

Bihar AIIMS to battle 2025 polls health grounds

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■
New Delhi/Patna/Saharsa

As the battle for ballot in Bihar draws near and anticipated visits by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union Ministers to launch various projects on cards, the tussle for the premier medical establishment, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), in Mithilanchal region has intensified.

Two prominent districts, Darbhanga and Saharsa, are battling it out to have the second AIIMS in Bihar within their districts. However, the foundation stone for AIIMS Darbhanga was laid by the PM Modi along with Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar in November 2024.

PM Modi noted that the establishment of AIIMS in Darbhanga will significantly uplift the healthcare landscape of Bihar, serving not only local regions such as Mithila, Kosi and Tirhut but also benefiting patients from neighbouring West Bengal and Nepal.

The matter of the country's premier medical institution, which witness millions of patients from Bihar in the national Capital's AIIMS, has also reached Supreme Court and Patna High Court on the grounds of two contrary reports within a year by the same Central Government inspection committee about feasibility of the site allocated in Darbhanga.

The issue has now become a matter of sentiments for peo-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bihar Chief Minister laying foundation stone for Darbhanga AIIMS in November 2024

PIONEER PHOTO



The land identified by the Saharsa administration in Gauravgarh near airport in the district.

PIONEER PHOTO

ple of Kosi region primarily, districts such as Saharsa, Supaul, Katihar, Purnea, Madhepura, Khagaria, Araria, Kishanganj and adjoining areas. They have launched a series of protests, demonstrations and public outreach programs to bring AIIMS to Saharsa from the proposed Darbhanga.

One of the fronts-AIIMS Nirman Sangharsh Samiti, Kosi Mandal Saharsa-has claimed that the more need of a medical hospital such as AIIMS is at Saharsa due to the annual damage by the Kosi river, which is known as Sorrow of Bihar.

They have questioned as what transpired in between year 2023 to 2024 when the then Union Health Secretary Rajesh Bhushan questioned

the "feasibility" of AIIMS in Darbhanga to Bihar Health Secretary Pratayya Amrit.

"A team of officials was deputed to visit the proposed site which in its report stated that the proposed location (Darbhanga) has certain potential disadvantages, making the execution of project on this site more complex on many reasons," the Health Secretary letter date May 26, 2023, a copy of which is with The Pioneer, said.

"Besides a high project cost involved due to soil quality, it may pose a serious threat and cause instabilities in the built structure. There might be possibility of water-logging in the built structure," the Central team report for AIIMS in Darbhanga said.

Continued on >> P8

PM Modi snubs President Trump on call

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
New Delhi/Kananaskis (Canada)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a blunt message has told President Donald Trump that India and Pakistan halted their military actions last month following direct talks between their militaries without any mediation by the US, calling out the American leader's narrative that he brokered the ceasefire. Modi also declined Trump's invitation for a stop-over visit to Washington DC on his way back from the G7 Summit in Canada, citing his scheduled visit to Croatia on June 18.

In a nearly 35-minute phone call with Trump on Tuesday, Modi firmly stated that India does not and will "never accept" mediation and that the discus-

TRUMP REPEATS MEDIATION, TRADE CLAIMS

Hours after holding a phone conversation with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump on Wednesday repeated his claim that he stopped a war between India and Pakistan.

"Well, I stopped the war.... I love Pakistan. I think Modi is a fantastic man. I spoke to him last night. We're going to make a trade deal with Modi of India. But I stopped the war between Pakistan and India," Trump said Wednesday. Trump, who is hosting Pakistan Army Chief Asim Munir for lunch at the White House Wednesday, was asked what he is looking forward to achieving diplomatically from the meeting with the Pakistani general.

"This man was extremely influential in stopping it from the Pakistan side," Trump said, referring to Munir.

"Modi, from the India side, and others. They were going at it, and they're both nuclear countries. I got it stopped. I don't think I had one story. Did I have one story written... I stopped the war between two major nations, major nuclear nations. I don't think I had a story written about it," he said, adding that the people know.

Continued on >> P8

sions between Indian and Pakistani militaries on cessation of military actions were initiated at Islamabad's request, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri

said. The Prime Minister also said India no longer views "terrorism as a proxy war, but as a war itself", and that India's Operation Sindoor is still ongoing, the foreign secretary said.

The cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan was first announced by President Trump on May 10. Since then, the US president has been claiming that he brokered the ceasefire deal by threatening to stop trade with both countries if they do not agree to stop the conflict. The prime minister declined a request by the US president to stop over in the US on his way back from Canada, citing "prior commitments".

The May 7-10 military clashes between India and Pakistan figured prominently during the phone conversation that took place as the two leaders could not meet on the sidelines of the G7 summit following the American president's early departure.

Continued on >> P8

India, Canada relationship thaws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■
New Delhi/Kananaskis (Canada)

Signaling a thaw in the frosty diplomatic ties between the two countries, India and Canada have agreed to restore High Commissioners to each other's capitals at an early date, the first in "calibrated steps" to restore stability to the "very important relationship."

This important development came about during Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney talks. Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said both the leaders had a "very positive and constructive meeting" on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Kananaskis.

"The meeting discussed the



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney as he arrives for the G7 Summit at Kananaskis

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importance of the India-Canada relationship, which is based on shared values, democracy and the rule of law, people-to-people contact and many other commonalities," Misri said in a video statement.

He said the prime ministers

agreed to take "calibrated steps" to restore stability to this "very important relationship", and the "first of these steps that was agreed on was to restore High Commissioners to each other's capitals at an early date. Other diplomatic steps will follow."

The ByStander



PIONEER IN SHORT

Monsoon arrives in Jharkhand, red, orange alerts issued

Jharkhand came under full monsoon cover on June 18, bringing heavy to extremely heavy rainfall and thunderstorms. At least seven people, including a mother-daughter duo, have died due to lightning and rain-related incidents. The Indian Meteorological Department has issued a red alert for Ranchi and surrounding districts on June 18-19, with an orange alert for others on June 20. Schools across Ranchi have been ordered shut on June 19 for safety. A well-marked low-pressure system is expected to sustain intense rainfall till June 20. Jharkhand, previously facing a 52 per cent rain deficit, now reports a 7 per cent surplus, with Khunti receiving the highest rainfall at 155.8 mm in 24 hours.

Insurance claims complicated by deaths in AI crash

Insurance firms are facing challenges settling claims from the June 12 Air India crash in Ahmedabad, which killed 270 people, as in many cases both policyholders and their nominees died. Insurers including LIC, New India Assurance, HDFC Life, and others have set up help desks at Ahmedabad Civil Hospital. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India has directed firms to avoid procedural delays. In cases where both the insured and nominee perished, companies are seeking declarations from heirs. So far, insurers have received multiple claims across life, personal accident, and marine cargo policies, and are working to expedite settlements. Emotional trauma and legal complexities are further slowing down the processing of claims for bereaved families still recovering from the tragedy.

FULL REPORT ON P10

FASTag annual pass goes live on August 15

PROSS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

In a bid to ease toll payments on National Highways, the government will from August 15 bring a Rs 3,000 FASTag-based annual pass that would allow up to 200 trips on the highways in one year on a single charge.

The annual pass will be applicable only for non-commercial private vehicles such as cars, jeeps, and vans. It will allow seamless travel across National Highways without the need for repeated recharging of FASTag cards or toll payments, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari said, announcing the move through a post on X.

In closed tolling highways such as Delhi-Mumbai Expressway - where toll collection occurs exclusively at exit points - a single trip includes both entry and exit points. On the other hand, on open tolling routes like Delhi-Chandigarh, each toll plaza crossing would constitute a separate trip.

The pass can be recharged multiple times once the 200-trip limit in a year is crossed.

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) clarified that those who already have a FASTag will not need to purchase a new FASTag. "The annual pass can be activated on your existing FASTag, provided it meets the

At fee plazas on Expressways, State Highways (SH), etc, managed by State or local bodies, the FASTag will operate as a regular FASTag

eligibility criteria (i.e., it is properly affixed on the vehicle's windshield, linked to a valid Vehicle Registration Number, not blacklisted etc)," it said. The annual pass will be valid only at National Highway (NH) and National Expressway (NE) fee plazas.

At fee plazas on Expressways, State Highways (SH), etc, managed by State Governments or local bodies, the FASTag will operate as a regular FASTag, and applicable user fee charges may apply.

Continued on >> P8

Iran threatens consequences to US intervention

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

Iran's supreme leader on Wednesday rejected US calls for surrender in the face of blistering Israeli strikes and warned that any military involvement by the Americans would cause "irreparable damage" to them.

The second public appearance by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei since the Israeli strikes began six days ago came as Israel lifted some restrictions on daily life, suggesting that the missile threat from Iran was easing.

Khamenei's speech came a day after US President Donald Trump demanded "UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER" in a social media post and warned Khamenei that the US knows where he is but has no plans to kill him, "at least not for now."

Trump initially distanced himself from Israel's surprise attack on Friday that triggered the conflict, but in recent days has hinted at greater American involvement, saying he wants something "much bigger" than a ceasefire. The US has also sent more military aircraft and warships to the region. Khamenei dismissed the "threatening and absurd



Students and their family members board a plane at the Doha airport ahead of their return to India under an evacuation operation from Iran facilitated by the Government of India

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statements" by Trump.

"Wise individuals who know Iran, its people, and its history never speak to this nation with the language of threats, because the Iranian nation is not one to surrender," he said in the low-resolution video, his voice echoing. "Americans should know that any military involvement by the US will undoubtedly result in irreparable damage to them."

Iran followed a similar sequence in releasing Khamenei's statement before the video was aired, perhaps as a security measure. His location is not known and was impossible to discern from the tight shot that showed only beige curtains, an Iranian flag and a portrait of Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Khamenei's immediate predecessor who died in 1989.

An Iranian diplomat had earlier Wednesday warned that US intervention would risk "all-out war".

Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei did not elaborate, but thousands of American troops are based in nearby countries within range of Iran's weapons. The US has threatened a massive response to any attack.

Continued on >> P8

A juvenile attempt at reform lands in death in Delhi

VAISHNAVI MISHRA ■ New Delhi

A teenage inmate was allegedly beaten to death by two fellow inmates during a fight over bathing arrangements at a Juvenile home in north Delhi, police said on Wednesday. The minor deceased is a resident of south Delhi and was declared brought dead at Hindu Rao Hospital on Tuesday morning.

Both, victim and accused were earlier detained in an attempted murder case at the Hauz Khas Police Station.

As per the police, a Police Control Room (PCR) call was received from Hindu Rao Hospital at 9:46 am, which informed them about the victim's death. The body was preserved at the hospital's mortuary and later sent to Maulana Azad Medical College for post-mortem.



According to police, a medical board will conduct the autopsy and the procedure will be videographed.

Initial investigation revealed that the altercation broke out around 9:15 am in the wash-

room area of the Special Home for Boys (OHB-A), located on Magazine Road, Majnu Ka Tila. The victim had reportedly gotten into a quarrel with two other inmates, one from Sangam Vihar and another

from JJ Colony, Sawda. The argument escalated into a physical fight, during which the victim was allegedly beaten severely.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (North) Raja Banthia

said, "The incident took place inside the juvenile facility and that both accused juveniles were already in custody for serious offences. One of the accused was also detained under sections related to an attempted murder case registered at Hauz Khas Police Station, the same case for which the victim was lodged in the home. The second accused was facing charges under IPC section 302 (murder) and section 34 (common intention) in a case from Mundka police station.

Police have registered a case under section 103(1) and 3(5) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) at Timarpur Police Station and are conducting further investigations. Additionally, a judicial enquiry under section 196 of the BNSS has been initiated by the Judicial Magistrate First Class (JMFC), who has also been informed about the incident

along with the deceased's family.

The victim's family, devastated by the death of their son, has accused the juvenile home administration of serious negligence. According to the family, the boy was handed over to the police just over a month ago by his relatives in the hope that he would be reformed through the juvenile justice system. The family claims that he had gotten involved in a minor scuffle before and was on the run for some time. On May 13, hoping to steer him towards a better path, they helped him surrender to the police so that he could be rehabilitated at the juvenile home.

A family member of the victim said that they were first informed that the boy had fallen ill and was being treated at Hindu Rao Hospital.

Continued on >> P8

Punjab, Delhi, Odisha top performance index of schools

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Chandigarh, Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat and Odisha are among top performers in the 2023-24 Performing Grade Index that assesses school education at the district level, according to a report of the Ministry of Education.

Other top performing states and Union territories include Kerala, Daman and Diu, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, the report said.

Performance Grading Index for Districts (PGI-D) measures the performance of states and UTs in school education. Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL) has so far released PGI report for states and UTs for the years 2017-18 to 2021-22. Meghalaya has been adjudged as the lowest performing state in the latest report. Puducherry, Himachal Pradesh, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal are among the average performers as per the index.

"The PGI has been conceptualised as a tool to catalyse transformational change in the field of school education with an objective of assessment of the relative performance of all the districts in a uniform scale," a senior ministry official said.

The PGI-D structure comprises total weightage of 600 points across 74 indicators, which are grouped under six categories -- Outcomes, Effective Classroom Transaction, Infrastructure Facilities and Student Entitlements, School Safety and Child Protection, Digital Learning and Governance Process. Following the same approach of state PGI, districts are graded.

In PGI-D, the nomenclature for PGI scores is classified into various grades. Highest achievable grade in PGI-D is 'Utkarsh', which is for districts scoring more than 90 per cent of the total points in that category or overall. The category and overall scores are then reduced by an equal width of 10 per cent of total points in that category or overall points for arriving to the next grade.

Govt to promote ‘Y-Break’ protocol on Yoga Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Ahead of the International Yoga Day on June 21, the Uttar Pradesh government is set to integrate yoga into daily governance and office culture.

Acting on the guidance of the AYUSH Ministry, the state has directed all government offices to implement the ‘Y-Break’ Yoga Protocol. The initiative not only upholds India’s yogic heritage but also promotes a stress-free, healthier work environment by making yoga breaks a regular part of the daily routine. ‘Y-Break’ is a short-duration yoga session specially designed for office and desk workers. Lasting 5 to 10 minutes, it includes light movements targeting the neck, back and waist,

along with deep breathing and mindfulness exercises. Its goal is to reduce mental fatigue, release physical stiffness, refresh the mind, and restore focus and energy.

To promote yoga widely, the Government of India’s digital tools – such as the Namaste Yoga App, Y-Break App, Yoga Calendar and Yoga Glossary – will be used extensively. Awareness campaigns will be run to ensure these tools are actively adopted by employees and the public alike.

The state government also aims to foster a yoga culture at the grassroots level. To achieve this, non-governmental organisations will be engaged to connect yoga experts for conducting common yoga protocol (CYP) workshops and online training sessions.

12 Dalit and OBC girls from remote govt school crack NEET-UG, draw praises

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mirzapur

Twelve girls belonging to Dalit and OBC communities from a government residential school in the remote Marihan area of Uttar Pradesh’s Mirzapur district have cracked the NEET-UG examination this year, drawing praises from several quarters.

Many people hailed it as a “milestone” in the region’s progress.

According to officials, a total of 25 girls from Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in Marihan appeared for the NEET-UG exam, the results of which were declared on June 14.

Among them, Shweta Pal, Kumari Pooja Ranjan, Princi, Malti, Komal Kumari, Lakshmi, Anuradha, Komal, Laxmi, Sabhya Prajapati, Dipti Gupta and Pooja Sonkar cleared the test. All of them belonged to SC

(scheduled castes), ST (scheduled tribes) and OBC (other backward classes) communities.

Shweta Pal, one of the girls who were qualified, said she felt elated by the results.

“Our teachers and wardens ensured that we stayed focused on our studies. My Chemistry teacher Arvind sir and Biology teacher Sudhir sir were always available for help. Our school provided indoor and outdoor games facilities if we needed to refresh.” Shweta’s father Heera Lal also praised the school’s support system. “The school and hostel facilities were excellent. The teachers were cooperative and encouraging,” he said.

Ramesh Ranjan, father of another successful candidate, Pooja Ranjan, said his daughter was excited that she cleared the test in her first attempt. He said she previously studied at the Sarvodaya Vidyalaya in

Sonbhadra before shifting to Marihan for Classes 11 and 12.

“Pooja scored 81 per cent in the UP Board exams because she worked hard. She studied 16 to 18 hours a day —? six hours of school, five hours of coaching, and six to seven hours of self-study,” he added. The girls’ achievement have drawn the attention of higher-ups.

Uttar Pradesh’s Minister for Social Welfare (Independent Charge) Asim Arun congratulated the successful students. Terming the feat as a “brilliant success”, he wished them a bright future.

“Some years from now, these girls will become doctors and save people’s lives, make them healthy. We will ensure that there is no interruption in the scholarship of these girls,” he said in an X post on Tuesday.

Lauding the school for its efforts, District Magistrate Priyanka Niranjana said, “This is

a milestone for the area. Sarvodaya Vidyalaya of Marihan has proved to be an exemplary model for government schools. This is a residential school, the girls have been studying here for two or more years. In addition to regular schooling, they also attended coaching for NEET and JEE. Lodging, boarding and education — everything here was free.”

District Social Welfare Officer Trinetra Singh said, “Marihan Sarvodaya Vidyalaya was developed as a Centre of Excellence. Both the Deputy Director of Social Welfare and I kept a close watch on their grooming and coaching. We provided all required facilities — books, coaching, food, and indoor-outdoor games.” He said a total of 39 girls received free coaching for NEET and JEE at the centre. Of them, 26 students registered for NEET, 25 appeared and 12 qualified.

UP BJP Minority wing to make Muslims aware on caste census issue

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Bhharatiya Janata Party Minority Morcha on Wednesday said the party will soon launch a state-wide campaign to ensure accurate dissemination of information on the upcoming caste-based census, especially within the Muslim community.

It appealed to Muslims to provide their correct caste details while filling out the census forms and not to be misled by clerics or opposition leaders who are allegedly urging people to declare their religion instead of caste.

“We will soon launch a state-wide campaign to ensure accurate dissemination of information regarding the upcoming caste-based census, especially within the Muslim community,” UP BJP Minority Morcha president Kunwar Basit Ali Ali said, calling the move “historic and revolutionary”.

“Until now, Muslims have been listed merely as a religious group, which has hidden the deep social and economic diversity within the community. This caste census will reveal the real status of various Muslim castes and help in effective policy-making and delivering social justice.”

The BJP leader said certain headline religious leaders are trying to confuse Muslims by asking them to write ‘Islam’ in place of caste, which he said would defeat the very purpose of the exercise.

“This is caste census not religious census,” he said “Caste is part of culture, not religion.” Ali said urging Muslims to stand firm against any such misinformation campaigns.

He pointed out that around 85 per cent of the Muslim population in India comprises Pasmanda (backward and marginalised) communities, who stand to benefit significantly from the caste census data.

Ali accused opposition Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and Congress of historically misleading the Muslim community.

“But this time, Muslims have seen through their designs and are now rallying behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath,” he said.

Ali announced that the BJP Minority Morcha would ensure that correct information about the caste census reaches every household in the state.

He also said that there are plans to run a major digital campaign aimed at youth outreach, which would ignite a spirit of nationalism among Muslim youth.

“The enthusiasm among Muslims for this census will be clearly visible. The BJP is committed to the upliftment of all marginalised communities, and this is a major step toward inclusive development,” he added.

Sixteen years after the last census in 2011, the government on Monday issued a notification for conducting India’s 16th census which will include caste enumeration in 2027.

