentioned as 08-01-2008 in my Aadhaar Card and Birth Certificate. However, my correct date of birth is 29-01-2007. Therefore, the same may kindly be corrected/amended accordingly.**

PD(1493)C

**I, Hari Parkash Rana S/o Sh. Dev Parkash Rana, R/o B-402, Shri Radha Krishna CGHS, Plot No-23, Sector-7, Dwarka, Delhi have changed my minor daughter's name from Akanksha to Akanksha Rana for all future**

PD(1494)C

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given on behalf of Shri Atul Kumar Bagaria to inform to the public to change the name of Shri Atul Kumar Bagaria to Shri Atul Kumar Bagaria in the UPPER GROUND FLOOR, FRONT SIDE WITHOUT ROOF/TERRACE RIGHTS (REFERRED TO AS "SAID FLOOR") OF PLOT NO. 447, HAVING LAND AREA MEASURING 126 SQ. YDS. PERTAINING TO THE KHASRA NO. 5623, SITUATED IN THE COLONY KNOWN AS RAJ NAGAR, IN THE AREA OF VILLAGE PALAM, NEW DELHI from Smt. Chandrawati Devi who became owner through GFA, AT&S and Will dated 21/11/1983 duly attested with the Notary Public Delhi which was executed by Shri Kartar Singh same to be financed & mortgaged by Aditya Birla Housing Finance Ltd. So, to comply the requirements of BAA, KNBSI-C, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim over the said mortgaged property over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his or her claims within 15 days from the date of Publication of this Notice. Otherwise it will be presumed that the said property is free from all encumbrances, charges and/or lien etc. and my clients are free to sell/transfer the said property.

Rakesh N. D. (ADVOCATE),  
Office No 107, 1st Floor,  
M.S. Chembur, C-1/A, Vikas Marg,  
Laxmi Nagar, Delhi-110052

**INDRAPRASTHA POWER GENERATION CO. LTD. & PRAGATI POWER CORPORATION LIMITED**  
(Govt. of NCT of Delhi Undertaking)  
Corporate Identity No. (CIN)-IPGCL- U40103DL2000ISGC111530  
Corporate Identity No. (CIN)-PPCL- U74899DL2000ISGC109135  
(ISO 9001:2008, 14001-2007, 18001-2007 Certified Stations)  
ED(C&M), Pragati Power Station-I, I.P. Estate, Ring Road, New Delhi-110002.  
TEL: 011-23370541, FAX NO. 011 23379164

**NIT No. 02/2026-27 TENDERING FOR ONLINE BIDDING Date: 29/05/2026**

Offers are invited in two parts system on e-tendering on the portal of Delhi Govt. at <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>, for the below items with tender closing time at 11:00 hrs. on bid submission date:-

	Tender ID & Description	T-Value (Rs.)
01	2026_IPGCL_291114 Biennial Rate contract for the maintenance of Electrical system at PPS-I	89,80,006.35
02	2026_IPGCL_291810_1 Biennial Rate contract for HRSG (STG & HRSG) at G1PS	33,97,584.54
03	2026_IPGCL_292250 Supply installation (Retrofitting), Testing and commissioning of Air Circuit with Auto Changerover/Interlocking scheme of the SA-2 LT (415V) panel board at G1PS, Delhi	42,14,000.00

**Corrigendum/Retender**

01	2025_IPGCL_281659_1 Implementation "Automatic Generation Control" on 4 Gas Turbine Generators of 1500MW PPS-III Bawana	3,44,00,000.00
02	2026_IPGCL_286058 Urgent Comprehensive Civil Repair and Rehabilitation of Cooling Tower at PPS-III, Bawana based on NCCBM Report and BOQ	8,10,28,499.70

Note: 1) Tender Issue Date & EMD details - Please visit IPGCL-PPCL website ([www.ipgcl-ppcl.gov.in](http://www.ipgcl-ppcl.gov.in))  
2) Bid Submission End Date & Bid Opening Date : As per IPGCL-PPCL website and Delhi Govt e-portal  
3) No Corrigendum/addendum/modification for tender value up to Rs 50.00 Lacs will be advertised in newspaper and bidders are requested to regularly visit IPGCL-PPCL website as well as Delhi Government E-procurement site for getting themselves updated.  
**DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0121/26-27**



## Delhi Govt suspends 5 pharmacists, 2 officials over drug procurement lapses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government suspended five pharmacists and two officials with immediate effect following inspections at Central Procurement Agency (CPA) stores that exposed serious irregularities, negligence, and administrative lapses. The action was taken after the investigation revealed serious irregularities and lapses in the procurement, storage and management of medicines.

Earlier, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a money laundering case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in connection with an alleged ₹600 crore Delhi health procurement scam.

The case stems from allegations of large-scale irregularities in the procurement of medicines, surgical items, consumables, and medical equipment by the Central Procurement Agency (CPA) under the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The probe was initiated



after the Directorate of Vigilance referred a complaint to the Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB) of the Delhi Government.

According to chief minister Rekha Gupta, corruption and administrative negligence will not be tolerated in the Government under any circumstances.

The chief minister reiterated that the Delhi Government follows a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption and will not tolerate corruption, negligence or irregularities at any level of the administration. She said that ensuring accountability in matters concerning public

interest is the Government's highest priority, and strict action will continue against any officer or employee found guilty.

During its initial investigation, the ACB examined procurement records and found that key files related to multiple procurements were not produced. The records reportedly included documents linked to portable X-ray machines, C-Arm equipment, anaesthesia workstations, ORS supplies, surgical consumables, medicines, and linen procurement.

The items reportedly procured at inflated prices include portable X-ray

machines, C-Arm radiological equipment, anaesthesia workstations, Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS), bed sheets, linen, surgical consumables, and medicines.

Investigators alleged that these files were in the personal custody of the former Head of Office of the Central Procurement Agency. According to the ACB, he failed to provide satisfactory explanations regarding missing records, prompting the agency to seek custodial interrogation to recover documents, identify co-conspirators, and trace alleged financial transactions.

Amid allegations of irregularities in procurement of medicines, the Delhi Government has earlier suspended former DGHS and former head of office at the BJRM Hospital, according to official orders.

Following these developments, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta recommended registration of FIRs against two more doctors in the case. The matter is also being probed separately by the Directorate of Vigilance.

## DU opens registrations for more than 71,000 UG seats for 2026-27 session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The race for more than 71,000 undergraduate seats at the University of Delhi has begun with the university opening its first phase of registrations for admission for the 2026-27 academic session, triggering excitement and anxiety among aspirants awaiting a place in one of the country's premier institutions.

The Delhi University has commenced Phase I of admission — registrations under the Common Seat Allocation System (CSAS) for candidates who appeared in the Common University Entrance Test (CUET-UG) 2026 and are seeking admission to its undergraduate programmes.

"The registrations have been opened in the first phase. The second phase will definitely be opened by next week," Dean of Admissions Haneet Gandhi said. She confirmed that around 71,600 undergraduate seats are available across the university's colleges this year.

Admissions to 73 undergraduate programmes and



more than 100 BA programme combinations offered across 67 colleges will be based solely on CUET-UG 2026 scores, subject to programme-specific eligibility criteria.

Candidates can register on the CSAS portal using only their CUET-UG 2026 application number. The university said candidates' essential details, including name, date of birth, photograph and signature have been auto-integrated through the Government of India's API Setu to minimise data-entry errors and enhance security.

The university has prescribed a one-time, non-refundable registration fee of ₹250 for candidates belong-

ing to the unreserved, OBC-NCL and EWS categories, and ₹100 for SC, ST and PwBD candidates. After completing Phase I, candidates will have to participate in Phase II, during which they will map their CUET test papers with the subjects studied in Class 12 and submit their preferences for programmes and college combinations.

The university will determine candidates' eligibility based on this subject mapping before preparing allocations. The schedule for Phase II will be announced shortly. As registrations got underway, aspirants said they were hopeful but anxious about securing admission to their preferred colleges.

Aniket, a Delhi-based aspi-

rant who goes by his first name, said Political Science was his preferred course and Hindu College topped his list of choices. "My CUET score is good, so I'm hopeful. But I'm still very nervous about whether I'll get my first preference. Everyone wants the top colleges, so there's always uncertainty," he said.

The university has advised candidates to read the Undergraduate Bulletin of Information and CSAS (UG) 2026-27 guidelines carefully before completing the registration process and to regularly check the admission portal for further announcements.

In 2025, Delhi University began classes on August 1 as scheduled, but several admission and mop-up rounds continued till late September, resulting in many students joining courses weeks after teaching had commenced.

A similar situation prevailed in 2024 when the academic session started only on August 29, following delays in the declaration of CUET-UG results. Mop-up rounds that year extended into October.

## Intelligence alert on terror threat to Delhi, Uttarakhand; security stepped up



Delhi Police have stepped up security following a warning from intelligence agencies in New Delhi on Saturday. PANKAJ KUMAR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

An intelligence alert has been issued regarding a potential terrorist threat to Delhi and Uttarakhand, prompting intensified security measures. According to sources, intelligence agencies have issued a high-level security warning following specific intelligence inputs indicating a possible threat.

Major religious sites, government facilities, and police installations have been placed under increased surveillance. This alert, characterised as "serious," has led to the immediate reinforcement of security arrangements across both regions.

In Delhi, additional police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed at sensitive locations, including prominent temples, gurdwaras, the Red Fort, India Gate, government offices in

central Delhi, and police stations. Rapid response teams and counter-terrorism units remain on standby. In Uttarakhand, security efforts are concentrated at key pilgrimage centres and popular tourist destinations such as Haridwar, Rishikesh, and Dehradun.

Security has been heightened through random checks, vehicle searches, and increased patrols at state entry points.

Officials have noted that specifics regarding the nature of the threat have not been disclosed to preserve operational integrity.

Nonetheless, the intelligence inputs are being treated with utmost seriousness due to the strategic significance of Delhi, India's capital, and Uttarakhand, which shares sensitive borders with China and Nepal. Security agencies have urged the public to

remain calm while maintaining vigilance. Citizens are encouraged to report any suspicious activity or unattended objects to the nearest police station or helpline. Hospitality providers, including hotels and dharmshalas, as well as transportation operators, have also been briefed.

This development occurs amidst ongoing efforts by security forces to dismantle terrorist networks nationwide. Although no particular group has been identified, authorities are diligently verifying intelligence inputs and working to prevent any potential threat.

Authorities have assured that comprehensive security measures are in place and that there is no immediate cause for panic.

The situation is being closely monitored at the highest levels of government and security agencies.

## MCD plans multi-level decks, underground parking at APMC mandis

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is planning multi-level decks and underground parking facilities for goods vehicles at APMC mandis in the national capital to ease chronic congestion.

The proposal is likely to be sent to the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) in the coming days, according to an MCD official.

"The proposal is still at a preliminary stage and will be discussed with the APMC before a detailed plan is prepared. We are examining the feasibility of developing multi-level and underground parking facilities within the mandis," an MCD official said.

The move comes as wholesale markets across Delhi con-



tinue to face traffic bottlenecks due to unregulated parking, particularly during the night and early morning hours when hundreds of trucks carrying fruits, vegetables, food-grains, flowers, fish and poultry arrive for unloading.

"Since vehicles often have to wait several hours for their turn at unloading bays, they end up occupying internal roads and circulation areas, slowing the movement of

other trucks, traders and buyers inside the markets," an official explained.

Delhi has seven major APMC-regulated wholesale markets — Azadpur Mandi, Keshopur Mandi, Narela Mandi, Najafgarh Mandi, Shahdara (Ghaziपुर) Mandi, the Fish, Poultry and Egg Market at Ghaziपुर, and the International Flower Market at Ghaziपुर. All these mandis/markets are located

in the densely populated areas.

Parking management in these mandis falls under the jurisdiction of the APMC. Although designated parking spaces exist at several markets, officials said they are either inadequate or not effectively utilised, resulting in haphazard parking and congestion during peak trading hours.

"Most goods vehicles enter the mandis between midnight and the early hours of the morning. Loading and unloading operations can take four to five hours, during which trucks remain stationed inside the market. A structured parking system will help regulate this movement and reduce pressure on internal roads," the official said.

According to the officials,

the proposed facilities are being planned as dedicated parking hubs where truck drivers can park their vehicles while awaiting unloading slots, rest, freshen up and then proceed with market operations without obstructing traffic within the mandi.

"Besides improving traffic circulation, the facilities are expected to make the handling and movement of perishable produce more efficient by separating waiting vehicles from active loading and unloading zones," the official said.

They added that the proposal is initially being explored for the Okhla and Ghaziपुर wholesale markets, with similar facilities likely to be considered at other APMC-regulated mandis depending on feasibility.

## Delhi BJP names office-bearers for 11 districts, 33% posts to women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi BJP on Saturday announced the new team of office-bearers for 11 organisational districts, saying that women received 33 per cent representation in line with the party's commitment to women empowerment. The party also said it ensured adequate representation for youth and members of the Scheduled Caste community in the new organisational structure.

The announcement was made with the approval of Delhi BJP president Harsh



Malhotra and the party's senior leadership. According to the party, district presidents of 11 organisational districts have declared their office-bearer lists. Appointments for the organisational districts of Outer Delhi, West Delhi and

Najafgarh will be announced later after consulting with the existing district presidents. The BJP also announced the appointment of a few mandal presidents as part of the organisational reshuffle.

Speaking on the occasion, Delhi BJP president Harsh Malhotra said the party fulfilled its commitment to women's empowerment by ensuring 33 per cent representation for women in the new organisational teams.

"We have announced the list of office-bearers giving 33 per cent representation to women as per the national leadership's

commitment towards women's empowerment. Ample opportunity has also been given to the youth," Malhotra said. He added that the party also strictly adhered to providing representation to Scheduled Caste office-bearers. "The new organisational set-up will further energise the party organisation towards serving the people of Delhi," he said.

Among several appointments, some of those office-bearers are: Chaudhary Jagat Singh and Neelam Sahdev as vice-presidents, while Simal Sahn (Scheduled Caste) has been appointed minister and

Shawk Kardam has also been inducted as a Scheduled Caste office-bearer. Devendra Gaur has been named treasurer, Pankaj Tiwari has been appointed IT head, and Sumit Trivedi has been given charge as the social media head. At the mandal level, Mohini Sharma has been appointed president of the Mayur Vihar-II Mandal.

These appointments are part of the Delhi BJP's ongoing organisational restructuring exercise aimed at strengthening the party's grassroots network ahead of future political and civic engagements.

## 10 arrested as Delhi Police bust international mobile theft racket

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police on Saturday busted a large interstate and international syndicate involved in trafficking stolen and snatched mobile phones. Police said 10 people, including two courier operators, have been arrested, and 325 high-end mobile phones worth nearly ₹1 crore have been recovered.

According to the police, the investigation revealed that the gang smuggled stolen mobile phones from Delhi to Bangladesh through Kolkata, Malda, and Murshidabad, while another network routed the devices to Nepal via Uttar Pradesh.

Police said the operation exposed a structured disposal network that had allegedly been active for nearly a year and is suspected to have trafficked around 10,000 to 12,000 stolen mobile phones through organised channels.

Calling it one of the biggest recoveries of stolen handsets in Rohini district in recent times, police said the syndicate operated through a multi-layered network involving thieves, local receivers, aggregators, warehouse han-



dlers, courier operators and cross-border contacts.

The investigation began after police noticed a spike in mobile phone thefts, house burglaries and snatchings in the district, while recoveries remained low. Crime pattern analysis revealed that many stolen phones were not reappearing on Indian telecom networks, raising suspicion that they were being quickly moved outside Delhi.

A special team reviewed around 200 criminal dossiers and profiled hundreds of habitual thieves, snatchers and receivers. Investigators combined technical surveillance, digital examination of seized devices, courier trail reconstruction and field intelligence to track the network.

The breakthrough came on June 19 with the arrest of Raja alias Raju, Karan and Govind, from whom 101 stolen mobile phones were recovered.

## Delhi zoo uses artificial incubation for gharial and other reptile eggs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Delhi zoo is banking on artificial incubation to hatch eggs of reptiles, including critically endangered gharials, in an effort to revive breeding after years of failure.

The last successful gharial breeding at the zoo was recorded in 2010-11, but all 11 hatchlings died within days. Female reptiles such as gharials, crocodiles, turtles, rat snakes and cobras at the Delhi National Zoological Park do not incubate their own eggs, a zoo official said.

Instead, the eggs are carefully removed and placed in an artificial incubation system to improve their chances of survival and support conservation efforts, he said.

The eggs are kept under controlled conditions throughout the incubation period, the official said.

Temperature is monitored closely because even slight variations can affect the development of embryos and reduce the chances of successful hatching, he added.



Not all eggs hatch into healthy offspring despite careful handling, he said and added the work carried out by the zoo's biological staff has so far shown encouraging results, and officials are hopeful of a better outcome this breeding season.

The results of the incubation process will be known after around 45 days, when it will be clear whether the eggs have hatched successfully, the official added.

He said the zoo has been trying to breed gharials for the past 10 to 12 years, as it has only three of the endangered reptiles in its collection.

If the incubation process is successful, gharial hatchlings could emerge this

season, which would be a major achievement for the Delhi zoo, the official said.

The official added that breeding of the species has not been successful at the zoo for several years.

The last successful gharial breeding at the Delhi zoo was recorded in 2010-11, when 11 hatchlings were born, the official said. However, all of them died within a few days, he explained.

Male gharials often break the eggs laid by females and may even eat the hatchlings if given the opportunity, he said. Female reptiles that lay eggs generally do not display parental instincts because of their hormonal makeup.

## 30-year-old man arrested over motorcyclist's death in Vasant Kunj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

A 30-year-old man was arrested for allegedly causing the death of a motorcyclist after making an abrupt lane change and fleeing the scene in Delhi's Vasant Kunj, police said on Saturday.

The victim, identified as Sarthak Mattoo (34), a resident of Gurugram who worked with an event management company, died after his motorcycle collided with a Mahindra Thar on June 25.

According to police, a PCR call reporting the accident was received at Vasant Kunj South police station on Wednesday. Mattoo, who sustained critical injuries, was rushed by PCR personnel to the Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, where doctors declared him brought dead. Police registered an FIR under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, conducted a post-mortem examination at Safdarjung Hospital and handed over the body to the family.

During the investigation, officers traced the offending Mahindra Thar, which was registered in the name of a



Bengaluru-based private company. The SUV had been leased to Sagar Saha, 29, a Bihar native employed with the company in Bengaluru. Saha told investigators that the vehicle was being driven at the time of the accident by his friend, Apurv Singh (30), a native of Uttar Pradesh's Ghaziपुर who works for a private firm and currently lives in Gurugram. Police said Saha was seated in the front passenger seat when the accident occurred.

The vehicle has been seized, and Singh has been arrested. Police said he was medically examined at Safdarjung Hospital and that further investigation is underway. According to preliminary findings, Mattoo was

wearing a helmet and riding behind the SUV when its driver allegedly made a sudden lane change.

The biker rammed into the left side of the vehicle after the abrupt turn, lost control and suffered fatal injuries. Police said the SUV driver fled the scene without stopping to help the injured rider. News reports quoted Mattoo's father, Surender, as alleging that the driver showed no concern after the crash. "The SUV came right in front of him. He lost balance, skidded on the road, and was crushed under the wheels of the Thar. The driver did not even stop to take him to the hospital," he said.

Mattoo had left home early that morning for a work assignment in Noida. "My son would have turned a year older on Saturday. Instead, we are preparing for his funeral. He was my only son. 'I know he won't come back, but I feel he is asking me for justice,'" his father told the media.

Police are examining CCTV footage from multiple routes to reconstruct the sequence of events and complete the investigation.

**IN FOCUS**

## Ram Temple Trust meeting on July 7, says VHP Chief

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Lucknow

VHP chief Alok Kumar said on Saturday that the Ram Temple Trust will meet in Ayodhya on July 7 to decide on the next course of action following the resignation of the two senior Trust functionaries.

He said he hopes that a chief executive officer is appointed to manage the affairs of the Ram Temple.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust general secretary Champat Rai and trustee Anil Mishra have resigned following allegations of malfeasance in donations at the temple.

"It's true that they (Rai and Mishra) sent in their resignation to both the president and the treasurer of the



trust, taking moral responsibility for the Ram Temple Donation Row.

The Trust will address the issue at its July 7 meeting," Kumar said.

Their decision should be respected since they took a "moral stand," he said. The resignations came on the heels of a Special

Investigation Team (SIT) unravelling blatant malpractice and mismanagement in donation collection in its preliminary report to the Uttar Pradesh Government.

Based on its findings, the police filed an FIR and arrested eight people.

Though neither Rai nor Mishra was named in the FIR,

their role in not reporting the matter on time has been under scrutiny.

The eight nabbed include Rai's former driver, who allegedly held the keys to the 'hundi' (donation boxes) without authority. Rai is also the VHP's vice president.

Kumar, meanwhile, said the allegations of theft have shaken people's trust in the temple management.

"It is my understanding that if the matter is investigated quickly, decided in a fast-track court, and those guilty are brought to justice in record time, it would be akin to a healing touch," he said. "I hope we will now have a CEO type setup in place to manage the affairs of the Ram Temple along with other Trustees," he added.

## Digvijaya seeks FIR and arrest of Champat Rai

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Ujjain

Senior Congress leader Digvijaya Singh on Saturday demanded the registration of an FIR and arrest of Champat Rai, general secretary of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, in connection with the alleged financial irregularities in donations received at the temple in Ayodhya.

He alleged that the BJP, RSS, and VHP "bear full responsibility for this episode, but they are trying to shield the accused".

"Those who believe in the religion, Sanatan Dharma, and Lord Ram will not tolerate this theft and looting. The entire accountability and responsibility for this lies with the BJP, RSS, and VHP," he added. Responding to a question, Singh said Champat Rai, vice president of the VHP, and Anil Mishra should be arrested.

"They have done this openly. And there are witnesses like Mahipal Singh and Dinanath Verma. Why don't you take their evidence? Record their statements," he told reporters.

Singh claimed donations were collected from approximately 12.5 crore families for the Ram Temple, yet there is no accounting for these funds.

An FIR, lodged at the instance of trust member Krishna Mohan, was registered following the recommendations of the preliminary report of a three-member Special Investigation Team (SIT) con-



stituted by the Uttar Pradesh Government after the allegations of misappropriation surfaced on June 7. The eight arrested persons were associated with counting cash and valuables received as donations at the temple. Following their arrest, they were remanded in judicial custody till June 29 while investigators reported recovering Rs 79.85 lakh. Digvijaya Singh, meanwhile, said the Congress would raise the Ram temple donation issue in every village, and committees are being formed at levels ranging from the ward to the district.

"The BJP, VHP, and RSS have collectively destroyed the traditions of Sanatan Dharma and betrayed its followers. The VHP and Sangh have nothing to do with religion or religious systems," he said.

Singh further alleged, "These people engage in land grabbing, and they are the most corrupt". In an apparent jibe at RSS, Singh said, "They have no registration, nor do they pay any taxes. Yet, such an organisation has been empowered. Their sole objective is to take over 'mathas' (monasteries) and temples."

## Congress urges party leaders to back 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' movement

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Congress on Saturday urged all party leaders to support the students' countrywide 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' movement to pave the way for a new system that provides equal opportunities for all. The movement has been launched by its youth wing, as well as the NSUI, against the present education system of "oppression and extortion."

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, in a letter to all party general secretaries, State in-charges and chiefs of all State, district and city units, urged



them to make 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' campaign a country-wide movement. He had addressed the first 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' rally in Kota on June 17 and is scheduled to address similar rallies in Prayagraj, Patna and Delhi.

The protest rallies planned by the Congress are part of

the party's plan to woo students and Gen Z and rally their support against the Modi Government, especially in the wake of the NEET paper leak and CBSE onscreen marking row.

"The young people of India are facing an unprecedented crisis. Paper leaks, cancelled examinations, repeated re-examinations, delays in recruitment, vacant Government posts, rising unemployment, and the growing cost of education have caused deep distress to them and their families," Rahul said in his letter.

"We are all aware that it is

a system that puts immense pressure on young people and throws their families into a spiral of debt, sustained stress and suffering instead of supporting them as they choose career paths and forge strong futures for themselves. We need to expose the truth of the oppression and extortion being faced by India's youth and create the momentum for a message to be carried across the country in a coordinated and effective manner," the senior Congress leader said in his letter.

"Let us all work together to free our youth from this oppressive system and lay

the foundation for a new system that provides them with the opportunity and support they deserve," Rahul said. On the alleged Maharashtra Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) paper leak, Rahul described the paper leak and postponement of the exams as "theft" of the future of youngsters.

"Another paper leak. Another exam cancelled. This time, Maharashtra's TET. The country's education and examination system has been turned into a system of extortion, leaving every youngster in the country insecure," Rahul wrote on his social

media posts. "This is not just a paper leak; it is the theft of the youth's future," he added.

The TET-2026, scheduled for Sunday in Maharashtra, was postponed after a raid in Bhiwandi town of Thane district found that certain individuals possessed several questions purportedly similar to those from the actual paper, officials said. Police in Bhiwandi have registered a case against three individuals in this connection, they said. In a statement, the Maharashtra State Council of Examination (MSCE) said it is committed to examining with complete transparency.

## BJP president Nitin Nabin to visit Telangana

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

BJP president Nitin Nabin will embark on a three-day visit to Telangana on Sunday to strengthen the party's organisational base and expand its grassroots outreach in the Congress-ruled State.

During his visit, Nabin will preside over several meetings with party leaders and workers, including MLAs, MLCs and MPs, the BJP said on Saturday. According to the party, the BJP chief will inaugurate multiple offices of the party in various districts of Telangana and hold interactions with prominent leaders of the tribal community and



various other communities. "Bharatiya Janata Party national president Nitin Nabin will undertake a highly significant three-day organisational visit to Telangana from Sunday, 28th June 2026, to Tuesday, 30th June 2026," the BJP said in a statement.

During this extensive visit, the party said, Nabin will

preside over several "high-level meetings" aimed at "infusing new energy" into the party's organisational framework, broadening public outreach at the grassroots level, and sharpening upcoming strategies. "Additionally, the national president will inaugurate newly constructed district offices, interact with youth and booth presidents, and formally inaugurate the state executive meeting of the Telangana BJP to guide and inspire the party cadre," it added.

The BJP said that Nabin will on Sunday inaugurate 10 newly constructed offices of the party in the state. While

he will physically inaugurate the Rangareddy Rural District BJP Office, the other nine district offices of the party will be inaugurated virtually.

The same day, Nabin will visit the BJP state office in Nampally and hold a key interaction with the booth presidents of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC), Cyberabad Municipal Corporation (CMC), and Malkajgiri Municipal Corporation (MMC), the party said. In the evening, Nabin will hold an "important meeting" with the party MPs, MLAs, and MLCs to "review progress and guide them on future initiatives", the party added.

## Mann to meet AAP MLAs ahead of Akal Takht summons

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ Chandigarh

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann will hold a meeting with AAP MLAs in Amritsar on Sunday, party sources have said. The meeting comes ahead of June 29, when all Sikh MLAs and ministers from Punjab have been asked to appear before the Akal Takht in connection with the anti-sacrilege law.

At the meeting, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is likely to decide its course of action in view of the Akal Takht's directions, the sources said.

AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal is also expected to attend the meeting, they added. Kejriwal arrived in Amritsar on Saturday. Kejriwal, along with Mann, was scheduled to attend a devotional programme — "Ek Shaam Bhagwan Shiv De Naam" — in Amritsar on Saturday evening. The programme



will also be held in Gurdaspur and Batala on Sunday and Monday respectively. Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Kuldip Singh Gargaj on June 15 summoned all Sikh MLAs, regardless of party affiliation, and Sikh ministers before the Akal Takht on June 29 regarding the anti-sacrilege law. Non-Sikh cabinet ministers have been asked to submit their views in writing on the matter before June 29.

However, the chief minister has not been summoned. Mann was declared "Guru Dokhi" (anti-Guru) and "Khalsa

Panth Virodhi" (anti-Khalsa Panth) over a controversial video. Several Sikh MLAs of other parties have already confirmed that they would appear before the Akal Takht. The Akal Takht and the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) had raised objections to the anti-sacrilege law — Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act, 2026 — saying it was enacted without consulting the Sikh Panth.

The Akal Takht, the supreme temporal body of Sikhs, had earlier asked the Punjab Government to remove the provisions from the anti-sacrilege law that are "against the Guru Granth Sahib, the Khalsa Panth and the sentiments of the 'Sangat' (Sikh community)". Gargaj had earlier said the Akal Takht Sahib has no objection to strict punishment being awarded to those guilty of committing sacrilege.

## FROM PAGE - 1

## Uttar Pradesh opens land bank for investors: Yogi

Adityanath said Gautam Buddha Nagar had emerged as one of the country's most preferred investment destinations, attributing the transformation to improved law and order and infrastructure development under the BJP Government. He said the district now had a functioning international airport, an upcoming film city, Apparel Park, a semiconductor unit, electronics and solar manufacturing facilities, in addition to several other industrial projects.

Marking International MSME Day, Adityanath said micro, small and medium enterprises formed the backbone of industrial growth and were critical to achieving the vision of an "Atmanirbhar Bharat".

He also highlighted the State's expanding infrastructure, saying travel time from Ghaziabad and Meerut to Lucknow had been significantly reduced and described the Ganga Expressway and the Noida International Airport as projects built to global standards.

## Champat Rai, Anil Mishra resign

Among those arrested is Ramashankar Yadav, also known as Tinnu Yadav, a former driver of Champat Rai. Others arrested worked for a bank's outsourced cash management agency that handles donation counting.

Ayodhya Police recovered about ₹79.85 lakh in cash, believed to be linked to embezzled donations, from most of the accused. The FIR includes charges under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for criminal conspiracy, breach of trust, theft by a servant or clerk, and receiving stolen property. It also includes sections of the Prevention of Corruption Act. The investigation is ongoing, and the FIR lists 'others' as possible additional accused.

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, headed by President Mahant Nitya Gopal Das, manages the daily operations of the Ram Temple. Champat Rai, a former chemistry professor and long-time member of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, has played a key role in the trust for many years. Neither Champat Rai nor Anil Mishra has been named as an accused in the FIR. Their resignations are seen as a step of moral responsibility for the problems in the

system they managed. Sources say the decision came after talks within the trust and the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has called for transparency.

Retired bureaucrat and chairman of the Ram Mandir Construction Committee, Nripendra Misra, has defended Champat Rai's personal integrity. He also called for stronger administrative systems, such as appointing a full-time CEO.

The SIT is investigating the case, questioning those involved in counting cash and receiving donations, and reviewing records. The episode has sparked a broader conversation about how donations and operations for the Ram Mandir are managed. Meanwhile, SIT officials said the investigation will be fair and thorough, aiming to rebuild public trust.

## Indians among 8 sanctioned by US...

The explosives were subsequently used in bombs deployed by the SAF, it said.

TMAC and its general manager, senior DIS officer Tariq Hussain Muhammad Madani, have also been blacklisted.

According to the US Treasury Department, the Defense Industries System (DIS), Sudan's largest defence enterprise, supports and maintains the SAF's arsenal of arms, ammunition, vehicles and material, often acquired from Iran and other external backers.

DIS controls numerous subsidiaries, including the Sudanese conglomerate, Giad Industrial Group (Giad) — also known as Sudan Master Technology — through complex and opaque structures from which it has generated billions of dollars. DIS's acquisition of military equipment and related material has enabled the SAF to sustain combat operations against the RSF, conduct attacks against civilians, and reject and obstruct efforts to cease hostilities and achieve a ceasefire, the US Treasury Department said, adding that DIS and Giad were sanctioned in 2023. OFAC also designated Ports Engineering Company Ltd, a State-owned civil engineering construction firm established in 1998 and based in Port Sudan.

Linked to Sudan Master Technology, the firm reportedly imported military uniforms and footwear for Sudanese intelligence from a company in the United Arab Emirates, alongside

ammunition belts and weapons cases from a Turkish firm since the conflict erupted in April 2023. The restrictions also targeted individuals tied to a transnational network that recruits former Colombian military personnel to fight alongside the RSF.

The network, led by retired Colombian officer Alvaro Andres Quijano Becerra and his wife, Claudia Viviana Oliveros Forero, was previously sanctioned by Washington.

US authorities blacklisted three individuals associated with Panama-based Talent Bridge, SA, a company allegedly used to obscure the recruitment operations.

The sanctioned individuals, who all held executive or managerial roles at the company, include Panamanian nationals Enrique Daniel Palacios Quintanilla and Jack Peter Derman Guzman, as well as Colombian national Freddy Alejandro Lopez Ocampo. (PTT)

## Indian Diaspora welcomes PM Modi...

Later, artists presented a Bharatanatyam performance that combined a devotional *bhajan* dedicated to Lord Rama with the rhythmic chanting of the Shiva Tandava Stotram. Sharing his appreciation on the social media platform X, Modi praised the diaspora for preserving India's diverse traditions abroad. He described the performance from Kutch as an "amazing cultural connect" and lauded the community's efforts in celebrating the country's cultural heritage.

Following the airport reception, Prime Minister Modi and President Herminie visited the Seychelles National Botanical Garden, where they toured the enclosure housing the famous Aldabra giant tortoises, one of the world's largest and longest-living tortoise species. PM Modi was also seen feeding the native tortoises during the visit.

Highlighting the historical connection between the two nations, the Prime Minister noted that Seychelles had gifted Aldabra giant tortoises to India's Alipore Zoo in Kolkata in 2014, followed by additional tortoises for Hyderabad Zoo in later years. He described the species as a symbol of the enduring friendship between India and Seychelles. The two leaders also participated in a tree plantation ceremony at the botanical garden, planting the iconic Coco de Mer palm, a species unique to Seychelles and featured on

the country's national coat of arms. Calling the event a symbol of the shared commitment to environmental conservation, Modi said both nations remain dedicated to protecting biodiversity and promoting sustainable development for future generations.

Prime Minister Modi is visiting Seychelles at the invitation of President Patrick Herminie. During his stay, he will participate in the country's National Day celebrations and hold discussions aimed at further strengthening bilateral cooperation across key sectors.

## NIA charges 3 more accused in Red Fort...

The Red Fort blast happened last year in the centre of the national Capital and caused immediate concern because of the monument's location and symbolic value. The 17th-century UNESCO World Heritage Site attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors each year and is the site of the Prime Minister's Independence Day speech.

The NIA took over the investigation soon after the incident, which is standard in cases that may involve terrorism or cross-State connections. Investigators have since worked to uncover the conspiracy, logistics, and the roles of those involved. Sources said that ongoing technical surveillance, forensic analysis, and questioning of those arrested helped confirm the involvement of the three new suspects.

Although their specific roles have not been made public, all three men, including the missing paediatrician, are from Jammu and Kashmir, which has led investigators to look into possible networks in that area. Finding Muzafar Ahmad remains a priority, and the NIA has reportedly issued alerts to help locate him.

With the number of accused now at 13, the case appears to involve a larger alleged network than first thought. Officials said the NIA has taken a careful approach, working with local police, especially in Jammu and Kashmir, and drawing on central resources throughout the investigation. Other sensitive sites in the Capital were tightened immediately after the blast. The incident prompted a broader review of perimeter security and vehicle movement protocols in the old Delhi area. The supplementary chargesheet marks another step.

As the case moves forward in the special court, the focus will turn to the framing of charges and

the trial. The agency believes the evidence collected so far, including the new findings, will stand up in court. This case is one of the most closely watched NIA investigations in recent years because of its location in the national Capital and the importance of the target.

## LeT operatives seen at Shoab Akhtar's...

This event highlights how banned groups and their supporters still appear in public and remain active, even as Pakistan claims to be fighting terrorism.

LeT is known for its involvement in the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, several attacks in Jammu and Kashmir, and the Pahalgaon massacre. Kasuri has threatened more attacks like 26/11 and claimed connections with Pakistani security forces. His presence at the funeral with PMML leaders shows that these networks still operate openly.

This situation raises important questions. How can a banned terrorist group move so freely in Islamabad? Why are political groups linked to attacks in India still active and attending public events? These facts suggest that some parts of Pakistan's leadership may tolerate or even use these groups. This is a difficult situation for both cricket and Pakistan's image abroad. Shoab Akhtar is still seen as a national hero for his achievements in cricket. However, his family's time of mourning became an opportunity for people linked to deadly attacks in India to appear in public. Some critics say this shows a wider acceptance of jihadist groups in society or institutions, not just a one-time event. India has often pointed to Pakistan as a safe place for anti-India terror groups. Incidents like this offer new proof and could make it harder for the two countries to improve relations. They also support calls for ongoing international pressure on terror funding and safe havens.

"Pakistan's repeated promises to fight terrorism seem doubtful when LeT leaders and their political allies can attend a funeral in the capital without any trouble. Unless Islamabad takes concrete steps to dismantle these networks rather than just changing their names, these incidents will likely continue. Those who have died deserve respect, and those still living deserve justice. Right now, it is not clear if either is being provided in this case," said a top official involved in counter-intelligence.

## Interlinking rivers only solution to water disputes: VP Radhakrishnan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Bengaluru

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Saturday pitched for interlinking rivers as the only lasting solution to the long-standing water-sharing disputes between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.

He underlined that the interests of farmers in both States must take precedence over politics and that no drop of water should be allowed to flow wastefully into the sea.

Addressing the 517th birth anniversary celebrations of Nada Prabhu Kempegowda, the founder of Bengaluru city, at Jnanajyoti Auditorium in Bengaluru, the Vice President said the Centre had already begun discussions on river interlinking and expressed confidence that the initiative would be imple-



VP CP Radhakrishnan addresses a gathering during the 517th birth anniversary celebrations of Nada Prabhu Kempegowda in Bengaluru

mented in phases to ensure equitable distribution of water among farmers across the country.

"The interests of both State farmers should be taken into account. That is the real solution for this problem," Radhakrishnan, who hails from Tamil Nadu, said, asserting that political rhetoric would not resolve the decades-old Cauvery dispute. The Vice President said the only sustainable solution was to link rivers across the country so that surplus water could be shared among all States.

"The only solution to this problem is that we should take care of the concerned farmers of every state. The water going into the sea

should get stopped first. That water should be utilised by all the farmers equally, fairly," he said.

Recalling his tenure as the BJP's Tamil Nadu president, Radhakrishnan said he had advocated the interlinking of the Ganga and the Cauvery during a statewide 'Yatra'.

He said, "Farmer is always a farmer. Whether he speaks Kannada, Tamil, Telugu or Marathi, that doesn't make any difference. They are the Annadata (giver of food) for all of us."

He said recent discussions with the Union Water Resource Ministry had focused on taking forward river interlinking projects in a phased manner and pointed to the recent joint participation of southern Chief Ministers at the Tungabhadra Dam as a positive step towards greater cooperation.

## Bihar universities ordered to distribute pending degrees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Patna

State-run universities in Bihar have been directed to distribute pending degrees to students who have successfully completed their courses on a mission-mode, according to a letter issued by the Lok Bhavan on Saturday.

In the letter to vice-chancellors of all varsities, Additional Chief Secretary to the Governor Dipak Kumar Singh said the issue is a serious concern as the delay in handing over degrees adversely affects students' higher education opportunities, employment prospects, and overall career progression.



Representative image

"It has been observed that a substantial number of grievances received at Lok Bhavan pertain to the non-issuance and pendency of degrees of students who have successfully completed their courses. All universities are directed to distribute pending degrees to

students who have successfully completed their courses and to undertake a special drive to clear the backlog in a mission-mode manner," it said. All universities are directed to accord printing and distribution of degrees the highest priority, it added.

The varsities were also directed to furnish detailed information regarding the status of degree printing and distribution.

"The information should be submitted in Excel format via email by 1st July 2026. The data should cover the period from 2010 to 2024 and include separate details for Undergraduate (UG) and Postgraduate (PG) courses," it said.

The letter also directed the universities to constitute a dedicated 'degree monitoring cell' to regularly supervise the progress of degree printing and distribution, identify bottlenecks, and ensure the timely clearance of all pending cases.

## Why fuel prices still high as crude falls: Kharge to Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Saturday hit out at the Government on high fuel prices even when global crude oil rates had returned to the pre-West Asia war levels.

He accused the BJP of "looting" and "pickpocketing" the people, and alleged that the public has become just a means for the BJP to extract taxes and raise its collections.

Kharge asked why the public is being made to shell out more for petrol, diesel and LPG even when the global crude oil prices had plummeted to pre-war levels.

"BJP's looting and pickpocketing habit — Crude oil is tumbling, yet instead of easing up on petrol-diesel-gas... The Modi Government keeps tightening the reins on savings," he said in a post in Hindi on X.

Posing a set of three questions to the Government, the Congress chief said, when the war in West Asia was at its peak, crude oil was at \$138 per barrel. Back



then, petrol was ₹94.77 a litre and diesel ₹87.67 a litre, he said, adding that today, crude oil has fallen to \$70.71 per barrel.

"So why is the Modi Government still selling petrol at ₹102.12 a litre and diesel at ₹95.20 a litre?"

"Citing the war, the BJP Government doubled the prices of commercial LPG. Now that supply has normalised, why aren't LPG prices being rolled back? Why isn't the public getting even a penny's relief?" he asked.

Domestic cylinders, the 5-kg small cylinders useful for migrants, and CNG —

everything has been jacked up, he noted.

"Now that conditions are normal, why are the Modi Government's hands trembling when it comes to cutting the prices?" Kharge asked.

The Congress chief said that when crude oil was expensive, the public suffered.

Now that crude oil is cheap, why is it still that the public is bearing the brunt, he asked.

"It's obvious — the public has become just a means for the BJP to extract taxes and raise its collections," the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha said.

## In a u-turn, Punjab Govt notifies VB-G RAM G scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Chandigarh

The AAP Government in Punjab, which had been opposing the Viksit Bharat Guarantee Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission Gramin (VB-G RAM G), has notified the rural employment scheme, which will come into force from July 1 in the State.

The Bhagwant Mann Government had convened a special session of the Punjab Assembly last December, which had unanimously passed a resolution against the VB-G RAM G Act.

"In order to align the rural development framework with the national vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 by providing an enhanced statutory wage

employment guarantee of one hundred and twenty-five (125) days in each financial year to such rural households whose adult members volunteer to undertake unskilled manual work;

"And to focus on employment, growth, convergence and saturation, the government of Punjab is pleased to notify the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G] Scheme, Punjab 2026, under the provisions of the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025," read the June 26 gazette notification.

The notification was issued by the Department of Rural Development and Panchayats.



Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann

The Opposition Congress slammed the AAP Government, asking under what "deal and compromise" with the BJP, it implemented this scheme in Punjab.

Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring said the timing

of the implementation of the scheme in Punjab is as important as it is surprising.

"Whether the sudden implementation of the scheme had something to do with the ongoing controversy related to the chief minister," he asked, referring to the video row.

The AAP Government had called a one-day special session of the Punjab Assembly to oppose the VB-G RAM G Act.

On December 30, 2025, the Assembly had unanimously passed a resolution against the VB-G RAM G Act, accusing the BJP-led Central Government of "taking away" the livelihood of the poor and Dalit labourers by scrapping MGNREGA under a "deliberate conspiracy".

## Kerala: Cricket coach gets 20 years RI for assaulting minor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Thiruvananthapuram

A court on Saturday sentenced a cricket coach to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and imposed a fine of ₹79,000 for sexually assaulting a minor student under the pretext of coaching.

Fast Track Special Court Judge Anju Meera Birla convicted Manu M (40), a native of Sreevaraham, under various provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, the Information Technology Act and the Indian Penal



Code (IPC) for sexually assaulting the student in 2018.

Though the court awarded a cumulative sentence of 48 years' rigorous imprisonment under various provisions, it directed that all the substantive sentences would run concurrently.

Accordingly, the effective sentence in the case is 20 years' rigorous imprisonment.

The court also directed that the sentence in the present case would commence only after the completion of the sentences in two other cases in which Manu has already

been convicted. Those sentences are scheduled to end on July 4, 2039. The court granted the convict a set-off of 722 days, covering the period from July 6, 2024, to June 27, 2026.

The court also found Manu guilty in another case under the IPC and the POCSO Act on Saturday.

The sentence in that case will be pronounced on June 29.

A total of six cases were registered against Manu at the Cantonment police station after the alleged sexual abuse came to light in 2024, following complaints lodged by students he coached.

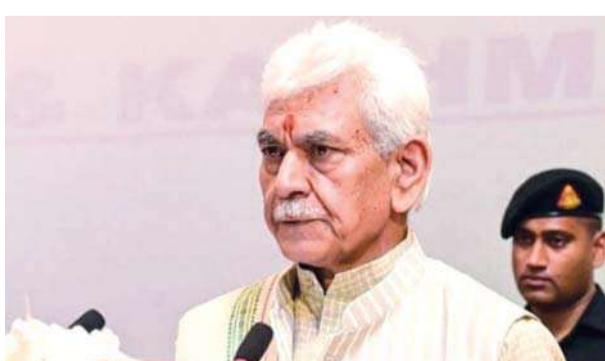
## Support Amarnath Yatra for social harmony: J&K LG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Jammu

The Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, on Saturday, appealed to all sections of society to actively support and contribute to the annual Amarnath pilgrimage, which is a true symbol of social harmony. LG Sinha also urged the public to come forward to ensure a memorable spiritual experience for all pilgrims.

LG Manoj Sinha stated this during his meeting with civil society groups, business leaders, and religious heads to discuss the upcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra.

"Every year, the world bears witness that the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra is an occasion where people of all faiths, communities and walks of life unite in the spirit of serving the pilgrims. Let us make Baba Barfani's Yatra an exemplary model of devotion and service. Let us



show the world that when devotion and service go hand in hand, the impossible becomes possible. Let us ensure that every pilgrim feels our hospitality and warmth. This is an occasion when Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs, Christians and followers of all faiths in Jammu Kashmir stand together in the cause of human service. That unity is our greatest strength," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor

said that the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra is an opportunity to showcase our culture of selfless service, compassion, and hospitality to the world.

This sacred journey of devotion, dedication and faith will begin on 3 July and conclude on 28 August this year. The Lieutenant Governor said that the representatives of civil society, religious and business leaders, and social workers are the guardians of our

nation's moral conscience.

"Everyone present here is a custodian of spiritual traditions. Generation after generation, we have ensured that Baba Amarnath's ancient spiritual heritage remains vibrant. As we prepare once again to welcome the devotees, I look to each of you for your guidance and cooperation. Your role is vital in ensuring that every pilgrim experiences respect, safety and a sense of belonging," the Lieutenant Governor said.

The Lieutenant Governor also emphasised that over the past few years, the Shri Amarnath Ji Shrine Board and other stakeholders have consistently worked to make the Yatra smoother and safer. Roads have been widened, communication facilities improved, and infrastructure modernised. He said the Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra is now equipped with world-class facilities.

## Govt slams misleading posts on Rajnath's Op Sindoor speech

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

The Government on Saturday said some social media posts sought to "misrepresent" Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's address in Parliament in July 2025 and "selectively" quoted an isolated portion of it to "falsely imply" that he had claimed that "no Indian soldier lost his life during Operation Sindoor".

"These are deliberately misleading and factually incorrect," the defence ministry said, adding that the minister's remarks were in reference to the "specific and mischievous narrative" that India had lost its pilots during Operation Sindoor.

The statement from the ministry comes after Congress leader Pawan Khera accused the government of "concealing" the supreme sacrifice made by six bravehearts during



Operation Sindoor. In a post on X, he also shared a video of the defence minister making a statement in Parliament on Operation Sindoor, and claimed that either the minister was "unaware of the martyrdom" of the six soldiers at that time or he "chose to mislead Parliament".

Without naming anyone, the defence ministry in its statement said that "certain

## States Focus



### BIDADI ROW: KUMARASWAMY REJECTS CONGRESS CHARGES

Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy on Saturday rejected allegations that the proposed Bidadi township was his 'dream project' and accused the Congress Government in Karnataka of "portraying him as a criminal". Calling upon the farmers to continue their agitation, he declared his support for farmers opposing the acquisition of fertile agricultural land. The JD(S) second-in-command asserted that he had never intended to displace cultivators. Addressing a gathering of protesting farmers at Byramangala near Bidadi, Kumaraswamy defended his record as CM and sought to explain the concept of the "Red Zone" in town planning. The Union Minister had asked CM Shivakumar for a debate. A chair next to Kumaraswamy was vacated for the Chief Minister, who did not turn up. (PTI)



### POCSO CASES: ARUNACHAL GUV SLAMS LOW CONVICTION RATE

Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd) on Saturday expressed concern over the low conviction rate in cases registered under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act in the State and called for strengthening the Directorate of Prosecution and a coordinated 'Whole of State' approach to ensure the safety of women and children. Chairing a high-level review meeting at Lok Bhavan, the governor said crimes against women and children, particularly POCSO cases, cause lifelong trauma to victims and their families while shaking the conscience of society. Stressing the need for urgent action, he said every case represents a child whose trust, safety and future have been compromised, an official statement said. (PTI)



## States Focus



### CM SUVENDU MEETS FAMILY OF MURDERED BJP WORKER

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday visited the residence of murdered BJP worker Prashanta Dey in Howrah's Bagnan, paid floral tributes to him and assured the bereaved family that police were working to solve the case at the earliest. Adhikari, who did not speak to the media during the visit, met Dey's family members and conveyed his condolences. The chief minister also assured the family that one of its members would be provided a Government job, according to Dey's relatives. Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Dey's son said the family had demanded capital punishment for those responsible for his father's murder. "He assured us that police are investigating the case and those involved will be brought to justice," he said. Adhikari had earlier asserted that his Government follows a 'zero tolerance' policy against political violence and had assured strict action in the case. (PTI)



### UDDHAV'S EGO DESTROYING SHIV SENA (UBT): MINISTER SHIRSAT

Maharashtra Minister Sanjay Shirsat on Saturday slammed Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray's visit to the constituencies of rebel MPs from his party, terming it a mere "touch and go" tour aimed at gaining news coverage. Talking to reporters, the Shiv Sena leader alleged that Thackeray's ego is destroying his party, dismissing the former chief minister's claim that the rebel lawmakers had previously won elections solely because of him. Thackeray has embarked on a tour of the constituencies represented by the six party MPs who crossed over to the rival Shiv Sena faction led by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde earlier this week. "This tour is meant only to show that he is visiting constituencies where the MPs have left him. This is being done simply so that people learn through the news that he has visited their constituencies," Shirsat said. (PTI)

## Ayodhya temple row: Congress demands probe under SC judge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi/Ayodhya

Congress on Saturday questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence on the alleged embezzlement of donations at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and demanded the immediate arrest of those behind the "scam".

Addressing a Press conference, Congress spokesperson Akhilesh Prasad Singh said the investigation of this entire matter should be conducted under the supervision of a sitting Supreme Court judge because the corruption is "deep-rooted".

He also demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible in the trust against whom serious allegations have been made, and that the trust be dissolved as it has lost the "people's trust".

Singh also alleged that the incident reveals that BJP leaders are not "true Ram bhakts" because they did not maintain Lord Ram's 'maryada' by not ordering an investigation themselves.

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi should step forward to ensure a fair investigation of this case, so that people's faith remains intact," he said.



"All this has proved that they are not Ram bhakts. Had they been Ram bhakts, they would have maintained Lord Ram's 'maryada' and given strict instructions for an independent investigation in the supervision of the Supreme Court, as this trust was formed on SC directions," Singh said.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh used a dialogue from the Hindi film "Upkaar" to say "Dete hain bhagwan ko dhokha, insaan ko kya chhodenge... (They trick God, would they spare humans...)"

"These lines from the well-known film 'Upkaar' are entirely accurate for the

thieves of Shri Ram Mandir and their protectors.

"When there are grand claims of faith, patriotism, and morality, but silence on accountability," For them, 'Oaths, promises, patriotism, loyalty' " all are just words, what's to their words," he said in a post on X.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra also termed the happenings at Ayodhya "really tragic" and shameful.

"The people from all over the country, those who believe and those who have faith, gave donations, and now those donations have been stolen. I think it is tragic.

"I think it is shameful and the Government needs to inquire into what has happened, how it has happened and why it has happened," she told reporters in Wayanad.

She said these are funds which have been collected from every citizen, and there was a drive to collect them.