The Pioneer

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NOTICE

I Pradeep Kumar Jain S/O Mool Chand Jain I have Lost my original sale deed dated 06.06.2003 executed by smt.Rajeshwari Nigam wife of Late Sarvaman Nigam in favour of (1) Sri Ikrar Ahmad & (2) Sri Ishiyak Ahmad Sons of Sri Ikakh Ahmad Vide book No.1 Jild No.1472 on Pages 1 to 26 at SI.No.5935 dated 06.06.2003 duly registered at the office of Sub Registrar-V, Lucknow in respect house No.369/45,(Old No.369/144Ka) admeasuring 1600 sq.ft.s. i.e.148.698 mtrs only

NOTICE

I Have Changed My Name From Fareeduddin To Fareez Uddin S/o Alauddin For Future Purpose.Address- Village & Post Govindpur Goriyon Sirathu Kaushambi

SURNAME CORRECTION

I, Moirangthem Ashalata Devi (DOB 01-12-1987) W/o. Moirangthem Maimu Singh a resident of Sugnu, P.O. & P.S. Sugnu, District Kachhing, State Manipur Pin 795101 declare that my surname has been wrongly recorded as Mayanglbamb Ashalata Devi in my husband’s service record. It should be Moirangthem Ashalata Devi (DOB 01-12-1987) which is recorded in my Aadhaar card bearing No. 9709 6562 7773. Tse/711-31 Sd/- Moirangthem Ashalata Devi

NOTICE

I Shweta Kumari W/o Kamlesh Kumar 122/312 Shastri Nagar Kanpur – 208005 have changed my name to Shweta Valecha for all future purposes.

NOTICE

I ARUNA RANI DAS SPOUSE OF LATE RAMENDRA KUMAR DAS R/O 316-A , DURGA VIHAR , JAJMAU KANPUR HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM ARUNA RANI DAS TO ARUNA DAS VIDE AFFIDAVIT DTD 13-06-2025 AT KANPUR .

NOTICE

My correct name is Soni W/o Anil R/O- 35, Pahelwan purwa Nawabganj kanpur nagar which is mentioned Aadhar card pan card bank passbook Records by mistake LIC policy no. 234253439 my name is mentioned as Suman which is my household name In future I will be known Soni I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

NOTICE

My correct name is Priya Yadav D/o Ramesh Singh R/o Nabipur, Akbarpur Kanpur Dehat which is mentioned aadhar card pan card bank passbook all educational Records by mistake Lic policy no.233016285 my name is mentioned as Jyoti Yadav which is my household name In future I will be known Priya Yadav I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is hereby notified to the general public that the original Registered Sale Deeds executed in favour of Sri Subhash Pandey and Sri Atul Diwedi have been lost and the same could not be traced detailed as under: 1-Original Regd Sale Deed Sr No. 9703 dated 13/12/2018 executed in favour of Sri Subhash Pandey, 2-Original Regd Sale Deed Sr No. 4945 dated 14/05/2022 executed in favour of Atul Diwedi. The Sale Deeds mentioned above have been lost at the court compound Faizabad District Ayodhya on 31/05/2025. If any person finds the above mentioned documents or has any information regarding the same, They are requested to contact undersigned.

Smt Ramawati W/O Awadhesh R/O Duhwa Mishra, Post Sangrampur Tahsil Harraiya, District Basti U P

NOTICE

Notice- Sushil Kumar Kanodia, I Have Lost my Original Possession Letter of My H.N. A-2/18, Sector 3, Jawaharpuram, Kanpur Nagar Certificate No. D/613/310310 Zone-2 Registered Kanpur Development Authority

NOTICE

My correct name is Pinki w/o Satendra R/O-627/14, Maswanpur shivnagar kalyanpur kanpur nagar which is mentioned Aadhar card pan card bank passbook Records by mistake LIC policy no. 235422260 my name is mentioned as Kavita tiwari which is my household name In future I will be known pinki I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

NOTICE

Ratan Kumari and Ratan Kumar, both names are mine. In future, I should be known and identified only by the name Ratan Kumari, W/o Ex-JWO Mr. Dharendra Kumar Singh (248018), 109/335A Ram Krishna Nagar, Kanpur.

NOTICE

My correct name is Parmu S/o Mohan Lal R/O-91, Barimhaten kanpur nagar UP which is mentioned Aadhar card pan card bank passbook Records by mistake LIC policy no. 233544051 my name is mentioned as Aditya kumar which is my household name In future I will be known Parmu I have completed all legal formalities regarding the above by me

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Navratna Kumar Mishra S/o Janardan Prasad Mishra R/o Sarojani Nagar Nagar Palika Parishad, Maharajganj, District- Maharajganj Uttar Pradesh-273303 have changed the name of my minor son Parth Sarathi Pandey aged 14 years and he shall hereafter be known as Yuvan Ratna Mishra. PD(2285)C

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Unidentified miscreants stole goods worth about Rs 1 crore from the house of a petrol filling station owner in Jankipuram.

At the time of the incident, the family had gone to Bengaluru and the house was locked.

As per reports, Durgesh Kumar Mishra, a resident of Kharagpur Jagir, had gone to his sister’s house in Bengaluru with his family on May 28. He reached home late night on Tuesday and found the latch of the main door broken. However, the lock of the main door was functioning.

After opening the lock and going inside, he found the room’s lock broken and the contents scattered. Then he found jewellery, cash and expensive sarees missing from the house. He then informed the police about this.

Durgesh told police that his family and his brother Ram Manohar Mishra’s family live in the same house. “Our ancestral and new jewellery worth about one crore were kept in the house. About Rs 3 lakh in cash was kept which was also stolen. The thieves thoroughly searched the whole house. They also took away the precious sarees kept in the cupboard and other valuables kept in the room. They also ate chips kept in the kitchen and dry fruits kept in the fridge,” he said. He provided a list of items stolen to the police. The police said that a search for the thieves was being conducted with the

help of a CCTV installed nearby.

Meanwhile, unidentified miscreants stole a motor cycle owned by one Vijay Kumar from Vidhyak Niwas in Husinganj. The theft has been captured in the CCTV and the police are searching for the culprit.

SCHOLARSHIP SCAM ACCUSED HELD

A joint police team of Economic Offences Wing, Lucknow and Wazirganj police arrested a wanted accused, who along with his aides had embezzled scholarship money, to the tune of several crore, by preparing forged documents.

The accused arrested was identified as Dinesh Singh Yadav, of Ghazipur district.

Giving details of the arrest, DCP crime Kamlesh Dixit said the accused was being wanted for a long time. He said several of the accused involved in the scholarship scam had been arrested in the past but Dinesh had been absconding.

He said on the basis of written information of the then Acting Registrar, UP Homeopathic Medicine Board, Lucknow/Joint Secretary, Ayush Department, UP Government, Shailendra Kumar, a case was registered on July 30, 2022 for embezzlement of scholarship money by the accused by preparing forged documents. The DCP said on finding sufficient evidence against the accused Dinesh Singh Yadav in the above case, and in compliance of directions given by higher authorities for

immediate arrest, a joint team of Economic Offences Branch Lucknow and Wazirganj police was continuously raiding the possible locations of the accused for past some time.

He said the accused Dinesh was carrying a cash prize of Rs 5,000 and was nabbed on Tuesday evening. “During interrogation he owned his crime and he was arrested on Wednesday,” the police said.

FRAUDSTER ARRESTED

The Gomti Nagar police, on Wednesday, arrested a fraudster who had grabbed a plot of the Lucknow Development Authority by forging documents and had sold it. The accused, Satvir Singh of PGI police station area, was being hunted by the police for a long time.

Giving details of the arrested accused, DCP Crime Kamlesh Dixit said the action came in a case lodged on the complaint of Section Officer, LDA Ashok Kumar Saxena on May 2. It was alleged that the accused had grabbed the plot (number E-104 at Transport Nagar Yojana Lucknow) by preparing fake documents and executing a fake sale deed of the above said plot.

On Tuesday, the police was tipped off about the miscreant who was near Dayal Crossing. A team raided the place and nabbed him. The accused confessed to his crime and said he had usurped several plots or LDA and sold many of them. The police are finding details of his crime of fraudulent sale of LDA plots.

Two arrested for raping minor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Madheganj police, on Wednesday, arrested two youths who raped a minor girl after giving her soft drinks laced with intoxicants and then threatened to make her video viral if she spoke to the police.

The girl, on Wednesday, filed a complaint against the accused she identified as Samar (20) of Madheganj and Lucky Ali (22) of Yahiyaganj.

She alleged that both entered her house when she was all alone and made her consume soft drink laced with intoxicants, and then made physical relations with her.

She further alleged that the accused filmed their act and threatened to make the video viral if she complained to the police. The accused also had asked her to meet them for physical relations in future or they would make the video viral. The victim also named two other youths in her complaint. A police spokesman said two accused were arrested on Wednesday on the basis of evidence collected during investigation of the case. He said the accused were arrested near Kudia Ghat on the information of an informer.

Both the accused confessed to their crime during police interrogation.

NR DRM inspects Lko stn

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Northern Railway’s Lucknow Divisional Railway Manager Sunil Kumar Verma inspected the loco pilot, guard and TTE running rooms at Lucknow station on Wednesday. During the inspection, the DRM thoroughly inspected the facilities available for the running staff and reviewed the cleanliness and maintenance of the premises, kitchen waste and garbage management.

He also interacted with the employees present there and listened to their problems and suggestions. He also inspected the station building under construction towards the second entrance.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Skill Development Mission (UPSDM) is steadily gaining global recognition.

In a significant endorsement, India’s Ambassador to Suriname, Subhash P. Gupta, visited the UPSDM headquarters in Lucknow on Wednesday.

He praised the state’s robust training ecosystem — particularly its emphasis on technical, linguistic, and soft skills — highlighting its alignment with international standards.

Ambassador Gupta noted that youth from Uttar Pradesh

are increasingly making their mark on the global stage, especially in Suriname’s growing oil and gas sector. He also recommended leveraging virtual platforms to enhance accessibility, flexibility, and inclusivity in skill training by bridging the gap between trainers and trainees.

Pulkit Khare, Director of UPSDM, emphasised that the government’s policy is focused on equipping the youth not only for domestic employment, but also to meet global market demands. He emphasised that the training curriculum places equal importance on soft skills, including communication, professional behaviour, language proficiency, and resumé development, alongside technical education.

Additional Mission Director Priya Singh added that UPSDM is continuously updating its training modules in response to evolving industry needs, ensuring that youth receive not just training but also direct employment opportunities. Joint Director Mayank Gangwar presented an overview of the mission’s achievements and future plans, reiterating the state government’s vision to position Uttar Pradesh as a ‘Global Skill Capital’.

Criminal nabbed after encounter

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

A hard core criminal involved in cases of chain and purse snatching incidents in the city was arrested in a police encounter in Alambagh in the wee hours on Wednesday.

The accused, identified as Aneesh of Sadatganj, was externed from Lucknow following the long list of crime cases against him but he still was active. Giving details of the encounter, DCP Central Ashish Srivastava said the encounter took place between the police and the arrested accused and his aide in the Alambagh police station area of Lucknow on Wednesday morning.

“When the police signalled the bike-riding miscreants to stop, they started firing. The

police laid siege of the locality following this and in retaliation, one of the miscreant was shot in the leg by the police and arrested. He was identified as history-sheeter and district-banned criminal Aneesh. He was admitted to the hospital for treatment. As many as 22 cases are registered against him. His partner in crime fled taking advantage of darkness and the police is searching for him,” the DCP said.

He said the Alambagh police team received information from an informer that two suspicious people were going on a bike from Langra Phatak via TN Bajpai Chowk to Mawaiya.

On interrogation, the accused identified himself as Aneesh, of Wazirbagh Shahi Badi Masjid locality in Sadatganj

A pistol, two cartridges, a bike,

a mobile and Rs 600 which is part of looted money as per his confession, were recovered from him. The accused was involved in the robbery which took place near Alambagh bus stand recently.

To recall, one Sarvesh, of Farrukhabad, had reached Charbagh station along with his wife Anuradha on June 6 at around 11 pm by Sabarmati Express from Ayodhya. The couple later were going to Krishnanagar by e-rickshaw from the railway station when near the Alambagh bus stand, the accused and his aide, riding a black colour bike, looted Anuradha’s purse. During this, Anuradha fell from the e-rickshaw and had got injured. Her purse contained Rs 11,000, a gold chain, earrings and house keys.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR MUNICIPAL CORPORATION, CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR E-Tender Notice 2025-2026 (II Call)

E-Tender in B-1 form for the following work invited by Municipal Administrator, Municipal Corporation, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar (Phone No. 0240 233536-40) from Government Registered Contractors / Companies / Firms of Appropriate Category.

Sr. No.	Name of Work	Tender Amount Rs.
1	Construction of Concrete Road From C.A. Association Office to Shreyash College	10,86,37,869/-

Details regarding the tender for the said works will be available on <http://mahatenders.gov.in> From. dt18/06/2025. Administrator, Municipal Corporation, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar reserves all the rights to reject / cancel any or all tenders without assigning any reason.

Signed by
Khan Abdul Farooq Mahmood Khan
Date: 17-06-2025
City Engineer CSMC,
Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

जा. क्र. ममपा। उप.अभी। ड्रोन क्र.०८।५९।२०२५

उत्तर प्रदेश आवास एवं विकास परिषद

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, रुहेलखण्ड वृत्त, ऑफिस कॉम्प्लेक्स, भूतल, सेक्टर-5, मझौला योजना सं0-4, भाग-2, मुरादाबाद

E-mail: circle5@upavp.com

IS 15700:2018

भारत

पत्रांक: 956 / एम-15ए / 68

दिनांक: 18.06.2025

कार्यालय अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, रुहेलखण्ड वृत्त, उ0प्र0 आवास एवं विकास परिषद, मुरादाबाद

ई-निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना विज्ञापित

उ0प्र0 आवास एवं विकास परिषद की ओर से इस कार्यालय के ई-निविदा आमन्त्रण सूचना सं0-955/एम-15ए/67 दिनांक 18.06.2025 द्वारा परिषद में पंजीकृत एवं अनुभवी ठेकेदारों/फर्मों से टू-बिड पद्धति पर परिषद परियोजना, अवस्थापना निधि एवं डिपॉजिट कार्य के अन्तर्गत अधिशासी अभियन्ता, नि0खं0, रुहेलखण्ड-01, मुरादाबाद के अन्तर्गत अवस्थापना निधि के अन्तर्गत जनपद-बिजनौर में परिषद की रावली रोड योजना, बिजनौर की 6.00 मी0, 9.00 मी0 चौड़ी सड़कों के सुदृढीकरण एवं नालियों की मरम्मत कार्य हेतु दिनांक 22.07.2025 अपरान्ह 05:00 बजे तक ई-टेंडर के अन्तर्गत निविदाएं वेबसाइट <https://etender.up.nic.in> के माध्यम से कार्यालय अधिशासी अभियन्ता, निर्माण खण्ड, रुहेलखण्ड-01, उ0प्र0 आवास एवं विकास परिषद, मुरादाबाद में आमंत्रित की जाती हैं:- अन्य नियम व शर्तें किसी भी कार्यदिवस में अधिशासी अभियन्ता, निर्माण खण्ड, रुहेलखण्ड-01, मुरादाबाद एवं अधीक्षण अभियन्ता, रुहेलखण्ड वृत्त, मुरादाबाद कार्यालय अथवा परिषद की वेबसाइट www.upavp.in से देखी जा सकती हैं।

(हं0 महेन्द्र कुमार)

अधीक्षण अभियन्ता

5 of a family die in road crash



Charred remains of a car being removed after it caught fire following a collision in Bulandshahr on Wednesday. PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Bulandshahr/Agra

Five members of a family returning to Delhi from a wedding in Budaun died while one was injured following a road crash in Bulandshahr district of western Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday morning, police said.

The car hit a culvert on the road, overturned and caught fire which the police said happened because the driver was drowsy.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Tejveer Singh said the incident took place around 5.30 am near Janipur village.

He said the police were alerted that a car had crashed and caught fire. Immediately local police and fire brigade rushed to the site and started rescue-relief works.

“One injured person, identified as Gulnaz (28), was pulled out and taken to the Community Health Centre (CHC) while five other people on board the car were dead,” Singh said. The police identified those killed as Zubair (28), Tanveez (26), Momina (24), Zainul (2) and Zeba alias Nida (23). “Initial probe revealed that all six people had gone to Budaun district for a wedding and were returning from there to Malviya Nagar in Delhi. The driver of the car was

drowsy in the morning hours and the vehicle went out of control, hit a culvert and overturned. Eventually it caught fire,” the Additional SP said.

The bodies have been sent for postmortem and further legal proceedings are underway, Singh added.

Meanwhile, another tragic accident took place on Shahdara flyover of Thana Trans area of Agra. On Wednesday morning, a vehicle carrying mangoes in Max from Lucknow suddenly went out of control after the driver could not handle it. The vehicle collided with the divider and overturned in which three people who had come out for a walk early in the morning on the side of the highway were crushed. At the same time, the driver was also killed while the cleaner was seriously injured. Seeing the accident, a crowd of people gathered on the spot. As soon as the information was received, the police also reached the spot. By the time the seriously injured were sent to hospital for treatment, all the three morning walkers succumbed along with the driver.

Eyewitnesses said that the speed of the Max car was very high. After hitting the divider, the car overturned so fast that the victims did not get a chance to save themselves.

In the accident, 65-year-old Rajesh, 60-year-old Rameshwar

and 63-year-old Haribabu, resident of Shahdara, and the driver Krishna died. The cleaner of the car is seriously injured, who has been sent to SN Hospital for treatment.

Reports said that agitated with the incident, local people tried to block the road, but the police officers pacified them. ACP Hemant Kumar said that they registered a case and made further investigation.

Bus rams into stationary truck at toll on Lucknow-Agra Expressway, 2 killed

Meanwhile, in Agra, two passengers were killed and another 15 injured after a bus hit a stationary truck at a toll plaza on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway here on Wednesday, police said.

The bus, which was travelling from Delhi to Bihar, crashed into the rear of a parked truck around 1 AM near the Fatehabad Toll Plaza.

The impact of the collision left two passengers dead on the spot. Their identities have not yet been confirmed, according to the police.

Assistant Commissioner of Police Aman Deep said, “We received information about the incident late at night and police immediately reached the scene. All the injured passengers have been admitted to the hospital. The bodies of the deceased have been sent for post-mortem.”

Swiss-tech to add comfort on Gkp E-way

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Lucknow

The Gorakhpur Link Expressway will not just enhance connectivity and alleviate traffic congestion in Eastern Uttar Pradesh, it has brought world-class standards in ride quality and comfort. This has been validated through advanced testing conducted using state-of-the-art technology and equipment from ETH University, Zurich, Switzerland.

Building on this success, the same Swiss technology is now being utilised in the construction of the six-lane Ganga Expressway. It will also soon be deployed to enhance the riding quality of the Bundelkhand Expressway, Agra-Lucknow Expressway and Purvanchal Expressway.

In a pioneering move, the Uttar Pradesh Expressway Industrial development Authority (UPEIDA) has initiated a comprehensive assessment and improvement drive for expressway riding comfort. This involves cutting-edge vibration and artificial intelligence-based technologies developed by ETH Zurich and its independent spin-off company, RTDT Laboratory AG.

For this purpose, seven high-precision sensors – four for assessing riding quality and three for monitoring motion – were installed in an Innova vehicle. These include accelerometer-based and S-motion sensors, as well as advanced equipment for data collection and analysis.

The UPEIDA has set a goal to inspect and improve the riding experience of every lane on all major expressways in the state using this technology.



oped by ETH Zurich and its independent spin-off company, RTDT Laboratory AG.

Following the construction of the Gorakhpur Link Expressway, all four lanes underwent detailed testing, and based on the findings, targeted improvements were implemented to achieve world-class riding standards.

This innovative approach is now being applied in the construction of the Ganga Expressway. It will be extended to other key expressways across Uttar Pradesh, reaffirming UPEIDA's commitment to delivering safe, smooth, and high-quality road infrastructure. Meanwhile, Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the Gorakhpur Link Expressway on Friday, with twin ceremonies in Azamgarh and Gorakhpur.

In a symbolic tribute to the spirit of ‘Shramev Jayate’ (Labour Triumphs), the chief minister will honour the workers whose tireless efforts made the expressway a reality by joining them for group photographs at both venues.

The Gorakhpur Link Expressway is set to offer more than just speed and connectivity. It will also ensure comprehensive road and commuter safety. Plans are also underway to implement an Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS), similar to the one on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway, for continuous surveillance and enforcement.