"So who's responsible? If you collected them, it's your responsibility to keep them safe," she noted.

Singh said the 'trust' of the people in the Ram Mandir Trust has been lost; this trust should be immediately dissolved.

"It is strange that no arrest has been made so far. If an Opposition leader is involved, the ED and CBI arrest all such leaders, claiming that if they remain out they can influence the trial.

"Is the ED, CBI only meant for the opposition? Are those involved in the scam in Ayodhya not influencing the probe?" he asked.

He said the Ram Mandir Trust had appointed agencies for financial investigation and scrutiny, and those agencies gave several suggestions, but the trust's people ignored them.

## BJP panel submits report on Karnataka MLC poll cross-voting



BJP MLC CT Ravi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Bengaluru

The fact-finding committee constituted by the Karnataka BJP to look into cross-voting by party MLAs during the recent MLC polls submitted its report to State unit president BY Vijayendra on Saturday.

Senior MLC CT Ravi, who headed the committee, said the report contains information gathered during the inquiry and identifies areas where the BJP should have exercised greater internal caution.

"Party president Vijayendra had constituted a three-member internal fact-finding committee comprising me, State vice-president N Mahesh and MLA Mahesh Tenginakayi. He directed us to conduct an internal inquiry and submit the report at the earliest," Ravi said.

"Accordingly, we completed the inquiry within four days and, after discussions among the three of us, submitted the report, which contains findings on which all three members agreed," he added.

Speaking to reporters after submitting the report, he said that immediately after receiving directions from the party president, the committee held a virtual meeting to determine the scope of the inquiry.

A list of individuals considered suspicious based on media reports and other available information was

prepared, and discussions were held with them.

"We held discussions with the candidates, gathered their views, spoke to JD(S) leaders, collected information from the media, and held discussions with the Leader of the Opposition and the opposition chief whip. After considering the locally available information and circumstantial evidence, we prepared the report and submitted it to the party president," he said.

Ravi said that since it was an internal inquiry report submitted to the state president, it would be inappropriate to disclose further details.

He declined to comment when asked whether the report identified those involved in cross-voting.

"There were 12 instances of cross-voting by NDA legislators. BJP lost four votes, including one invalid vote. Thirty votes had been allocated to the BJP's two candidates," he said.

"One candidate received 29 votes, with one vote declared invalid, while the other received 27 votes, three fewer than expected. JD(S) should have received 22 votes but got only 14, an eight-vote shortfall," he added.

Stating that the Congress should not assume the cross-voting reflected admiration for the party, Ravi alleged that the ruling party had engineered the cross-voting through "unethical means".

## Ex-Kolkata councillor arrested on cheating, forgery charges

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Kolkata

Former Kolkata councillor Tarakeswar Chakraborty was arrested on Saturday on charges of cheating, forgery, theft and outraging the modesty of a woman, police said.

Chakraborty, a former TMC councillor of ward 104, was arrested around midnight after two FIRs were registered against him at the Survey Park police station, they said.

"A thorough investigation was carried out on the basis of the complaints received.



Tarakeswar Chakraborty

The accused was arrested after sufficient prima facie material emerged during the probe. He has been booked under relevant sections pertaining to cheating, forgery, criminal intimidation, theft

and other offences mentioned in the FIRs," a senior police officer said.

One FIR alleges that Chakraborty intimidated and threatened the complainant, while the second includes charges of forgery, theft and outraging the modesty of a woman, he said.

The investigation is at a preliminary stage, and further legal action will be taken based on the evidence collected, he added.

The officer said Chakraborty and his associates extorted money and amassed huge property by forcibly taking control of

fish farms in the area.

"We are examining all available evidence and recording statements of the complainants and witnesses. No one is above the law, and appropriate action will be taken in accordance with the legal process," the officer said.

A number of former TMC councillors of Kolkata have been arrested on various charges after the BJP formed a Government in the State last month. Among them were Sushmita Bhattacharya (ward 63), Swapan Samaddar (ward 56) and Bappaditya Dasgupta (ward 101).

## Pune realtor murder: Siya Goyal's parents, brother summoned

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Pune

The police on Saturday summoned the parents and brother of Siya Goyal, a co-accused in the murder of 25-year-old Pune realtor Ketan Agarwal, for questioning at the Lonavala rural police station.

Siya's parents — Pravin and Puja Goyal — and brother Sahil arrived at the police station in the morning.

Earlier on Friday, Sahil was questioned by the police for more than 10 hours before he was allowed to go in the evening.

"Today, Siya's parents and brother were summoned for questioning, and their statements will be recorded," said a senior police officer.

Siya's father was briefly



Pooja Goyal, Praveen Goyal (parents of Siya Goyal)

admitted to a hospital after her arrest in the case earlier this week.

Siya (20) and her lover, Chetan Chaudhary (22), are accused of pushing Ketan off a cliff at Lohagad Fort in Maval taluka of Pune district, on June 18. According to police, Siya and Ketan were set to tie the knot in November, but she did not want to marry him,

prompting her and Chetan to hatch a conspiracy to eliminate him.

On Friday, Ketan's father, Vishal Agarwal, met Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, who accepted the family's demands to try the case in a fast-track court and appointed Ujjwal Nikam as the special public prosecutor.

## Maharashtra TET postponed amid paper leak concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Pune/Thane

The Teacher Eligibility Test (TET) 2026, scheduled for Sunday in Maharashtra, has been postponed after a raid in Bhiwandi town of Thane district found that some individuals possessed several questions purportedly similar to the actual question paper, officials said.

The Bhiwandi police have registered a case against three individuals in this connection, they said.

The Maharashtra State Council of Examination (MSCE), in a statement, said it remains firmly committed to conducting the examination with complete transparency.

"Given the gravity of the situation and the necessity for an in-depth probe, the exam scheduled for June 28, 2026, has been postponed," it stated in a release.



Representational image

ISTOCK

According to the Thane district administration, the breach came to light in the early hours of Saturday, when the Bhiwandi police acted on confidential intelligence about individuals pos-

sessing unauthorised information about the examination papers.

"A raid was promptly conducted at the suspected location. Senior officials from the Maharashtra State Council of Examination

were immediately summoned by the police to verify the seized materials. Upon close inspection, it was confirmed that several questions in the possession of the suspects matched the actual question paper drafted for the June 2026 TET," the Thane district administration stated.

Expressing a zero-tolerance policy toward examination malpractice, the MSCE stated that the postponement was necessary to ensure absolute transparency and to allow law enforcement agencies to conduct an uncompromised, deep-dive investigation into the racket.

The council has urged candidates not to rely on rumours and announced that revised dates and updated schedules for the TET 2026 will be published soon on the council's official website.

Meanwhile, officials said that candidates will not be charged a re-registration fee for the examination.

Talking to reporters, MSCE Deputy Commissioner Priya Shinde said that at least 6 lakh candidates were scheduled to appear for the examination across 1,728 centres at 37 locations.

"The process of organising an examination of this scale typically takes around three weeks. Candidates who had already registered for the examination will not have to register again. Since the candidates are not at fault, no re-registration fee will be charged," she said.

A first information report (FIR) has been registered against three persons, and the police are conducting further investigation, she said, adding that strict action will be taken against those found responsible.

## India mastered cryogenic engine technology: ISRO chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Bengaluru

India has mastered the cryogenic engine technology once denied to it, ISRO Chairman V Narayanan said on Saturday.

He said the country is preparing for the first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission, advancing Chandrayaan-4, a lunar sample return mission, and Chandrayaan-5, a joint long-duration mission with Japan involving a heavier rover.

Delivering the 17th Air Chief Marshal LM Katre Memorial Lecture at the HAL Management Academy under the aegis of the Air Force Association, Karnataka Branch, Narayanan outlined India's progress in space technology and its roadmap towards establishing an Indian space station by 2035 and landing an Indian astronaut on the Moon by 2040.

"We have developed a cryogenic rocket engine, the technology which



ISRO Chairman V Narayanan

was denied to India," Narayanan said.

He explained that India had transformed technology denial into technological leadership by developing three cryogenic propulsion systems and setting multiple world records in the process.

Narayanan said the first uncrewed Gaganyaan mission was the immediate focus before India proceeds with crewed spaceflight.

"We are now working on the first uncrewed mission this year. Then once we review the result, we'll come back to the

rocket in 1963 to building some of the world's most advanced launch vehicles and spacecraft.

Recalling India's cryogenic engine programme, he said technology denial had ultimately strengthened indigenous capabilities.

"Today, I thank the countries that denied the technology. Today we have developed three cryogenic propulsion systems," he said.

Referring to the country's long-term vision, Narayanan said India was working towards establishing its own space station by 2035 and sending an Indian to the Moon by 2040.

"By 2040 Indian will land on the Moon using an Indian launcher with our national flag," he said.

He said Chandrayaan-2 had placed the highest-resolution camera in lunar orbit, while Chandrayaan-3 had made India the first country to achieve a successful soft landing near the Moon's south pole.

Legendary Tamil filmmaker and actor K Bhagyaraj, known for his subtle humour and witty dialogues, well-connected with the audience, died on Saturday following a cardiac arrest, a source in the hospital where he was admitted said. He was 73.

His roles, mostly drawn from middle-class lives, held a charm as his exquisite screenplay combined with his on-screen persona. In a career spanning over five decades, Bhagyaraj gave numerous hits, and some of his celebrated directorial and action works include Andha 7 Naatkal, Mundhanai Mudichu, Chinna Veedu, and Enga Chinna Rasa.

He is survived by his former actress wife, Poornima, and their children, actor Shathanu and Saranya. Apart from his film career, Bhagyaraj has been the editor of the Tamil weekly magazine Bhagya,

## Veteran filmmaker, actor Bhagyaraj dies at 73

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Chennai

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He is survived by his former actress wife, Poornima, and their children, actor Shathanu and Saranya. Apart from his film career, Bhagyaraj has been the editor of the Tamil weekly magazine Bhagya,



Tamil filmmaker and actor K Bhagyaraj

and he has authored several novels.

"He participated in the marriage of Khusboo's daughter in Goa. While we returned yesterday, he came back a bit early. He was cheerful throughout. This morning, after returning from walking, he complained of chest pain and was rushed to the hospital. His end finally came," actress Suhasini Maniratnam told reporters.

She, along with actor Parthiban and several others, paid their last respects to the mortal remains of the

veteran director at his Nungambakkam residence.

DMK president and former Chief Minister MK Stalin too paid his last respects. He described Bhagyaraj as an incredible director who succeeded in everything, being the uncrowned king of screenplays in Indian cinema, a realistic hero who attracted everyone, and a writer who had the power to convey complex situations in short dialogues. "Only a few months ago, I attended the function held to mark the completion of 50 years of

Bhagyaraj's film career and spoke at the function not only as the chief minister but also as his fan. Those memories are still fresh," Stalin said on 'X' and described his death as a "great loss".

"Through his works, Bhagyaraj will forever live on as an inseparable part of the Tamil Nadu people," Stalin added.

Stalin and TMC (Moopanar) founder GK Vasana were among the leaders who paid homage to the mortal remains of the filmmaker.

Actress-politician Gautami said his untimely demise left a huge void in the creative world. "We all mourn the loss of an icon. A Renaissance man who has been relevant to every generation, he leaves a lasting legacy for ages to come," she said on 'X'.

"The passing away of veteran Tamil film director and writer K Bhagyaraj is a great loss to the world of cinema," Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar said.



## PROSPECT

### Indian Army pays tribute to Hav Warepam Govindchandra Singh



The Indian Army paid tribute to Hav Warepam Govindchandra Singh of the Army Medical Corps (AMC), who passed away in Lucknow on June 23 during an official visit. His mortal remains were received at Imphal Airport, Manipur, on June 26 and escorted to his native village, Phubala, Bishnupur District, with full dignity and military honours.

Following the completion of all statutory formalities, including the postmortem, the mortal remains were transported from Lucknow to Imphal via Delhi before being handed over to the family. Army officers laid a wreath on behalf of the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command and other military commanders, honouring the veteran's dedicated service to the Nation. The Army also extends its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prays for eternal peace to the departed soul. The Army stands firmly with the family during this difficult time.

## Remembering Capt Kenguruse's supreme sacrifice

LT COL AMIT SHUKLA

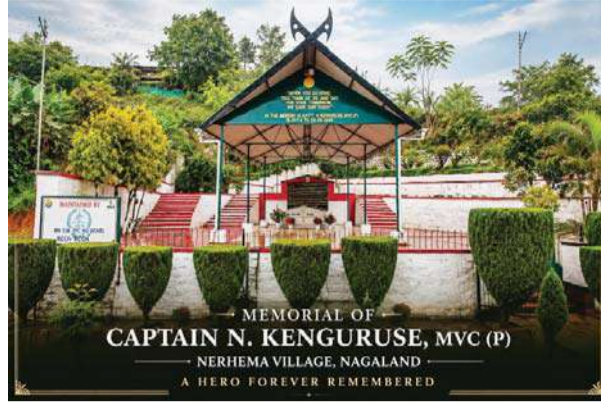
Every year on June 28, the State of Nagaland pauses to remember a son of the soil whose life became larger than life itself. Captain Neikezhakuo Kenguruse, Mahavir Chakra (Posthumous), was not born into history, he was shaped by a humble village upbringing, disciplined training and a deep sense of duty. From Nerhema village in Kohima district to the icy heights of Drass in Kargil, his journey is the story of a young Naga boy who answered the call of the nation with courage, dignity and sacrifice.

What makes his story so moving is its simplicity. He was not a man of grand words or public display. He was a soldier who believed in service. He came from a place where family values, community life and hard work matter deeply. Like other young people from Nagaland, he grew up with dreams, hopes and responsibilities. But unlike many, he turned those dreams into a life of national service. That decision would one day place him among India's immortal heroes.

Drass, where Captain Kenguruse made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty, is one of the coldest inhabited places on earth. During the Kargil War in 1999, it became a battlefield of extraordinary danger, where Indian soldiers fought enemy positions hidden high in the treacherous mountains. The terrain was steep, harsh and unforgiving. Every step demanded strength. Every move could mean life or death. In such conditions, the courage of soldiers was tested beyond imagination.

Captain Kenguruse's name shines because he did not hesitate when duty demanded everything. He fought with determination in one of the most difficult battle zones of the war. His bravery was not of the loud kind. It was the bravery of action, of remaining steady when fear would have been natural, of choosing duty over self. That is why his story continues to move people. He showed that heroism is not about fame, it is about sacrifice.

For his family, the sacrifice was personal and painful. For his village, it was a moment of



deep sorrow mixed with pride. For Nagaland, it became a reminder that the State has given the nation brave sons who stood tall in the most difficult hours. And for India, Captain Kenguruse became a symbol of the unity that binds the country together. A boy from a small village in Kohima district served in the farthest reaches of the north, proving that patriotism knows no geographical limit.

There is something powerful in the thought that a simple village boy could rise to such heights of honour. In many homes across Nagaland, children grow up hearing stories of elders, land, faith and com-

munity. Captain Kenguruse's life fits naturally into that world. He did not forget his roots. He carried them with him. That is perhaps why his sacrifice feels so personal to the people of the state. He was one of their own, yet his life belonged to the whole nation.

One of the most striking things about soldiers like him is that they make us rethink the meaning of success. In today's world, young people are often seen chasing comfort, popularity and quick rewards. Captain Kenguruse's life offers a different lesson. It says that true greatness is found in responsibility. It says that a person's worth is not measured only by

personal gain but by service to others. He reminds us that dignity comes from character, not convenience.

There is an old truth in military life: the uniform does not erase a person's humanity, it reveals it. Behind every brave soldier is a son, a brother, a friend and a dreamer. Captain Kenguruse was all of these. That is why his story touches hearts so deeply. He was not an abstract hero in a history book. He was a living human being, one among us, who made a conscious choice to stand where danger was greatest. His sacrifice was not accidental. It was deliberate, noble and rooted in love for the country.

The people of Nagaland have every reason to be proud of him, but pride alone is not enough. Remembrance must lead to reflection. His martyrdom day should not only be a ritual of wreaths and speeches. It should become a time to ask what kind of values we are giving to our children. Are we teaching them discipline? Are we teaching them courage? Are we teaching them to care for the nation, the community and one

another? Captain Kenguruse's life gives a clear answer to these questions.

For the younger generation, his story is a call to live with purpose. Not every young person will wear a uniform and not everyone is meant for military service. But the values of Captain Kenguruse are needed everywhere. In schools, they mean honesty and hard work. In colleges, they mean focus and responsibility. In public life, they mean integrity. In homes, they mean respect and selflessness. His legacy is not limited to the battlefield. It belongs to every place where courage and character are needed.

An anecdote often shared about soldiers from the Northeast is how quietly they carry themselves, even when their deeds are extraordinary. That quiet strength is part of their greatness. Captain Kenguruse's life had that same quality. He did not seek attention. He simply served. And in that simplicity lies a lesson that our age badly needs.

The writer is PRO & Spokesperson, Ministry of Defence, Manipur, Nagaland and Southern Arunachal Pradesh

### NTPC School of Business holds fourth convocation



NTPC School of Business (NSB), Noida, convened its fourth convocation on Saturday, marking another significant milestone in its journey of nurturing future business leaders. Postgraduate diplomas were conferred upon 148 students graduating from the AICTE-approved programmes offered by the institution. Among them, 18 students were awarded medals in recognition of their exemplary academic achievements. Gurdeep Singh, Chairman, Governing Board, presided over the convocation ceremony. The event was also graced by Anil Kumar Jadhav, President, NTPC Education and Research Society (NEARS); Rachna Singh Bhal, Chairperson, Governing Committee, and Dr R. Gopichandran, Officiating Director, NTPC School of Business. The convocation celebrated the academic accomplishments of the graduating students and reaffirmed NTPC School of Business's commitment to academic excellence, industry-relevant education, innovation, and creating meaningful societal impact.

### CM Himanta meets Sunil Gavaskar

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday welcomed cricketing legend Sunil Gavaskar at his office in Lok Sewa Bhawan and discussed on strengthening Assam's cricketing ecosystem.

The great opening batter, who is known for his remarkable mastery against the world's fiercest fast bowlers, proposed to organise an international marathon in Guwahati on the lines of the Tokyo Marathon '25. Chief Minister Sarma said that he will be glad to host it, as the government will definitely examine the proposal.

The Chief Minister also shared with him his childhood memories of watching those masterclass innings of Sunil Gavaskar. Besides talking on the glorious moments of Indian cricket, they also talked on the evolution of cricket across the red-ball and white-ball formats and the roadmap for further strengthening cricket in Assam. Sarma



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (left), Sunil Gavaskar (centre) and BCCI Secretary Debajit Saikia (right)

observed that the invaluable insights and wealth of experience of Gavaskar will certainly serve as a guiding light in the government's efforts to nurture quality cricketing talent and further develop

the sport in the State. Secretary of the BCCI, Debajit Saikia, and Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister, Dr KK Dwivedi, were also present during the interaction.

### Tripura CM inaugurates Global Pineapple Festival in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday inaugurated the three-day Tripura Global Pineapple Festival 2026 at Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium in New Delhi, alongside Union minister of state for DoNER Dr Sukanta Mujumdar and State Agriculture Minister Ratan Lal Nath.

The festival brought together policymakers, farmers, traders and exporters to promote Tripura's GI-tagged Queen Pineapple as a premium product and to strengthen the State's profile as a horticulture hub in the northeast.

Addressing the gathering, Saha said the event is meant to showcase the quality of Tripura's pineapple, expand market opportunities for growers and promote the state's tourism, agriculture and cultural offerings. He noted that Tripura's queen



pineapple reached markets in Europe, the Middle East and major Indian cities in the last five years.

"In response to the increasing demand for Tripura's pineapple, we plan to grow the area dedicated to queen pineapple cultivation from 12,000 hectares to 15,000 hectares over the next three years, along with establishing two bromelain extraction centres in Agartala and the Gomati District," Saha stated.

The festival will feature around 25 exhibition stalls by State Government departments highlighting agricul-

tural products, tourism destinations, handicrafts, rural industries and development projects.

Tripura produces nearly 1.78-1.87 lakh metric tonnes of pineapples annually, including around 23,000 metric tonnes of GI-tagged queen pineapples supplied to markets. Describing the fruit as a symbol of the State's agricultural strength and cultural heritage, he said the festival would strengthen exports while showcasing Tripura's tourism, handicrafts, and investment potential to a global audience.

### ED attaches 4 hotels, 2 flats in DA probe against former IPS officer from Assam

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Four hotels in Guwahati and two flats in Mumbai worth ₹53 crore were attached in connection with a disproportionate assets-linked money laundering case against a retired IPS officer from Assam, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) said on Saturday. The action was taken against Prasanta Kumar Dutta, who retired from the Assam Police as a Deputy Inspector General in 2019, said the ED.

The assets provisionally attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) include four hotels in Guwahati and two residential flats in "Samartha Deep", Andheri (West), Mumbai, the agency said.

The properties collectively were valued at ₹53.28 crore, it said. The money laundering case stems from an FIR filed



by the Assam Anti-Corruption and Vigilance Bureau, which alleged that Dutta, during his service period between 1992 and 2019, amassed assets disproportionate to his known sources of income. The agency ascertained that Dutta and his wife amassed assets worth ₹79 crore, against a combined disclosed income of ₹7.23 crore and expenditure of ₹9.04 crore.

The ED alleged that Dutta laundered the money through three companies,

one of them, Ishan Commercial.

The central agency claimed that during the 2022-23 financial year, the former police officer caused 3.70 lakh shares of Ishan Commercial to be transferred from the dummy and fictitious name-lending shareholders to himself, becoming the largest shareholder in the firm.

"It is to be noted that Ishan Commercial is the company which is the beneficial owner of three of the four hotels," the ED said.

### Sandhu among Punjab's top parliamentarians

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh/New Delhi

Satnam Singh Sandhu, a Rajya Sabha member from Punjab, has been recognised as one of the State's top parliamentarians. Since taking office in January 2024, he has kept an overall attendance of 91 per cent in the Rajya Sabha, well above the national average.

During the Budget Session, Sandhu recorded 97 per cent attendance, exceeding the national average and that of many peers. His attendance figures reflect a consistent record of participation.

Since joining the Rajya Sabha in January 2024, Sandhu has maintained 100 per cent attendance in the 2024 budget session and the 2025 winter session. Sandhu is among Punjab's most active parliamentarians, regularly raising issues concerning his home state in the Upper House. Parliamentary records



Satnam Singh Sandhu

show that Sandhu has taken part in 104 debates, asked 196 questions, and introduced six Private Members' Bills since joining the House two years ago. These numbers put him ahead of the national average and most other parliamentarians from Punjab.

These figures place him among the most active parliamentarians from Punjab, comparable to senior legislators across parties. Parliamentary engagement is typically assessed by attendance and participation.

### Coast Guard commissions indigenous fast patrol vessel ICGS Akshay in Goa

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Panaji

The Indian Coast Guard on Saturday commissioned ICGS Akshay, a new-generation fast patrol vessel built by Goa Shipyard Limited, to strengthen maritime security, search and rescue operations and coastal surveillance.

The indigenous ship was formally inducted into service at Goa Shipyard Limited in Vasco in the presence of senior Coast Guard officials and government dignitaries. Designed and constructed by Goa Shipyard Limited, the vessel has been built under the Centre's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives, showcasing the country's indigenous shipbuilding capabilities.

The vessel, named "Akshay", meaning "indestructible", symbolises the Coast Guard's commitment to safeguarding the country's mar-



itime interests and ensuring safe, secure and clean seas, an official statement said.

As per the statement, the fast patrol vessel will undertake a wide range of missions, including maritime law enforcement, coastal security, search and rescue operations, marine environmental protection and assistance to mariners in distress. It will be commanded by Commandant (Junior Grade) Deepak Choubey.

The commissioning of ICGS Akshay is part of the Coast Guard's ongoing fleet modernisation programme aimed

at enhancing maritime safety, security and environmental protection across India's vast coastline, the statement said.

Additional Secretary (Personnel), Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance, Parama Sen, Indian Coast Guard Region (West) Commander, Inspector General Bhisam Sharma, Deputy Director General (HRD), Inspector General Jyotindra Singh, senior Central and state government officials, and representatives of Goa Shipyard Limited were present on the occasion.

## External legal review clears HDFC Bank of concerns raised by ex-chairman

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

HDFC Bank has said an independent legal review conducted by two external law firms found no evidence to substantiate concerns raised by former chairman Atanu Chakraborty in his resignation letter or subsequent public statements.

The bank said the review, announced on March 24, examined whether any concerns flagged by Chakraborty were evident from the records, whether he had recorded any dissent during his tenure, and whether such

dissent, if any, had been addressed.

Chakraborty resigned as chairman of the country's second biggest lender, HDFC Bank, citing ethical concerns. This was the first time that a part-time chairman of HDFC Bank left mid-way, raising concerns over its functioning.

"Certain happenings and practices within the bank, that I have observed over the last two years, are not in congruence with my personal values and ethics. This is the basis of my aforementioned decision," he said in his resignation letter dated March 17.

The review was carried out by Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati, P C and Wadia Ghandy & Co over a three-month period, HDFC Bank said in a regulatory filing on Friday.

The law firms reviewed Board and committee meeting minutes and agenda papers covering the two years preceding Chakraborty's resignation, examined thousands of documents, and conducted interviews with independent directors, including committee chairpersons, the Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer, and senior



executives heading key control and assurance functions, it said.

The external law firms

repeatedly requested Chakraborty to participate in the review, but the interview did not take place.

"Having now completed an extensive legal review, external law firms found that Chakraborty's statement and its implications were not substantiated by the record and witness interviews," it said.

The review found that the minutes of board meetings attended by Chakraborty followed a comprehensive drafting, review and approval process that gave him the opportunity to record any dissent or concerns, it said.

It also found no contemporaneous evidence in Board or committee records, meeting materials or communications supporting the issues raised

in his statement, it said.

Further, witness interviews did not corroborate Chakraborty's allegations, the bank said.

The law firms also examined references made by Chakraborty to the "Dubai matter" in his post-resignation public statements and found no contemporaneous evidence showing that he had raised concerns relating to his personal values and ethics or disagreed with decisions taken by the Board or its committees on that issue or any other matter.