The safety fleet will include five Innovas, five Campers, four ambulances, two cranes and one hydra vehicle. The Innovas will patrol the expressway round-the-clock in 8-hour shifts, with each vehicle manned by four ex-service-men. The camper vehicles, open at the rear, will be equipped with traffic cones,

ropes, and radium strips. In case of accidents or breakdowns, these vehicles will be deployed immediately to secure the area, preventing inconvenience or danger to other commuters. Along the 91-km expressway, ambulances will be stationed every 45 km – on both sides of the road – to ensure quick medical response. Cranes will also be positioned every 45 km, along with one hydra vehicle to cover the entire stretch. In case of vehicle failure, small and medium vehicles will be moved using cranes, and large vehicles will be shifted via the nearest chainage point. As per NHAI guidelines, no broken-down vehicle is allowed to remain on the expressway.

In the coming days, ATMS will be implemented to strengthen road safety. The system includes the installation of CCTV cameras every 5 km, monitored from a central control room. It will also involve speed cameras and number plate readers (NPRs) to detect and report violations. Any instance of speeding will be automatically flagged to the respective district's ARTO for swift action.

Jayant praises UP's law, order

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Baghpat

Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) president Jayant Chaudhary on Wednesday praised the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh, saying the people trust CM Yogi Adityanath more than Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav on the matter.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of an event in Khekra, Baghpat, Chaudhary commented, “The people re-elected Yogi Adityanath as chief minister because he prioritised law and order. The chief minister is serious and sensitive about this issue.”

“If you put Akhilesh Yadav's face on one side and Yogi ji's face on the other and ask people, you'll see whom the public trusts more. There's a reason why the government has been elected repeatedly. The biggest reason is the improvement in security,”

Monsoon officially arrives in UP; heavy rains expected

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Lucknow

The Southwest Monsoon officially entered the southern areas of Uttar Pradesh on Wednesday, arriving five days later than its usual date of June 13, MeT officials said.

According to the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), the monsoon brought light to moderate rains in various districts, including Sonbhadra, Ballia, Mau and Ghazipur.

The forecast predicts favourable conditions over the next two to three days for the Southwest Monsoon to further advance into additional parts of Uttar Pradesh. “A well-marked low-pressure area, currently



situated near Gangetic West Bengal, is expected to move in a west-northwesterly direction over the coming days. This weather system is projected to significantly increase rainfall in Uttar Pradesh from June 19, bringing widespread thunderstorms and lightning,” IMD scientist Atul Kumar Singh. “There is a strong possibility of isolated to very heavy rainfall

occurring between June 19 and June 22 in many parts of the state,” Singh cautioned.

The monsoon, expected to cover the state by June 30, marks its expansion into parts of the northern Arabian Sea, the remaining areas of Gujarat, sections of Rajasthan, additional regions of Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, the rest of Jharkhand, and further areas of

Bihar. The onset of monsoon in the state brought some much-needed relief on Wednesday from the parched and hot weather conditions, with temperature in most parts hovering above the 40-degree Celsius mark. Meanwhile, the state government has advised residents to exercise caution as the arrival of the monsoon typically leads to an increase in the frequency and intensity of lightning strikes. The meteorological department has also warned of potential damage to dilapidated buildings, kutcha houses, and huts due to heavy rain and lightning. The district administration has been advised to make preparations and remain on alert given the recent weather forecast, relief department officials said.



President Droupadi Murmu with Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a meeting at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi. PTI

CM assures full medical aid for serious illnesses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Gorakhpur

During his visit to Gorakhpur on Wednesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a Janata Darshan at Gorakhnath temple, where he assured full government support for treatment of serious illnesses.

He directed officials to promptly process cost estimates for patients who do not have Ayushman health cards and ensure swift aid to them through the Chief Minister's Discretionary Fund.

He emphasised that the government would ensure treatment at the best available hospitals.

Due to the ongoing monsoon, the Janata Darshan was held at the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan

auditorium within the Gorakhnath temple complex. The chief minister met around 200 people, patiently heard their grievances, and handed over their applications to officials with clear instructions for timely resolution.

Reassuring the public, he said no genuine concern would go unaddressed and directed officials to act with empathy, seriousness and accountability to prevent any hardship due to administrative lapses.

Highlighting the need for a compassionate approach, the chief minister said that every victim must be treated with sensitivity, their issues resolved effectively, and they should leave with a sense of satisfaction.

Taking a firm stand against unlawful activities, the chief minister directed strict legal action against land encroach-

ers and those involved in bullying or intimidation. For family disputes, he stressed the importance of resolving issues through dialogue and mutual understanding.

As in previous Janata Darshan sessions, many people sought help for treatment of serious illnesses. The chief minister enquired about their Ayushman Bharat cards and assured them that lack of funds would not delay health care, and they would be extended support from the Chief Minister's Discretionary Fund. Offering reassurance to a woman, he said, “Get an estimate from the doctor, the government will ensure you receive financial aid for treatment.”

The chief minister also directed officials to ensure that every eligible person is issued an Ayushman card without delay.

UP advocates strengthening of disaster mgmt framework

Lucknow: The Uttar Pradesh government is making rapid strides toward enhancing the effectiveness of its disaster management strategy. In a significant move, the state has submitted a series of vital proposals to the 16th Finance Commission aimed at fortifying disaster response and mitigation mechanisms.

Key among these proposals is the request to revise the rules governing the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and the State Disaster Mitigation Fund (SDMF) to ensure faster and more effective relief for disaster-affected citizens. The government has strongly advocated for the inclusion of state-notified disasters – such as heat waves, lightning strikes, unseasonal rains, storms, snakebites and drowning – in the national list of recognised disasters.

This push stems from the reality that these incidents dis-

proportionately impact Uttar Pradesh. For instance, in the financial year 2024-25, 4,534 deaths were reported due to state-notified disasters, compared to 176 from nationally recognised ones.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has personally taken the lead in urging the Central government to acknowledge the severity of these challenges and to extend appropriate support. In line with this, the state has proposed increasing the permissible expenditure limit for state-notified disasters from 10 per cent to 25 per cent, reflecting the scale and intensity of their impact. Another notable recommendation seeks to allow flexibility in fund allocation by permitting inter-head budget transfers within disaster funds. This would ensure optimal utilisation of resources, especially in cases where certain allocations remain unspent.

Additionally, the state has requested approval to construct dedicated buildings for District Disaster Management Authorities in every district – a move currently not permitted under existing SDRF and SDMF guidelines. A demand has also been made to allocate 1 per cent of the fund for administrative expenses, which would support the creation of a more robust and responsive administrative framework for disaster management. These proposals are driven by the vision of making disaster management more flexible, efficient and people-centric. Uttar Pradesh has already made significant progress in disaster preparedness. With the approval and implementation of these recommendations, the state is poised to become a model for disaster management nationwide, ensuring the safety and well-being of millions of its citizens. PNS

Maya: Nothing unusual in police recruitment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Lucknow

Bahujan Samaj Party chief and former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Mayawati reacted to the 60,244 police recruitment that took place recently in UP. In two consecutive X-posts, she alleged that the way the government is publicising the recruitment, it seems that this is something new.

Mayawati targeted the ruling BJP government by posting two posts one after the other on Tuesday. She wrote, “The recent constable recruitment in UP was publicised as if it was something new, whereas such recruitment in the police is a routine work, so that the evil of backlog does not come to the police department as well. But did the entire society get its right in this recruitment or not and what about their training?

This is the common concern.”

In her second post, Mayawati recalled her government's tenure. She wrote, “While in my BSP government, police recruitment was made with full honesty by creating 1.20 lakh new posts in one go to establish a justice-oriented environment of ‘rule of law by law’ in UP, the benefit of which was received by people of all sections of the society without any discrimination, which is now lacking a lot.”

This statement of Mayawati is being considered a direct attack on the current law and order and police recruitment process of the state. She clearly said that in her government, police recruitment was done on the basis of transparency and merit and all sections used to benefit from it. Recently, in Lucknow, Home Minister Amit Shah had distributed appointment letters to the selected candidates of UP Police.

IDFC FIRST Bank Limited
(erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)
CIN : L65110TN2014PLC097792
Registered Office : - KRM Towers, 8th Floor, Harrington Road, Chetpet, Chennai- 600031.
Tel : +91 44 4564 4000 | Fax: +91 44 4564 4022

**APPENDIX IV [Rule 8(1)]
POSSESSION NOTICE
(For immovable property)**

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited) under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 29.01.2025 calling upon the borrower, co-borrowers and guarantors **1. UMA SHANKAR RAM AUTAR, 2. MAYA DEVI**, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 24,28,884.32/- (Rupees Twenty Four Lac Twenty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Four and Thirty Two Paise Only)** as on **28.01.2025 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said Demand Notice**.

The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub – section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this **12th day of JUNE 2025**. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of **THE IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)** for an amount of **Rs. 24,28,884.32/- (Rupees Twenty Four Lac Twenty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Eighty Four and Thirty Two Paise Only)** and interest thereon.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub – Section (8) Of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

DESCRIPTION OF MORTGAGE PROPERTY	
ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF HOUSE NO. 448/119/50, ADMEASURING 1000 SQ. FT., I.E. 92.936 SQ. MTRS., ON PART OF LAND KHASRA NO. 796 KA AND 797KA, SITUATED AT NAGARIYA, KALYANPURI, THAKURGANA, WARD MALLAHI TOLA, LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH-226003, AND, BOUNDED AS: EAST: HOUSE OF MAHESH CHANDRA SHARMA, WEST: HOUSE OF SUDAMA MISHRA, NORTH: 8 FT. WIDE ROAD, SOUTH: HOUSE OF SHAMBHU KASHYAP	
Date: 12-06-2025 Place: UTTAR PRADESH Loan Account No: 106567201	Authorised Officer IDFC FIRST Bank Limited (erstwhile Capital First Limited and amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited)

Preparations for Shravan begin at Kashi Vishwanath Corridor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Varanasi

Preparations have started at the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor (KVC) for the upcoming auspicious Shravan month, when lakhs of devotees and saffron-clad kanwariyas are expected to visit this one of the Dwadasa (12) Jyotirlingas. Efforts in this direction have intensified, especially after the recent visit of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who clearly told the officers during his stay at KVC premises that the state government was fully committed to providing smooth *darshan* and security to Shiva devotees at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham (KVC). This auspicious Shravan month as per Hindu calendar will start from July 11 and end on August 9. It is expected that all the four Mondays falling during the



month. will witness huge crowds. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Nyas Parishad Vishwa Bhushan Mishra said that it was decided in the meeting that on every Monday of Shravan, Godowlia to Maidagin would be converted into a no-vehicle zone. "The temple administration will operate e-rickshaws for the elderly, Divyangjan visitors etc

coming to visit the KVC from Godowlia and Maidagin to Gate Number 4. He said that the entire corridor area would be equipped with CCTV cameras and a control room would be set up. "All arrangements, including the security of the devotees, will be closely monitored. The work of reducing the crowd will be done by barricading both outside and inside areas so that the situation of extra crowd can be

controlled and additional sheds are being installed to protect the devotees from rain, sun and heat", he said. To further improve the convenience of the visitors, he said that live telecast of the *darshan puja* of the sanctum sanctorum would be done by installing LED TVs at various places. He said that a lost and found centre would be set up in the KVC, in which there would also be a provision of multilingual personnel. The duty of medical personnel would be ensured in the KVC so that in case of any emergency, proper medical treatment can be provided on time. Many water coolers have already been installed to provide cool and pure drinking water in the entire dham. Along with this, proper arrangements for toilets etc were already in place, he added.

NCL organising massive awareness campaign to promote yoga

CORRESPONDENT ■ Sonbhadra

Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the International Day of Yoga has emerged as a global movement. Northern Coalfields Limited (NCL), a Singrauli-based Miniratna Company under the Ministry of Coal, is organising a massive awareness campaign promote yoga and its health benefits in the local community. The campaign is in view of International Yoga Day 2025, which is celebrated on June 21 every year. This year's Yoga Day is themed "One Earth, One Health," reflecting the growing understanding that human health is closely connected to the health of our planet. NCL plans to connect nearly 25,000 people through its initiatives,



spreading the message of yoga's physical, mental and spiritual significance. NCL aims to inspire people toward physical well-being, mental peace and a strong connection with nature and their community. Through these initiatives, the company also plans to make yoga a sustainable practice within its workplace and to foster ongoing health initiatives for its employees, their families and the surrounding stakeholders. NCL's campaign resonates with the ongoing global yoga move-

ment, reflecting the growing understanding that yoga can aid in reducing lifestyle disorders, strengthening community bonds and conserving nature's resources. NCL's campaigns and programmes reflect its deep-rooted understanding that a healthy community forms the basis for a healthy nation and a healthy world. This year's Yoga Day is not just a celebration, but a powerful opportunity to unite in promoting well-being for all - for One Earth, One Health.

NCL's extensive awareness drive includes a range of community-oriented programmes: **Yoga awareness rallies** - to bring yoga's benefits to every corner of the community including all employees, contractual workers, students and surrounding stakeholders. **Essay writing and poster making competitions** - to enable local children and youth of Singrauli region to creatively reflect on yoga's role in health and well-being. **Public yoga sessions** - following the Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) for all, including children and senior citizens. **Workshops in schools and colleges** - designed to foster a habit of yoga from a young age. On the International Yoga Day over 10,000 people will participate in yoga session across the company in all its areas and units.



CRPF personnel, others practicing yoga at Namo Ghat in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Yoga performed at Namo Ghat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Varanasi/ Prayagraj

The members of Govardhan Puja Samiti and Namo Govardhan Morning Team along with 95 Battalion CRPF personnel and more than 400 people did yoga in the rain under the Yoga protocol by the Union Ministry of AYUSH at Namo Ghat here on the fourth day of the 11th International Yoga Day Week on Wednesday. The objective of the programme was to give the message to the general public to connect with yoga and stay healthy. "Yoga and Ayurveda are our ancient heritage, the more we stay in touch with it, the more it will be beneficial for our family and society and we will remain physically and mentally healthy, therefore we all should do yoga and walking for at least one hour daily to keep our health healthy", he

said. CRPF's Second Command Officer Alok Kumar, Deputy Commandant Navneet Kumar and Yoga Guru Sushil Gupta were honoured by being presented *angavastram*. Govardhan Pooja Committee office-bearers also honoured Commandant RS Balapurkar by giving him a memento. The yoga practitioners present there were also presented yoga T-shirts by the CRPF. At the end of the programme, Balapurkar proposed the vote of thanks. Meanwhile, Prayagraj is gearing up to host the 11th International Yoga Day on June 21, the main event of which will be held on the banks of the Triveni Sangam. The programme is scheduled to start at 5:30 am and Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya will attend as the chief guest. Over 10,000 people are expected to participate in the

mass yoga session. Four ambulances and medical teams will be present. The Public Works Department (PWD) will arrange the stage, carpet, sound system and LED screen to facilitate a smooth and engaging experience. The Jalkal Department and Parag Dairy will provide water and glasses. Regional Ayurvedic and Unani Officer Dr Manoj Kumar Singh said Triveni Sangam was considered one of the holiest places in Hinduism, where the convergence of the three rivers was believed to amplify spiritual energy. This year's event promises to be a grand celebration of yoga and spirituality, building on the success of previous years. Last year, the main event was held at the Scouts and Guide ground in Mumfordganj, and this year's event at Triveni Sangam is expected to draw an even bigger crowd.

Varanasi given target of planting more than 16.97 lakh saplings

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Varanasi

A joint meeting of District Tree Plantation Committee, District Environment Committee and District Ganga Committee was held in the Collectorate Auditorium here on Tuesday under the chairmanship of District Magistrate Satyendra Kumar. A target of planting 16,97,520 saplings has been allotted to Varanasi district for tree plantation in the rainy season. Divisional Forest Officer Swati informed that currently more than 30 lakh saplings are available in the nursery.



DM Satyendra Kumar presiding over a meeting on plantation in Varanasi

While discussing the plantation to be done in the district, the district magistrate directed that all the departments should immediately provide details of the sapling demand letter to the Forest Department office as per their respective targets. In the

sapling demand letter, the species of trees to be planted must be selected. He appealed to all the departments to plant a tree in the name of the mother under 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign. The district magistrate also directed that all

government employees of the district should plant at least one sapling and also, all the students studying in basic and secondary education schools should plant one fruit sapling each in their homes. Along with community plantation in the district, he directed to encourage individual plantation by giving fruit saplings to the farmers individually. He said that this would ensure the survival of maximum number of trees. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Swati and other departmental officers were prominently present in the meeting.

CORE organises yoga camp

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Prayagraj

The Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE) on Wednesday organised a yoga camp as part of the ongoing celebrations ahead of the 11th International Yoga Day. The camp, held at Triveni Vihar, Railway Colony, brought together railway officers, employees and their families to promote holistic health and well-being through yoga. Sanjay Pandey led the yoga sessions, demonstrating various postures and emphasising the scientific benefits of each. The event saw active participation of Deputy General Manager/Chief



Public Relations Officer Kalyan Singh, Deputy Chief Vigilance Officer Saurabh Mishra, Deputy Chief Signal and Telecommunication Engineer Pradeep Tiwari, Deputy General Manager (Law) PK Singh, Senior Law

Officer/Senior Personnel Officer SN Shrivastava and Public Relations Officer/Assistant Secretary Vimal Kumar and others. The yoga camp aimed to promote physical and mental well-being among partici-

pants, aligning with the broader objectives of International Yoga Day. By incorporating yoga into their daily routines, participants can potentially improve their health, reduce stress and enhance their overall quality of life. Pandey said that yoga was an ancient practice that combines physical postures, breathing techniques and meditation to promote holistic health. Regular yoga practice can help manage chronic illnesses, improve mental clarity and enhance spiritual growth. The Ministry of Ayush and various yoga gurus have emphasised the importance of incorporating yoga into daily life for overall well-being.

PCMO of BLW honoured



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Varanasi

Under the aegis of Ministry of Railways, Kamalapati Tripathi Rajbhasha Gold Medal and Railway Minister Rajbhasha Silver Medal Award distribution ceremony was organised under the chairmanship of Railway Board Member (Operations and Business Development) Hitendra Malhotra at Rail Bhavan in New Delhi on Tuesday. The awards were given for the excellent and commendable contribution made in the field of Rajbhasha implementation in the base year 2023 to the officers related to

Railway/ production unit/ institution/ undertaking. In this ceremony, Principal Chief Medical Officer (PCMO) of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) Dr Devesh Kumar was honoured with the Railway Minister Rajbhasha Silver Medal and a citation by Railway Board Member (Operations and Business Development) Hitendra Malhotra, for playing a commendable role in the promotion of the Rajbhasha Policy of the Government of India during the base year 2023 and for doing most of his work in Hindi and for encouraging subordinate officers and employees to do government work in the Rajbhasha of the Union, Hindi.