On March 20, HDFC Bank terminated the services of

three employees for gaps in client onboarding at its Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) branch.

Following the allegations of mis-selling, the local regulator - Dubai Financial Services Authority - barred HDFC Bank from onboarding new customers at its DIFC branch last September.

"In sum, the contemporaneous evidence reviewed was inconsistent with Chakraborty's statement, and the external law firms' review did not identify any basis for the statement," HDFC Bank said, quoting the findings of the legal review.

## FROM THE WORLD

### JAPAN

#### Storms leave one dead

Two major storm systems pounded Japan on Saturday, causing landslides and floods and leaving one dead and several injured, media and officials said. The storms, Mekkhala and Higos, have dumped heavy rain and damaged roads as Japan experiences its annual rainy season. A man in his 70s died and three others were injured after a house collapsed in a landslide in Yamaguchi prefecture on Friday, Japan's Kyodo News agency reported. Footage from Kyoto showed the Kamo River swollen with churning, muddy water. A flooding alert was issued in parts of Kyoto, Osaka and other areas in western Japan. The Fire and Disaster Management Agency said more than 30 homes were flooded in Nara and Hiroshima on Friday. Heavy rain also disrupted some train operations and flights in the area.

### PAKISTAN

#### Strong quake, no damage

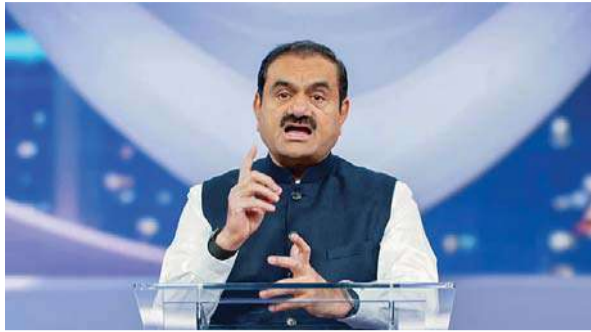
A magnitude 5.9 earthquake struck parts of Pakistan and neighbouring Afghanistan on Saturday, sending panicked residents across Pakistan rushing out of their homes, authorities said. There were no immediate reports of damage or casualties. The epicentre was in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department. It was felt in Islamabad, as well as in the eastern province of Punjab and the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which borders Afghanistan. It was also felt in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Emergency services in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa said district administrations were placed on alert. Anwar Shahzad, a spokesman for the Provincial Disaster Management Authority, said that initial assessments had found no reports of casualties or damage.

# US court refuses to drop Adani indictment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ New Delhi

In a big setback to industrialist Gautam Adani, a United States federal court has refused to immediately allow the Department of Justice (DoJ) to drop criminal charges in the \$250 million bribery case, after finding that the Government's explanation for doing so was "terse, bland, and conclusory."

Adani's nephew Sagar Adani also accused in the bribery case. Judge Nicholas G Garaufis of the United States District Court for the Eastern District of New York directed the DoJ to give reasons for its decision to seek dismissal of the indictment against all eight accused. The DoJ has been directed to file its explanation by July 13, 2026. The



Court said that the Government must provide each reason for seeking dismissal of the indictment with prejudice, along with sufficient factual support for each basis. "Here, the Government's terse, bland, and conclusory statement affords the court neither a sufficient basis to reach any conclusion, nor the opportunity to conduct any analysis

of the Government's request for dismissal," the judge said. It added that Rule 48(a) of the Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure requires the Government to set out the basis for a motion to dismiss. It described the rule as a "sunshine provision" under which prosecutors must supply sufficient reasons to support dismissal of an indictment. "Thus, the

Government has failed to meet its obligation to supply adequate reasoning and sufficient facts to support dismissal of the Indictment. And, without this additional information, the court cannot fulfill its own obligation to exercise "sound judicial discretion in considering [the Government's] request for dismissal."

The order came after the US Government moved the Court under Rule 48(a). In its May 18 filing, the DoJ said that after reviewing the case, it decided not to devote further resources to the criminal charges against the individual defendants.

Gautam Adani and his companies (one company is registered in US) caught for allegations concerning a 12 gigawatt solar power project in India. According to the

earlier indictment, the Solar Energy Corporation of India needed state electricity distribution companies to enter into power supply agreements so that the project and related power purchase agreements would become financially workable.

The indictment had alleged that Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, Vneet Jaain, Ranjit Gupta and others devised a plan to bribe Indian state Government officials to get the project going. It was alleged that bribes worth ₹2,029 crore (around \$265 million) were promised to officials of state electricity distribution companies. Of this, ₹1,750 crore was allegedly allocated to officials in Andhra Pradesh to secure purchase of 7 gigawatts of solar power.

It was further alleged that

Adani entities raised over \$3 billion in loans and securities from US investors while concealing the alleged bribery scheme. The indictment had also claimed that Adani issued \$750 million in senior secured notes in September 2021, with around 25% of the bond purchased by US-based investors. Adani and other accused were charged with securities fraud, wire fraud, conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act and conspiracy to obstruct justice.

Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani, and Vneet Jaain are represented in the proceedings by Sullivan & Cromwell LLP co-chair Robert J Giuffra Jr and partner James McDonald. Incidentally, Robert Giuffra happens to be US President Donald Trump's personal lawyer.

## Pakistan assures Iran of constructive role amid fresh strikes

SAJJAD HUSSAIN  
■ Islamabad

Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar spoke with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi over phone after the US and Iran traded fresh strikes, threatening the fragile peace in the Gulf region, according to a statement on Saturday.

The US and Iran signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on June 18, aimed at restoring peace in West Asia. It was followed by technical-level talks in Switzerland on June 21, with Pakistan and Qatar as mediators. However, the two sides again got involved in attacks against each other. The US launched its airstrikes on Friday in response to an Iranian drone attack on a ship trying to get out of the Strait of Hormuz a day earlier.

Dar, who is also Pakistan's foreign minister, spoke with Araghchi Friday night and reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to play its "constructive role" for achieving lasting peace and stability in the region, the Foreign Office said.

Araghchi expressed appreciation for Pakistan's continued support in advancing the peace process, according to the statement. He also thanked



Pakistan Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar

Pakistan for facilitating the safe and smooth repatriation of Iranian crew members and fishermen to their homeland.

A new group of 22 Iranian crew members of a tanker seized by the US authorities reached Pakistan for repatriation to their country, Dar said in a social media post on Friday.

Dar also said that this was the fourth group of Iranian crew whose repatriation was facilitated by Islamabad over the last two months. They were on the vessel M/T Davina, seized by the US forces after imposing a naval blockade on Iran on April 13. The two leaders also agreed to remain in close contact, the Foreign Office said. (AP)

## Israeli drone strike kills two siblings in Gaza camp

WAFSA SHURAFU  
■ Deir al-Balah

An Israeli drone strike on Saturday killed two Palestinian siblings, including a 15-year-old girl, in southern Gaza and wounded at least seven others, according to Nasser hospital, where the casualties were taken.

The strike targeted tents sheltering displaced Palestinians in the sprawling camp of Muwasi, killing 15-year-old Islam Moussa and her 30-year-old brother, Abdullah Moussa. The Israeli military acknowledged it had struck the area of

Muwasi, saying it had targeted a Hamas militant but did not immediately provide more information.

In the hospital's courtyard, relatives wept over the bodies covered in white burial shrouds. Also on Saturday, Palestinians reported hearing a loud boom in Gaza City. The Israeli military struck a tent sheltering displaced Palestinians in western Gaza City, wounding at least 12 people, according to Shifa hospital. The ambulance service of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society said two people were critically wounded and the majority of those hurt were women.



The Israeli military did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the strike, and it was not immediately clear what the target was. Despite a fragile ceasefire reached in October

that paused the heaviest fighting between Israel and the Hamas militant group, Israel continues to carry out near-daily strikes and shelling across the coastal enclave. (AP)

## Indian envoy visits Shanghai institute to boost ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Beijing

India's Consul General Pratik Mathur has visited the Shanghai Institute of International Studies (SIIS) and held comprehensive talks on a wide range of issues, including strengthening New Delhi-Beijing ties.

The envoy engaged in a "rich exchange" with eminent Chinese scholars, Prof Shao Yuqun, Dr Xue Lei and Dr Su Liuqiang, the Consul said in a post on X on Friday.

The meeting covered discussions on New Delhi's vision during its historic BRICS presidency and shared perspectives on deepening India-China bilateral ties, it said.

"The meeting underscored the growing interest and commitment to strengthening academic, educational and diplomatic dialogues," it said. On Saturday, he took part in the Diplomatic Exchange Program at East China Normal University (ECNU), it said.



Pratik Mathur

## Iran launches drone strike on Bahrain, attacks Gulf ship

JON GAMBRELL  
■ Dubai

Iran launched a drone assault targeting Bahrain while a ship in the Strait of Hormuz separately came under attack Saturday, likely Tehran's response to overnight airstrikes by the United States.

The attacks across the Persian Gulf show the danger of the Iran war again spinning out of control, even after Iran and the US reached an interim deal to try to agree on a final accord to end the conflict. The US had launched its airstrikes in response to an Iranian drone attack on a ship trying to get out of the strait on Thursday, continuing a string of attacks that have shaken the uneasy ceasefire in the war. Meanwhile, a multinational maritime body



overseen by the US Navy said Saturday that it would expand a route near Oman in the strait to allow for both inbound and outbound traffic - likely setting up a new flashpoint with Tehran. That Iran targeted Bahrain was likely

not coincidental. The kingdom has been one of the strongest critics of Iran and is home to the US Navy's 5th Fleet. It just hosted US Secretary of State Marco Rubio for a meeting of the Gulf Cooperation Council's

foreign ministers, which ended with a call for an end to Iran's attacks and for the strait to be completely open.

A statement from Bahrain's Foreign Ministry said a "number of Iranian drones" targeted the country. It called the attack "a flagrant threat to the security of citizens and residents." Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard earlier on Saturday issued a statement carried by the state-run IRNA news agency saying it had targeted several locations "of the US terrorist army in the region." It did not name what areas were targeted.

Meanwhile, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said that a tanker was attacked Saturday in the strait, saying the crew was safe and

no environmental damage was reported. No one immediately claimed the strike, but suspicion immediately fell on Iran. Just after the report of the ship attack, the Joint Maritime Information Centre, overseen by the US Navy, said the route near Oman's shores is expanding to allow for both inbound and outbound traffic.

Iran has insisted ships must obey its orders and is warning it will start charging fees for transit through the strait, through which a fifth of all oil and natural gas once passed. The US and Gulf Arab states have rejected Iran's demands. The Strait is considered around the world as an international waterway, despite being the territorial waters of Iran and Oman. (AP)

## Burkina Faso cuts diplomatic relations with France

ASSOCIATED PRESS  
■ Ouagadougou

Burkina Faso's military Government severed diplomatic ties with France, its former colonial ruler that had been a key security partner for the West African nation before relations fractured.

The junta said in a statement Friday it broke off relations with France effective immediately, accusing it of "blatant neo-colonial ambitions and active support for subversive networks and terrorists," without providing evidence. France's Foreign Ministry spokesman Pascal Confavreux said in a statement that the country regrets the "hostile and unfounded decision, which illustrates the worrying drift of the Burkinabe authorities."

"Necessary reciprocal measures are currently under review," he said. Confavreux added that France is monitoring the safety of French Government personnel and citizens in Burkina Faso and urged them to exercise heightened vigilance.



The West African country of 23 million people has been battered by yearslong violence perpetrated by extremist groups linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, as well as Government forces often accused of extrajudicial killings. Its wider Sahel region is the world's deadliest region for extremism.

It was unclear what would follow the end of diplomatic relations or how the French embassy in Burkina Faso would be affected. "The conditions essential for fostering relations based on mutual

respect, reciprocal trust, and respect for the principle of non-interference in internal affairs and national sovereignty are no longer met," Burkina Faso's Communications Minister Pingwendé Gilbert Ouedraogo said in a statement. The two sides suffered broken relations for years. Burkina Faso's military Government has in the past targeted foreign diplomats, including the French, whom it has often accused of working against its interests. In 2023, the junta asked France to recall its ambassador and declared the United Nations' resident and humanitarian coordinator in the country persona non grata, while in 2024, it expelled three French diplomats for alleged subversive activities.

France was Burkina Faso's major security partner until a 2022 coup. The junta then sacked hundreds of French forces sent to fight extremist groups.

The violence has worsened under the military Government that had promised to curb it, analysts say.

## IIT Bombay, New York University announce collaboration in engineering education, research

YOSHITA SINGH  
■ New York

In a development highlighting the enhanced India-US partnership in education and research, IIT Bombay and New York State University have joined hands to collaborate in the fields of science and engineering.

The Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT Bombay) and the State University of New York Old Westbury announced Friday that they will partner in the development of new educational and research opportunities that would be offered on the Long Island, New York campus.

A letter of intent was signed here by IIT Bombay Director Prof Shireesh Kedare and President of SUNY Old Westbury Dr Timothy E



Bombay Dean (Alumni & Corporate Relations) Prof Upendra V Bhandarkar with IIT Bombay Director Prof Shireesh Kedare, Consul General of India Binaya Pradhan, centre, State University of New York (SUNY) Old Westbury President Timothy E Sams, second right, and SUNY Old Westbury Associate Provost and Dean of Research & Innovation Dr Michael Kavic, right, during the signing of a letter of intent between IIT Bombay and SUNY Old Westbury in New York, United States

Sams in the presence of Consul General of India in New York Binaya Pradhan.

Under the partnership, the two institutions will begin work towards creating new academic offerings at all levels in science and engineering focused on emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, while also developing plans for collaborative research activities, SUNY Old Westbury said in a statement.

Attending the announcement virtually were Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, Secretary of Higher Education Dr Vineet Joshi and Indian Ambassador to the United States Vinay Mohan Kwatra. Dharmendra Pradhan welcomed the announcement by the institutes to "explore collaboration in

engineering, multidisciplinary research, technology and other emerging areas of the future." "Such collaborations enrich our research culture, open new avenues for our students, scholars and learners and build enduring bridges of knowledge to address global challenges while carrying India's intellectual strengths to the world," he said in a post on X.

The statement by SUNY said early areas of cooperation under the partnership are expected to include visits and exchange of faculty members and researchers between the institutions, joint research activities, and the development of joint conferences or symposia. These early-stage efforts will be conducted while the development of new degree pro-

grams takes shape.

"IIT Bombay is excited to work with SUNY Old Westbury, whose leadership is committed to quality education and is forward-looking in its outlook," Kedare said. "Considering that our strengths are complementary, we believe that our partnership has the ability to scale great heights."

Describing IIT Bombay as a world-class institution, Sams said his institute is excited to establish a direct partnership that advances teaching, innovation and excellence in disciplines like physics and engineering with a goal of creating a "robust IIT Bombay presence on our campus so that together we can prepare the next generation of leaders who will fuel success across our region, state, nation and

world." Speaking on the occasion, Kwatra underscored the importance of strengthening academic and technological collaboration between the two prestigious institutions and fostering deeper partnerships in research, innovation, and higher education. Joshi described the partnership between IIT Bombay and SUNY Old Westbury as a "new and proud" chapter in the India-US partnership in higher education and research and one of the most consequential.

The IIT Bombay-SUNY collaboration is the latest in a series of recent partnerships between prestigious higher education centres based in India and the US, underscoring the potential of deepening research and academic bilateral ties. (PTI)

## Ukraine hits Russian arms factory

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

Ukraine struck a major industrial facility in the Russian city of Volgograd, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said Saturday, while a Russian drone attack killed a man in Ukraine's northeastern Stryi region overnight.

Ukraine has stepped up its long-range aerial attacks on Russian military industries and energy facilities, aiming to cut Moscow's revenue for the war and make Russians feel the consequences of the invasion, now in its fifth year.

Writing on X, Zelenskyy said that FP-5 Flamingo missiles hit the Titan-Barrikady facility in Volgograd in



southwestern Russia, describing it as a "major industrial complex" where Russia "produces artillery systems and specialised military equipment, including components for missile launch systems." According to Ukraine's General Staff, the facility manufactures equipment for missile systems, including self-propelled launchers and transport-loading vehicles for

the Iskander-M missile system, which it said is "the same system Russia regularly uses to strike Ukrainian cities."

Volgograd regional governor Andrei Bocharov confirmed an attack on a business in the region's Krasnooktyabrsky district, saying 10 people had been wounded and taken to hospital. He said production facilities at the site were damaged but did not identify the company.

The attack came a day after Ukraine launched what appeared to be one of Kyiv's biggest drone assaults since the Kremlin's full-scale invasion more than four years ago. The major nighttime attack targeted a dozen

Russian regions, Russian-held Crimea and the surrounding seas, Moscow's Defense Ministry said Friday, noting that Russian air defences intercepted 660 Ukrainian drones.

Zelenskyy said Thursday he had ordered "a 40-day influence operation," believed to mean an escalation of attacks, aimed at "compelling (Russia) to end the war" after US peace efforts over the past year yielded no breakthrough.

Meanwhile, in Ukraine's Sumy region, a 66-year-old man was killed overnight in a Russian drone strike on a private residence in the region, regional head Oleh Hryhorov said on Saturday.

## German highways are buckling under extreme heat as Europe sizzles

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Authorities in Germany reported damage to highways and train cancellations on Saturday as a heat wave that baked western European countries this week moves to central and eastern parts of the continent.

Temperatures in Germany are expected to hit 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit). In the western city of Dormagen, dozens of residents of a nursing home were evacuated for medical care due to dangerous heat conditions in the building. The local fire department reported that temperatures inside the home had reached 35 C (95 F). Air conditioning is not widespread in Germany and many countries in Europe because the continent is largely unused to such oppressive heat.

A resident at the home died overnight, but it was not yet clear whether the heat was the cause, a city spokesperson told German news agency dpa.



## John Bolton pleads guilty over classified documents



MICHAEL KUNZELMAN ■ Greenbelt

Former Trump administration national security adviser John Bolton pleaded guilty to illegally retaining classified information, sealing a deal with federal prosecutors that could allow him to avoid a prison term.

Bolton, who became an outspoken critic of President Donald Trump after serving in the Republican's first administration, is scheduled to be sentenced on October 28 by US District Judge Theodore Chuang in Greenbelt, Maryland.

Bolton, 77, of Bethesda, Maryland, pleaded guilty to a single count of illegally retaining national defence information, which carries a maximum sentence of 10

years. His plea agreement with the Justice Department may enable him to avoid time behind bars, but the judge ultimately will decide his punishment. Trump celebrated the plea on his social media platform late Friday, calling Bolton a "terrible person" and writing, "Hopefully, he will be dealt with harshly!"

The plea agreement recommends capping any prison sentence at five years, but the judge isn't bound by that part of the deal. Bolton, who also agreed to pay a fine of \$2.25 million, can withdraw his guilty plea if the judge imposes a longer prison sentence or a larger fine. Bolton must pay half of the fine within five days of his plea and the balance within 90 days. (AP)

## UK TO OPEN SPONSORSHIP ROUTES FOR REFUGEES

SYLVIA HUI ■ London

Britain's Government said it will open safe, legal routes for eligible refugees, while also changing human rights laws to make it easier to deport people who are in the country illegally.

The new routes will allow community groups, universities and employers to sponsor refugees to come to the UK. Authorities said the plan was inspired by a similar "community sponsorship" programme in Canada that has settled some 400,000 people in the country since 1979. "I will open new legal routes for genuine refugees, while closing loopholes that have been too often abused," Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood said on Friday.

At the same time, Mahmood said, a new immigration law will seek to prevent "abuse" of human rights laws and crack down on "vexatious claims." It will tighten the definition of family so that it is restricted to immediate family members only. (AP)



## Security forces kill 8 terrorists in Pak's Balochistan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

Security forces killed eight terrorists in two separate operations in Pakistan's restive Balochistan province, the army said on Saturday. According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistani army, two intelligence-based operations were conducted by Security Forces on June 25 and 26 in Kharan and Mastung districts of the province.

On Thursday, intelligence leads regarding the movement of a group of terrorists were picked up by the security forces in Kharan.

Three terrorists were killed while several others were injured, ISPR said in a statement. In another engagement on Friday, an intelligence-based operation was conducted in Mastung against the presence of a



suicide bomber, leading to an effective engagement with the terrorist, it said, adding that an intense exchange of fire took place and five terrorists, including the suicide bomber, were killed.

Weapons, ammunition, improvised explosive devices and motor-

bikes were also recovered from the possession of the slain terrorists, the statement said.

The federal Government accuses the banned terror outfit, Balochistan Liberation Army, of carrying out attacks on civilians as well as Government infrastructure.

## Pilot dies, 13 injured in Beijing plane crash: Authorities

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beijing

Chinese authorities on Saturday said a small plane that crashed into a building in Beijing the day before had killed the pilot and injured 13 others.

The authorities of the Chaoyang district, a vibrant business area, said a two-seat light sport aircraft collided with a high-rise building near the East Third Ring Road at 5:55 pm on Friday and caused the casualties. The short statement on WeChat did not identify the building or the pilot, who the authorities said was the only person on the craft.

The global flight-tracking service provider Flightradar24 on Friday said the plane crashed into the CITIC Tower, also known as China Zun, which rises more than 1,700 feet (528 metres), just east of a major ring road in a cluster of skyscrapers. The



108-storey CITIC tower, shaped like an ancient Chinese wine vessel, is one of the most recognisable skyscrapers in Beijing and is the tallest building in the city.

Flightradar24 posted on social media the path of the plane, a Sunward SA 60L Aurora, which took off from an airport about 50 kilometre-

tres east of Beijing. It headed westward and ended just east of the East Third Ring Road.

Associated Press photos showed on Saturday apparent marks of the crash on the glass facade on one side of the CITIC Tower. A hole there had been covered up.

It was not immediately known what caused the crash in a city with strict airspace controls, including a recent ban on drones. An investigation is underway into the situation, the authorities said. It was also unclear whether the injured were in the building or were hit by debris, but the statement said they were receiving treatment. The CITIC tower is just a roughly 20-minute drive from Zhongnanhai, a former imperial garden that now serves as headquarters of China's top leadership, and a 15-minute drive from

the Forbidden City, a popular tourist attraction.

Social media posts about the crash were scrubbed from China's walled-off internet on Friday, though footage has made its way outside of China's firewall and is circulating on overseas sites such as X.com.

A report by financial news platform Caixin about the crash's casualties soon became inaccessible on Saturday. Chinese authorities consider such incidents to be a sensitive matter. Images and videos shared on social media appeared to show debris from a small aircraft near the skyscraper.

While the images were consistent with the location, it was not possible to independently confirm their authenticity. One image of the wreckage shows a partial registration number of "B-12." The full registration number of the aircraft is B-12PP.

## Scars of war among survivors in Sudan

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Khartoum

Three years of war have devastated much of Sudan. The impact has been pressed into the skin of survivors, and their memories.

Thousands of people are dead. Millions are displaced. Associated Press journalists spent more than a week in and around the capital after the army retook Khartoum last year. It continues to fight elsewhere against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

Here are some of the war's survivors and their stories. A member of the military media accompanied the AP during the visit, including



during interviews. The AP retains full editorial control of its content.

Omer al-Toum had dreamed of playing for Sudan's national soccer team. But everything changed in October, when an unexploded weapon went off in his house as he tried to use it to loosen a nail. He lost part of his right leg and left arm.

## Venezuela earthquake: Desperate search for survivors continues on third day

REGINA GARCIA CANO/ JUAN PABLO ARRAEZ/ MEGAN JANETSKY LA ■ Guaira

The situation has grown more desperate by the hour in Venezuela as people dig through the rubble of collapsed homes and apartment buildings three days after the devastating one-two punch of 7.2 and 7.5-magnitude earthquakes, knowing time is running out to find survivors.

Authorities announced Friday night that they would block access to La Guaira, the epicentre of the destruction, as chaos and traffic began to hamper search efforts. Officials said anyone who wants to enter would now have to seek official permits, but

provided few details of who would be allowed in.

Venezuelans took the search for missing loved ones into their own hands, citing a scarcity of Government rescuers, as the human toll of Wednesday's quakes climbed to at least 920 dead and more than 51,000 missing.

People reported seeing few state rescue teams in the hardest-hit areas, despite authorities projecting an image of a robust Government response. Aid agencies consider the first 48 to 72 hours to be a crucial time frame to retrieve people alive, though that can be extended if they have access to food and water.

"Each person saved is a miracle," said Jorge



Rodriguez, president of the National Assembly. "We are not going to hide absolutely anything about the magnitude of this tragedy."

In the State of La Guaira, just north of the capital, Caracas, Nazareth Jimenez

sobbed into a loved one's shoulder as she watched neighbors use hammers and power tools to try to cut through slabs of concrete in a building reduced to a mountain of debris. She was wracked

with anxiety as she waited to see if her siblings, nephews, nieces and friends would emerge alive.

"My God, how are we going to get them out of there?" Jimenez murmured. "We're making a call for help

to the Government and countries across the world," she said, pleading for machinery capable of moving collapsed structures. "There are still people alive in there."

Government forces distributed food and water to survivors in La Guaira, and acting President Delcy Rodriguez said her Government was mounting a full response during these "critical hours for rescuing people alive."

She welcomed the arrival of international rescuers and humanitarian aid. She said La Guaira had been militarized and more help was on the way, even as residents said it was just a fraction of what they needed. (AP)

## Starmmer's inability to deliver promised economic growth burdens Andy Burnham

BRIAN MELLEY/JILL LAWLESS ■ London

Britain looks set to get a change of tone at the top, replacing stolid, unpopular Prime Minister Keir Starmer with popular, affable Andy Burnham.

But the charismatic Burnham may have difficulty — at least initially — distancing himself from policies set in motion by his predecessor.

Burnham, the former mayor of Greater Manchester who was sworn into Parliament hours after Starmer announced his resignation on Monday, will be constrained by the platform the centre-left Labour Party was elected on that deci-

sively ended 14 years of Conservative rule in 2024.

It's not entirely clear how he'll navigate those limits and bring his unique brand of politics to the revolving-door post that would make him the 7th prime minister in a decade. He'll lay out his economic vision in a speech next week. "At the moment, Andy Burnham is being almost hailed and held up as a folk hero that will save British politics," said Matthew Flinders, politics professor at University of Sheffield. "The tide is changing and the big issue for Andy Burnham is that when the world suddenly moves against him and he becomes a folk devil, will he sustain the pressure?"



Burnham is currently the only contestant for the job of leading the Labour Party and the country, and will likely take over July 17 if no one else enters the race.

His return to the House of Commons follows a decade leading the region around the UK's third-largest city, birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, which has

enjoyed an economic revival during his tenure.

His main challenge will be to overcome Starmer's inability to deliver promised economic growth, repair tat-

tered public services and ease the cost of living.

Burnham highlighted those issues — along with housing and creating opportunities for young people — in a post on social media after Starmer said he was quitting.

"The country expects stability, seriousness and a continued focus on the issues that matter most and that is what it will get," he said on X.

Burnham, who is widely regarded as sitting to the left of Starmer in the party, has said he'll revive a sluggish economy without going beyond the current Government's spending and borrowing plans. That pledge has helped reassure markets traumatised in 2022 after

Prime Minister Liz Truss announced unfunded tax cuts and then withdrew them, leading to her 49-day record as Britain's shortest-serving leader. "If you are a Labour prime minister from the soft left of the party, the markets don't need that much invitation to panic," said Mark Goodwin, a politics lecturer at Coventry University. "They will start from a position of scepticism. So he'd have to be very, very careful."

He said Burnham will face a challenge "to convince people that this is something different, without the markets reading that as this is too different." Burnham promotes what has been

called "Manchesterism," a business-friendly socialist approach that involves harnessing private investment for major projects and decentralising Government to give communities more control of housing, utilities, transportation and education.

Burnham's lack of experience on the world stage could present a challenge improving the so-called special relationship with the US after President Donald Trump turned on Starmer. Trump described Burnham this week as a "town" mayor and said he heard he was "extremely liberal" and probably wouldn't expand North Sea oil drilling — one of his frequent gripes about Starmer. (AP)



## BRIEFLY

### Egypt star Salah leaves during WC match with Iran due to left knee injury

Former Liverpool standout and Egypt forward Mohamed Salah left on Friday night's 1-1 draw with Iran at the World Cup because of a left knee injury, coach Hossam Hassan said.

In the 57th minute, Salah was surprisingly replaced by Mostafa Zico. In comments translated from Arabic, Hassan said Salah is being assessed by the team's medical staff, and will have another examination when Egypt returns to the team hotel. "I talked to Salah and he said he's going to be OK and it's not a big injury," Hassan said. "We still have time to talk to the medical staff. I think he will be back, and when I spoke to Salah he assured me he's going to be OK." Ahead of the tournament, Hassan expressed a quiet confidence in the roster around Salah. Egypt made good on Hassan's goal of the team advancing past the group stage for the first time in the expanded field.

It would still be a serious blow for Egypt if Salah is not able to play in the knockout round against Australia next Friday. The four-time Premier League Golden Boot winner scored his 68th international goal in the Pharaohs' first World Cup win, a 3-1 victory against New Zealand. The 34-year-old has assisted on two other goals in the tournament.



## Dembele scores hat trick as France beat Norway

**KYLE HIGHTOWER**  
■ Foxborough

Not so fast, Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe. Ousmane Dembele has just entered the Golden Boot race.

Dembele scored a first-half hat trick, including one off a feed from Mbappe, to help France beat Norway 4-1 at the World Cup on Friday.

Dembele's goals came in the seventh, 20th and 32nd minutes. It was the first first-half hat trick at the World Cup since Russia forward Oleg Salenko scored three of his five goals in the opening 45 minutes against Cameroon at the 1994 World Cup in the United States.

"It is a unique moment," Dembele said. "But the most important was to finish first of the group in the group stage, and we are focused on the round of 32, which is the most important."

France, which won the World Cup in 2018 and lost in the final four years ago, had already secured its place in



the knockout round before Friday's match. Norway was also assured of a spot in the round of 32 and ended up in second place in the group.

Desire Doue scored France's final goal in second-half injury time.

Dembele said changing their approach in the final group match was never a consideration. France has 10 goals through three games.

"We want to win all our matches, but we remain focused," Dembele said.

The fastest World Cup hat trick took only 7 minutes, 42 seconds. Hungary striker Laszlo Kiss, who had come on as a substitute, managed that feat late in the match against El Salvador at the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

The quickest World Cup hat-trick from the start of the match occurred at the 1954 tournament in Switzerland when Austria striker Erich Probst scored his three goals in the opening 24 minutes against Czechoslovakia.

Dembele, who won Ballon

d'Or as Europe's top player in 2025 and has now scored four goals at this year's World Cup, left the game in the 65th minute. He was replaced by Bradley Barcola.

Thelo Aasgaard got Norway on the scoreboard after Dembele's second goal, finding the back of the net only 14 seconds after the restart. But Dembele added his third goal less than nine minutes later to push the lead back to two.

Dembele increased his international goal total to eight while Mbappe now has 16 goals and four assists in 17 World Cup matches. He scored two goals in each of France's wins over Senegal and Iraq.

Erling Haaland was among 10 regular starters absent from Norway's starting lineup, presumably to rest. The wholesale changes included Egil Selvik starting in goal in place of Orjan Nyland.

Norway coach Stale Solbakken said resting so many players was an easy decision for him.

"The break that we had from the last game to this game was the shortest of any team. ... So it's a no-brainer," he said. "The fans around Norway and also in the arena would have like to see Erling. But that is not really the issue. We want to proceed as long as we can in the tournament." The Norwegians will next face Ivory Coast in the round of 32 on Tuesday in Arlington, Texas. France will play the same day against one of the eight best third-place finishers in East Rutherford, New Jersey.

Mbappe nearly got France on the scoreboard only 21 seconds into the game. He sprinted up the right side and sent a hard shot that hit the crossbar beyond the outstretched arm of Selvik.

Dembele was operating in space for his first goal when he took a pass from Mbappe and blasted a right-footed shot across Selvik.

### Bielsa takes responsibility for Uruguay debacle at World Cup



Coach Marcelo Bielsa looked desolate after Uruguay's World Cup campaign ended in disappointment Friday, saying he was fully responsible for the team's elimination and blaming himself for leaving nothing good for Uruguayan soccer during his stint with the national team.

Uruguay lost 1-0 to Spain, leaving the tournament without any victories. It was coming off draws against Saudi Arabia and Cape Verde. It was newcomer Cape Verde that advanced from Group H in second-place behind Spain.

Bielsa, the Argentine coach whose contract with Uruguay's soccer federation was valid through the World Cup, said in the past that his work with the national team would end after the tournament in the U.S., Mexico and Canada. He voice had a farewell tone on Friday.

"What do I leave for Uruguayan soccer?" he said. "Nothing, because any contribution that a coach might make to soccer in a country after three years of work never truly takes hold if results aren't achieved. Fourth place in the qualifiers didn't count for much, and a third-place finish in the Copa America didn't, either. And there is obviously no need to spell it out after what happened now."

"A tenure that left nothing behind."

## Belgium defeats New Zealand 5-1 to advance at WC

**ANNE M PETERSON**  
■ Vancouver (Canada)

With a flurry of goals, Belgium finally found its footing at the World Cup.

Leandro Trossard scored a pair of goals and Belgium overcame a slow start in the tournament to advance to the knockout round atop Group G with a 5-1 victory over New Zealand on Friday night. Belgium will face an as-yet undetermined third-place finisher on Wednesday in Seattle. The match was played simultaneously to the other group finale in Seattle between Egypt and Iran, which ended in a 1-1 draw, dropping Egypt out of first.

The Belgians went into the match a surprising third in its group after opening the World Cup with a 1-1 draw against Egypt and a scoreless draw against Iran.

"I think we had the chances as well in the first two games, and we didn't take them. So it's important that we took them today," Trossard said. "And it's always nice to score a lot of goals, and we're just really happy to go through in first place as well, and yeah, a lot of joy."

Kevin De Bruyne, Romelu Lukaku and Alexis Saelemaekers also scored for the Belgians, who were eliminated in the group stage in Qatar four years ago



after finishing third at the 2018 World Cup in Russia.

Elijah Just scored for New Zealand, which needed to win outright to have a chance at advancing. The All Whites head home without a first-ever World Cup win.

Should Belgium win its knockout round opener, it will face the winner of the match against the United States and Bosnia-Herzegovina in the round of 16. "First, we'll have to win our round of 32 match. I don't even know who we'll be playing yet, so it would be disrespectful to start talking about the round of 16 already," Belgium coach Rudi Garcia said. "We'll see who comes through."

The finish atop the group also means the Belgium won't have to travel far for their first knockout game. The team's training base is in Seattle.

Trossard scored his second early in the second half, striking a rebound off a New Zealand player past goalkeeper Max Crocombe.

De Bruyne added a stunning strike from outside the box in the 66th minute to all but put the game away for Belgium. He celebrated by making a heart with his hands for the sellout Vancouver crowd.

Just's goal avoided the shutout for New Zealand in the 84th minute, but two minutes later Lukaku scored on a header for Belgium and blew a kiss to the fans. Saelemaekers scored in stoppage time.

"It's been a long journey, and proud of the boys," said Just, who had three goals in the tournament. "Everyone worked their hardest, it just wasn't there."

Winger Jeremy Doku started for Belgium after missing Sunday's scoreless draw with Iran with an illness. He then flew to London for the birth of his son. He had only trained with the team once in seven days. Goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois made his 18th World Cup appearance for Belgium, breaking the mark set by Enzo Scifo.

New Zealand fell 3-1 to Egypt on Sunday in Vancouver, as the Pharaohs won for the first time at a World Cup. The All Whites tied 2-2 with Iran in their group opener.

## Egypt survives with 1-1 draw against Iran



Egypt goalkeeper Mostafa Shoubir jumps to stop an Iran scoring chance a goal scoring attempt by Iran during World Cup Group G soccer match

**ANDREW DESTIN**  
■ Seattle

Egypt advanced past the group stage at the World Cup for the first time while Iran, which had a potential late winning goal called back due to an offside, will have to wait one day to find out its fate after the two teams played to a 1-1 draw.

At the conclusion of what was promoted as a "Pride Match" in Seattle, one which neither Iran nor Egypt wanted any part in, the Pharaohs finished in second place in Group G. Belgium, which played to a 1-1 draw against Egypt on June 15, beat New Zealand 5-1 in Vancouver, British Columbia to win the group outright.

Iran could still advance to the knockout round for the



first time in the expanded 48-team pool at this year's tournament. But, they no longer control their own destiny after Friday's game.

Egypt took an early lead on a goal by Mahmoud Saber in the fifth minute. Former Liverpool star Mohamed Salah provided some strong play in the box before Saber fired a shot between the legs of Iranian goalkeeper Alireza Beiranvand.

Iran tied the match nine minutes later on a goal by Ramin Rezaeian, and nearly won the game in stoppage time. Shoja Khalilzadeh fired a shot past Beiranvand in the 93rd minute, but it was overturned for offside after a video review.

Had the goal counted, Iran would have clinched a berth to the knockout round. (AP)

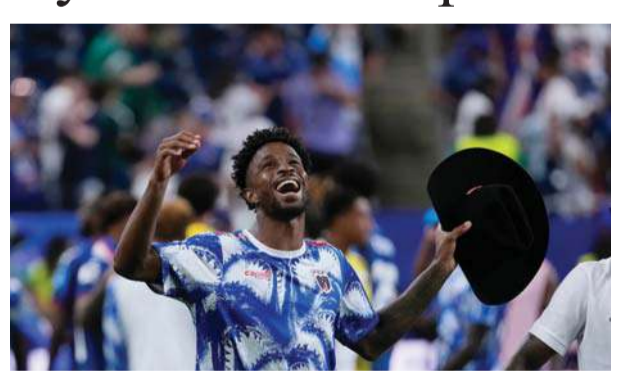
## Tiny Cape Verde's dream run continues, becoming smallest country into World Cup knockout round

**KRISTIE RIEKEN**  
■ Houston

Tiny Cape Verde defied odds to become the smallest country to earn a spot in the World Cup knockout round behind the stellar play of Vozinha, the 40-year-old goalkeeper who embodied the grit of his nation. "We are small," he said. "But we have big hearts and we are fighters."

Cape Verde completed an improbable run through the group stage with a third straight World Cup draw, a 0-0 draw against Saudi Arabia on Friday night to advance in the tournament.

The small island nation off the western coast of Africa, which is making its debut on soccer's grandest stage, already held 2010 champion



Spain to a 0-0 draw and then came from behind to get a 2-2 result against Uruguay.

"The team was very eager to show this to the whole world," Cape Verde coach Bubista said while draped in his country's flag. "We are proud of having arrived at this stage. We have shown that we are a small country,

Drawing all three group matches doesn't guarantee advancement at major soccer tournaments. But several teams have done it in the past, including Wales in 1958, Ireland and the Netherlands in 1990, and Chile in 1998. New Zealand, however, also got three draws at the 2010 World Cup and was eliminated. On the eve of the match, Bubista mused, "everyone is entitled to dream and nothing is impossible."

The Blue Sharks proved him right, overcoming seemingly insurmountable odds as this country of just more than 500,000 reached the round of 32.

A woman, her face painted with a flag of the archipelago, held a sign that read: "Small Islands, Big Dreams." (AP)

## Spain wins its World Cup group, beating Uruguay, Muslera's error sends 2-time champion home

**TALES AZZONI**  
■ Guadalajara (Mexico)

Spain defeated Uruguay 1-0 after another goalkeeping mistake by Fernando Muslera, advancing to the knockout stage of the World Cup and eliminating the South American powerhouse.

Uruguay, a two-time champion, will go home without any victories in its three Group H games. Spain, the European champion, won the group with seven points and will face the second-place team from Group J—either Austria or Algeria—on Thursday in Inglewood, California.

Alex Baena scored in the 42nd minute after Muslera couldn't fully swat away his shot from inside the area. It



was the third blunder of the tournament by the 40-year-old Muslera, who asked coach Marcelo Bielsa to substitute him at halftime. Sergio Rochet came in to start the second half. "He is the one who decided to leave," Bielsa said.

The veteran Argentine coach said he feels like Uruguay deserved better luck considering its performances,

every type of match," Spain coach Luis de la Fuente said. "This was a game with maximum difficulty." De la Fuente said midfielder Yeremy Pino likely suffered a broken collarbone that would sideline him for the rest of the tournament. Pino, who entered the match in the 66th minute, stayed on until the end despite the injury because Spain had already made all five substitutions.

Cape Verde, which played Saudi Arabia to a 0-0 draw in the other group game on Friday, finished second in the group with three points, one more than both Uruguay and Saudi Arabia. Uruguay finished third but without enough points to be among best eight third-place teams that will advance. (AP)

## Senegal routs Iraq to boost hopes of reaching knockout rounds

**ALEXANDRIA SMITH**  
■ Toronto

Senegal needed to win and it needed to win big. Done and done. Senegal racked up the goals on 10-man Iraq in a 5-0 victory Friday that boosted its chances of reaching the World Cup knockout stages.

"The job is done, but fate is no longer in our hands," Senegal coach Pape Thiaw said. "We have to wait until the other matches are over."

Pape Gueye scored twice in a second-half flurry as the Senegalese — vying to advance from third place in



Group I — took advantage of a first-half red card on Iraq defender Rebin Sulaka, who prevented Sadio Mane from going in on goal alone by yanking his shirt.

Habib Diarra scored in the

fourth minute and even though Sulaka was sent off in the 13th, Senegal didn't find the net again until Ismaila Sarr's goal in the 56th minute.

Gueye then added his two goals, both hard blasts from around the edge of the penalty area, and Iliman Ndiaye netted Senegal's fifth.

Senegal now has three points and a plus-two goal differential. The eight best third-place teams advance to the Round of 32.

"We had to score as many goals as possible," Gueye said. "So there you go."

Diarra also seemed confident Senegal will be among the teams that move on.

"They gave us problems, but we solved them," he said. "We played a great match, both collectively and individually. Now, here we are. I

can say we're focused on our next match."

Iraq was eliminated without a point in its first World Cup appearance since 1986. "I want to apologise for our fans, for our (country), these three games," Iraq defender Merchas Doski said.

Iraq coach Graham Arnold said just qualifying for the tournament was a miracle.

"Hopefully the players will go away from this enjoying the experience of being in the World Cup for the first time in 40 years," he said, "but also learning from the mistakes." (AP)

**STEPHEN HAWKINS**  
■ Arlington (USA)

Lionel Messi, the top scorer in World Cup history, will not start when defending tournament champion and Group J winner Argentina plays Jordan on Saturday night in its last match before the knockout stage.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni said Friday, two days after Messi's 39th birthday, that the team's captain will begin the match on the bench, but also indicated through an interpreter that he "will come in a little bit



later."

Scaloni didn't say when Messi might substitute in to the game, or what his lineup would be against first-time World Cup participant

Jordan, which lost its first two matches.

Messi scored all five goals for Argentina in the first two group matches, and now has 18 goals overall in his six World Cups. He had his first-ever hat trick in the tournament in a 3-0 win over Algeria to tie the career scoring record at 16 goals that had been held by Miroslav Klose of Germany. He broke that mark with the goals in a 2-0 win over Austria on Monday at the home of the NFL's Dallas Cowboys - where the group finale will be played. (AP)

## India needs to improve batting to square Ireland series

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Belfast

India's star-studded top order will be under pressure to make amends when they take on a buoyant Ireland in the second and final T20I on Sunday, with Shreyas Iyer's men aiming to level the series after a shocking defeat in the opener.

Playing their first match since their T20 World Cup triumph, the reigning champions were handed one of their biggest upsets as Ireland defended 182 to bowl them out for 148 and register their maiden international victory over India here on Friday.

It was hardly the start Iyer would have envisioned on his return to T20Is after 963 days, and his first assignment as India's T20 captain. With a five-match series against England beginning at

Chester-le-Street on Wednesday, Iyer, who has replaced India's T20 World Cup winning skipper Suryakumar Yadav, would be eager to sign off their brief Ireland tour on a winning note.

The biggest concern from the opening game was India's batting collapse. Sanju Samson, India's World Cup hero three months back, lasted just four balls before becoming debutant Jai Moondra's maiden international wicket.

Ishan Kishan and Iyer too fell for single-digit scores inside the powerplay as India slipped into early trouble. At the other end, Abhishek Sharma carried on in his usual explosive manner, striking the ball cleanly at the top, but lacked support from the other end. His dismissal after the powerplay derailed India's chase. Ireland's two debutant



pacers, Moondra and Matt Hollard, exposed India's top order brilliantly. While Moondra removed Samson with his very first delivery in international cricket, Hollard dismissed Kishan and Iyer before claiming Washington Sundar to finish with three wickets.

With run-rate pressure mounting, Tilak Varma, Washington, Shivam Dube couldn't consolidate. The outcome of the second contest, thus, could hinge on how India's batters tackle the inexperienced but confident Irish pace duo could once again.

Sooryanvashi's debut: The team management is unlikely to press the panic button after one defeat.

Teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryanvashi, who was anticipated by many to make his international debut in the opener, is

expected to remain on the sidelines again as India are unlikely to tinker top order after one defeat. Accommodating the left-hander would require a reshuffle, possibly pushing Samson down the order at the expense of Washington. The bowling unit, on the other hand, offered several positives. Harshit Rana made an impressive comeback after a four-month layoff due to a knee injury, using his variations smartly to return figures of 3/24.

Arshdeep Singh and Axar Patel also bowled well, especially at the death. However, Iyer's decision to front-load his pace attack left India short of options in the closing overs.

Washington leaked 19 runs in the 16th over before Prasad Krishna endured another forgettable outing, conceding 27 in the 17th and finishing with 0/57.

Those expensive overs allowed Ireland to add around 20-30 crucial runs, which eventually proved decisive.

Ireland's innings on the other hand, was built around captain Lorcan Tucker's composed half-century. After crawling to five off his first 11 balls, Tucker accelerated brilliantly to reach his fifty off 35 deliveries, while Gareth Delany's 49 off 32 provided the perfect support as the hosts posted a competitive 182.

Having already scripted history with their first international win over India, Ireland will be brimming with confidence. India, on the other hand, will have a little choice but to produce a far more complete performance if they are to avoid losing the series and restore momentum before the England assignment.

## Ancy breaks Anju's 22-year-old long jump national record

**PHILEM DIPAK SINGH**  
■ Bhubaneswar

Kerala long jumper Ancy Sojan smashed the 22-year-old national record previously held by the legendary Anju Bobby George, while high jumper Sarvesh Kushare also etched his name in the record books on a memorable day of Indian athletics during the National Inter-State Championships here on Saturday.

The 25-year-old Ancy leaped a stunning 6.88m in her fifth attempt to better the previous national record of 6.83m, which Anju set during the 2004 Athens Olympics. She also bettered the Asian Games qualifying mark of 6.48m set by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI). She also became the season leader among Asian athletes.

She was earlier second among Asian athletes this season with her 6.75m jump,



which was her previous personal best.

Shaili Singh of Uttar Pradesh was second with 6.67m, while Mubassina Mohammed of Lakshadweep was third with 6.53m. All three podium finishers breached the qualifying mark. Only two, however, can represent the country at the Asian Games (September 19 to October 4).

Just before Ancy's feat,

has been held by Tejaswin Shankar since 2018.

Kushare went for 2.35m but could not clear it in two attempts. His performance on Saturday took Kushare to joint third in the global season rankings and to the top spot among Asian athletes. He also became the first Indian high jumper to clear 2.30m.

In the process, he bettered the Asian Games qualifying standard of 2.19m set by the Athletics Federation of India.

The diminutive but spunky Ancy thus brought down one of the most prestigious national records in an event which was synonymous with Anju as the lone World Championships medallist -- a bronze in the 2003 edition.

Kushare, who became the first Indian to qualify for the men's high jump final at the World Championships in Tokyo last year, cleared 2.31m, bettering the previous national record of 2.29m, which

me a lot," Ancy said after her feat. "I saw her jump several times and I know how hard she trained for that. And I hope ma'am should be happy for this and she would support me, I hope."

Ancy, who won silver at the 2022 Asian Games with a jump of 6.63m, said she came into Saturday's event with the aim of bettering her personal best and was not thinking about the national record.

"I came here to do my PB, not the national record, and (I) just wanted to be a good world-class jumper. But, finally it (national record) happened."

"I felt like I was getting tired, but suddenly I remembered my last Asian Games and I got a boost. I went to my coach and told him that I was feeling some stomach issues. But my coach said 'you can do it'. Finally, I took a deep breath and did the jump, it happened." (PTI)

## Vaibhav Sooryanvashi plays unreal shots: Vengsarkar

**SUMAN RAY** ■ New Delhi

Vaibhav Sooryanvashi plays some unreal shots with his hand-eye coordination, which makes his batting unbelievable, says former India captain and chairman of selectors Dilip Vengsarkar.

Vengsarkar said he is confident that the 15-year-old Sooryanvashi would capitalise on the opportunity once he gets to make his debut on India's tour of Ireland, followed by England. "I am sure he will get the opportunity, and once he gets it, he will grab it with both hands because he is a very good player. He is just unbelievable," Vengsarkar, who is on a tour with the Mumbai Cricket Association team to the UK, told PTI in an exclusive interview. "He has tremendous potential. Some of the shots he plays are unreal. His batsmanship is completely different. He can clear the ground with his bat swing and hand-eye coordination. In T20 format, he has been amazing."

When asked if Sooryanvashi has the potential to play for India in longer formats, Vengsarkar said, "It's very difficult to say because he is currently in the T20 format. I have not seen him play in a longer format." "But I'm sure he will do well in that, once picked. We will have to wait and see how he plays in the longer format, which is very important."

Vengsarkar said Sooryanvashi can learn a lot from how Sachin Tendulkar carried himself at a young age.

"When I watched Sachin Tendulkar play, he looked mentally matured for his age. He did extremely well in inter-school tournaments in Mumbai, besides club cricket where he scored consistently," Vengsarkar said. "He was mentally prepared to play a

higher level of cricket, (so) that is how we picked him. He was so disciplined, passionate, and focused, and that is a great example for the youngsters like Vaibhav to emulate."

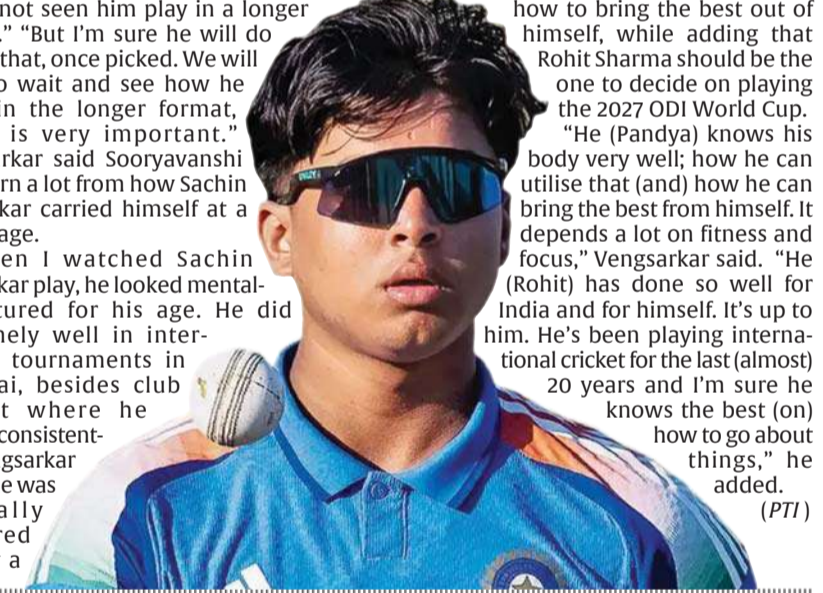
Vengsarkar backed Shreyas Iyer, who has taken charge of the Indian T20I side, to continue leading from the front.

"He (likes to) lead from the front as he is doing very well as a batsman, and that allows him to call the shots as a captain. He is a very thoughtful captain, and he will do well," Vengsarkar said.

The former India skipper said batters like Sarfaraz Khan and even Devdutt Padikkal should get more opportunities in Test cricket. "I was really impressed by Sarfaraz Khan and Devdutt Padikkal in the India-England Test match in Dharamsala a couple of years ago. They had an excellent partnership at a very crucial stage of the Test match. They showed excellent temperament and excellent technique," he said.