Road accident claims two lives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Kanpur

High speed and negligence once again caused a major accident in Purva Kotwali police station area of Unnao. Two people died in the accident, while many others were seriously injured. As per reports, a fierce collision took place between a dumper, tractor-trolley, bike and e-rickshaw near Billeshwar temple on Wednesday. The high speed dumper first hit the tractor-trolley moving ahead. After hitting the tractor-trolley, the dumper went out of control and ramed into the motorcycle coming from the front. The motorcycle riders were Ashish, his wife Mamta and their son Anshuman. They fell on the road due to the collision with the dumper. Meanwhile, an e-rickshaw passing by, in which six passengers were sitting, also came under the dumper's grip. On getting information about the accident sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) Pramesh Srivastava, circle officer (CO) Ajay Singh and Naib Tehsildar Ashutosh Pandey immediately reached the spot with a heavy police force. The

SDM and CO immediately started relief and rescue work and sent all the injured to the Community Health Centre (CHC). The doctors at CHC declared the motorcycle rider Ashish of Poorandas Kheda under Purva police station, dead. His wife Mamta, who was seriously injured, was undergoing treatment. Their son, Anshuman, who was injured in the accident, died during treatment and e-rickshaw driver Aman Awasthi was referred to the district hospital after first aid. The other people riding in the e-rickshaw also received minor injuries and were being treated at the CHC. After the accident, the tractor-trolley and the dumper drivers fled from the spot. The police have taken both the vehicles into possession and have started searching for the absconding drivers. Purva Kotwali in charge Amarnath Singh said that prima facie the case appeared to be of speeding and negligence. **Faculty Development Programme** Gignaat, a pioneering force in AI education and innovation, has announced the successful kick-off of its transfor-

mative Faculty Development Programme (FDP) on AI Agents at CSJMU. This landmark collaboration marks a significant stride towards empowering educators and fostering a new generation of AI-driven innovators, aligning seamlessly with the vision of a self-reliant India championed by PM Narendra Modi. The inaugural session, held at CSJMU, was met with overwhelming enthusiasm, underscoring the urgent need and immense potential for AI integration within the academic landscape. The programme is designed to equip faculty with cutting-edge knowledge and practical skills in AI Agents, prompt engineering, and visual programming, preparing them to lead the charge in an AI-powered future of learning. "We are grateful to Vice-Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak for his visionary leadership and unwavering belief in Gignaat's mission," said Yogesh Huja, Founder of Gignaat. "His commitment to fostering innovation and embracing the future of education has made this collaboration possible. This FDP is not just about teaching AI; it's about cultivating a mindset of innovation and

self-reliance, echoing the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' initiative." "We foresee a future where the incubation centre of CSJMU will be brimming with innovators, driven by the knowledge and skills gained from this programme," added Yogesh Huja. "Once this programme reaches the students in July, we anticipate a surge in creative solutions and entrepreneurial ventures, further solidifying India's position as a global leader in AI", he said. The inaugural session was chaired by Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir K Awasthi. He mentioned the use of AI in the specific disciplinary domains but he also talked about ethical considerations around use of AI in higher education. Dr Alok Kumar, Director UIET, Dr Sandesh Gupta, Head CSE department, Dr Anshu Singh are the convenor of this programme that will run in two batches for the faculty members of CSJMU. **Summer cricket camp** A seven-day summer cricket camp is being organised at The Sports Hub (TSH) located in Arya Nagar, where former Indian cricket team star spinner Piyush Chawla will provide special coaching.

IIT-BHU awarded ₹55 cr competitive research grant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Varanasi

The Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF), Government of India, has selected IIT (BHU) Varanasi as one of the seven key nodal centres (e-nodes) under its Mission for Advancement of High Impact Areas in Electric Vehicles (MAHA-EV) initiative. This selection emerged from a pool of 227 proposals received nationwide. IIT (BHU) will lead a national facility dedicated to studying battery degradation and its solutions, aiming to develop safe, sustainable and efficient battery systems. The mission will operate under the banner 'Te-MobiX (Tropical e-Mobility Excellence). The Government of India has awarded IIT-BHU a competitive research grant of Rs 55 crore to establish a national facility for battery research at the institute. The proposal was led by battery diagnostics expert Prof Amit Patra, with participation

from faculty members of IIT-BHU, IIT-Kharagpur, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and ICT- Mumbai. Expressing his gratitude, Director of IIT-BHU Prof Amit Patra said, "IIT (BHU) envisions developing a unique national facility that will span the entire spectrum of battery research—from raw materials to next-generation battery solutions for land, water and air transportation. This mission aligns with India's National Mission on Transformative Mobility and Energy Storage, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the EV30@2030 target. It will also promote local innovation, skill development and job creation." Project investigator Prof RK Singh highlighted that the primary objective of Te-MobiX is to enhance the performance, safety and lifespan of batteries in India's tropical climate. The mission will prioritise innovation, cost-effective solutions and environmental sustainability thus supporting India's transition to clean mobility.

PM Modi talk with Trump bust every lie of Congress: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

The BJP and Congress on Wednesday here slugged it out after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's telephonic talks with US President Donald Trump on Operation Sindoor. While the ruling party said the talks 'busted' every lie of the opposition party, it demanded Modi an all party meeting to brief leaders on what he has told Trump and take the nation into confidence.

The BJP said Prime Minister Modi's conversation with President Trump on Operation Sindoor has "busted" every lie of the Congress, stating that if the opposition party does not believe in this, then it should be considered a "partner" of Pakistan.

BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said, "The Congress and its troll army

simply cannot digest the fact that Prime Minister Modi told President Trump in clear terms — India neither needs nor accepts any third-party mediation."

"Congress must stop maligning India's firm and principled foreign policy just to feed its petty narratives," he said in a post on social media. "Every Congress lie has been busted," said BJP's Shehzad Poonawalla. "Shame on Congress. They are not INC but PNC: Pakistani National Congress," he added.

The attack on the Congress from a number of BJP leaders came after Modi, earlier, set the record straight in a telephonic conversation with Trump, saying Operation Sindoor was "paused" following a request from Pakistan and not due to mediation or offer of a trade deal by the US.

In a 35-minute phone call with Trump on Tuesday, Modi briefed the US President on



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PTI

Operation Sindoor, launched by India against terror sites in Pakistan, and made it clear that countries that support terrorism must face the consequences.

The opposition party has constantly targeted the government over Trump's claim of mediating between India and Pakistan with his offer of trade deals to the two countries.

Following Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's statement on the phone call between the two leaders, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh continued with his swipe at Modi.

He demanded that the Prime Minister must immediately chair an all-party meeting on his return from his three-nation tour to brief leaders on what transpired in the telephonic conversation and take the nation into confidence.

The opposition party also termed the scheduled lunch

between Pakistan Army Chief General Asim Munir and Trump a "huge setback" and said the Prime Minister should have conveyed India's displeasure on it to the US president during their telephonic conversation.

Hitting back, BJP spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari said Modi made it clear to Trump that no third country mediated and that India gave a befitting reply to Pakistan. "If Pakistan fires bullets, India will respond with bombs. Even after that, if Congress does not believe in India's stand, then it should be believed that Pakistan and Congress are team partners," he alleged.

Malviya claimed that under the Congress, India was seen as a "weak, third-world country". "Today, India is a rising power — a bright star in the global order. No amount of lies can dim that truth."

He also accused Ramesh of

being a "congenital liar, much like Rahul Gandhi" after the Congress leader cited a January 2025 readout from the White House as the US statement on Modi's latest conversation with Trump. Ramesh, however, acknowledged later that he made an "inadvertent error" and immediately rectified it.

Ramesh, meanwhile, asserted that if Indira Gandhi would have been the prime minister she would definitely have conveyed her displeasure to whoever the US President would have been on the issue of Trump's invitation to General Munir.

Ramesh also urged the government to form a "Pahalgam Review Committee" on the lines of the Kargil Review Committee that was set up three days after the Kargil War and was chaired by K Subrahmanyam, father of External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar.

Employees under UPS now eligible for retirement, death gratuity benefits

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

All Central Government employees part of the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) will now be eligible for retirement and death gratuity benefits available under the Old Pension Scheme (OPS), Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday.

Responding to this long-pending demand by a large section of Government employees, he said, the move addresses a significant demand of government staff and brings parity in retirement benefits.

Singh, the Minister of State for Personnel, said the new provision reflects the government's commitment to ensure social security for all categories of employees under the National Pension System (NPS). Addressing a presser on the "transformational" journey of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions over the last 11 years, he highlighted a series of reforms aimed at simplifying governance, empowering citizens, and humanising

administration.

Central Government employees covered under the UPS will now be eligible for retirement and death gratuity benefits, as per the provisions of the Central Civil Services (Payment of Gratuity under National Pension System) Rules, 2021, Singh said.

The new provision reflects the Government's commitment to ensure social security for all categories of employees under the NPS
— JITENDRA SINGH, UNION MINISTER

The Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW), under the Personnel Ministry, on Wednesday issued an order on the "options to avail benefits under Old Pension Scheme on death of government servant during service or his discharge from government service on account of invalidation or disability for central government servants covered under Unified Pension Scheme".

"The order gives an employee the option to revert to OPS in case of death in service. It is progressive in nature and addresses the clarifications being sought by employees," DoPPW Secretary V Srinivas said.

President of the All India NPS Employees Federation, Manjeet Singh Patel, welcomed the order and termed it a historic and much-needed move by the government.

Patel said the inclusion of death-cum-retirement gratuity in UPS will remove all the misconceptions of the employees. He said, the inclusion of OPS benefits in case of death or disability of any employee during the service under UPS is a great justice.

"Therefore, a lot of employees will opt for the UPS now," Patel said. The DoPPW had notified the Central Civil Services (Implementation of National Pension System) Rules, 2021, to regulate service-related matters of central government employees covered under the NPS.

Under these, Rule 10 provides for the option to be exercised by every central govern-

ment employee covered under the NPS for availing benefits under the NPS or the Old Pension Scheme in the event of death of a government servant during service or his discharge on the ground of invalidation or disablement.

"UPS has been notified as an option under the NPS. Therefore, it has been decided that the central government civil employees who opt for UPS under the NPS shall also be eligible for option for availing benefits under UPS or the CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021 or the CSS (Extraordinary Pension) Rules, 2023 in the event of death of the government servant during service or his discharge on the ground of invalidation or disablement," the order said.

The finance ministry, on January 24, issued a notification regarding the introduction of UPS as an option under the NPS for recruits to the central government civil service with effect from April 1, 2025. It gives a one-time option to the Central Government employees covered under the NPS for inclusion under the UPS.

₹2,006 crore Central assistance approved for HP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

A high-level committee, headed by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, has approved ₹2,006.40 crore in central assistance for Himachal Pradesh for recovery and reconstruction efforts following the devastating floods, landslides and cloudburst of 2023.

The committee, comprising Union Finance and Agriculture Ministers and the Vice Chairman of the NITI Aayog as members, considered the proposal for financial assistance to the state from the recovery and reconstruction funding window under the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF), an official statement said.

The high-level committee has approved the recovery plan of ₹2,006.40 crore to Himachal Pradesh, which will help the state in carrying out recovery and reconstruction activities, arising due to damage and destruction occurred during the 2023 monsoon due to floods, cloudbursts and landslides, it said.

Of this, ₹1,504.80 crore will be the Central share from the recovery and reconstruction funding window under the NDRF, it added.



Union Home Minister Amit Shah

FILE PHOTO

On December 12, 2023, the Ministry of Home Affairs approved an additional financial assistance of ₹633.73 crore from the NDRF for Himachal Pradesh.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Government is standing shoulder to shoulder with the State Governments during natural calamities and disasters, the statement said.

To fulfil Modi's vision of a disaster-resilient India, the home ministry, under the guidance of Shah, has taken several initiatives to ensure effective

management of disasters in the country, the statement said.

Several steps have been taken to prevent any extensive loss of life and property during disasters by strengthening the disaster risk reduction system in India, it said.

The Central Government had approved a recovery plan of ₹1658.17 crore for Uttarakhand in the aftermath of the Joshimath subsidence and of ₹555.27 crore for Sikkim in the aftermath of the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) incident of 2023.

Further, the central govern-

ment approved several mitigation projects with an overall financial outlay of ₹7,253.51 crore, for mitigating the risks of several hazards in the areas of urban floods (₹3075.65 crore), landslides (₹1,000 crore), GLOF (₹150 crore), forest fires (₹818.92 crore), lightning (₹186.78 crore) and drought (₹2022.16 crore).

This additional assistance is over and above the funds released by the Centre to the states in the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF), already placed at the disposal of the states.

Axiom-4 mission delayed again

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla's Axiom-4 mission to the International Space Station (ISS) has been postponed to June 22, to allow NASA to evaluate the operations on the orbital lab after the recent repairs in the Russian section, Axiom Space announced on Wednesday.

The Axiom-4 mission, which marks the return to space for India, Hungary, and Poland, was earlier scheduled for lift-off from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on June 19 onboard SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket.

"NASA, Axiom Space, and SpaceX are now targeting no earlier than Sunday, June 22, for launch of the fourth private astronaut mission to the International Space Station, Axiom Mission 4," Axiom Space said in a statement.

"The change in a targeted launch date provides NASA time to continue evaluating space station operations after recent repair work in the aft (back) most segment of the International Space Station's Zvezda service module," it said.

The Axiom-4 commercial mission is led by Commander Peggy Whitson, with Shukla as mission pilot and Hungarian astronaut Tibor

Kapu and Poland's Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski as mission specialists.

The mission was originally scheduled for lift-off on May 29 but was then put off to June 8, then June 10 and June 11, when engineers detected a liquid oxygen leak in the boosters of the Falcon 9 rocket and NASA also detected leaks in the ageing Russian module of the International Space Station.

"The #Ax4 crew remains in quarantine in Florida to maintain all medical and safety protocols. The crew is in good health and high spirits and looks forward to launch," Axiom Space said on X.

Updated National Mission for Green India unveiled

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

The Government on Tuesday unveiled an updated National Mission for Green India, aiming to restore degraded forest ecosystems in the Western Ghats, the Himalayas and the Aravalli mountain range.

The updated mission document, launched on the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, also focuses on greening the arid regions of northwest India.

In its first phase, the mission aimed at improving ecosystem services in 10 million hectares of land, increase forest-based livelihood income of around

three million forest dependent households and enhance Co2 sequestration by 50 to 60 MT in the year 2020.

The mission's interventions began in 2015-16 and around 11.22 million hectares were brought under plantations by 2020-21.

The Government said the new phase of the mission will work towards creating an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2030, a key commitment made by India under the Paris Agreement to combat climate change.

One of the eight components of India's National Action Plan on Climate Change launched in 2008, the updated

mission aims to restore the ecologically critical Aravalli hills, which stretch 700 kilometre from Gujarat to Delhi.

One of the world's oldest mountain ranges, the Aravallis play a key role in sustaining natural resources but face threats from deforestation, mining and construction.

This has led to desertification, declining rainfall and groundwater depletion.

Under the Aravalli Green Wall project, the government plans to create a five-kilometre green buffer belt around the mountain range, which will act as a barrier against desert winds and help recharge groundwater, ensuring long-term ecological stability in the region.

The mission also aims to restore and protect the Western Ghats, one of the world's 34 biodiversity hotspots. Stretching 1,600 km from Gujarat to Tamil Nadu, the Ghats are home to rich plant and animal life, absorbing up to 10 per cent of India's greenhouse gas emissions. However, deforestation, illegal mining, and pollution have severely damaged the ecosystem, affecting water sources, agriculture, and biodiversity, while also increasing human-wildlife conflict and altering local climate patterns.

The mission will also focus on restoring degraded Himalayan slopes by planting native species to stop soil erosion, control landslides and

improve rainwater harvesting. It will employ methods like gully plugging and contour trenching to stabilise slopes.

In the Northeast, the mission seeks to address shifting (hum) cultivation through respectful, locally appropriate technologies. It will also promote seabuckthorn plantations in suitable areas of Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Uttarakhand and Sikkim to enhance ecological health and local livelihoods.

The mission further aims to tackle soil erosion in the arid regions of northwest India, where fertile land is turning barren due to wind, overgrazing, poor land management and loss of vegetation.

Dropout rates at School secondary level found to be high in dozen States: PAB report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

School dropout rates at the secondary level were found to be high in a dozen states, including Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Maharashtra, according to a report by a department of the Education Ministry.

The central government has suggested that the states take special steps to reduce the dropout rate as laid out in the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020. Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Jharkhand and Punjab were also found to have high school dropout rates.

The information on dropout rates at the secondary school level was obtained from the minutes of the meetings of the Project Approval Board (PAB), which comes under the Ministry of Education.

The meetings Samagra

Shiksha programme for 2025-26 were held between April and May this year with different states.

According to officials, the Government wants to achieve a 100 per cent Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) at the school level by 2030 as targeted in the NEP, 2020 and considers dropout as a hindrance.

According to the PAB report, the dropout rate in 2023-24 at the secondary level in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Tripura, Karnataka, Punjab, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu remains an area of concern.

The Centre has advised these states to initiate a special enrolment drive in the form of door-to-door surveys in school catchment areas to identify Out-of-School Children (OoSC) and to ensure their admissions.

In Bihar, as per the report, there were "large variations" in

The Government wants to achieve a 100 per cent Gross Enrolment Rate at the school level by 2030 as targeted in the NEP, 2020

the reporting of data, especially on OoSC on the PRA-BANDH portal. The State was directed to initiate a special enrolment drive with the involvement of school management committees to ensure the identification and admission of all OoSC.

The report said 57.06 per cent of school students in Delhi study in Government-run schools which make up 48.99 per cent of schools in the national Capital.

The PAB expressed concern at the enrolment rate in government schools and suggested that Delhi should prioritise the improvement of Gross

Enrolment Ratio (GER) and Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) — both measures of participation in education — at higher secondary level in the coming years.

In West Bengal, the annual dropout rate at the secondary school level is 17.87 per cent. The state was advised to check the data and work on factors responsible for the high dropout rate.

In Tamil Nadu, the dropout rate at the secondary level — 7.7 per cent — needs to be addressed. The state needs to improve on its 82.9 per cent Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) at the higher secondary level and ensure 100 per cent as aimed in NEP.

In Karnataka, the dropout rate at secondary levels — 22.1 per cent — is higher than the national average for secondary — 14.1 per cent — and therefore, needs to be addressed, the report said.

Air India cancels three international flights due maintenance issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Air India has cancelled three of its international flights on Wednesday owing to various reasons, including maintenance and technical issues. Two of these flights were cancelled after the passengers had already boarded the aircraft, the airline said.

The airline said it had to cancel its Toronto-Delhi flight AI188 of June 18 due to extended maintenance and consequently operating crew coming under regulatory flight duty time limitation norms.

Passengers, who had already boarded the aircraft, were disembarked following cancellation of the flight, it said.

Also, flight AI996 from Dubai to Delhi on June 18, 2025 was cancelled due to technical reasons and passengers were disembarked after

boarding, as per Air India.

However, the airline's flight AI2145 from Delhi to Bali was cancelled after it was advised to return to Delhi mid-way due to reports of volcanic eruption near the destination airport Bali, in the interest of safety, Air India stated.

The flight safely landed back in Delhi and all passengers were disembarked.

Air India said its teams on the ground are making alternative arrangements for the passengers to fly to their respective destinations at the earliest.

Full refunds on cancellation or complimentary rescheduling have also been offered to passengers.

Air India said it is anticipating some disruptions (in its flight operations) due to the continuing enhanced checks on the airline's Boeing 787 fleet coupled with airspace restrictions and inclement weather.

On June 13, a day after the B787-8 crash that killed 241 people on board, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation ordered enhanced surveillance of Air India's Boeing 787 fleet, comprising 26 787-8 and seven 787-9 planes.

Since the Ahmedabad crash, Air India cancelled 66 flights to be operated with Boeing 787 between June 12th and June 17th. Multiple flights have been cancelled or delayed citing technical issues.

At a review meeting with top executives of Air India and Air India Express, aviation safety regulator DGCA flagged concerns regarding recent maintenance-related issues reported at Air India and "advised the airline to strengthen internal coordination across engineering, operations, ground handling units and ensure availability of adequate spares to mitigate passenger delays."

Yoga Sangam gets encouraging registrations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Registrations for Yoga Sangam, the flagship event of the 11th International Day of Yoga on June 21, have crossed the 4 lakh mark, the Ayush ministry said on Wednesday.

It also claimed that no single event in India has ever garnered assured participation at such a scale.

On June 21, a synchronised yoga demonstration will unfold simultaneously at lakhs of locations across the country — a landmark moment in India's wellness journey, it said.

The main function will take place in Visakhapatnam, where more than 5 lakh yoga enthusiasts in performing the common yoga protocol.