"Sarfaraz is a good player. There is no question about it. But you cannot take a place for granted and you have to be fit all the time." Vengsarkar said injured all-rounder Hardik Pandya knows how to bring the best out of himself, while adding that Rohit Sharma should be the one to decide on playing the 2027 ODI World Cup.

"He (Pandya) knows his body very well; how he can utilise that (and) how he can bring the best from himself. It depends a lot on fitness and focus," Vengsarkar said. "He (Rohit) has done so well for India and for himself. It's up to him. He's been playing international cricket for the last (almost) 20 years and I'm sure he knows the best (on) how to go about things," he added. (PTI)



## Indian women in do-or-die T20 clash against Australia today

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ London

With a place in the Women's T20 World Cup semifinals on the line, India will be desperate to overcome their fielding and batting woes when they take on six-time champions Australia in their final Group A clash at Lord's today.

The day's two matches will determine the semifinal lineup from the group, with South Africa (six points) taking on Bangladesh (four) at Lord's before India (six) meet unbeaten Australia (eight). Given

South Africa's overwhelming head-to-head (9-2 in 12 matches) record against Bangladesh, India's clash against Australia is expected to become a virtual quarterfinal for the Harmanpreet Kaur-led side.

If the Proteas, who are the last edition's finalists, win as anticipated, India will have to beat Australia to qualify, while a defeat would end the hopes of the reigning ODI world champions. Australia, on the other hand, can still afford a loss and progress courtesy their eight points and a far



superior net run rate of 4.724. However, an unlikely Bangladesh upset would ease

the pressure on India as even in defeat, Kaur's side could still sneak into the last-four if their net run rate of 2.268 remains superior to South Africa's current 0.734.

But it will be no less than a test of character for Harmanpreet Kaur's side who have battled one issue after another throughout this campaign. India's tournament began with the form of their openers being a concern. But even as Smriti Mandhana (167 runs) and Shafali Verma (145) responded well, India's middle-order comprising skipper Harmanpreet (85) and Jemimah Rodrigues (58) came up short repeatedly.

## Sri Lanka keeps semifinal hopes alive

**ASSOCIATED PRESS**  
■ Manchester

Sri Lanka kept alive slim hopes of making the Women's Twenty20 World Cup semifinals for the first time after a dramatic last-over win over Scotland at Old Trafford on Friday.

Sri Lanka chased down the 152 target on the penultimate ball and won by three wickets. Scotland medium-pacer Rachel Slater bowled the last over, trying to prevent Sri Lanka from scoring seven runs. She conceded singles off the first three deliveries then pulled up and collapsed to the ground with a suspected knee injury. Slater eventually left the field in tears,



Priyanaz Chatterji stepped up, conceded a single but then the winning boundary to tailender Sugandika Kumari. Sri Lanka needed its best-ever third win in one World Cup to be by a bigger margin, inside 10.3 overs, but going the distance barely

improved its net run rate and the West Indies can clinch the second and last semifinal spot in their group by cruising against winless Ireland on Saturday.

Scotland, at its second T20 World Cup, has finished fifth in the group but sought fourth place and a direct spot into the 2028 T20 World Cup in Pakistan.

But only Sarah Bryce, in after her sister and captain Kathryn fell at 66-2 in the 10th over, made the Sri Lankans sweat with an unbeaten 33-ball 47 and a last-ball boundary for a 151-6 total.

Sri Lanka captain Chamari Athapaththu, appearing in her 10th T20 World Cup, exploded with a 16-ball 33 but after her exit at 57-2 in the sixth over her teammates slowed and crawled over the finish line at 154-7.

On Saturday, there's also Netherlands vs. Pakistan, and semifinal-bound England vs. defending champion New Zealand.

## India A take 170-run lead vs Sri Lanka A

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Galle (Sri Lanka)

Jammu and Kashmir seamer Aqib Nabi showed his prowess with the second new ball as his four-wicket burst put India 'A' on the driver's seat with a handsome overall lead of 170 runs against Sri Lanka 'A' on the third day of the opening 'Test'. Starting the day at 113 for 2, Sri Lanka 'A' were in a comfortable position reaching 300 for 5 when Nabi bowled a charged up spell with the second new ball to dismiss the hosts for 330.

Nabi's figures were 4 for 58 in 19.4 overs and that gave India a substantial first innings lead of 122. India



had scored 452 for six in its first essay.

At stumps, India consolidated their position further to reach 48 for no loss in the second innings although opener and first innings centurion Sai Sudharsan had to retire hurt on 4. Other opener Ayush Pandey and stylish No. 3 Devdutt Padikkal were both

comfortable both against pacers and spinners during their 117-run third wicket stand. At one point, Lankans were 260 for 3 and not looking like losing a wicket.

In fact, Arachchige was severe on spinners Saransh Jain and Harsh Dubey, picking up three sixes apart from five boundaries. However, Jain and Dubey had the last laugh removing both caught by Devdutt.

At 268 for 5, Anjala Bandara (15) and Ravindu Fernando (22) added 32 runs as India A skipper Jurel waited for the second new Kookaburra.

Once that came, Nabi dismissed both Bandara and Fernando caught by Devdutt and Pandey.

## Neeraj Chopra to compete in Asian Games in Japan, AFI confirms

**PHILEM DIPAK SINGH**  
■ Bhubaneswar

Indian javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra will compete in the Asian Games in Japan in September-October in his bid to defend the title, Athletics Federation of India's (AFI) selection committee chairman Adille Sumariwalla confirmed on Saturday.

Recovering from a lower back injury he had sustained before the Tokyo World Championships in September 2025, Chopra made a late start to the season at the Doha Diamond League where he finished fourth with a throw of 85.69m. The 28-year-old two-time Olympic medallist has already confirmed participation in the Commonwealth Games but has not unequivocally said

that he will compete in the Asian Games in Aichi-Nagoya from September 19 to October 4.

"Yes. He (Chopra) will participate both in the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games. He has qualified already and he is recovering. He has done 86m (85.69m) in his very first event, which is fantastic," Sumariwalla told PTI in an exclusive interview. "He won a gold with 88m (in the 2022 Asian Games in China), so he is already close to 86m, then we see no reason why he will not do well in both the Commonwealth Games and the Asian Games."

The AFI's selection committee is expected to name the Indian team for the Asian Games on Sunday, the last day of the ongoing National Inter-State Senior Athletics Championships

here. Chopra had won gold in the last edition of the Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, in 2023, with a throw of 88.88m.

In Aichi-Nagoya, Chopra is expected to face rising Sri Lankan star Rumesh Tharanga Pathirage, who breached the 90m mark earlier this year and won two Diamond League titles, including in Doha where Chopra finished fourth. Pakistan's Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem could also be in the mix, which will make the Asian Games men's javelin throw highly competitive.

Nadeem is also the reigning Asian and Commonwealth Games champion. He, however, pulled out of the Doha Diamond League on June 19 after the organisers initially announced his name.

The AFI has, however, left it to Chopra on whether he wants to



participate in any event before the Commonwealth Games to be held in Glasgow from July 23 to August 2. Chopra was earlier named in the 32-member Indian team for the Commonwealth Games. "We have left it to him

(about competition before CWG), we are saying his medical team, his coach, everyone will sit together and work out which are the best competitions he needs to compete," said Sumariwalla, a former president of the AFI and

currently a vice president of World Athletics. "The important thing was for him to qualify, which he did. Now the important thing is how do we make him peak at the Commonwealth Games as well as in the Asian Games."

**2031 World Athletics Senior Championships host to be announced in September:** India has made a bid for hosting the World Athletics Senior Championships in either 2029 or 2031 and Sumariwalla said a decision on the host city will be announced in September. India has also placed a bid to host the 2028 World U20 Championships in Ahmedabad.

"We made bids to host both these championships in Ahmedabad. A team from World Athletics was there in Ahmedabad, along with the chair

of the bid committee. They inspected the infrastructure, evaluated the transport, hotels, operations, weather, food, everything.

"It is a very tough competition, there is London which has hosted World Championships and Olympic Games, there is Munich that has also hosted the Olympic Games, there is Kenya which has done two Junior World Championships, so the fight is tremendous."

"We presented our best case scenario to them and let's wait and see what happens. A decision on the host city will be taken at a meeting after the World Athletics Ultimate Championships in Budapest (September 11-13)." Sumariwalla said the AFI is hoping that the athletes will do better in the Asian Games in Japan than in the earlier edition. (PTI)



## Why OVERSIZED JERSEYS rule the streets



**World Cup fever officially rewired high fashion. The noisy blokecore trend turned giant vintage FIFA kits into everyday street staples**

SAKSHI PRIYA

Stadiums are currently bleeding into the streets because football has fully hijacked the global runway. Every tournament cycle brings predictable chaos to the pitch but the simultaneous frenzy that hits the city sidewalks is far more fascinating to watch. The fashion landscape calls it blokecore and suddenly everyone wants to dress like a nostalgic European supporter wandering out of a local pub in 1994. The sidewalks resemble a vintage sports catalog that exploded in real time as high fashion completely surrenders to athletic wave. Designers are sending models down runways drowned in colossal synthetic soccer shirts with massive embroidered crests and flashing retro sponsor logos. The entire aesthetic runs

on extreme irony mixed with lazy comfort where someone will pair a battered vintage Brazil kit with incredibly sharp tailored trousers. This friction works beautifully because it forces a deliberate clash between casual terrace culture and strict high-end styling. During tournament weeks the team jersey completely stops being simple fan merchandise and evolves into a loud sartorial statement. A teenager might wear a rare neon green geometric Nigeria shirt without knowing a single name on the active roster because they care entirely about the graphic energy. Football kits provide the bright colours and aggressive typography that minimalist fashion killed off years ago. People are utterly bored with the predictable silence of quiet luxury and they crave absolute noise instead. Baggy silhouettes dominate this entire movement

because tight athletic gear feels hopelessly dated. Young fans actively seek out tops big enough to swallow them whole where sleeves drape way past the elbows to capture that beautifully chaotic nineties pub energy. Huge clothing budgets mean absolutely zero here because any person can wander into a rundown charity shop and yank a cheap secondhand kit from a dusty bargain bin. Lacing up some scuffed old trainers with that giant shirt makes an amateur instantly outshine the wealthy guy drowning in overpriced boutique labels.

Fashion permanently abandoned the pristine runway for concrete stadium steps long ago where the modern enthusiast grabs a warm meat pie and lets their wardrobe move to that frantic rowdy FIFA foot rhythm.



**FIELD NOTES: EXECUTING THE BLOKECORE AESTHETIC**

- **Footwear locks the vibe:** Keep running shoes in the gym because the authentic look demands low profile retro indoor sneakers. Classic suede trainers with gum soles are non negotiable and minor scuffs actually improve the final outcome.
- **Accessory restraint:** Let the aggressive colors of the team crest do the heavy lifting. A simple silver chain works perfectly while massive jewelry fights too hard against the already busy patterns of the shirt.
- **Vintage always wins:** Modern performance kits look far too engineered for the street so hunt down older pieces from the eighties or nineties to secure the weird oversized collars and the blocky questionable typography.



**FASHION HAS PERMANENTLY TRADED THE RUNWAY FOR THE STADIUM STEPS AND THE WORLD IS MOVING TO A RELENTLESS FIFA FOOT RHYTHM.**

## Voices calling the clouds



**Midival Punditz, Malini Awasthi, and Kutle Khan celebrate India's ancient, rain-soaked musical heritage in Delhi**

SAKSHI PRIYA

A raga holds the rare, astonishing power to summon seasons long before the first clouds ever gather. Music always carries the memory of water, translating ancient verses into living sound. The team at Excursors successfully captured this beautiful magic during the opening chapter of their *Baarish* festival in New Delhi. Stepping onto the stage with a quiet confidence, Atul Shankar breathed vivid life into his flute. Alongside Aarush Shankar and the steady, driving beats of Nishit Gangani on the tabla, he gracefully navigated the complex paths of *Raag Megh*. Their *Kajari* and *Jhulapi* pieces painted striking pictures of Banaras, shifting the atmosphere inside the room entirely. The night then smoothly transitioned into a fascinating visual history. Historian Eric Chopra

guided a quiet, captivated crowd through centuries of Indian art, showing how ancient painters and weavers captured the monsoon on canvas and fine fabric. Shifting the focus to scent, Pallavi Bhatia and Minhal Hasan explored the stubborn link between human memory and petrichor. They unveiled a beautiful bespoke fragrance that effectively bottled the earthy smell of wet soil. The live return of Midival Punditz felt beautifully understated. The two producers deliberately kept the electronic elements restrained, setting up a quiet, rolling backdrop. That subtle choice allowed Malini Awasthi, Kutle Khan, and Pavithra Chari to easily step forward and carry the emotional weight of the set, their vocals lingering naturally over the

digital loops. Watching ancient folk traditions fold so easily into modern soundscapes kept everyone quietly captivated. Festival founder Minhal Hasan built this entire evening to turn a simple shift in weather into a shared celebration, achieving exactly what he set out to do. As *Baarish* prepares to return to the capital in the coming months, the sold-out room proved that these traditional melodies remain desperately needed in our modern spaces.



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

## Celebrating Santoor's timeless legacy

**Maestros and young artistes unite to preserve the soulful legacy of the santoor and inspire future generations**



STUTHI NAIR

Keeping the legacy of the saint of the santoor, Pandit Bhajan Sopori, alive, legendary maestros and young emerging artistes came together in New Delhi to celebrate the third edition of World Santoor Day. Celebrated on the birth anniversary of Pandit Bhajan Sopori, the event was organised by the Sopori Academy of Music and Performing Arts at the Chinmaya Mission Auditorium, bringing together music lovers and cultural enthusiasts to honour one of India's most cherished and ancient classical instruments. The evening was a tribute to India's centuries-old musical traditions and Pandit Bhajan Sopori's lifelong mission of preserving Kashmir's Sufiana legacy through the santoor. It featured captivating performances by emerging santoor exponent Divyansh Srivastava,

accompanied by Khurram Ali Niazi on the tabla and Varun Rajasekharan on the ghatam, who performed Raga Jhinjhoti in the traditional Sopori Baaj style. This was followed by the enthralling melodies of Raga Kaushik Dhvani, performed by renowned santoor maestro Sandip Chatterjee, accompanied by Pandit Duryaj Bhanik on the tabla. Reflecting on the significance of the occasion, Pandit Sandip Chatterjee emphasised the importance of preserving India's musical heritage and traditional instruments by passing them on to future generations. Recalling the wisdom of his guru, he highlighted the values of unity, harmony, and collective strength, describing music as a powerful medium that connects people through love and shared traditions.



PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

## Filming the freedom struggle

**Watch Gagandeep Singh Gill pivot from massive global ad campaigns to filming an Indian revolution**

TEAM VIVA

We see countless young directors chase the Hollywood dream, but very few survive the actual grind. Gagandeep Singh Gill is quietly beating the odds. Growing up between Mumbai and Gujarat, the local cinema was his real living room. It offered a cheap ticket to exotic worlds, sparking an obsession that eventually drove him to Los Angeles. Earning a Master's Degree in Film Production from Pasadena's ArtCenter College of Design, he was surrounded by an intense, passionate crowd of cross-disciplinary artists. The environment completely sharpened his creative instincts. Gill took a highly practical route into the business. Drawing directly on his childhood love for those incredibly clever Imperial Blue Music CDs

and Hutch television spots, he carved out a distinct niche in advertising. He applied his authentic storytelling rhythm to massive global campaigns for Kodak, Levi's, and Dove Men+Care. The industry rewarded him heavily. Taking home nine trophies like the American Advertising Federation, The One Club For Creativity, and the International Telly Awards is a serious achievement for a young professional. However, advertising only satisfies so much creative hunger. Pulling from his own experiences, he directed a short film about an Indian lead navigating the New York City comedy scene. That project landed squarely on the official shortlist at an Oscar and BAFTA-qual-



ifying festival in LA. Now, he is taking an enormous swing. Blending American technical polish with his cultural roots, Gill is currently developing a new narrative set during the peak of the Indian Freedom Struggle. Shooting a historical piece in India is incredibly risky. But watching a director pivot from high-end commercials to filming a revolution makes him exactly the kind of emerging talent you need to keep on your radar.



**Blending American filmmaking with his cultural roots, Gill's next project is to reimagine the freedom struggle**

### ART CORNER

## Healing through natural landscapes

TEAM VIVA

When dreams collide with the natural world, they usually leave a distinct emotional footprint. Pinning down that exact intersection is the core ambition behind *Threshold of Dreams*, the fourth solo outing by contemporary painter Neha Bisht. Currently hanging at New Delhi's IIC Annexe Gallery until 28 June 2026, the exhibition, inaugurated by acclaimed painter Ashok Bhownick, strips away typical gallery pretence to focus entirely on environmental healing. Bisht clearly knows her materials. Looking closely at her *Lyrical*



*Landscape series*, she manipulates heavy oils and loose watercolours to break down the wall separating actual, physical geography from pure imagination.

These canvases present mornings that read as visual poetry and clouds drifting like silent melodies. The technical standout remains her *Himalayan Trail Series*, where she steps away from standard pigments to create striking pieces using ink and *Panchtatva*, an intricate medium pulled directly from the five elemental forces of nature. Bisht herself defines the collection as an exploration of magical spaces where memories remain suspended like a heavy perfume, ultimately building a beautifully crafted, deeply necessary sanctuary right in the middle of a loud metropolis.

PHOTOS: PANKAJ KUMAR

**The exhibition reimagines Himalayan landscapes through elemental art and evokes environmental healing**

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

A leader is one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way.  
— John C Maxwell

New Delhi  
June 28, 2026

## The Transformative Global Leader



Narendra Modi is one of the world's most influential and closely followed political leaders. Admired by supporters and fiercely criticised by opponents, he has established an exceptional record of electoral success, earning a reputation as an astute politician, capable administrator, and tireless leader. Known for his discipline, fitness, relentless work ethic, and decisive leadership, Modi has played a central role in elevating India's global profile.

### The journey so far...

Narendra Modi has been serving as the Prime Minister of India since May 2014, following a long political career that began as a grassroots organiser

- 2024-PRESENT Third tenure as Prime Minister**
  - Formed a coalition government in June 2024 after the BJP secured 240 seats, relying on NDA allies.
  - Became only the second Indian leader, after Jawaharlal Nehru, to be elected Prime Minister for three consecutive terms.
- 2019-2024 Second tenure as Prime Minister**
  - Led the BJP-led NDA coalition to a larger victory with 303 seats in May 2019.
  - Oversaw the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, removing Jammu and Kashmir's special status.
  - Navigated India through the COVID-19 pandemic with nationwide lockdowns and digital vaccination rollouts.
  - Inaugurated the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya in January 2024.
- 2014-2019 First tenure as Prime Minister**
  - Sworn in as the 15th Prime Minister of India on May 26, 2014.
  - Launched signature national schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Make in India, and Jan Dhan Yojana.
  - Implemented major economic changes, including 2016 Demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017.
  - Authorized the 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot airstrike following cross-border terror attacks.
- 2013-2014 Shift to National Stage**
  - Sworn in as the 15th Prime Minister of India on May 26, 2014.
  - Launched signature national schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Make in India, and Jan Dhan Yojana.
  - Implemented major economic changes, including 2016 Demonetisation and the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2017.
  - Authorized the 2016 surgical strikes and the 2019 Balakot airstrike following cross-border terror attacks.
- 2001-2014 Chief Minister of Gujarat**
  - Appointed Chief Minister of Gujarat in October 2001.
  - Won his first legislative assembly seat in a February 2002 by-election.
  - Led the BJP to three consecutive assembly victories in 2002, 2007, and 2012.
  - Pioneered the "Gujarat Model" of development.
- 1990s Rise to National Prominence**
  - Helped organize L.K. Advani's 1990 Ram Rath Yatra and Murli Manohar Joshi's 1991 Ekta Yatra.
  - Promoted to BJP National Secretary in 1995, relocating to New Delhi.
  - Elevated to BJP National General Secretary (Organisation) in 1998 to manage nationwide strategies.
- 1970s-1980s Early Political Life**
  - Joined the RSS as a full-time volunteer in the early 1970s.
  - Managed underground protest networks during the 1975-1977 Emergency.
  - Formally assigned to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by the RSS in 1987.
  - Organised the 1989 Gujarat State Election campaign, securing a BJP victory.
- 1950 Narendra Modi is born on September 17, 1950 in Vadnagar, Gujarat**

as tough as he is a killer...So he gets you by surprise...He's a tough trader."! In an exclusive interview with Axios on June 18, 2026, Trump extolled Modi as a "great leader" and a "very tough cookie". In a turbulent, topsy-turvy world tormented, battered and besieged by unconscionably futile war, strife, violence and bloodshed, Modi heroically stood out as a luminous beacon profoundly championing the cause of peace, understanding, humanity and forbearance, and spearheading India to the truly exemplary status of "Vishwa Shanti Guru" on the world stage!

The archetypal Virgoan Modi was born on Sunday, September 17, 1950, to a frugal family of humble origins and modest means in a diminutive single-storied abode in Vadnagar, Gujarat, archaeologically famous for its pair of 12th-century AD "kirti toranas" (triumphal arched gateways) exquisitely carved in red and yellow sandstone. His father, Damodardas Mulchand Modi, unobtrusively ran a nondescript tea stall on Platform No.1 of the Vadnagar railway station serving hot, steaming tea to tired and weary rail passengers. His mother, Heeraben, also known as Hiraba, was just a humble domestic helper. As a child, Modi used to diligently lend a helping hand to his father by selling tea to passengers directly inside train compartments, dexterously ferrying an aluminium kettle and "kulhads". There is an enthralling story linked to an adventurous eight-year-old Modi who, after finishing his chores at the tea stall, went for a pleasure dip with his friends in the Sharmishtha Talav, a picturesque lake on the outskirts of Vadnagar. He furtively caught a wriggling baby crocodile from the lake and triumphantly brought it home as a prospective pet. Upon beholding the scaly reptile, his mother chided him for severing the child from its mother and prevailed upon him to release it back into its habitat!

Modi was introduced to the Rashtriya

**MODI IS ADMIRERD WORLDWIDE BY ONE AND ALL BECAUSE HE REPRESENTS THE CLASSIC "RAGS-TO-RICHES" STORY. HE HAS EMERGED AS THE ULTIMATE EMBODIMENT OF PERSEVERANCE AND UPWARD MOBILITY**

Swayamsevaka Sangh (RSS) in 1958 at the tender age of eight by Lakshmanrao Madhavrao Inamdar, popularly known as "Vakil Saheb", who took him under his wing as a "balswayamsevaka" (junior cadet) and became his political guru. In 1972, Modi entered the hallowed portals of Dr. Hedgewar Bhavan in Ahmedabad and became a "pracharak" (full-time worker) under the tutelage of Inamdar. The RSS assigned him to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in 1985.

Modi formally joined the BJP in 1987 and was sucked into the vortex of mainstream politics. He steadily rose through the party ranks, becoming General Secretary on January 5, 1998. On October 7, 2001, Modi was fortuitously appointed the Chief Minister of Gujarat, replacing the reigning Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel. On February 24, 2002, Modi won his first assembly election from the Rajkot II constituency which earned him a prized seat in the Gujarat Legislative Assembly as an MLA. On October 3, 1995, Modi was made

the National Secretary of the BJP and on January 5, 1998 was appointed its General Secretary. And the crowning moment came on May 26, 2014 when he was sworn in as the 14th Prime Minister of India, after BJP's landslide electoral victory on May 16, 2014 that brought into its kitty a rich, bountiful harvest of 282 seats.

The enlightened people of India have wholeheartedly endorsed Modi as their supreme leader for three successive terms and are translating into reality his cherished mantra of "Together, for Everyone's support, everyone's development, everyone's trust". The BJP's sweeping election juggernaut in various states and union territories and recently in Puducherry, Assam and West Bengal, has been powered by the clarion call "Modi Hai To Mumkin Hai" (If Modi is there it's possible)! The "surgical strikes" on September 29, 2016 on terror launch pads inside Pakistan occupied Kashmir in response to the gruesome pre-dawn ambush by Pakistan backed terrorists in Uri on September 18, 2016, the air strikes on February 26, 2019 upon secret terror camps in Balakot deep inside Pakistan, and the launch of "Operation Sindoor" on the night of 7th/8th May, 2025 in retaliation for the horrific, dastardly, spine-chilling attack in Pahalgam deep inside the Kashmir valley, on 22nd April, 2025, by members of the Pakistan based terrorist group "The Resistance Front", that snuffed out the lives of 26 innocent Indians, carried out with extraordinary speed, stealth and ferocity, have demonstrated to the entire world that those who sowed the ill wind against India had to reap the most terrible retributory whirlwind!

Modi has assiduously restored to numerous Indian political heroes like Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Pannulaparthi Venkata Narasimha Rao and

Pranab Mukerjee, their rightful places in Indian society by adopting and accepting them as national leaders and dedicating roads, museums, statues (like the 182 metres high "Statue of Unity" at Kevadiya, Gujarat, dedicated to Patel, and the Netaji Statue under the sandstone canopy right behind India Gate in New Delhi), postage stamps, coins, memorials and even islands in their honour. And his faith in and commitment to the lofty ideals, thoughts and musings of Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Syama Prasad Mookerjee remains unassailable!

Modi is a prolific writer. In 2008, he published a Gujarati book titled "Jyotipunj" (Mass of Light), which incisively delved into the lives and contributions of sixteen iconic RSS leaders, including his mentor Inamdar. The longest one was that of Madhav Sadashivrao Golwalkar, the father of the emulsifying concept of "Akhanda Bharat" (Undivided India), whom Modi referred to as "Pujniya Shri Gururji" (Guru worthy of worship). Modi's intention was to explain the workings of the RSS to his readers and to reassure RSS members that he remained ideologically anchored to the RSS.

After becoming the Prime Minister, he also authored a book called Exam Warriors, a fun and interactive guide for children to commendably deal with the stress and strain of examinations, which was published in 2018. Modi has written eight other books, mostly containing short stories for children. Modi has penned the lyrics of two Gujarati garba songs viz. "Garbo" and "Maadi". And through his "Man Ki Baat" (Mind's Talk), the monthly radio programme, Modi has built an indestructible bond between himself and the public-doing much to shape the image of the Prime Minister as the caretaker of the Indian people.

Modi is admired worldwide by one and all because he represents the classic "rags-to-riches" story. Rising from abject poverty to the highest office in the land, he has emerged as the ultimate embodiment of

perseverance and upward mobility.

A man for all time and seasons, Modi's strong principles, timeless rhetoric and resolute leadership have contributed to his status as a globally acclaimed behemoth. Power has never corrupted him, nor has success make him conceited, arrogant or pompous. It would perhaps be virtually impossible to compare Modi with the towering Abraham "Abe" Lincoln, the 16th and, by every measure applied, the greatest American President, and the Father of Modern Democracy, who used to say "I am nothing, truth is everything", but if such comparisons are indeed feasible, Modi will effortlessly qualify to be on an equal footing with Lincoln!

In conclusion, Modi is the grandiose harbinger of a truly earth-shattering, all-consuming religious, cultural and spiritual renaissance in India. The eternal, unflinching devotee of Swami ji, who fervently wanted to join the ranks of the saffron-clad monks of the Ramakrishna Mission, is now steadfastly realising the cherished vision and dreams of his childhood hero and role model. It is the mes-

merising inspiration and nourishment he has unceasingly drawn at every single phase of his illustrious career from Swami ji's life, example, work and teachings that have catapulted him to such unfathomable heights, perhaps never before attained by any individual Indian political leader! And under his valiant and envisioned stewardship, India shall, without the faintest shadow of doubt, gloriously step into Viksit Bharat, Ram Rajya and Amrit Kal (all rolled up into one!) and like the wondrous "Sone Ki Chiriya" majestically unfold its fluttering wings and reach out for the distant sky and far beyond as the dominant, domineering and dominating Vishwa Shanti Guru!

For millions of Indians, he is a mystical personality exuding an aura of mental and physical fitness, whether he is deeply immersed in hardcore politics or transfixed in yogic meditation.

The author is an internationally reputed senior lawyer practising in the Supreme Court of India and various High Courts and Tribunals in India. He is an avid debater, public speaker, writer, broadcaster, telecaster, artist, painter, sculptor, music critic and filmmaker



ANOOP BOSE

On June 10, 2026, India's beloved Prime Minister Narendra Damodardas Modi proudly emerged as the longest continuously serving elected premier of India, having occupied that exalted office for 4,398 days, heralding a watershed moment in India's chequered post-independence history. A deeply beholden Modi tweeted, "I remain fully committed to working with even greater dedication to realise the vision of a Viksit Bharat and fulfil the aspirations of 140 crore Indians." An ecstatic Union Home Minister Amitabh Anilchandra Shah posted, "These 12 years of Modi ji have been about cultural renaissance and freeing the nation from the mentality of servitude. The new Parliament was constructed, three new laws were implemented, the new education policy paved the way for medical and engineering education in mother tongues, and Atmanirbhar Bharat became the resolve of every Indian. In these 12 years, on one hand, the country's borders were secured, Article 370 was abrogated from Kashmir, the Ram Temple was built, Naxalism was eradicated, and terrorism was reined in with a befitting response to every terror incident; on the other hand, the collective strength of the nation learned to take pride in its heritage, culture, and capabilities by emerging from feelings of inferiority." The maverick American President Donald John Trump paid his own personal tribute, "Congratulations to my friend, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on becoming India's longest-serving Prime Minister - And a Great One he is! He is a strong, healthy, and wise man and will have many years of Greatness and Success ahead of him!"

The Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed Modi as the "doyen of all Indian Prime Ministers", the Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu conveyed that "your leadership has propelled a nation of over 1.4 billion people into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world" and the French President Emmanuel Macron lauded, "It has been a long journey that reflects your steadfast resolve and the strength of your country".

On June 16, 2026, Modi arrived at Évian-les-Bains, a tourist paradise, nestled in southeastern France (famous the world over for its smooth, crisp and cool mineral water!), aboard a sleek Airbus H225 helicopter to attend the 52nd G7 Summit. Modi was not only accorded a rousing "red carpet" welcome by Macron, but his seminal presence at the Summit made a thundering impact that triggered colossal waves all across the world! When Modi reached the Summit venue on June 17, 2026, Trump literally rose from his chair and greeted Modi with his signature smile and a warm handshake and exchanged fleeting pleasantries.

Modi later met Trump at the "Belle Époque" 5-star Hôtel Royal Évian, overlooking the panoramic Lake Geneva at the foot of the majestic Alps, when he had occasion to underline the imperative need to ensure the safety of seafarers inextricably caught in the Strait of Hormuz. After the meeting, Trump adulated Modi, "You look at this man...He's the most beautiful-looking man. He looks so nice, like an angel...Actually, he's



"THOSE WHO WON OUR INDEPENDENCE... VALUED LIBERTY AS AN END AND AS A MEANS. THEY BELIEVED LIBERTY TO BE THE SECRET OF HAPPINESS AND COURAGE TO BE THE SECRET OF LIBERTY"  
— LOUIS D BRANDEIS

# The Pioneer AGENDA

WEEKLY MOON SIGN FORECAST | 28 JUNE - 4 JULY

## Closing One Chapter, Preparing for the Next

**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 marks the completion of one lunar cycle. It naturally encourages reviewing recent experiences, releasing what has served its purpose and stepping into the next phase with a clearer emotional perspective.

### Weekly Overview

The week begins under the Scorpio Moon, encouraging deeper observation and emotional honesty. As the Moon moves into Sagittarius, perspective broadens and optimism gradually returns. Midweek, Capricorn brings greater attention to responsibilities, structure and practical decisions.



**Aries (Mesh):** The week opens with situations that may encourage you to look beneath the surface before making important decisions. Financial matters, shared responsibilities or unresolved discussions could require greater attention than expected. As the Moon moves into Sagittarius, confidence gradually returns and long-term plans begin to feel more manageable. Midweek supports practical work.

**Taurus (Vrishabh):** Relationships and one-to-one conversations may become an important theme during the opening days. Listening carefully may prove more valuable than trying to settle every issue immediately. Midweek encourages travel, learning or broader thinking, helping you view certain situations from a different perspective.



**Gemini (Mithun):** Daily routines, work commitments or health priorities may shape the beginning of the week. A few small adjustments could make everyday responsibilities feel lighter. As the week progresses, financial planning or shared decisions deserve careful thought rather than quick conclusions. Midweek encourages practical discussions and realistic expectations.

**Cancer (Karka):** Creative interests, personal hobbies or family moments may bring quiet satisfaction during the opening phase of the week. Emotional awareness remains strong, though there is no need to rush important conversations. As Sagittarius energy develops, routines and responsibilities begin demanding greater attention. Midweek favours practical organisation and patient effort.



**Leo (Simha):** Home, family matters or personal priorities may naturally occupy your attention during the early part of the week. Some unfinished matters may finally move toward resolution. As the Moon enters Sagittarius, enthusiasm returns, bringing greater creativity and confidence. Midweek encourages discipline and thoughtful planning rather than acting on impulse.

**Virgo (Kanya):** Communication, meetings or short journeys may keep you occupied during the opening days. Some useful information may arrive unexpectedly, helping you understand a situation more clearly. Midweek encourages learning, planning and reviewing future goals with a practical approach. As Capricorn energy strengthens, creativity and personal interests receive fresh encouragement.



**Libra (Tula):** Financial priorities or practical responsibilities may require careful attention at the beginning of the week. Avoid unnecessary comparisons and focus instead on what genuinely needs improvement. As Sagittarius energy develops, communication becomes smoother and important discussions gain momentum. Midweek supports travel plans, learning or professional development.

**Scorpio (Vrishchik):** With the Moon beginning the week in Scorpio, emotional awareness becomes stronger and personal priorities naturally move into focus. Trust your instincts, but allow important decisions enough time to develop. As the Moon enters Sagittarius, attention gradually shifts toward practical matters, finances and future security. Midweek supports organised effort and patient progress.



**Sagittarius (Dhanu):** The week begins quietly, encouraging reflection before taking action. Once the Moon enters Sagittarius, energy rises noticeably and confidence returns. This is a supportive period for reconnecting with long-term goals, travel plans or educational interests. Midweek encourages practical effort and greater discipline, helping ideas take a more realistic shape.

**Capricorn (Makar):** Friends, colleagues or professional networks may play a helpful role during the opening days of the week. Some discussions could quietly influence future decisions. As Sagittarius energy develops, you may prefer working behind the scenes before revealing your plans. Once the Moon enters Capricorn, confidence becomes steadier and practical responsibilities move forward with greater ease.



**Aquarius (Kumbh):** Professional expectations or leadership responsibilities may shape the beginning of the week. Others may look toward you for guidance or balanced judgement. Midweek encourages reflection before making important commitments, particularly where long-term goals are involved.

As Capricorn energy develops, rest and preparation become equally important. By the weekend, the Moon enters Aquarius, bringing renewed confidence, fresh ideas and a stronger desire to engage with people. The week finishes with greater optimism than it began.

**Pisces (Meen):** The opening phase supports learning, travel or exploring new perspectives that encourage personal growth. Emotional concerns gradually become easier to understand once viewed from a wider angle.

Midweek turns attention toward practical ambitions, friendships and long-term planning. Cooperation with others may produce better results than working alone.

By the weekend, you may prefer a quieter pace that allows reflection before beginning the next chapter. Sometimes clarity arrives most naturally after a cycle has reached its conclusion.



## The US at 250: Patriotism, pageantry, and politics in its historic anniversary



MR DUA

COME JULY 4, the United States of America will be 250 years old as an independent, sovereign nation (besides the world's richest and perhaps the most powerful country). The 250th birthday of America will be celebrated nationwide as per the 250th anniversary of the United States Declaration of Independence from British rule on July 4, 1776, along with numerous other freedom-ushering-in events preceding the anniversary celebrations.

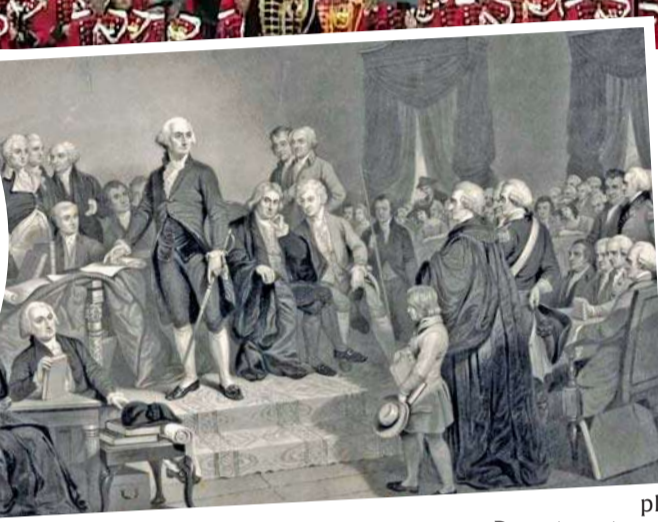
America's semi-quincentennial 250th founding day celebrations commenced this year on January 1, 2026, nationwide when the historical, the Washington Monument, was lit with festive birthday by lighting a 'Gigantic Birthday Candle,' especially designed for the occasion. "The illumination of the Washington Monument marked the beginning of the momentous year for our nation - 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence."

Alongside multiple festivities, the Ultimate Fighting Championship event took place with prayers at the White House on June 14, 2026, which was also Flag Day, and President Donald Trump's 80th birthday. A fair, called the 'The Great American State Fair,' will be also be organized on the National Mall on June 25 that will continue until July 25, featuring exhibits from all the 50 states of the union on the phenomenal events of the American history, America's exclusive culture and nonpareil innovations, unveiling the 'Story of America's journey,' -celebrating its "most spectacular birthday the world has ever seen," as desired by President Donald Trump.

These 'spectacular' shows will be organised and managed by national groups, namely, "Freedom250" and the "America250" under the U.S. Public Law 114-196, also known as the Semi-quincentennial Commission Act, 2016, during Trump's first presidential term. This statute laid down that, as per this document, "America250" has been mandated to 'plan, encourage, develop and coordinate the commemoration of the history of the U.S. leading up to the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.'

During the whole semi-quincentennial year, 2026, 'America250', 'Freedom250', along with the White House Taskforce, will organise more than 60 national events during the nation's year-long birthday celebrations. Besides, other festivities will include massive cultural programmes associated with many other national events at the National Initiatives.

In addition, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Endowment for Public Impact Projects relating to literature, art and culture will be awarded up to \$200,000 per project under the 'America250's vision.' The main object of which is to create the most 'inspiring and unifying commemoration and apposite celebration in the nation's history,



DURING THE JULY 4 NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY FESTIVITIES IN ALL 50 STATES, THE PRESIDENT HAS TOUTED A 'GREAT AMERICAN STATE FAIR' ACROSS THE COUNTRY AND ON THE NATIONAL MALL

bringing Americans to reflect on the nation's history and its future.'

Meanwhile, during the July 4 national Independence Day festivities in all 50 states, the president has touted a 'Great American State Fair' across the country and on the National Mall. The 'Freedom250' activities kicked off by turning the Washington Monument into the 'world's tallest birthday candle,' along with projections depicting the nation's 'discovery, expansion, independence, and the future.' There will also be "Patriot Games", a nationally televised "Freedom 250 Competition for School athletes, boys and girls... particularly the Hunger Games for participants - ('hunger games' is an annual event wherein there's a fight to the death and survival). Trump's approach to the July 4 birthday festivities is said to have been influenced by the 'Culture Wars of 2020.'

Under the newly re-established 1776 Commission, President Trump has tasked it with creating a 'patriotic' ecosystem by lecture series intimately related to the country's founding, to be broadcast nationally throughout 2026. The 1776 Commission's version of history is reflected in Trump's 'statue garden, which remains a key part of the president's 'America250' vision.

President Trump is said to have underscored the need to celebrate the 'American Exceptionalism,' according to an independent author, Mary L.G. Theroux. She further avers: "While we enter a year cel-

ebrating America's 250th anniversary, there will likely be much soul-searching about how well we have delivered on the promise - the Independent will bring much to the conversation."

Meanwhile, Keith Krach, the Chief Executive of Freedom250, who served as a senior State Department official during Trump's first term, has said in a statement that 'the illumination of the Washington Monument', "invite every American - and every friend of America - to join this historic celebration of the triumph of the American spirit."

In addition, the 'AmericaGroup250' has planned a 25-minute projection that displays recurring at the top of each hour each night, cycling through five themed segments: Discovery; Revolution-Independence; Westward Expansion; the Industrial Revolution and the 20th Century; and Modern Day and the Future of the Nation.

Some of these projections are computer-generated, and images were received from the National Archives and the American Library of Congress. All these and more kerfuffles were envisaged before Trump's second term commenced in January 2025. Soon after his inauguration on January 20 last, President Trump seized the opportunity and started planning 'America250', 'Freedom250', and the November 20, 2026. The President's executive orders were on the way, and soon after, on December 2. The initial prepara-

tions for all these works are also on the way. "We will renew the patriotism, pride and pioneering spirit of America," the President said in a December talk, "and lay the groundwork for the next 250 years."

Meanwhile, according to a recent report in the daily newspaper *USA Today*, the opposition Democratic Party has criticised Trump's America250

plans. The U.S. Treasury Department proposal to print President Donald Trump's face on a \$1 coin commemorating the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, and a quarter-dollar coin honouring national heroes from the abolitionist, suffragette and civil rights eras has been scrapped and will be replaced by the nation's early White pioneers and revolutionaries.

(America's) Opposition Democratic Party members of both legislative houses, Congress - the Senate and the House of Representatives - members (termed as 'Congressmen' and 'Congresswomen,') have vehemently criticised the Trump Administration. They opine that Trump's schemes shouldn't valorise a living president, and should reflect the full scope of American history.

Further, *USA Today* points out that it would be like policies under the Trump administration when the United States Mint made the decision in 2025 to feature the president's face on currency, which broke the long-standing centuries-old tradition. The lawmakers are also questioning the legality of the Trump coin (already issued) for all categories.

Be that as it may, most schemes drawn up under America250 and Freedom 250 are estimated to cost several billion: according to one estimate, between \$12 billion and \$15 billion. Only time will tell how much this fanfare will be worth. Perhaps the only thing one can say with a certain amount of certainty is that Donald Trump's face will be seen day in and day out all over the American media outlets.

The writer was a professor and head of print journalism in Delhi's Indian Institute of Mass Communication, ex-head-founder, journalism-communication department University of Calicut, Kerala and has authored-edited five books on mass media. He is now settled in the US

## The blue-light divide: Why today's parents are giving up the fight



NITIN MADAN KULKARNI

It is one or two in the morning. All the lights in the house are off, save for a dim, blue glow spilling out from under a bedroom door. A mother wakes up in the middle of the night. She gets up to drink water and casually peeks into child's room. There they sit, a mobile phone clutched in hand, headphones firmly in place. Something is playing on the screen. Some game is going full throttle. Time has completely lost its meaning. This scene plays out every single night in countless homes today.

The next day, the cycle continues: sleeping until eleven or twelve noon, waking up only after multiple nudges. When they finally roll out of bed, a phone is in one hand and a cup of coffee is in the other. The body is technically awake, but the natural rhythm of the day is entirely lost. Staying up all night, waking up at midday, and staring at a laptop or mobile screen until the early hours has become the new normal.



Times change, technology evolves, and lifestyles adapt. All of this is acceptable. But the fundamental needs of the human body remain unchanged. The body requires physical rest. The mind needs deep, restful sleep. The eyes need darkness, and the brain needs time to regenerate and recalibrate. Today's generation, however, is competing with its own biology. They seem to believe that with enough technology and data, they can outsmart human physiology and circumvent the bio-rhythms.

Today's teens have flipped the clock, treating night as day and day as night. As parents, we watch this happen. At first, we speak up. We advise them with love. Then, we try to explain the consequences. We repeat ourselves. Sometimes we get angry, sometimes we plead. But today's kids have an arsenal of pre-

recorded responses ready to fire back: "Our generation's life is different." Hearing the dismissals routinely, parents eventually fall silent. But their minds are far from calm. They know from experience that if you mistreat your body, you will eventually pay the price. At twenty or twenty-five, you feel invincible. But the small seeds of chronic sleep deprivation, erratic routines, a lack of physical activity, and excessive screen time are quietly being sown.

In time, those seeds develop and grow. Irritability increases. Concentration wanes. Communication within relationships dwindles, confidence falters, and worst of all, the simple joys of life begin to disappear. Yet, for parents, the most painful part isn't witnessing these consequences; it is the agonising realisation that



they can no longer reach their children. Parents are not the enemies of their children; they are the truest witnesses to their dreams. They are the first to pray for their success and the ones who break inside when failure strikes. They stay up all night during illnesses and celebrate their children's victories more than their own. When a parent asks a child not to stay up all night, it doesn't come from a desire to control. It comes from love. It comes from experience,

care, and a fierce, selfless fear: "My child should not suffer."

But when nothing changes despite endless conversations, parents gradually retreat into silence. Children often mistake this for apathy, thinking their parents no longer care. In reality, they care deeply. They have simply realized that the power of words has been exhausted, and that life itself will have to be the teacher.

This silence is not a defeat; it is a sad acceptance. A heavy helplessness.

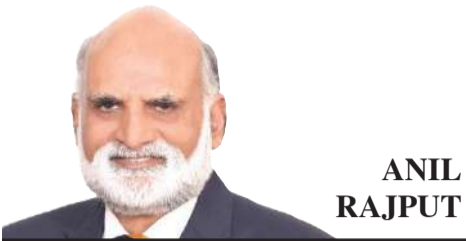
The day parents stop arguing, their worries do not end-on the contrary, they intensify. Because being a parent is a lifelong sentence. The nature of the anxiety changes with age, but it never truly disappears. Therefore, I have one request for today's younger generation:

You do not have to accept everything your parents say. You do not have to agree with every opinion. Have your own thoughts, make your own decisions, and live your life on your own terms. But occasionally, try to listen to the love hidden beneath their nagging. Because a time will come later in life when you will suddenly understand the weight of everything, they are saying today.

The writer is a senior IAS officer of Jharkhand; currently posted as Principal Secretary to Jharkhand Governor

### AKSHAYA TRITIYA

## Cuisine of abundance, charity and continuity



ANIL  
RAJPUT

Akshaya Tritiya is one of the most auspicious days in the Hindu calendar, celebrated as a symbol of prosperity, renewal and enduring abundance. Observed on Vaishakh Shukla Tritiya, the third lunar day of the bright fortnight of Vaishakh, Akshaya Tritiya this year fell on 19 April. It is associated with sacred beginnings, acts of charity, worship, annadaan and the invocation of lasting well-being. The word akshaya means "that which does not diminish," reflecting the belief that virtuous actions performed on this day generate merit that endures and multiplies. While the festival is often associated with purity of purpose and the commencement of new ventures, its deeper message lies in the cultivation of gratitude, generosity and the responsibility to preserve and share abundance.

Arriving during the height of the Indian summer, when water becomes precious and fruits mature, Akshaya Tritiya also reflects the close alignment between seasonal cycles and cultural practice. The cultural background of Akshaya Tritiya is layered with sacred associations. In many Hindu homes, the day is connected with the worship of Lord Vishnu and Goddess Lakshmi, invoking preservation, auspiciousness and prosperity. It is also observed as Parashurama Jayanti in several traditions, while popular belief links the day with renewal and righteous beginnings. In Rajasthan and parts of western India, Akha Teej has long been considered auspicious for marriages and family celebrations. In Maharashtra, it is counted among the highly auspicious murtura days, when new work, purchases and household rites are undertaken with faith. In Odisha, the day carries a distinct agrarian and Jagannath tradition, as farmers mark Akhi Muthi Anukula, the ceremonial beginning of agricultural activity, while preparations for the Rath Yatra at Puri begin with chariot construction. In Jain tradition, Varshitap Parna is observed by those who break long austerities with sugarcane juice, recalling Rishabhnantha. Its culinary traditions embody this spirit through foods that are simple, nourishing and suitable for the climate, while also carrying the sanctity of offering and sharing.

The cuisine accordingly adapts to regional variations. Some households prepare elaborate naivedya, food offered to the deity, like cooling summer dishes or sweets while many mark the day through annadaan, the traditional Hindu sacred act of offering food to others. Since the festival falls in Vaishakh, the cuisine naturally leans towards mango, raw mango, curd, cucumber, coconut, soaked pulses, jaggery, ghee, rice, milk and light sattvic preparations. The purpose is not excess for its own sake. It is nourishment made auspicious, reminding the household that prosperity should

spread rather than remain personal.

Maharashtra offers some of the most distinctive Akshaya Tritiya food associations, especially because the day falls in the season of mangoes and tender cashews. A festive meal may begin with Puran Poli, a soft flatbread filled with cooked chana dal and jaggery, flavoured with cardamom or nutmeg and served with ghee. The dal is cooked until tender, sweetened with jaggery and ground into a smooth filling, while the dough is rolled carefully around it. On Akshaya Tritiya, Puran Poli is not only a sweet dish but also as a symbol of plenty, because grain, pulse, jaggery and ghee come together in one generous preparation.

The same kitchen also gives us one of the best ways to make the savory section more specific to Akshaya Tritiya. Katchi Amti is prepared from the strained stock of the cooked chana dal used for the puran filling. Instead of wasting this nourishing liquid, it is transformed into a thin, spiced, tangy amti with goda masala, tamarind, jaggery, mustard, cumin, curry leaves, asafoetida and chilli. This dish carries the spirit of the festival in a subtle way. Akshaya does not mean endless consumption. It also means intelligent use, respect for ingredients and the ability to turn what remains into something complete. Katchi Amti balances the sweetness of Puran Poli, making the meal feel whole rather than heavy.

The Maharashtrian summer table then moves toward more seasonal savory dishes that are even more meaningful. Olya Kajuchi Bhaji, also known in some homes as fresh tender cashew curry, is especially valuable because tender cashews belong to the season and carry festive richness without excess. The cashews are cooked gently with coconut, cumin, green chilli, ginger, coriander and mild spices according to family custom. Ole Kajuchi Usal follows a similar seasonal logic, treating fresh cashews almost like a precious pulse. Raw mango creates another natural bridge between the festival and the climate in which it is observed. Kairichi Dal, also called Ambe Dal, is made with soaked chana dal, grated raw mango, coconut, green chilli, coriander and a light tempering. It is not a dal in the usual cooked sense, but a cooling, grainy, tangy preparation that refreshes the palate. Alongside it, Khamang Kaddi brings cucumber, peanut, coconut and mild seasoning into the meal. It is crisp, cooling and humble, yet festive enough for a thali.

Festive accompaniments reveal how Indian cuisine preserves labour across seasons. Kurdai, a sun-dried wheat preparation later fried or roasted until crisp, reflects the art of summer preservation, when households prepare papads, vadis and dried foods

under the strong sun. Nachanicha Papad, made with ragi, brings a millet-based note to the thali. Gilkyachi Bhaji, made from sponge gourd and served in a crisp or lightly cooked form, brings another seasonal vegetable into the meal. These preparations may appear small, but they carry memory, planning and household economy.

The sweet side of the western Indian table is naturally brightened by mango. Aamras is one of the most fitting dishes for Akshaya Tritiya because it belongs to the same hot season and carries a sense of golden abundance. Ripe mango pulp is extracted, lightly whisked and sometimes flavoured with cardamom or saffron, though many families prefer it plain so that the mango remains central. Shrikhand also fits the mood of the festival, especially in Gujarat and Maharashtra, where strained curd is sweetened and flavoured with saffron, cardamom or mango to make Amrakhand. Since curd cools the body and saffron-gold tones evoke auspiciousness, Shrikhand becomes both festive and seasonally wise. Sanjori, a lesser-known Maharashtrian festive sweet made with semolina, milk, ghee and sugar or jaggery, can also be included for special meals.

In North Indian homes, milk-based sweets are widely used. Kheer, made by slow-cooking rice in milk until it thickens, is one of the most familiar ways to express auspiciousness. On Akshaya Tritiya, it can be enriched with cardamom, saffron, almonds, cashews and raisins, then offered as prasad before being shared. Lapsi, made from broken wheat roasted in ghee and cooked with jaggery or sugar, is another meaningful dish because wheat represents grain, growth and household sustenance. In Rajasthan and Gujarat, where Akha Teej has strong cultural resonance, Lapsi can be framed as a dish of wholesome sweetness. Besan Laddoo or Atta Laddoo may also appear when families prepare sweets that can be distributed, stored and shared with guests.