Editor's TAKE

India's digital fraud epidemic: A silent heist

Across India, thousands are losing their hard earned money to invisible digital scamsters who are rarely caught

Every time you make a phone call and hear Amitabh Bachchan's voice warning you about digital fraud, remember — it's more than just a public awareness message. It's a reflection of a growing crisis that's far more widespread than most people realise. Thousands of unsuspecting individuals are falling victim to fraudsters operating through phone calls, fake websites, and social media traps, losing their hard-earned money in the process. What makes it even more alarming is that, in most cases, the identity of the scammer remains unknown and the chances of catching them are painfully slim. In the dazzling rush towards a cashless economy, India's digital landscape has opened doors to both prosperity and peril.

As smartphones turn into wallets and money moves at the speed of a swipe, scamsters too have gone digital — riding the same wave to orchestrate a silent heist that is robbing lakhs of Indians of their hard-earned savings. The scale of the crisis is alarming. In the first ten months of 2024-25 alone, digital financial frauds drained over ₹4,245 crore from unsuspecting citizens, with more than 2.4 million cases reported across the country. That marks a sharp 67 per cent jump from the previous year, and behind every number lies a story of loss, confusion, and broken trust. Digital fraud in India is no longer confined to amateur hacking or phishing attempts. It now includes a wide web of criminal tactics — ranging from fake investment schemes and fraudulent loan apps to malware-ridden websites, deepfake impersonations, and phone calls posing as police or bank officials. At the heart of many of these scams is the use of "money mule" accounts, which are opened in the names of unsuspecting people or fabricated identities and used to launder stolen funds. The rapid growth of such frauds can be traced to three compounding factors. First is the lightning-fast spread of digital financial services in India, especially through UPI, mobile wallets, and internet banking, without a parallel rise in public understanding of digital safety. Second is the lack of sufficient resources within the law enforcement system, which is often under-equipped to combat the complex and evolving nature of cybercrime.

And third is the socioeconomic pressure, especially high unemployment among tech-savvy youth, which sometimes pushes them toward the dark web and illegal online activity. India has now found itself ranked 10th globally in the World Cybercrime Index, signalling not only a high number of victims but also a growing number of perpetrators. This reflects the seriousness of the threat and the urgency with which it must be tackled. To confront the challenge, regulators and authorities have begun to strengthen the system's resilience. Unless policymakers, banks, regulators, and citizens act in concert to strengthen awareness and enforcement, the country risks turning its greatest leap into its most dangerous vulnerability. The war against digital fraud is not just a technical or financial battle — it is a fight to protect every honest Indian who dares to believe in a better, more connected future. Because in the age of instant payments, scams are just one click away.

Israel's precision warfare

Israel operates in the hush of calculated silence. At the heart of this doctrine lies Mossad, Israel's legendary intelligence agency, whose quiet efficiency and chilling accuracy have turned modern warfare into a ghost operation

In a world of noisy wars and chaotic battlefields, Israel prefers silence. It doesn't declare war with megaphones — it whispers through precision. It doesn't drop bombs in bulk — it strikes with surgical clarity. And more often than not, it leaves no trace, only questions and consequences. The recent string of covert attacks deep inside Iran has once again shown that Israel's sharpness is unmatched.

A top Iranian military commander is gone — eliminated without a single alarm. The Natanz nuclear facility, considered a cornerstone of Iran's nuclear ambitions, was hit again — crippling not just infrastructure but pride.

In Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, the elusive Hamas mastermind, was reportedly killed in a tunnel strike. And all this without a single Israeli boot crossing the border. That is not just power. That is precision. At the heart of this lies Mossad — Israel's legendary intelligence agency. It is not the biggest, but arguably the most effective. Its agents move through Tehran, Istanbul, and Beirut with a ghostlike presence. Their weapons aren't just guns or gadgets — but knowledge, timing, and patience.

They wait, they listen, and when the moment is right — they strike. Mossad has proven again and again that no leader is too far, no secret too deep, and no bunker too strong. What makes these operations exceptional is the clarity of purpose. Israel doesn't carpet-bomb cities. It doesn't threaten entire populations. It identifies the threat, maps the target, confirms it a hundred times over, and then acts.

That is why its attacks leave the enemy stunned, their infrastructure in ruins, and their narrative shattered. The Pager strike in Gaza was a classic case. No collateral damage. Just the precise elimination of high-ranking terrorists responsible for the October 7 massacre.

Each name had a file. Each file had a face. And each face had a timeline. That's how Israel operates — with surgical certainty. These aren't mere airstrikes. They are operations rooted in deep intelligence. Inside Iran, Israeli assets have reached the unthinkable — military high commands, nuclear research labs, and political circles.

These aren't James Bond fantasies. They're real. When Israel hits a nuclear site in Natanz or assassinate a nuclear scientist in the streets of Tehran, it means Mossad was already inside the room before the first shot was fired.

One must pause and admire the technological backbone of these missions. Israel, though small, is a global giant in R&D. It



SANTHOSH MATHEW

spends more per capita on defence innovation than almost any other country. Tel Aviv and Haifa are not just cities — they are incubators of military tech that shape tomorrow's wars today. AI-guided missiles, cyber-espionage systems, autonomous drones, and real-time target validation tools — these are not concepts;

they're deployed every day. In 2020, when Iran's top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh was assassinated, it wasn't a man with a gun who pulled the trigger.

It was a remote-controlled machine gun guided by satellite, powered by artificial intelligence, and placed by Mossad. No agents were even present. The target was eliminated with zero noise. That's 21st-century warfare — and Israel is writing the manual.

More importantly, Israel's strategy sends a message far louder than explosions. It says: "We see you. We know you. We will come for you—no matter where you are."

That psychological edge is priceless. It forces adversaries into defensive positions, makes them second-guess every move, and often, silences them without a fight. And then there's the Iranian dilemma. For all its fiery rhetoric and televised parades of missiles, when Israel strikes Tehran, the only response is silence. Because Iran knows — the moment it retaliates recklessly, the next wave won't just be surgical. It might be sweeping.

What's worse, if Iran does nothing, it reveals to the world that its much-hyped defence systems are just paper tigers. One is reminded of the first days of the US war on Iraq. Over 200 jets flew silently into Baghdad and dismantled Saddam Hussein's elite command within hours. Today, Israel seems to be doing the same — on a smaller but sharper scale.

The question now echoes across the Middle East: Does Iran even have a defence system that works? Israel's brilliance lies in its readiness. Its doctrine isn't reactive — it's preemptive.

Never again is not just a phrase from history. It's national policy. The Jewish state, forged in the memory of genocide, has vowed never to be caught off-guard again. And it lives that vow with every satellite

pass, every cyber scan, every Mossad mission. Critics call it brutal. Others call it genius. But none deny that it works. When enemies fall mysteriously, when nuclear dreams are shattered before they're born, and when even the world's most guarded leaders live in fear, the fingerprint is often Israeli.

This is not just about warfare. It's about a philosophy: act smart, act first, and act only when sure.

In an age of drone wars and digital surveillance, Israel has mastered the art of the silent strike. And while the world debates morality and legality, Israel simply protects itself — with chilling effectiveness; no one sees them coming.

No one hears them leaving. But everyone feels the impact. That's not just intelligence. That's legacy. That's Mossad. That's Israel. In the end, one truth remains — the sharpest swords are not the loudest, but the most precise. And today, Israel wields that sword with unmatched mastery.

(The writer is Professor, Centre For South Asian Studies, School of International Studies & Social Sciences, Pondicherry Central University. Views are personal)

Harnessing inner resolve for true transformation

SECOND Opinion

Where there is a will, there is a way" is a familiar proverb, and while its general meaning is widely understood, not many realise its profound utility as a tool for self-transformation. One's inner transformation is intrinsically linked to the strength of one's will and the resoluteness of one's spirit.

If an individual, with a strong and unbending will, decides to no longer harbour negative thoughts or indulge in a specific bad behavioural response, then partial or full success in inner change can be achieved; otherwise, one falters repeatedly, becomes demoralised sooner or later, and gives up the effort to change.

It is crucial to understand that on the path of self-transformation, temptations to seek tributes and laurels, to rise to fame and glory, will be incredibly strong. Gender attractions will exert a powerful pull on one's mind, and situations to defray tempers will be too provocative or too numerous. One might feel cheated by these subtle ways of Maya.

Therefore, it is essential to stand firm and face these storms like a rock, saying to oneself: "It is a question of my integrity and honour. I have made a promise to myself that I will not now be a puppet or a slave to this negative

habit of mine or that personality trait. Am I going to break my promise? Am I a person who does not stick to his or her words or whose promise has no value? Wouldn't it be a breach of trust God has placed in me, or a breach of promise I have made with God, to indulge in this nefarious act which I swore that I had given up?

Does it behove a person with any self-respect to break his promise and to do what he had considered as spiritually obnoxious and morally evil?" This kind of self-talk is very helpful while on the path of self-transformation. It has been observed that one weakness leading to the spiritual ruin of man is the postponement of implementing certain decisions, even though these were made voluntarily and are for his lasting good. This happens especially if a person fails in one's initial steps to prevent any of one's negative traits from manifesting, as a result of which, in case of failure, he feels frustrated and loses his self-confidence, believing all his efforts will end in smoke.

Having lost his will, he gives up the effort and says to himself: "I am not giving it up forever. I will start and fight against this evil that is entrenched in me but, perhaps, the time has not yet come. I will start it on some more auspicious and memorable day."

And when that day finally comes, he thinks that for this day, he will start afresh. But again there is a pitfall. So, he says to himself: "I shall better start it from the first day

of next month." On that day, he starts it over again.

But, one who has not determined that he will continue it now against all odds will admit his defeat again and again and, having lost his heart, will either give up efforts forever or will postpone it until another auspicious day! Such people get used to failing again and again and, in the process, they become weak.

Let us, therefore, make a strong affirmation and say to ourselves: "Even if the heavens fall, I am now not going to fall. My pledge is harder than steel. And I pledge that I am not going to falter and will now march from great to greater heights!"

When individuals thus work for self-change with a tenacious and determined will, then only does a society change. Apart from sharing this individual responsibility of self-change, there is no other known way of world-change.

This ripple effect, starting within each individual's heart and mind, gradually expands to transform families, communities and ultimately, nations. A society composed of self-aware, morally grounded individuals inherently promotes peace, justice, and sustainable progress. It is in this collective awakening of individual wills that the true promise of a better world lies, offering a genuine path to universal welfare and harmony. Thus, the journey of self-transformation becomes the very bedrock of a flourishing, compassionate global civilisation.

(The writer is a popular columnist and a spiritual teacher. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

West Asia on the boil

Tensions in West Asia escalated dangerously as Iran launched missile strikes on Israel, injuring 30 and targeting strategic infrastructure. In response, Israel struck a major Iranian oil depot with a 260 MT capacity and bombed the Natanz nuclear facility, reportedly destroying four buildings and killing ten scientists.

Around 14,000 centrifuges were affected, sparking fears of a nuclear leak. The IAEA condemned Israel's actions, warning of trans-border consequences. War scenes were visible from passenger planes over Iraq and even rooftops in Lebanon. Iran had enriched uranium to 60 per cent — near weapons-grade — enough for 10 atomic bombs.

Israel is suspected of pursuing regime change in Iran, with reports of a failed plan to assassinate Ayatollah Khamenei. Pakistan denied backing Iran, aligning instead with Arab nations and the US. Having no better option, India remains neutral not to annoy either fighting faction, and is busy evacuating 1,500 students — mainly from J&K — studying medicine in Iran via the only available land route, as airspace remains closed. The escalating situation highlights the volatile regional balance, demanding urgent de-escalation to prevent a wider, potentially catastrophic conflict. As the world watches, the path to a fragile peace remains perilous and uncertain.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

India's unemployment rate is rising

The country's unemployment rate increased to 5.6 per cent in May this year, as compared to the previous month, Government data released on Monday (June 16) revealed. The latest data, collected in the current weekly status (CWS), indicated that the unemployment rate (UR) for persons of all ages during May 2025 rose to 5.6 per cent from 5.1 per cent in April 2025.

According to the data, the pace of joblessness among females was higher at 5.8 per cent compared to 5.6 per cent in males in May 2025. Similarly, unemployment among people in the age group of 15-29 increased to 15 per cent in May from 13.8 per cent in April 2025 across the country. Unemployment in urban areas also increased to 17.9 per cent in May from 17.2 per cent in April. In rural areas, the figure stood at 13.7 per cent in May, an increase from 12.3 per cent in April this year. The data further indicated that the Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) among people aged 15 years and above dipped to 54.8 per cent in May from 55.6 per cent during April 2025.

These escalating figures paint a concerning picture of the national job market. The consistent rise across demographics signals deeper economic challenges ahead. Addressing this trend becomes crucial for fostering sustainable growth.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Technical glitches in the air

Many airlines have been forced to return mid-air recently due to technical glitches or bomb threats. Moreover, passengers on board are making complaints about faulty air conditioning, and lack of response from crew members to service requests, leading to videos being posted on social media. Air travel is the most expensive form of travel, for which the average person has to shell out a hefty amount from their pocket.

The main concern for air travellers is time-saving and the facilities provided. But nowadays, it seems both privileges are being denied to air passengers. Though the Government is unable to curb the surge in air fares, yet airlines are wreaking havoc with passengers' journeys by returning mid-air or making emergency landings.

The aviation ministry should establish protocols for the maintenance of aircraft, services provided to the passengers, and time-bound limits to curb harassment faced by passengers at the hands of airlines.

The Government should initiate insurance for airline passengers and make it mandatory for their safety. This deteriorating service and safety record erodes passenger confidence significantly. Urgent regulatory oversight is essential to restore trust and ensure airline accountability. Prioritising passenger well-being is paramount for the future of air travel.

ABHILASHA GUPTA | MOHALI

IRAN-ISRAEL WAR MUST BE CONTAINED BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE

Amidst the front-page news 'Iran missile attacks on Israel kill eight' (17 June), there is an urgent need to expose and blow up the nuclear nexus between Iran and Pakistan to de-escalate the ongoing war, lest it turn into a full-blown nuclear war not restricted to Iran and Israel. Directly or indirectly, Pakistan may be dragged into this war for Iran, to its own peril, further after Operation Sindoor. India's worries are compounded, as our citizens and students are trapped both in Israel and Iran. It is an extremely tough task, as it was in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

The US has a major role to play, but its double standards on Iran and Pakistan have complicated the troubled scenario. The US role in West Asia is shrouded in mystery. Until now China held Pakistan in the right grip, but post Operation Sindoor, the US is pampering Pakistan and, for this reason, the US-Pak relationship is a

love-hate one. The ground reality is that Pakistan has used both the US and China at its choice of time and opportunity. It is not the right time to play checkers' games in the Middle-East and West Asia. India-Israel and Pak-Iran are bond-tight relations. China and Russia are known for their consistency, just as the US is understood for inconsistency. Nuclear flames in Iran and Israel must be extinguished, lest they engulf the entire Middle East and West Asia. India faces a humanitarian dilemma with its citizens trapped in the conflict zones. The US's inconsistent policies and strategic ambiguity have only worsened the crisis. It is imperative to expose the Iran-Pakistan nuclear nexus and push for immediate de-escalation. The world must act urgently — nuclear fire in West Asia will not remain confined. The stakes are dangerously high.

VINOD JOHRI | DELHI

11 Years of Modi Government: Reform, Resilience, Rising India

As the Modi-led NDA Government completes 11 years, India's economic transformation reflects bold reforms, resilient growth with a thriving startup and export ecosystem. However, challenges in job creation, R&D investment and manufacturing linkages persist

FIRST
Column

BY VIRAT BAHRI AND MANPREET KAUR

From bold structural moves like GST and the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme to investments in infrastructure, formalisation of MSMEs, and the emergence of a robust startup ecosystem—the Modi Government has aimed to reshape India's economic landscape over the past 11 years. But has this vision translated into sustained industrial growth, global competitiveness, and inclusive development?

This review takes stock of the progress made and highlights the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead on India's path to becoming a leading global economic powerhouse.

The year 2025 marks 11 years of the NDA Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi—a period marked by ambitious reforms aimed at energising the economy, boosting business & investor confidence, formalising the MSME sector, building best in class enabling infrastructure, nurturing a thriving startupecosystem, advancing the agri and food processing industries, creating a unified market through GST reform, and strengthening India's export capabilities. But it is logical to ask — What tangible impact have these structural reforms had on India's economic trajectory and industrial growth over the past decade? Let us take a look.

India's average GDP growth rate during 2014-2025 has been around 6.1 per cent, which is commendable amid significant global economic uncertainties, which demonstrates resilience and sustained momentum. According to the International Monetary Fund update, India's growth is projected at 6.2 per cent in 2025, the highest among major economies. With a current GDP of US\$ 4.2 trillion, the country stands poised to surpass Japan (world's fourth-largest economy), and is expected to overtake Germany to be the third-largest in the next few years. Looking ahead, India's economic outlook remains promising, with robust growth rates forecasted for the coming years. Proactive Government interventions and strong structural foundations ensure resilience in the face of global challenges, further solidifying India's position as a global economic powerhouse.

While the Indian economy is gradually moving toward industrial and services — led growth, the agriculture sector has emerged as one of the most supportive sectors to the growth of India's economy and is boosting economic resilience. The agriculture sector in India has grown at an average annual growth rate of 3.7 per cent over the last decade, playing an important role in enhancing productivity and ensuring food security.

India's food grain production has touched a new record of 347 MMT in 2024-25, reflecting significant gains in both yield and cropping intensity. The Indian processed food industry is poised for huge growth, increasing its contribution to world food



Source: Compiled from International Monetary Fund

trade every year due to its immense potential for value addition, particularly within the food processing industry. Over 20 times there is an increase in food processing capacity from 12 lakh metric tons in 2013-14 to 242 lakh metric tons in 2024-25.

Proceed food product exports have also doubled from US\$ 4.9 billion in 2013-14 to US\$ 9 billion (April 2024-Feb 2025), indicating enhanced competitiveness and scalability.

India's manufacturing sector is gradually emerging as a core pillar of growth, contributing around 14 per cent to GDP in FY 2024-25. The Government's Production — Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes across 14 sectors — including electronics, white goods, food processing, pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, and electric vehicles — have attracted significant foreign and domestic investment amounting to ₹1.46 lakh crore (US\$ 17.5 billion) as of December 2024. Notably though, the impact of PLI is not uniform across sectors, with large scale electronics manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, food processing, and telecom & networking products being significant contributors. Moreover, India needs to enhance its backward and forward linkages in manufacturing sector to increase the sector's employment intensity. The contribution of services to the total GVA at current prices stood

at around 55 per cent in FY25. For the FY 2025 (April to February), the total value of service exports was estimated at US\$ 354.9 billion, reflecting a 14.1 per cent increase compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. However, the ability to climb up the value chain in services — particularly moving from IT support to AI-based software engineering, cyber security, and block chain consulting — will be vital for maintaining this growth. The focus should shift toward enabling deep tech ecosystems, reskilling the IT workforce, and integrating emerging technologies through public-private R&D investments.

India's total exports reached an all-time high of USD 824.9 billion in FY 2024-25, a substantial increase from USD 466.22 billion in FY 2013-14, reflecting a sustained upward trajectory over the past decade.

This export performance underscores a structural shift in India's external sector, driven by diversification of export baskets, integration into global value chains, and rising competitiveness in sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, food processing, engineering goods, and services. The robust export momentum has also catalysed deeper participation of Indian businesses — especially MSMEs — in global markets, enhancing both foreign exchange resilience and industrial capacity

utilisation. The recent signing of FTAs with key partners signifies a bold approach towards business competitiveness and accelerated growth.

Over the last eleven financial years (2014-25), India attracted FDI worth US\$ 748.8 billion. In the recent year 2024-25, India received a total FDI of US\$ 81 billion.

This surge is indicative of policy liberalisation across sectors and targeted initiatives such as the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which have collectively enhanced India's competitiveness in capital-intensive and innovation-driven industries.

As a case in point, India's defence production reached a record ₹127,434 crore in FY 2023-24, marking a 174 per cent surge from 2014-15, shows significant expansion and self-reliance defence manufacturing. On the other hand, India's defence exports have risen to ₹23,622 crore in 2024-25 from ₹1,940 crore in 2014-15.

Start-ups are becoming employment — creating innovation ecosystems in India. India is home to Asia's 2nd largest startup ecosystem, with more than 120,000 startups, and over 100 unicorns, highlighting the dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem of the country.

The persistent expansion of emerging industries, fuelled by technological progress and shifting con-

sumer preferences, emphasises the need for increased investments to sustain growth momentum.

The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector, comprising over 630 lakh enterprises, has developed into a robust component of India's business landscape. This sector plays a crucial role in India's overall exports, contributing around 49 per cent to the nation's export revenue, thereby underscoring its essential role in promoting international trade.

Overall, the past 11 years have marked a pivotal chapter in India's economic history. The convergence of policy intent, institutional reforms, and market forces have propelled India toward becoming a future economic superpower.

However, sustaining this trajectory and ensuring employment-led growth is expected to require continual recalibration, informed economic governance, and greater institutional depth, especially if India aims to actually become a credible alternative to China.

A critical area for India to compete in this technology-led era will be R&D depth and output. Spends on R&D remain at around 0.6-0.7 per cent of GDP, compared to China (2.4 per cent), which limits our ability to move up the value chain.

Under the NDA Government (2014-2025), India has witnessed notable economic transformation through structural reforms such as GST, PLI schemes, and infrastructure development. The country averaged 6.1 per cent GDP growth, reaching a projected \$4.2 trillion economy in 2025 — poised to become the world's third-largest. Agriculture remained resilient, while food processing and services sectors showed strong export-led growth.

Manufacturing gained traction, yet job creation and value chain integration remain challenges. Startups and MSMEs flourished, contributing significantly to exports and employment. Defence production and FDI inflows surged, reflecting improved investor confidence. However, a number of sectors still struggle to attain global competitiveness.

Low R&D investment (0.6-0.7 per cent of GDP vs. China's 2.4 per cent) constrains innovation and industrial competitiveness, and several sectors need sustained investments to grow.

To sustain momentum and emerge as a credible alternative to China, India must enhance research capacity, strengthen industry-academia linkages, and push value-added manufacturing. The past decade has laid a solid foundation, but scaling global leadership will demand deeper reforms and innovation-led growth.

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Ahmedabad Air India AI-171 Tragedy Grounds Dreamliner Hopes, Exposes Global Safety Crisis

In a single fiery instant over Ahmedabad, the confidence in civil aviation — India's and the world's — came crashing down with Air India's ill-fated Dreamliner.

The death roll of 142 plus about another 20 deaths on the crash site at the hospital is tragic, but the fallout runs deeper. Investor panic, plunging Boeing shares, and over ₹1,000 crore in insurance claims expose a volatile mix of corporate negligence, regulatory failure, and a sector increasingly driven by cost-cutting rather than caution.

The Tata Group, which owns Air India, promptly announced a ₹1 crore compensation per victim — a gesture as much about damage control as it is about accountability.

Aviation analysts believe this move is less generosity and more recognition of the magnitude of the crisis — and the global scrutiny that now hovers over India's civil aviation, the third largest in passenger volume and sixth in cargo worldwide. Apart from international norms mandate such compensation.

Global Ripples

The impact has been swift and global. Boeing's shares fell 8 per cent just ahead of the Paris Air Show — an event where the company was expected to showcase its next-generation aircraft. CEO Kelly Ortberg cancelled his visit, as scrutiny mounted over Boeing's safety record. Boeing's key suppliers — Spirit AeroSystems (fuselage) and GE Aerospace (engines) — also took a 20 per cent hit. Losses run into billions of dollars.

This crash has reignited a long-standing debate: is Boeing's private-sector-driven model more vulnerable than Airbus, a European Government-backed consortium?

The Dreamliner, despite its reputation as a safe aircraft, has faced repeated technical issues — chief among them, its lithium-ion battery system, which has caused electrical fires and aircraft groundings in the past.

These batteries, similar to those used in e-rickshaws around Delhi, are prone to thermal runaway: a condition where internal heat builds up uncontrollably, leading to fires, toxic gas release, and even explosions.

Dreamliners have been grounded multiple times across the world — including by Japan Airlines — due to such issues.

The crash has led to circumspection and crashing share prices rattle investor confidence. Boeing shares dropped by 8 per cent just days before the Paris Air Show, where the company is expected to showcase its productions.

Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg has announced the

cancellation of his visit to the air show as the crash revived concerns about Boeing widebody jets. Boeing's supplier of 787 fuselages, Spirit Aerosystems, and engine — GE Aerospace have also suffered 20 per cent losses.

Total losses are estimated in billions of dollars though in percentage terms it might look small.

Boeing has paid \$1.1 billion to avoid prosecution for its two 737 Max plane crashes in 2018-19. Boeing has been mired in cont roversies, ranging from 737 Max crashes to last year's Starliner crash that stranded Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore at the international space station (ISS).

There are reports of Boeing workers complaining about shoddy production, including a claim by a whistleblower that the Dreamliner had structural flaws, said to be six tonnes heavier, than it should be.

No Dreamliner had crashed before the Ahmedabad incident. Another whistleblower, a Boeing engineer warned in 2024 that all 787s should be grounded due to structural flaws. One who reportedly expressed concerns about substandard spares was later found dead under mysterious circumstances.

India's Shrinking Airline Market The Ahmedabad tragedy also highlights vulnerabilities in India's aviation ecosystem, increasingly dominated by just two players — IndiGo and Tata group airlines (Air India and Vistara) — which together control nearly 90 per cent of the market.

This quasi-duopoly, despite Udaan and other regional airline schemes, limits competition and raises concerns over pricing, service quality, and most alarmingly, safety.

Flying is becoming costlier and more fragile. High aviation fuel costs in India — among the world's highest — along with supply chain constraints have pushed airlines to cut corners.

There are growing passenger complaints about air-conditioning being kept off during boarding to save fuel. Some aircraft remain grounded for lack of spares — especially engines from Pratt & Whitney. As of this year, 133 aircraft across airlines of India or 16 per cent of the fleet were grounded.

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) fined Akasa Air, Air India, and IndiGo for repeated safety violations. SpiceJet was ordered to halve its operations in 2022. The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security (BCAS) has also levied multiple penalties — for instance, ₹30 lakh on Air India and over ₹1 crore in fines on airport operators across Lucknow, Bhavnagar,

Chennai, and Delhi for violating the 1937 Aircraft Rules. This year Mumbai airport was also penalised for ignoring safety.

Most recently, DGCA inspections of Turkish Airlines flights between May 29 and June 2, 2025, revealed alarming safety breaches — unauthorised ground personnel at Bengaluru, missing documentation for dangerous cargo, and unaccounted equipment at Hyderabad and Chennai airports.

Boeing-Airbus Divide

Statistically, Boeing appears to fare worse than Airbus on safety metrics in the U.S. Since 2014, Airbus aircraft have faced 10 technical malfunctions, but no fatal crashes. Boeing, in contrast, has reported 32 malfunctions and multiple fatal issues. While more Boeings are in operation, the frequency of groundings and incidents raises red flags.

Despite this, Tata Group has inked a massive deal for 500 Boeing aircraft to be delivered over the next decade — a stark contrast from earlier decades when India, through Indian Airlines and Air India, maintained a balance between Boeing and Airbus procurement under public ownership.

Aviation Losing Altitude on Safety?

Every time an aviation tragedy strikes, the default explanation tends to be “pilot or human error.” While human error is real, this narrative often absolves aircraft manufacturers and operators of deeper accountability. In the Ahmedabad case, investigations must go beyond the cockpit and scrutinise systemic safety lapses, fleet maintenance records, battery safety, and manufacturing standards.

The DGCA's report on an earlier in-flight shutdown incident on a B-787 (VT-ANW) in August 2023 is one of many warning signs.

In November of that year, the Government admitted in the Rajya Sabha that 18 safety violations had been recorded across airlines, airports, and ground service providers in just three years.

The aviation sector-by design — cannot afford to operate on the edge. When corporate profit, regulatory apathy, and weak oversight intersect, the result is not just turbulence — it's a tragedy.

The Ahmedabad crash is not just an accident; it is a wake-up call. India's aviation authorities must seize this moment to launch a full-scale, independent safety audit of all domestic fleets. Because in the sky, there is no room for error and no margin for complacency.

(The writer is a vetran journalist. Views expressed are personal)

Blue carbon: Why India must bet big on blue ecosystems

As the impacts of climate change intensify, the global spotlight is turning toward blue carbon ecosystems — mangroves, seagrasses, salt marshes, and coastal wetlands — as high-impact, nature-based climate solutions.

These ecosystems are not only exceptional in their carbon storage capacity, but also offer multiple co-benefits including coastal protection, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable livelihoods. For a country like India, with a 7,500-kilometre coastline and over 4,992 sq km of mangrove cover, blue carbon represents a strategic opportunity to simultaneously advance its climate goals, protect vulnerable coastal communities, and unlock substantial climate finance through carbon markets. Blue carbon finance enables investments in ecosystem restoration that generate Verified Emission Reductions (VERs), which can be traded on international platforms to fund conservation efforts and community-based adaptation initiatives.

India's blue carbon ecosystems are remarkably diverse and widespread, including not only mangroves but also seagrass meadows, salt marshes, peatlands, lagoons, and estuarine wetlands.

These ecosystems store carbon in both biomass and sediment, with mangroves and seagrasses capable of sequestering carbon at rates several times higher than terrestrial forests. While mangroves have received attention in conservation policy, seagrasses — found in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, Lakshadweep, and Andaman & Nicobar Islands — and other wetlands remain underrepresented in India's carbon finance strategy, despite their vast potential for long-term carbon storage. Salt marshes and peat-rich wetlands, particularly in estuarine and deltaic regions, hold significant carbon in waterlogged soils and play critical roles in climate regulation and water purification. These ecosystems, when conserved or restored, offer pathways for both carbon avoidance (preventing emissions from degradation or conversion) and carbon removal (sequestering additional carbon through active restoration).

A similar initiative is underway in Bharuch, Gujarat, where mangroves are being planted on previously barren mudflats with the support of community-based organisations. Blue carbon finance provides a critical link between ecological restoration and sustainable livelihoods. Through the generation and sale of carbon credits, communities gain direct financial benefits from restoration activities. These credits represent either avoided emissions (from conserving intact wetlands or mangroves that would otherwise degrade) or sequestered carbon (from planting new vegetation in degraded areas).

The monetisation of carbon credits offers an economic rationale for conservation, channelling funds to community-led nursery development, plantation

work, monitoring, and sustainable resource use. In ongoing projects, co-benefits include reducing dependence on fuelwood, checking forest fires, and ensuring sustainable harvesting of Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs). Moreover, by integrating agroforestry models and plantation activities on both forest and farmer lands, such initiatives improve rural resilience while restoring ecological integrity. The premium value of blue carbon credits in voluntary carbon markets — due to their permanence, high additionality, and ecosystem co-benefits — makes these projects attractive to private investors and international buyers seeking high-quality offsets. India can harness this momentum to channel international climate finance toward large-scale coastal ecosystem restoration while simultaneously improving livelihoods, food security, and disaster preparedness in its most climate-vulnerable districts. To fully unlock India's blue carbon potential, a focused, multi-pronged strategy is essential — linking science, policy, markets, and community engagement. A National Blue Carbon Strategy should integrate these ecosystems into India's climate and coastal management frameworks, including SAPCCs and the NAFCC.

Expansion beyond mangroves to include seagrasses, salt marshes, peatlands, and wetlands will broaden the scope for high-integrity carbon credits. Dedicated efforts are needed to map and monitor seagrass using satellite data, drone surveys, and underwater imagery, particularly in the Gulf of Mannar, Palk Bay, and Lakshadweep. Scientific precision — through high-resolution mapping, biomass and soil carbon measurement, and AI-based modelling — will ensure credible verification. Building institutional and community capacity is vital for project sustainability, along with embedding equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms.

A Global Leadership Opportunity India stands at the threshold of a unique opportunity to lead the global blue carbon movement. With a rich variety of coastal and wetland ecosystems, proven institutional capability, and an emerging carbon market, the country can demonstrate how climate finance and nature-based solutions can go hand-in-hand to address climate change and social vulnerability.

India can achieve triple wins — enhanced carbon sequestration, strengthened biodiversity, and improved community resilience. As international demand grows for high-integrity, co-benefit-rich carbon credits, India's strategic positioning and early action can establish it as a frontrunner in blue carbon innovation, ensuring that its coastal landscapes are not only protected but also valued as global climate assets.

(The writer is Associate Fellow, Land Resources, TERI. Views expressed are personal)



SHIVAJI SARKAR



SAYANTA GHOSH

ONGC well blowout: Assam CM says controlling efforts lack urgency

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Guwahati

With gas continuing to leak from an ONGC crude oil well at Sivasagar in Assam for the seventh straight day, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday urged Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep S Puri to direct the energy major to step up efforts to contain the blowout. In a letter to Puri, Sarma said locals claimed that there has been “inadequate urgency and seriousness in ONGC’s response” while trying to contain the leak.

“Conveyed our concerns regarding the Barichuk Gas Blowout incident to Hon’ble Union Minister Shri @HardeepSPuri ji. I have requested him to direct @ONGC_ to step up well control efforts in mission mode so that the situation doesn’t aggravate further,” the CM said in a post on X.

The state government is providing necessary relief to the affected people at this hour, but a more proactive approach is needed from ONGC to mitigate this situation to restore normalcy, he added.

The blowout took place on June 12 at Well No RDS 147 of Rig No SKP 135 of Rudrasagar oil field of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation



Sivasagar factory blow out

FILE PHOTO

(ONGC) at Barichuk of Bhatiapur.

A private firm, SK Petro Services, was operating the well on behalf of the state-run Maharatna company.

In the letter, which was shared by Sarma along with the post, the CM said, “Despite ONGC’s ongoing well control efforts such as water blanketing, high-volume mud pumping and junk shots, pressure continues to persist and the well remains active.”

The prolonged nature of the incident is causing considerable distress in the surrounding villages, as already more than 330 families have

been evacuated from their homes and are being supported by the state government with basic relief and safety measures, he added.

“While the District Administration and state agencies are fully engaged on the ground, I am constrained to convey that the local perception is one of inadequate urgency and seriousness in ONGC’s response.

“Unlike previous incidents handled with a war-footing, the current approach appears procedural and lacking in visibility,” Sarma said in the letter.

Talking about his visit to the affected site on Monday

evening, the CM said he had assured the people of taking up their concerns at the highest level.

“I urge you to kindly direct ONGC to reinforce its technical and leadership presence on-site, adopt a more mission-mode approach and step up engagement with the affected communities to restore confidence and bring the situation under control at the earliest,” Sarma told Puri.

The Assam government on Tuesday announced a financial aid of ₹25,000 each to about 350 families affected by the blowout.

Puri also reviewed and took an update on well control

activities being carried out by ONGC, which informed him that competent personnel have been brought from other work centres of the company to control the fire.

Meanwhile, a company official said that uncontrolled leakage of gas is continuing from the well despite consistent efforts to control it.

“The well killing process is going on. The gas pressure has not increased in the last few days and we hope for some good news soon,” he added.

Later in the day, ONGC issued a statement and said its in-house well control experts are working around the clock and are in constant consultation with an international well control agency.

“The process to mobilise their team at the site has already been initiated to further strengthen efforts on the ground,” it added.

ONGC has successfully connected the well to a nearby production facility, thereby diverting a portion of the gas in a controlled manner.

As an additional safety

measure, water blanketing of the well is being continuously maintained.

According to the Assam Pollution Control Board (APCB), the air quality parameters are within the permissible limit as per the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQ) standards by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

“A thorough analysis of the released gas has been carried out through sample collection, confirming that the gas is non-toxic in nature. Being lighter than air, the gas is dispersing upwards into higher altitudes, minimising risk to nearby habitations,” the company said.

The noise levels are also being continuously monitored and are within acceptable limits beyond 500 metres, it added.

“Safety of the community and the environment remains ONGC’s foremost priority, and all actions are being taken in accordance with regulatory guidelines and industry best practices,” the statement said.

NHAI, GMDA join hands to tackle Gurugram flood woes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Gurugram

In a bid to bolster flood-preparedness measures ahead of the monsoon season, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) have decided to work in close coordination to address waterlogging and traffic issues across the city.

A high-level meeting was held on Wednesday at the NHAI Headquarters in Dwarka, chaired by NHAI Chairman Santosh Kumar Yadav and attended by GMDA CEO Shyamal Misra, along with senior officials from both departments.

The meeting focused on collaborative strategies to mitigate flooding in critical areas during heavy rains. One of the major concerns discussed was the persistent issue of waterlogging at Narsinghpur. GMDA officials informed that a temporary ‘Kachcha’ drain has been constructed to divert stormwater from

Narsinghpur to the Leg 3 Badshahpur drain. To support this effort, the NHAI committed to cleaning three culverts in the area on a priority basis to ensure the effective discharge of rainwater.

Several key flood-prone locations under NHAI’s jurisdiction were also identified, including Ifcco Chowk, Medanta Underpass, Rajiv Chowk, and Hero Honda Chowk up to Umang Bhardwaj Chowk. The NHAI has been instructed to clean all surface drains in these critical areas to prevent flood-like conditions during the peak monsoon.

In a show of inter-agency collaboration, GMDA pledged full support to NHAI in executing flood-mitigation measures. Both teams will jointly expedite actions to ensure the maintenance of a clean and efficient drainage network across vulnerable locations. Apart from flood management, the meeting also addressed the issue of severe traffic congestion at key junctions such as Rajiv Chowk and Shankar Chowk.

FASTag annual pass goes live on...

Continued from >> P1

FASTag - the electronic toll collection system - uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology to automatically deduct toll charges from a prepaid account linked to the vehicle. Over 10.1 crore FASTags were issued till December 1, 2024, according to the road transport ministry’s 2024 year-end review.

“In a transformative step towards hassle-free highway travel, we are introducing a FASTag-based annual pass priced at Rs 3,000, effective from 15th August 2025,” Gadkari said.

Valid for one year from the date of activation or up to 200 trips, whichever comes first, this pass is designed exclusively for non-commercial private vehicles such as cars, jeeps, and vans, he said. “The annual pass will enable seamless and cost-effective travel across national high-

ways throughout the country.”

A dedicated link for activation and renewal will soon be made available on the Rajmarg Yatra app as well as on the official websites of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH). According to Gadkari, the move will address long-standing concerns regarding toll plazas located within a 60 km range and simplify toll payments through a single, affordable transaction.

“By reducing wait times, easing congestion, and minimising disputes at toll plazas, the annual pass aims to deliver a faster and smoother travel experience for millions of private vehicle owners,” he said.

The government has made it compulsory for all ‘M’ and ‘N’ category vehicles to be fitted with FASTag. ‘M’ category

includes vehicles with at least four wheels used for carrying passengers, while category ‘N’ comprises vehicles with at least four wheels for carrying goods in addition to passengers.

Presently, monthly passes are available for those vehicles that frequently pass through a specific toll plaza. These passes, which cost Rs 340 a month and Rs 4,080 annually, can be availed by submitting address verification and other relevant documents. Average daily toll collection through FASTag on National Highway fee plaza is less than Rs 200 crore. Private cars account for 53 per cent of total passages but generate just 21 per cent of the revenue.

The annual pass will be applicable only for private non-commercial Car/jeep/Van. Use in any commercial vehicle will result in immediate deactivation without notice, the highways

ministry said.

It will be activated only when FASTags is properly affixed to the windshield of the registered vehicle. Each crossing of the fee plaza counts as one trip. A round trip (to and fro) counts as two trips. According to the ministry, for closed tolling fee plazas, one pair of entry and exit counts as one trip.

The ministry also clarified that the annual pass is not mandatory and that the existing FASTag ecosystem will continue to function as usual.

“Users who do not opt for the annual pass can continue to use their FASTag for regular transactions as per applicable user fee rates at fee plazas,” it said.

The ministry said highway users may re-purchase the annual pass once the 200-trip limit is exhausted, even if the one-year validity period has not yet ended.

A juvenile attempt at reform lands in...

Continued from >> P1

However, when they reached the hospital, they were told he had already died. The family alleges that the juvenile home authorities failed to act in time and did not ensure the victim’s safety despite the presence of

other inmates with violent backgrounds.

“We never thought that we would receive his dead body instead of a reformed child,” said a relative, breaking down in front of the hospital.

The family is demanding

strict action against those responsible, including the staff of the juvenile home, and has urged the Delhi government and police to ensure justice. They have questioned how an argument over bathing could escalate into fatal violence

within a state-run facility that is supposed to protect and rehabilitate minors. Meanwhile, the body has been moved to Maulana Azad Medical College’s mortuary, where a post-mortem will be carried out by a board of doctors.

PM Modi snubs President Trump on call

Continued from >> P1

Prime Minister Modi clearly conveyed to President Trump that at no point during this entire sequence of events was there any discussion, at any level, on an India-US trade deal, or any proposal for a mediation by the US between India and Pakistan,” Misri said.

“The discussion to cease military action took place directly between India and Pakistan through the existing channels of communication between the two armed forces, and it was initiated at Pakistan’s request,” he said, sharing key points of the Modi-Trump meeting.

The foreign secretary said Modi “firmly stated that India does not and will never accept mediation” and that there is complete political consensus in India on this matter.

Prime Minister Modi told President Trump in clear terms that after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, India

had conveyed its determination to take action against terrorism to the whole world.

Modi told Trump that India had only targeted the terrorist camps and hideouts in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, adding India’s actions were very measured, precise, and non-escalatory, according to Misri.

“India had also made it clear that any act of aggression from Pakistan would be met with a stronger response,” the foreign secretary said.

“On the night of May 9, Vice President (JD) Vance had made a phone call to Prime Minister Modi. Vice President Vance had conveyed that Pakistan may launch a major attack on India,” Misri said.

Prime Minister Modi had conveyed to him in clear terms that if such an action were to occur, India would respond with an even stronger response, he said.

“On the night of May 9-10,

India gave a strong and decisive response to Pakistan’s attack, inflicting significant damage on the Pakistani military,” he said on the phone conversation.

“Their military airbases were rendered inoperable. Due to India’s firm action, Pakistan was compelled to request a cessation of military operations,” he said.

Misri said Trump enquired if the Prime Minister could stop over in the US on his way back from Canada. “Due to prior commitments, Prime Minister Modi expressed his inability to do so. Both leaders agreed to make efforts to meet in the near future,” he said. The two leaders also discussed the ongoing conflict between Israel and Iran.

“Both leaders agreed that for peace in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, direct dialogue between the two parties is essential, and continued efforts should be made to facilitate this,” Misri said.

“With regard to the Indo-Pacific region, both leaders shared their perspectives and expressed their support towards the significant role of Quad in the region,” he added.

“Prime Minister Modi extended an invitation to President Trump to visit India for the next Quad Summit. President Trump accepted the invitation and said that he is looking forward to visiting India,” Misri said.

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7, targeting terrorist infrastructure in territories controlled by Pakistan in response to the Pahalgam terror attack.

The strikes triggered four days of intense clashes that ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions on May 10.

New Delhi has been maintaining that India’s fierce counter-attack that day forced Pakistan to plead for ending the hostilities.

Iran threatens consequences to US...

Continued from >> P1

Another Iranian official said the country would keep enriching uranium for peaceful purposes, apparently ruling out Trump’s demands that Iran give up its disputed nuclear programme.

The latest Israeli strikes hit one facility used to make uranium centrifuges and another that made missile components, the Israeli military said. It said it had intercepted 10 missiles overnight as Iran’s retaliatory barrages diminish. The UN nuclear watchdog said Israel struck two centrifuge production facilities in and near Tehran.

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz also said the military struck the headquarters of Iran’s internal security forces on Wednesday, without specifying the agency or location. The strike marks a shift toward targeting Iran’s domestic security apparatus, which has long cracked down on dissent and suppressed protests.

Israel’s air campaign has struck several nuclear and military sites, killing top generals and nuclear scientists. A Washington-based Iranian human rights group said at least 585 people, including 239 civilians, have been killed and more than 1,300 wounded. Iran has fired some 400 missiles and hundreds of drones in retaliatory strikes, killing at

least 24 people in Israel and wounding hundreds. Some have hit apartment buildings in central Israel, causing heavy damage, and air raid sirens have repeatedly forced Israelis to run for shelter.

Iran has fired fewer missiles as the conflict has worn on. It has not explained the decline, but Israel has targeted launchers and other infrastructure related to the missiles.

Israel on Wednesday eased some of the restrictions that it had imposed on daily life when Iran launched its retaliatory attack, allowing gatherings of up to 30 people and letting workplaces reopen as long as there is a shelter nearby.

Schools are closed and many business remain shuttered, but Israel’s decision to reverse its ban on gatherings and office work for all but essential employees signals the Israeli military’s confidence that its attacks have limited Iran’s missile capabilities.

The Washington-based group Human Rights Activists said it had identified 239 of those killed in Israeli strikes as civilians and 126 as security personnel.

The group, which also provided detailed casualty figures during 2022 protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, cross-checks local reports against a network of sources it has devel-

oped in Iran.

Iran has not been publishing regular death tolls during the conflict and has minimised casualties in the past. Its last update, issued Monday, put the toll at 224 people killed and 1,277 others wounded.

Shops have been closed across Tehran, including in its famed Grand Bazaar, as people waited in gas lines and pack roads leading out of the city to escape the onslaught.

A major explosion could be heard around 5 am in Tehran Wednesday morning, following other explosions earlier in the predawn darkness. Authorities in Iran offered no acknowledgement of the attacks, which has become increasingly common as the Israeli airstrikes have intensified.

At least one strike appeared to target Tehran’s eastern neighbourhood of Hakimiyyeh, where the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard has an academy.

Israel says it launched the strikes to prevent Iran from building a nuclear weapon, after talks between the United States and Iran over a diplomatic resolution had made little visible progress over two months but were still ongoing. Trump has said Israel’s campaign came after a 60-day window he set for the talks.

Iran long has insisted its nuclear programme was peace-

ful, though it is the only non-nuclear-armed state to enrich uranium up to 60 per cent, a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. US intelligence agencies have said they did not believe Iran was actively pursuing the bomb.

Israel is the only country in the Middle East with nuclear weapons but has never publicly acknowledged them.

Iran’s ambassador to Geneva, Ali Bahreini, told reporters that Iran “will continue to produce the enriched uranium as far as we need for peaceful purposes”.

He rejected any talk of a setback to Iran’s nuclear research and development from the Israeli strikes, saying, “Our scientists will continue their work”.

Israelis began returning on flights for the first time since the country’s international airport shut down at the start of the conflict.

Two flights from Larnaca, Cyprus, landed at Tel Aviv’s Ben Gurion International Airport on Wednesday morning, said Lisa Dvir, an airport spokesperson.

Israel closed its airspace to commercial flights because of the ballistic missile attacks, leaving tens of thousands of Israelis stranded abroad.

India, Canada relationship thaws

Continued from >> P1

“In view of the trade negotiations between the two countries that are currently paused, the two leaders also decided to instruct their officials to take it up at an early date,” Misri said, adding that the two leaders agreed to stay in touch and meet once again at the earliest possible opportunity.

A statement issued by the office of the Canadian Prime Minister said that Carney and Modi reaffirmed the importance of Canada-India ties based upon mutual respect, the rule of law, and a commitment to the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity.

“The leaders agreed to designate new high commissioners, with a view to returning to regular services to citizens and businesses in both countries,” the statement said.

The two leaders also discussed strong and historic ties between the peoples, partnerships in the Indo-Pacific, and significant commercial links between Canada and India - including partnerships in economic growth, supply chains, and energy transformation.

Carney “raised priorities on the G7 agenda, including transnational crime and repression, security, and the rules-

based order,” the statement said, adding that the leaders also discussed opportunities to deepen engagement in areas such as technology, the digital transition, food security, and critical minerals.

Last year in October, India expelled six Canadian diplomats and announced it was withdrawing its High Commissioner Sanjay Verma and other “targeted” officials from Canada after strongly dismissing Ottawa’s allegations linking the envoy to the probe of Nijjar’s killing, in a major downturn in already frosty ties between the two nations.

Verma was declared a “person of interest” by Canada in its investigation into the June 2023 killing of Nijjar, a Canadian citizen who has been declared a Khalistani terrorist by India. Before Canada could take further action, New Delhi recalled Verma and five other diplomats who were also similarly named.

Asked about Nijjar issue, Prime Minister Carney said he needs to be “careful” as there is a judicial process underway in the case. He said this in response to a question if he spoke to Modi about the killing of a Nijjar on the country’s soil.

“We have had a discussion, the prime minister and I, about

the importance of having the law enforcement to law enforcement... cooperation directly, the importance of addressing transnational repression, as I noted including when we met,” he said. “And obviously there is a judicial process that’s underway and I need to be careful about further commentary,” Carney said.

Meanwhile, Carney also said Prime Minister Modi’s attendance at the G7 summit is a reflection of the size and dynamism of the Indian economy and the leadership position India plays, Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has said.

“In terms of Prime Minister Modi’s attendance at the G7, Prime Minister Modi has attended every G7 since 2018, which is a reflection of the size of the Indian economy, the dynamism of the Indian economy, Indian technology, the leadership position India plays in a host of venues from G20 and beyond,” Carney said at a press conference as the G7 Leaders’ Summit wrapped up here. “So as chair of the G7, hosting the prime minister in that context is entirely natural, entirely consistent. I fully expect the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister of India, will be in attendance at the G7 next year,”

Carney said.

Carney described his bilateral meeting with Modi as “important”. “But I would describe it as foundational, as a necessary first step, an exchange of views, frank, open exchange of views around law enforcement, transnational repression, an agreement to provide the necessary foundations to begin to rebuild a relationship based on mutual respect, sovereignty and trust,” Carney said.

Carney added that the two leaders will move to appoint High Commissioners again. “And let me just finish by putting that in context, which is, that there are very deep ties of people and businesses between Canada and India,” he said.

“It’s well known...and they are not served at present by consular services, in effect, certainly by High Commissioners, and it’s necessary to have that level of service as a basis on which to build out again in the context of respect for sovereignty, and to begin to realise the potential of the relationship. And we will,” he said.

Carney said both he and Modi are committed to working towards that, but “there’s a lot of, a lot of work that will need to be done.”

Bihar AIIMS to battle 2025 polls health grounds...

Continued from >> P1

“The (Health) Ministry is of the considered opinion that the proposed new site situation on Ekma Shobhan Bypass, Anchal-Bahadurpur, Muazabalia, in Darbhanga is not suitable for setting up of AIIMS, Darbhanga. State Government is therefore again requested to kindly provide some other suitable and for setting up of new AIIMS in Darbhanga so that implementation of the project can be taken up promptly in larger public interest,” said the team in its May 2023 report.

Ironically same team ‘revisited’ the same location and submitted a ‘favourable’ report in July 2024 paving the way for foundation stone laying by Modi in November

2024.

Infact there should be probe as how the same Inspection Team altered their opinion within few months,” said Binod Kumar Jha, President of AIIMS Nirman Sangharsh Samiti and also advocate in the matter who has voiced his concerns alongwith local leaders irrespective of the allegiance to their political affiliations.

Binod was unanimously made the founder president of AIIMS Nirman Sangharsh Samiti, Kosi Mandal Saharsa and Pravin Anand, the local district councillor was given the responsibility of its Patron. Jha and Anand formed a 51-member working committee and resolved to build AIIMS in Saharsa. As many as 20

Parliamentarians from Bihar had met the then Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya to demand for AIIMS in Saharsa. The MPs sent in the letter that the Saharsa District Administration had informed the Bihar Government that

217.74 acres of land were available for the construction of AIIMS within the district. The Central Government had announced the construction of the second AIIMS in Bihar in its Budget 2015 thereafter Bihar Government in 2016 wrote a letter to the District Magistrate Saharsa and some other district officers except for Darbhanga to send a proposal to earmark 200 acres of land as per AIIMS standards. The district authorities earmarked 217 acre 74

decimal land and the certificate was shared to Bihar Health Department in 2017.

The current location of proposed AIIMS Darbhanga in Shobhan is a river about 35 feet deep from the road. “This is very surprising as it was rejected by AIIMS Nirman Sangathan and also the Union Health Ministry after inspecting the site. A PIL was filed in Patna High Court appealing for AIIMS in Saharsa. As soon as the Bihar Government came to know about the PIL, it hurriedly showed the court the papers of Rs 309 crore for filling the land and other expenses, which is unfortunate,” said Pravin Anand. Koshi Vikas Sangharsh Morcha has filed a SLP in the Supreme Court.

G7 leaders fail to reach joint agreements on key issues after Donald Trump’s exit

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kananaskis (Canada)

Six of the Group of Seven leaders discussed Russia’s war in Ukraine and the Israel-Iran conflict but failed to reach major agreements on those and many other top issues — closing a summit that was forced to try and show how the wealthy nations’ club might still shape global policy despite the early departure of US President Donald Trump.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and his counterparts from the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan were joined during Tuesday’s final sessions by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and NATO chief Mark Rutte.

“We need support from allies and I’m here,” Zelenskyy said, before adding, “We are ready for the peace negotiations, unconditional ceasefire. I think it’s very important. But for this, we need pressure.”

The remaining leaders agreed to jointly attempt to combat what they called non-market policies that could jeopardize global access to critical minerals. They also pledged to limit the downsides of artificial intelligence on jobs and the environment, while still embracing the potential of the “technological revolution.”

There was consensus on other issues, but though the summit was meant to showcase unity on top global concerns, no joint statement on the conflict in Ukraine was released.

Zelenskyy had been set to meet with Trump while world leaders were gathering in the Canadian Rocky Mountain resort of Kananaskis, but that



Canada’s Prime Minister Mark Carney (centre) smiles as he stands with G7 leaders and outreach countries, international organisations and invited guests at the G7 Summit

was scrapped. The US Also previously signed an agreement granting American access to Ukraine’s vast mineral resources.

A senior Canadian official who briefed reporters at the summit said the US Opposed a joint statement on Ukraine amid its efforts to promote negotiations with Russia. The official said it only became clear during the summit’s first day on Monday that there wouldn’t be a joint statement — though other attendees suggested no consensus agreement was seriously on the table. Emily Williams, a spokeswoman for the prime minister, later retracted the briefing statement and said “no proposed statement regarding Ukraine

was distributed to other leaders.” In Trump’s absence, the remaining six leaders held an extensive session on Ukraine. Lacking unanimity, individual leaders also met with Zelenskyy to reassure him of their support. The summit also was largely overshadowed by a showdown over Iran’s nuclear program that could escalate. Israel launched an aerial bombardment campaign against Iran and Iran has hit back with missiles and drones.

French President Emmanuel Macron warned against the US and other powers pushing for regime change in Iran, suggesting it could destabilise the greater Middle East.

“I believe the greatest mistake today would be to pursue

regime change in Iran through military means, as that would lead to chaos,” Macron said.

Before leaving, Trump joined the other leaders in issuing a statement saying Iran “can never have a nuclear weapon” and calling for a “de-escalation of hostilities in the Middle East, including a ceasefire in Gaza.” Getting unanimity even on a short and broadly worded statement — was a modest measure of success.

Macron said Carney fulfilled his missions as G7 host by preserving the unity of the multilateral organisation. “We shouldn’t ask the Canadian presidency to resolve every issue on earth today. That would be unfair,” said Macron, who will host the G7 next year.

Trump while preparing the language his own country used.

Still, Trump’s departure only served to heighten the drama of a world on the verge of several firestorms - and of a summit deprived early of its most-watched world leader.

“We did everything I had to do at the G7,” Trump said while flying back to Washington. But things were getting awkward even before he left. After the famous photo from the G7 in 2018 featured Trump and then-German Chancellor Angela Merkel displaying less-than-friendly body language, this year’s edition included a dramatic eye-roll by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni as French President Emmanuel Macron whispered something in her ear during a Monday roundtable.

That, and concerns about the Russia-Ukraine war, little progress on the conflict in Gaza and now the situation in Iran have made things all the more tense — especially after Trump imposed severe tariffs on multiple nations that risk a global economic slowdown.

Members of Trump’s trade team remained in Canada to continue discussing tariffs, including Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, who sat at the table as world leaders met with Zelenskyy.

Trump’s stance on Ukraine also put him fundamentally at odds with the other G7 leaders, who are clear that Russia is the aggressor in the war. The US declined to join new sanctions against Russia, with Trump saying, “When I sanction a country, that costs the US a lot of money, a tremendous amount of money.”

Trump jabs Macron for comments on leaving G7

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Paris

What began with a handshake evolved into turbulence at 33,000 feet as one of diplomacy’s oddest relationships took another strange turn.

The political chemistry that once defined the Trump-Macron dynamic — immortalised by a famously tense 29-second handshake in 2017 — was nowhere to be seen in midair Tuesday when US President Donald Trump blasted his French counterpart on social media.

As Trump departed the G7 summit early, French President Emmanuel Macron tried to reframe the exit as strategic.

“There is indeed an offer to meet and exchange,” Macron told reporters, suggesting the US might help broker a ceasefire between Israel and Iran.

But aboard Air Force One, Trump responded with a swipe that accused Macron of showboating. “Wrong! He is publicity seeking” and always gets it wrong,” Trump said. “He has no idea why I am now on my way to Washington, Much bigger than that. Stay tuned!”

The takedown punctured Macron’s narrative and revealed a rupture in a relationship that has featured theater, flattery and touch.

Macron, who once styled himself as a “Trump whisperer,” has long used charm and proximity to try to manage the unpredictable US leader, often contrasting himself with more openly critical peers like Germany’s Angela Merkel. But those efforts are far from foolproof. The Elysée Palace made no formal comment on Trump’s outburst.

Their diplomatic style has never been purely transactional — and has often been tactile.

From their earliest encounters, physical gestures have been part of the pageantry: Trump’s firm pats and arm-yanks, Macron’s theatrical poise and instinctive touches.

The roots of their rapport run deep. In 2017, Macron dazzled Trump with a Bastille Day parade, formal dinners and white-knuckle handshakes.

A viral 29-second grip — knuckles white, jaws clenched — set the tone for a relationship of theatrical dominance.

The physical choreogra-

As Trump departed the G7 summit early, French President Emmanuel Macron tried to reframe the exit as strategic

phy evolved over the years: Trump yanking Macron’s arm at the Elysée, Macron placing a steady hand on Trump’s thigh in Washington.

Their February 2025 White House meeting brought a refined version of the dance as Macron delivered corrections with charm, countering Trump’s Ukraine comments while laughing at Fort Knox jokes.

Signals of strain before the summit

Trump joked about Macron’s marriage last month after a video of Brigitte Macron playfully pushing her husband surfaced.

“Make sure the door remains closed,” he quipped, before adding: “They’re fine.”

But the chill had already begun to set in.

Trump dismisses US intelligence assesment on Iran nuclear weapons

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

Tulsi Gabbard left no doubt when she testified to Congress about Iran’s nuclear program earlier this year. The country was not building a nuclear weapon, the national intelligence director told lawmakers, and its supreme leader had not reauthorized the dormant program even though it had enriched uranium to higher levels.

But President Donald Trump dismissed the assessment of US spy agencies during an overnight flight back to Washington as he cut short his trip to the Group of Seven summit to focus on the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran.

“I don’t care what she said,” Trump told reporters. In his view, Iran was “very close” to having a nuclear bomb.

Trump’s statement aligned him more closely with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has described a nuclear-armed Iran as an imminent threat, than with his own top intelligence advisers.

er. Trump met with national security officials, including Gabbard, in the Situation Room on Tuesday as he plans next steps.

Administration officials downplayed the inconsistency between Trump and Gabbard, saying that enriching uranium can put Iran on track to having

Trump’s statement aligned him more closely with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu, who has described a nuclear-armed Iran as an imminent threat

a nuclear weapon.

Gabbard blamed the media for misconstruing her earlier testimony, asserting that “President Trump was saying the same thing that I said.”

“We are on the same page,” she told CNN. Asked for comment, Gabbard’s office referred to those remarks. In her March testimony to lawmakers, Gabbard said the intelligence community “continues to assess that Iran is not building a

nuclear weapon and Supreme Leader Khamenei has not authorised the nuclear weapons program he suspended in 2003.”

She also said the US was closely monitoring Iran’s nuclear program, noting that the country’s “enriched uranium stockpile is at its highest levels and is unprecedented for a state without nuclear weapons.”

General Erik Kurilla, who leads US forces in the Middle East, recently testified to Congress that Iran could produce enough nuclear material for 10 weapons in three weeks. However, he did not say how long it would take to assemble the pieces into a bomb.

A senior intelligence official said Trump was right to be concerned because its uranium enrichment far exceeds what would be needed for domestic purposes.

Another senior administration official said Iran was as close to having a nuclear weapon as it could be without having one. Both spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss sensitive issues.

US President Trump to host Pakistan Army chief for lunch

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

US President Donald Trump will host Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir for lunch at the White House on Wednesday. “The President has lunch with the Chief of Army Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan,” an advisory issued by the White House said.

The lunch will take place at 1 pm (local time) in the Cabinet Room of the White House. Trump had cut short his trip to Kananaskis, Canada, for the G7 Leaders’ Summit, and he returned to Washington Tuesday morning amid escalating tensions in the Middle East with the latest Israel-Iran conflict.

The White House’s invitation to Munir is being projected by officials in Islamabad as a major diplomatic win, according to the Dawn newspaper.

Field Marshal Munir, who was elevated to Pakistan’s rare five-star rank last month in the first such promotion since Ayub Khan in 1959, during his US trip urged India to engage with Pakistan “as a civilised



nation,” rather than “attempting to impose regional hegemony,” the paper reported.

Speaking to members of the Pakistani American community on Monday evening, he rejected that Pakistan was behind the terrorist attack in Pahalgam.

Munir accused India of seeking to establish a dangerous “new normal” of “violating international borders,” which he said Pakistan had “forcefully rejected,” according to the

newspaper. Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the Pahalgam terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on May 7.

The on-ground hostilities from the Indian and Pakistan sides that lasted for four days ended with an understanding of stopping the military actions, following talks between the directors general of military

operations of both sides on May 10. Munir’s interaction with the Pakistani American community at the Four Seasons Hotel in Washington’s Georgetown neighbourhood drew a large crowd, the paper said.

However, protesters aligned with the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party of former prime minister Imran Khan demonstrated outside, calling for democratic reforms and the release of their jailed

leaders. Munir also addressed the broader regional landscape, declaring Pakistan’s “clear and strong” support for Iran in its war with Israel while also backing US efforts to de-escalate the situation.

“We want this war to end immediately,” he said.

One of the most consequential developments during Munir’s visit, however, has been Pakistan’s strengthened counterterrorism partnership with the United States, particularly against the Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K) group, the paper said. Gen Michael Kurilla, head of US Central Command, recently described Pakistan as a “phenomenal partner” in the fight against ISIS-K, praising Islamabad’s operations along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

Gen Kurilla revealed to the House Armed Services Committee that Pakistani operations, supported by US intelligence, had killed dozens of IS-K militants and captured multiple high-value individuals, including Mohammad Sharifullah, one of the masterminds of the Abbey Gate bombing in Kabul that killed 13 American troops.

Berliners jump into Spree to show its cleanliness

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Berlin

A century after the city of Berlin banned swimming in the Spree River because it was so polluted it could make people sick, there’s a push by swimmers to get back into the water.

Around 200 people jumped into the slow-moving, greenish water Tuesday to show that it’s not only clean enough, but also lots of fun to splash and swim in the Mitte neighbourhood along the world-famous Museum Island.

A group calling itself Fluss Bad Berlin, or River Pool Berlin, has been lobbying for years to open the meandering river for swimmers again.

“For 100 years now, people have not been allowed to swim in the inner-city Spree and we no longer think this is justified, because we can show that the water quality is usually good enough to go swimming during the season,” said Jan Edler, who is on the board of Fluss Bad Berlin and helped organize Tuesday’s swim-in.

To circumvent the ban, the group registered their collective

swim event as an official protest.

Standing on a little staircase that leads down to the Spree canal, which flows around the southern side of the island, Edler stressed that “we want the people to use the Spree for recreation again.”

He pointed to the fact that the river has been cleaned up thoroughly, and that the water quality has improved in the last decade and is constantly being monitored.

Even city officials in the central Mitte district of Berlin say they’d be interested in introducing river swimming again in 2026.

“There are still many things that need to be clarified, but I am optimistic that it can succeed,” district city councilor Ephraim Gothe told German news agency dpa recently.

Supporters of lifting the swimming ban also point at Paris, where the Seine River was opened up for swimmers for the Olympic Games last year and will be opened this summer for Parisians. Swimming there had been banned since 1923.

Man charged with killing US lawmaker could face death

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Minneapolis

The man charged with killing a prominent Minnesota lawmaker and wounding another could face something that is a rarity for Minnesota but could become more common under the Trump administration: the death penalty.

Minnesota abolished capital punishment in 1911, and the state’s last execution was a botched hanging in 1906. But federal prosecutors announced charges against Vance Boelter on Monday that can carry the death penalty. It’s not unheard of for state and federal prosecutors to both pursue criminal cases for the same offense, especially in high-profile matters.

In this case federal authorities essentially grabbed the lead from the state prosecutor, Hennepin County Attorney Mary Moriarty. Boelter had been scheduled to make his first court appearance on state charges Monday, but instead marshals took him from the county jail to the US courthouse in St Paul, where he appeared on the more serious federal charges.

Boelter is accused of fatally shooting former Democratic House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, in their home early Saturday in the northern Minneapolis suburbs. Before that, authorities say, he also shot and wounded another

Democrat, Sen. John Hoffman, and his wife, Yvette, who lived a few miles away. He surrendered Sunday night after what authorities have called the largest search in Minnesota history.

The federal case Two of the six federal counts can carry the death penalty, something federal prosecutors have not sought in a Minnesota-based case since the Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976.

“Will we seek the death penalty? It’s too early to tell. That is one of the options,” Acting US Attorney Joseph Thompson said Monday at a news conference where he revealed new details of what he described as a meticulously planned attack.

They included allegations that Boelter also stopped at the homes of two other lawmakers that night and had dozens of other Democrats as potential targets, including officials in other states.

Boelter’s federal defenders have declined to comment on the case, and he has not entered a plea.

On her first day in office in February, Attorney General Pam Bondi lifted a moratorium on federal executions that was imposed under the Biden administration in 2021. Only three defendants remain on federal death row after Biden converted 37 of their sentences to life in prison. Bondi has since authorized feder-

al prosecutors to seek the death penalty in at least three cases, including against Luigi Mangione for the killing of UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson. In the other two cases, the Justice Department has said it is seeking the death penalty against defendants charged with killing fellow prison inmates.

President Donald Trump’s first administration carried out 13 federal executions, more than the administration of any other president in modern history.

Boelter is accused of fatally shooting former Democratic House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, in their home early Saturday in the northern Minneapolis suburbs

The state’s case

The federal intervention in Boelter’s case appeared to irritate Moriarty, the county’s former chief public defender, who was elected on a police reform and racial justice platform in 2022 after the police killing of George Floyd. At a news conference Monday to announce the state charges, Moriarty gave only vague answers in response to questions about the interplay between the federal and state

investigations. But she acknowledged “there’s a tension” and said federal officials “can speak for themselves.”

Moriarty said she intends to press forward in state court regardless and to seek an indictment for first-degree murder for the killings of the Hortmans, which would carry a mandatory sentence of life without parole. Her office did not immediately respond to a request for further comment Tuesday.

As evidence of the tensions, the county attorney refused to clarify how Boelter’s first hearings would play out. Court records show that Boelter was called for a first appearance in Hennepin County on Monday and that because he was not there as he was in federal custody, the judge issued a bench warrant as a formality, as requested by prosecutors.

“Usually murder cases are overwhelmingly handled in state courts,” said Mark Osler, a death penalty expert at the University of St. Thomas School of Law in Minneapolis. “Clearly this is something of national interest. And that seemed to play a role in the decision that the Justice Department is making here.”

Osler, who formerly served as Moriarty’s deputy county attorney and head of her criminal division, as well as assistant U.S. Attorney in Detroit, acknowledged that there are often tensions between state and federal pros-

ecutors. “There’s no doubt that it’s complicated,” Osler said. “And it’s hard to avoid the sense of the older sibling grabbing something away from the younger sibling.”

What’s next

If federal officials do pursue the death penalty, Osler said, they will face an unusual challenge: “a jury pool drawn from the citizens of a state that has rejected the death penalty for over 100 years. It’s not the same as choosing people in a state where there’s a history of support for the death penalty, such as Texas.”

After his federal court appearance, Boelter was taken to the Sherburne County Jail in suburban Elk River, where federal prisoners are often held. Thompson told reporters that the federal case “does not nullify the state charges. They remain in place. My expectation based on prior cases is the federal case, the federal charges, will be litigated first, but the state charges won’t necessarily go anywhere.”

Boelter’s next federal court appearance is June 27. He does not have any further appearances scheduled in state court. “There’s a natural competitiveness that occurs sometimes between jurisdictions, but you have to hope that in the end, they’re all facing the same way where there’s something as important to public safety as this case is,” Osler said.

Corporate sector pillar of economic growth: President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said that the corporate sector is a key pillar of the nation's economic growth and development.

While addressing officer trainees of the Indian Corporate Law Service, she noted that their decisions would influence not only policies and regulations but also the trust that citizens and investors have in the country's institutions.

As officers entrusted with the implementation and enforcement of corporate laws, "your role will be central in nurturing

a business environment that is transparent, accountable and conducive" to innovation and entrepreneurship, the President said.

"The corporate sector is a key pillar of our nation's economic growth and development," Murmu told the trainees, who had called on her at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here. Referring to the Companies Act of 2013, she highlighted their responsibility to ensure that the law is not only enforced but also understood, respected, and applied in a way that promotes justice, fairness and opportunity for all.

The officer trainees of the Defence Aeronautical Quality



Assurance Service and Central Labour Service also met the President.

Addressing the trainees, she asserted that quality in military aviation is not just about meeting technical specifications-it is about ensuring operational safety, mission preparedness, reliability, and strategic superiority.

"You have a prime responsibility to ensure that all military aviation stores, whether indigenously produced or imported, meet the stringent quality and airworthiness requirements at par with the highest global standards," Murmu said.

The President further emphasised that augmenting defence capabilities requires not only

strengthening public sector undertakings but also actively handholding and enabling the private sector.

"By integrating private enterprises into the defence ecosystem through supportive policies and technology transfers, India can accelerate indigenisation efforts and position itself as a global defence manufacturing hub," she added.

Citing 2025 as the 'Year of Defence Reforms', she urged the trainees to develop innovative approaches to transform the armed forces into technologically advanced, combat-ready forces capable of multi-domain, integrated operations.

"As you take on the challenges

of public service, you should remember that your decisions and actions have the power to transform lives. In your respective domains, you will be the torchbearers of good governance, transparency, and accountability," the President said.

In addressing the probationers of the Central Labour Service, she remarked that they are the custodians of the law, responsible for upholding compliance with labour laws that protect workers' rights and dignity.

"The decisions you make and the actions you take have far-reaching implications for both industry and society.

PM, Chancellor Merz discuss bilateral ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Kananaskis (Canada)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday met German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and discussed ways to strengthen bilateral cooperation in key areas such as trade and investment, defence and security, green energy and technology. The two leaders, who met on the sidelines of the G7 Summit here, also exchanged views on regional and international developments.

Prime Minister Modi thanked Chancellor Merz for Germany's strong expression of solidarity with India and support to its actions in the fight against terrorism. "The two leaders agreed that terrorism constitutes a major threat to peace and stability in the world," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a statement.

In a post on X, Modi said he and Chancellor Merz had discussions on deepening defence and security linkages. "We will keep working together in areas like counter terrorism and striking down on terror financing," he said. "Delighted to hold talks with Chancellor Friedrich Merz on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Canada. India and Germany are close friends, connected by shared values. This year, we mark 25 years of our

Strategic Partnership," Modi said. He said the two sides discussed how to work even more closely in areas like IT, manufacturing, semiconductors, sustainability, research and innovation. This was the first meeting between the two leaders since

This was the first meeting between the two leaders since Chancellor Merz assumed office in May 2025

Chancellor Merz assumed office in May 2025.

Prime Minister Modi congratulated the Chancellor on his victory in the elections and his assumption of office. He also expressed deep appreciation for the German Government's condolences on the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad last week, the MEA said.

"The leaders expressed happiness at the sustained momentum in the bilateral relationship and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthen cooperation in key areas of trade and investment, defence and security, green and sustainable development partnership, green energy, technology, innovation, education and mobility," it said.

Insurers struggle to settle claims of AI crash victims

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Ahmedabad

Insurance companies are facing challenges in settling claims of the Ahmedabad Air India plane crash victims last week as in many cases the policyholders and nominees both have died in the tragedy.

There are instances of an entire family perishing or one of the spouses dying in the horrific June 12 crash of the London-bound plane, which claimed the lives of 241 persons on board and 29 on the ground.

Immediately after the accident, the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRADI) asked insurance companies to verify details of the deceased with their database on issuance of the overseas



medical insurance, personal accident and life insurance policies. The advisory also stated no claim was to be denied or delayed due to procedural formalities in the case of confirmed

deceased individuals from the passengers' list and persons at buildings affected by the crash.

Accordingly, major insurers like the Life Insurance Corporation of India, New

India Assurance, HDFC Life, Ifico Tokio General Insurance, Bajaj Allianz GIC and Tata AIG Insurance have set up their help desks at the Ahmedabad Civil Hospital to

expedite the process.

The insurers said they are matching the data shared by authorities with their database and are proactively reaching out to the families.

LIC administrative officer Ashish Shukla told PTI that the company has so far received 10 claims at the hospital and its offices.

There is one case where the insured individual nominated the spouse and both died in the accident, said the officer from the country's largest insurance company.

Manpreet Singh Sabharwal, manager (claims) at Ifico Tokio insurance, also pointed to a case where the director of a company and his wife, who was his nominee, died in the plane crash.

Agriculture minister promises action on substandard inputs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Wednesday said the Government will tighten seeds and pesticides legislations and may bring amendments to the existing laws to ensure quality inputs to farmers.

The minister pointed that many farmers have raised concerns about the quality of seeds and pesticides during the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan, a pan-India campaign to reach out to the farmer community.

The campaign was launched on May 29 from Puri, Odisha and concluded on June 12 at Bardoli, Gujarat.

Briefing reporters about the outcome of this campaign, Chouhan said, "The campaign was very successful. We engaged directly with 1.34 crore farmers across 1.43 lakh villages in 721 districts." As many as 60,281 programmes were conducted including in tribal, aspirational and border districts.

He described the campaign as 'One Nation-One Agriculture-One Team' as it was a collaborative effort between the Centre and States involving 2,170 teams

Based on the feedback, Chouhan said the ministry has decided to tighten seeds, pesticides laws to curb sales of sub-standard inputs

comprising 8,280 scientists of ICAR and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs).

New research, crop advisory based on soil health and climatic condition of each district and benefits of natural/organic farming were discussed.

"Many suggestions came from our

farmers which are very useful. While making plans and policies we will try to keep those suggestions in mind," Chouhan said.

Scientists will also undertake research based on farmers feedback and many innovations done by progressive farmers would be popularised, he added.

Based on the feedback, Chouhan said the ministry has decided to tighten seeds and pesticides legislations to curb sales of sub-standard inputs and also make KVKs a nodal agency in every districts for better coordination among all stakeholders.

CEA highlights India's strength amid global uncertainty

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Thiruvananthapuram

India remains a rare "bright spot" in a world facing growing uncertainty, said Chief Economic Advisor (CEA) V Anantha Nageswaran, pointing to the country's steady economic performance despite ongoing global challenges.

The CEA said that while conflicts and disruptions have been part of the global scene since 2022, they have become more intense and unpredictable, making the overall environment-whether political, economic or security-related-far more difficult for growth across the world.

"You could say that downside risks are higher than the potential for upside surprises," Nageswaran said, when asked for his views on the impact on the Indian economy due to rising global uncertainties caused by military conflicts in West Asia, between Ukraine and Russia, and also between India and Pakistan, as well as tariff wars.

He said this is not just a problem for India - it's affecting



many countries.

"To some extent, one can say that the global environment today-whether political, economic or related to security-has become considerably more complicated and more challenging for growth, not just for India but for several countries, almost for the entire world economy," the CEA said.

But under these circumstances, Nageswaran said he believes that India does indeed stand out as a relatively "bright spot."

Noting that India's economy

has shown resilience since the COVID-19 pandemic, achieving strong growth while also improving its fiscal health, he said, "We have reduced the fiscal deficit and brought down Government debt levels."

According to him, this has helped build confidence among investors, as reflected in the narrowing gap between Indian and US 10-year Government bond yields- "something we've never seen at this level before."

The CEA said India's current growth of around 6.5 per cent is a significant achievement

under the circumstances.

Given how tough the global climate has become since the 2008 financial crisis, maintaining this rate is no small feat, he said. While the Government continues efforts to raise the growth rate to 7 per cent and beyond, Nageswaran cautioned that the world is no longer operating under the same favourable conditions it once did.

The CEA said that the Government is doing the hard work to grow faster, but even maintaining a 6.5 per cent growth rate was a solid outcome in today's world.

Nageswaran said India's strategic edge in its ongoing tensions with Pakistan, along with its steady economic reforms, is reinforcing the country's image as a stable and secure investment destination.

India has not only asserted clear dominance in the recent standoff with Pakistan but also demonstrated maturity and confidence in global diplomatic forums. This has contributed to the perception of India as a reliable and strong economy, Nageswaran said in response to

a query. He added that India's status as a reliable investment destination is also supported by the fact that the country has recovered from the COVID-19 pandemic shock far better than many other nations — in terms of growth rate, job creation, and fiscal management.

Asked whether India's superior strategic position in the conflict with Pakistan is influencing defence-related industrial growth, particularly under the 'Make in India' and Atma Nirbhar Bharat initiatives, he said that indigenous equipment has performed well and boosted morale.

He said this success has encouraged greater self-reliance.

According to him, in today's shifting geopolitical climate, India cannot afford to depend on unreliable supply chains. Nageswaran said the country must produce domestically to ensure strategic autonomy.

The CEA added that India's defence sector has made strong gains over the past decade under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, with exports steadily rising.

Reliance Infra partners Dassault to make Falcon business jets in India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

Anil Ambani's Reliance Infrastructure has forged a landmark strategic partnership with French aerospace major Dassault Aviation to manufacture Falcon 2000 business executive jets in India for the global markets, the firms announced on Wednesday.

The announcement, made at the Paris Air Show, marks the first instance of Falcon 2000 jets being produced outside of France. In a move that signifies a major leap for India's aerospace manufacturing capabilities, the collaboration will establish a final assembly line for the Falcon 2000 jets in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

When the Nagpur facility starts, India will join the elite club of countries producing business jets after the United States, France, Canada and Brazil. "Dassault Aviation and Reliance Infrastructure subsidiary, Reliance Aerostructure Limited (RAL) today at the Paris Air Show announced a

he Dassault Falcon 2000 is a versatile and efficient twin-engine business jet. It can typically accommodate 8 to 10 passengers

landmark strategic partnership to manufacture Falcon 2000 business executive jets in India for the global markets," the firms said in a statement.

The Dassault Falcon 2000 is a versatile and efficient twin-engine business jet. It can typically accommodate 8 to 10 passengers.

With over 10,000 military and civil aircraft (including 2,700 Falcons) delivered in more than 90 countries over the last century, Dassault Aviation has built up expertise recognised worldwide in the design, production, sale and support of all types of aircraft, ranging from the