South Indian traditions offer another way of making the cuisine more rooted in the day's seasonal and devotional character. Payasam is central to many temple and home offerings, whether made with rice, vermicelli, moong dal, chana dal or jaggery. Chana Dal Payasam and Moong Dal Payasam are especially useful in this preparation because pulses carry nourishment and strength, while jaggery and coconut bring sweetness without losing the sattvic character of the dish. The dal is lightly roasted or cooked until soft, then simmered with jaggery syrup, coconut milk or milk, and finished with cardamom, ghee-fried cashews and raisins.



In Karnataka and parts of the South, Kosambari provides the savory counterpoint. Made with soaked moong dal, cucumber, coconut, green chilli, coriander and lemon, it is light, cooling and suitable for offering. Thayir Sadam, or curd rice, may seem simple, but on Akshaya Tritiya its relevance lies in the heat of the season. Rice cooled with curd, tempered gently with mustard, curry leaves and ginger, becomes food that soothes, settles and completes a summer meal.

Odisha gives Akshaya Tritiya a particularly powerful cultural dimension because the day is linked with the beginning of agricultural activity. Accordingly there isn't one fixed menu but dishes shaped by the season and the festival's agrarian character. Dalma, made with dal and vegetables cooked together with mild spices, is one of Odisha's most representative sattvic dishes. It is nourishing, balanced and closely aligned with temple-style and household cooking. On a day that honours the beginning of cultivation, a dish combining pulses and vegetables feels deeply appropriate. Dahi Pakhala, rice soaked in water and curd, often enjoyed with salt, green chilli, roasted cumin, curry leaves or simple accompaniments, reflects the summer intelligence of eastern India. It cools the body and honours rice not as a luxury but as the foundation of life. If Saga Bhaja or Badi Chura appears alongside such a meal, the table becomes both humble and complete.

The beverage tradition of Akshaya Tritiya is just as important as the food because the festival belongs to the heat of Vaishakh, when offering water is itself an act of merit. Panakam, made with jaggery, water, dry ginger, cardamom and sometimes black pepper, is one of the most meaningful drinks to include because it is cooling, energising and devotional. Aam Panna, prepared from roasted or boiled raw mango, cumin, black salt and jaggery, protects the body against heat and celebrates the raw mango season. Chaas and Lassi bring curd into drink-

able form, offering comfort after a festive meal. Sattu Sherbet, made with roasted gram flour, water, lemon, cumin and salt or jaggery, connects nourishment with summer practicality. Nimbu Pani, Bel Sherbet, Kokum Sharbat and tender coconut water can also be a part of cooling hospitality. In Jain communities observing Varshitap Parna, sugarcane juice has a sacred role, reminding us that a beverage too can become a carrier of memory, austerity and grace.

What makes Akshaya Tritiya cuisine beautiful is this balance between offering and enjoyment. A family may begin with puja, offer Puran Poli, Kheer, Payasam, Aamras, Panchamrit or fruit, and then share the meal with relatives, neighbours or guests. In some homes, annadaan becomes the heart of the day, with food, water, fruit, buttermilk or sweets distributed to those in need. Buying gold may be one visible symbol of prosperity, but giving food reveals its deeper meaning. It teaches children that festivals are carefully shaped cultural moments in which the calendar, the kitchen, and the family come together to observe a moral and spiritual lesson that is in harmony with the seasonal cycle.

To carry Akshaya Tritiya forward, therefore, we must preserve not only its rituals but also the traditions of its cuisine and the wisdom that gives these practices its contemporary relevance. Recipes such as Puran Poli, Katchi Amti, Kairichi Dal, Aamras, Kosambari, Dalma, Dahi Pakhala, Payasam and Panakam should not remain only in the memories of elders or in fading notebooks. They should be cooked, explained, tasted and passed on. Children should know why raw mango appears in summer, why water is offered, why annadaan matters, why a festival of prosperity must also be a festival of sharing, and why food prepared with devotion becomes more than consumption. In protecting the cuisine of Akshaya Tritiya, we preserve a civilisational understanding that abundance is sacred only when it nourishes others. The call of this festival is therefore simple and urgent. Let us keep cooking these dishes, keep telling their stories, keep feeding with gratitude and keep teaching future generations that what is truly akshaya is not wealth kept for oneself, but culture, compassion and nourishment shared across time.

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society)

## Mediterranean culture on plate



GYANESHWAR DAYAL

A celebration of Cypriot cuisine, *Cyprus on a Plate* by Coração Do Vale, got underway at Roseate House New Delhi, bringing authentic flavours of the Mediterranean island to the capital through a specially curated gastronomic experience.

Organised in association with the High Commission of Cyprus, the festival showcases traditional Cypriot cuisine prepared by Chef Gagandeep alongside visiting Cypriot chef, culinary consultant and food anthropologist Chef Eleni Michael. The dishes are crafted using Coração Do Vale, a premium Portuguese extra virgin olive oil brand presenting the event as part of its culinary initiative.

Cypriot cuisine reflects the island's rich Mediterranean heritage, blending Greek, Middle Eastern and Turkish

influences. Known for its use of fresh herbs, olive oil, cheeses, grains and slow-cooked meats, the cuisine celebrates simplicity and depth of flavour. The festival offers a glimpse into these traditions, introducing diners to recipes passed down through generations.

The opening evening was attended by Evagoras Vryonides, along with hospitality industry representatives, diplomats and food enthusiasts, who sampled a multi-course menu highlighting Cyprus' rich culinary heritage.

The dining experience began with an assortment of traditional cold and warm mezze, including Tsakistes, Tashi, Melitzanosalata, Village Salad, Louvi Hummus, freshly made Cypriot pita, seared halloumi and Sheftalia. The meal continued with Patzarosalata, a beetroot and potato salad, and Ravioles, handmade Cypriot pasta filled with halloumi cheese and

spearmint. The main course featured Tavas Lefkaritikos, a slow-braised lamb preparation cooked with rice, potatoes, tomatoes, cinnamon and cumin, alongside Gemista, roasted vegetables stuffed with rice, herbs and mint, topped with feta cheese. Desserts included Anarokrema, a whipped ricotta cream with filo pastry, honey and walnuts, followed by traditional Cypriot sweets such as Soutzioukkos, Loukoumi and Daktyla. The meal concluded with Cyprus coffee and fresh mint tea. The initiative seeks to promote cultural exchange through food.

The festival also marks the launch of *World on a Plate*, a new culinary series by Coração Do Vale in collaboration with Roseate House New Delhi.

## A taste of Gujarat comes alive in Delhi NCR



TEAM AGENDA

Gujarati cuisine is often described as a celebration of balance—where sweetness, spice, tang and warmth coexist on the same plate. This rich culinary tradition is now taking centre stage at Radisson Blu Kaushambi, where a specially curated Gujarati Food Festival invites diners to experience the vibrant flavours and hospitality of India's western state.

From the moment guests step into the restaurant, the ambience sets the tone for an immersive cultural experience. Traditional décor inspired by Gujarat's colourful heritage, vibrant textiles, hand-crafted motifs and soft folk music create a welcoming atmosphere that evokes the warmth of a Gujarati home. The

elegant setting blends seamlessly with the hotel's contemporary interiors, making the festival both authentic and sophisticated.

The menu is a delightful showcase of the state's diverse culinary traditions. Guests can begin with popular farsan such as Khaman Dhokla, Patra, Khandvi, and crispy Fafda, accompanied by an assortment of tangy chutneys and pickles. These light yet flavourful appetisers perfectly capture the essence of Gujarati snacking culture.

The main course offers an equally tempting spread. Signature dishes like

Undhiyu, a slow-cooked medley of seasonal vegetables and spices, Sev Tameta Nu Shaak, Ringan Bateta, Gujarati Dal, and the mildly sweet Kadhi reflect the delicate balance of flavours that defines the cuisine. Freshly prepared Thepla, Bajra Rotla, Pulka, and soft rotis complement the curries, while fragrant steamed rice and traditional khichdi complete the wholesome meal.

No Gujarati feast is complete without desserts, and the festival delivers generously. Diners can indulge in classics such as Shrikhand, Basundi, Mohanthal, and Sukhdi, each offering a comforting finish that highlights

Gujarat's fondness for rich dairy-based sweets.

What makes the festival particularly memorable is the attention to authenticity. Every dish is prepared using traditional recipes and carefully selected ingredients, ensuring that the flavours remain true to their origins while appealing to contemporary palates. The chefs have succeeded in presenting a menu that is both nostalgic for those familiar with Gujarati food and an exciting culinary discovery for first-time diners.

More than just a dining experience, the Gujarati Food Festival at Radisson Blu Kaushambi is a celebration of culture, tradition and the legendary hospitality for which Gujarat is known. Whether one is a connoisseur of regional Indian cuisine or simply looking to explore new flavours, this festival promises a memorable gastronomic journey that lingers long after the last bite.

A WEEK-LONG  
CULINARY SHOWCASE  
IN DELHI CELEBRATES  
AUTHENTIC CYPRIOT  
FLAVOURS, BRINGING  
MEDITERRANEAN  
TRADITIONS, HERITAGE  
AND CULTURE ALIVE  
THROUGH FOOD



## Education for earning and education for living

AMMA (SRI MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI DEVI)

Today, communicating through machines has become standard practice. It helps us feel that people who are physically far away are actually very close. However, when there is no heartfelt connection, even those who are physically close feel far away.

It is important to carefully listen to what others are saying. In the world we see and hear a lot of things. However, unnecessarily meddling in other's affairs often ends in disaster. It is essential to ruthlessly discriminate between information we need to know and information we do not need to know. A man was walking along the road when he heard someone repeating: "Thirteen... thirteen... thirteen..." The sound was coming from behind a high wall. Curious to know what was going on, he pressed his ear against a hole in the wall, upon which he was immediately bitten.

The man jerked his head away and screamed in pain. Instantly, from the other side of the wall, he heard the voice begin again: "Fourteen... fourteen... fourteen..." The wall was the outer boundary of an insane asylum. We are like this. We have developed the habit of communicating superficially and meddling unnecessarily. This needs to change. We must cultivate the habit of listening carefully to what others say. Once, there was a computer that could answer any question—science, history, geography, politics, art. People asked it about everything under the sun. In an instant, the correct answer would flash on the screen. Then a clever little boy came forward and asked: "Hello, Super Computer, how's it going? Are you doing well?" That was his question. The computer screen blinked and then went blank. There was no answer. The computer that could answer every question in the world could not answer a simple question about itself. Most of us are like this. We lack aware-



The State University of New York presented Amma with an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters on May 25, 2010.

ness and knowledge about our own self. Education for earning a living and education for life are two different things. We learn to make a living in order to survive. We want to become an engineer or a doctor, and we go to college to study for that purpose.

But education for life is spirituality. Spirituality is understanding the nature of the mind and the nature of the world and then moving forward. It is not enough for us to master the language of machines. We must learn the language of the heart. For this, a spiritual foundation is essential. It is not enough for parents to give their children only wealth and luxuries. The wealth that they really need to impart to their children is culture and dharma. Even if a person buys the most expensive car and fills its tank with the highest grade petrol, a battery is needed in order to start the engine. Similarly, however much wealth and education children receive, it is the love and moral values learned from their parents that help them handle any cir-

cumstances life brings. The foundation of this is an open heart that is ready to give and receive love.

What the youth of today lack is proper judgment. Merely by dissemination of information, we cannot develop judgment. For this, we must develop faith in the cosmic power, the power beyond our mind and intellect. We should eliminate the egoistic notion that our life will become fruitful through mere human effort alone. We should bow down. Then this cosmic power will flow into us.

If we ask a guitarist or a singer where their music comes from, they will probably say, "From my heart." But, if we surgically open up their heart, will we find any music there? If they say that the music comes from their finger tips or their throat, would we find music if we searched in those places?

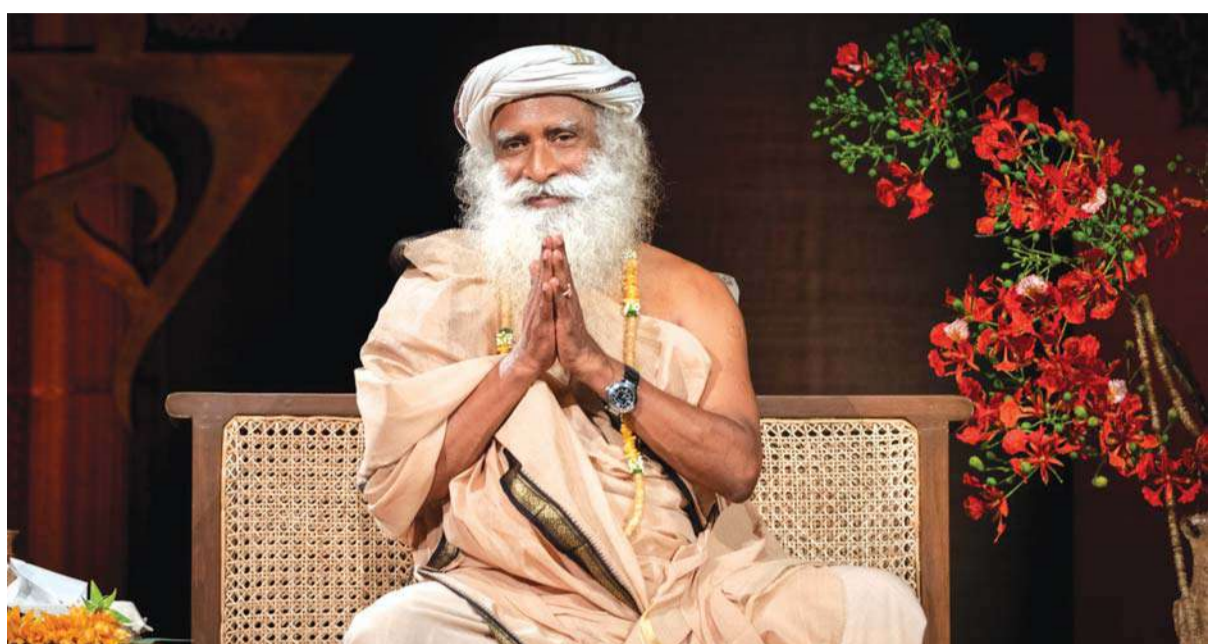
Then, from where does the music arise? It arises from a place beyond the body and mind. This place is the abode of Pure Consciousness, God. The younger generation should strive to understand and respect this power. Youth should be made aware of the importance of love, selfless service, humility and the necessity of giving back to society the fruit reaped from their success. For a householder, a CEO of a company or even a political leader, first one should know oneself. This is true strength. One should know and accept one's own faults, shortcomings and limitations, and try to overcome them. That is when a true leader is born.



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.

## Producing leaders for India

What do you think is the reason behind us not seeing the kind of leaders we should have — whether in companies or government?



SADHGURU

There is a historic element to this. We need to understand that we have been under occupation for centuries. In an

occupied nation, there is a certain psychology - when you step out, don't raise your head and be seen. Put your head down and just come home. So, wherever there is a problem, you always put your head down and come away. This has been our attitude for centuries. We have such a strong instinct to avoid every problem. But a leader is someone who confronts every problem.

When I was in college, those were the times when all kinds of strikes were happening. I remember how my mother used to be so worried every time. She knew I was a firebrand, and if I stepped out, I may be in trouble. So she would tell me, "Just go to college and come back home. Don't go anywhere else. Something is happening on the street." I would ask her, "Doesn't this issue matter to you? Why shouldn't I go? All the other boys are going. What is your stand on this?" She would reply, "Yes, it matters, but you come home." This is the wisdom of an occupied nation - somehow duck and you will survive. If you stand up, your head may go.

You will see, if something happens on the street, there will only be bystanders staring at something - not one person stands up and does what is needed. It is very rare to find someone jumping into action and doing something. That is not the case with most other nations.

This is deep-rooted in our country. This has to change. Those times are over. It is time - whatever the damn problems in this country, they are our problems. We have to address them. We cannot dodge them.

Today, things are beginning to change. It is only now that people are looking at being leaders. Otherwise, leadership was always in somebody else's hands. Our business was to not get into trouble. It is significant that today, many of our corporate leaders are people born in free India. And for the first time, we have a Prime Minister born in free India. This is significant because we were not in an occupied nation, we do not know what that experience is. This is a new generation of people who are thinking about where the nation should go and have a certain pride about who we are. It is not that the previous generation did not have it, but generally, there was a very natural instinct of "When there is trouble, look away. Don't get into the situation."

India is a tremendous pool of talent. Wherever else we go, Indians do phenomenally well, but we have not done well in our country because of lack of leadership and organization. One of the biggest problems in India has been lack of leadership. When we utter the word "leadership," people always think of the Prime Minister and Chief Ministers. But leadership is not just at the top. We need leadership at every layer of society, which is completely missing.

Today, if a good leader arises, everyone else starts worshipping him. A leader does not need worship. What he needs is a reinforcement of various

levels of leadership so that his leadership finds traction - when he wants to do something, it will find its way to the grassroots. That is not happening right now in the country. At the top, there is an intention and they are trying to do something, but it is not finding traction down the line because there is no such leadership all along to understand and implement what needs to be done.

Leaders don't fall from the sky. Some people make themselves into leaders or sometimes, situations compel them to become leaders. But the rest of the people need a proper system to become leaders. That system to build leadership is largely missing in India.

Isha is in the process of creating a leadership movement in the country and as part of this, we are building the Isha Leadership Academy. Starting from a homemaker, to a grocer, to a panchayat leader, to an MLA, I have identified eleven layers of leadership that we need in our society, and we are preparing courses for them. Besides the regular MBA, a variety of programs - a week-long program, a three-week course, a six-week program and more - will be available. Empowered with insight, inspiration, inner wellbeing, integrity and humility, these graduates will become active, successful entrepreneurs who can fit seamlessly into any organization and shape the society and world we inhabit.

(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)

## Being good is greater than being great

Nothing enriches humanity more than goodness. A kind word, a helping hand, or a simple gesture that brings a smile to someone's face can brighten a day, heal a hurt, and strengthen the bonds that unite us. Great souls inspire us not merely through extraordinary achievements but through their extraordinary humanity



DR SWAMI GYANANANDDAS

On the afternoon of 8 August 2018, at the age of 85, His Holiness Mahant Swami Maharaj surprised everyone accompanying him on his journey to Bodeli, Gujarat. Instead of proceeding directly to his destination, he asked his driver to turn towards Kothiya village, where a small tribal hut awaited a visitor it had long dreamed of receiving.

What made the visit remarkable was not merely where he went, but why he went. Several years earlier, a poor tribal farmer named Ramjibhai Rathwa had met Mahant Swami Maharaj and made a simple, heartfelt request: "Swami, please visit my village someday." It was the wish of an ordinary devotee with no influence, wealth, or social standing. Time passed. The request was forgotten by many. But it was not forgotten by Mahant Swami Maharaj. Years later, while travelling to BodeliBAPS Mandir, Swamiji unexpectedly instructed the driver to turn towards Kothiya village. The accompanying sadhus were surprised. There was no scheduled program there, no grand assembly awaiting him, and no prominent dignitary to meet. Yet Swamiji had remembered the humble plea of a poor devotee and was determined to fulfill it.

The home belonged to Ramjibhai Rathwa, a farmer whose dwelling was built of bamboo-strip walls, an aluminum-sheet roof, and a floor covered with dried rice stalks. There were no marble floors, no elaborate decorations, and no signs of material prosperity. Yet, for Mahant Swami Maharaj, none of that mattered. Drawn by love rather than comfort, he entered the humble hut and sat affectionately on a simple cot, treating the family with the same warmth and respect that others might reserve for royalty.

He performed aarti in their tiny hut-



mandir, personally distributed prasad to every family member, and showered sanctified flowers upon their belongings, sanctifying their home. The joy on the faces of the family was beyond words. A request made years ago had not only been remembered, but it had been honored with affection and grace.

The visit did not end there. Swamiji also met the villagers, encouraging them to give up addictions and embrace a life of morality, faith, and harmony. Under the open sky of a remote tribal village, he uplifted hearts and transformed lives.

In a world that often equates greatness with power, wealth, and recognition, this quiet visit revealed a far nobler truth: Being good is greater than being great. The measure of a person is not how many important people he meets, but how much importance he gives to those whom society often overlooks. By remembering the wish of a poor farmer years later and travelling to his humble hut, Mahant Swami Maharaj demonstrated that genuine goodness possesses a greatness of its own.

Of course, titles fade, applause quiets, and positions shift, but the impression of a kind heart endures forever. True greatness is not measured by how high we rise, but by how gently we walk among others. Being good, honest, humble, and selfless creates a legacy that no worldly success can surpass. It is goodness, not greatness, that touches lives, wins hearts, and ultimately defines our worth.

There is a popular saying: "It's nice to be important, but it's more important to be nice." This saying proves that, while being important holds some value, being good, kind, humble, and virtuous is far greater.

A profound thinker once wrote, "The greatest happiness on this earth is the conviction that we are loved." Indeed, when someone remembers us in our absence without any selfish agenda or expectation, when they long for our presence, and when they respond positively to our every gesture, such love, born of purity and sincerity, brings joy that cannot be measured.

This humility is the hallmark of greatness. Great spiritual masters inspire us not only through their wisdom, but through their extraordinary attention to these simple expressions of humanity. Their lives remind us that goodness is not reserved for grand occasions; it is found in the choices we make every day.

Of course, each day presents countless opportunities to spread goodness. A kind word, a helping hand, a patient ear, or a thoughtful gesture may seem small, yet such acts can leave a lasting impact, bringing a smile to someone's face and making life a little brighter.

The world may remember our achievements for a while, but it remembers our character forever. Those who are truly good do not seek to shine; they become the reason others shine. In the quiet simplicity of humility, kindness, and selflessness lies a strength far greater than any worldly success. Let us strive not just to rise high, but to grow deep, because being good is not only greater than being great, it is the very foundation of what makes greatness meaningful.

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

## What Alexander could not conquer

Dispassion is your strength, and the story of Alexander the Great reveals this truth.

GURUDEV SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Before Alexander marched into India, people in his country asked him to bring back, a sanyasi (one who is unshaken by anything is a sanyasi), for they were precious and found only here. When he arrived, he ordered that sanyasis be brought to him. But, strangely, nobody arrived in response to his summons. He then sent a warning: he would chop off the heads of those who refused. Still, nobody responded to the warning. He threatened to take away their books - four Vedas and the ancient scriptures. It is said the pundits secretly made their children memorize every manuscript overnight and handed over the texts the next morning.

Alexander had the manuscripts, but he still wanted a sanyasi. And a sanyasi would not come.

Finally, he was forced to go in search of a sanyasi himself. When he found one, he threatened to behead him on the spot if the sanyasi did not come along. The sanyasi replied that Alexander could do so if he wished. The mighty conqueror could not even look into the eyes of the sanyasi.

What is it that stopped Alexander? He could not stand the power of dispassion he saw in the sanyasi's eyes. For the first time in his life as a conqueror, he stood before a person who did not care about an emperor. Dispassion is not arrogance but centeredness.

When Alexander was in India, some people presented him with golden bread on a plate. He said he was hungry and asked for real bread. They replied that he was an emperor; how could he eat ordinary wheat bread? Alexander wondered if he was being made fun of. He was starving, and wanted real wheat bread. When people placed ordinary, real bread before Alexander, they asked, "Is this bread not available in your own country? Why have you conquered so many lands? Is it only to eat the same bread that is eaten everywhere?"

This shook Alexander for a moment. He felt it was the truth. What was the point of conquering a country after country? All that one needed was to live peacefully and happily. When he did not have that happiness and peace



inside him, putting his stamp on every village and town had no meaning.

So it is said that Alexander instructed that when he died, his hands should be kept open, for everyone to see. He wanted the world to know that, though he had conquered so many countries, Alexander the Great was leaving with empty hands. He was unable to take a single thing from this earth.

Now, why is this story so relevant? Look back at all the desires you have fulfilled so far and ask yourself whether they have given you rest. They have only created a few more desires, and those desires have sent you on yet another pointless trip. The mind is like a merry-go-round. A merry-go-round has dummy horses that do not go anywhere. They just go round and round in the same place, giving you the illusion that you have travelled miles, when you have reached nowhere. This is what desires do for you. A mind obsessed with them cannot find peace.

People often prioritize their feelings over their intellect. They constantly seek validation and approval from others. They believe that fulfillment lies somewhere outside themselves. They become slaves to their emotions. No conquest can satisfy a mind that keeps looking outward for what can only be found within.

You may have a craving for beautiful things, and you keep looking at

them. How long can you keep looking? Your eyes will tire of the most beautiful views, and you will close your eyes. Later, you may forget the scenes. All these objects that titillate the senses have their limitations. But your mind is not ready to accept these limitations. It wants unlimited joy and pleasure, which the five senses cannot give you. You simply get burnt out going over and over the same thing.

Dispassion is not about running away from the world or blaming the world. Often, people who think they have dispassion keep blaming their circumstances. They run away from the objects of the senses, fearing them as big temptations. But the fear of temptation is far worse than the temptation itself. Dispassion allows you to retrieve your senses from the objects or the craving, and take them to the Source.

And dispassion does not take away the joy from you; it gives the joy that nothing else can give. It does not divide you; in fact, it connects you to the present moment totally. When your mind is hoping for something, or regretting the past, you are not in the moment. When you are fully centered while doing anything in the world, then you are one hundred percent with every moment. You may be eating, enjoying every bit of it, and you are one hundred percent absorbed in it. You can feel every sip of the soup you are having. Every bite of the food tastes great. Every sight is fresh and new. You look at everything as if you are looking at it for the first time. Dispassion is not something dry and boring. It makes every experience complete.

There is a beautiful verse by Adi Shankaracharya: Kasya sukham na karoti viraagaha, which means, what pleasure can dispassion not bring to you? There is no joy that dispassion cannot give you. This is because you are fully in the moment.

When attention shifts from taking to giving, and from seeking recognition to being centred, a profound freedom dawns. Dispassion helps you understand that everyone who has come to this world has come to give something. We have nothing to take from here. This is a very valuable shift in consciousness.

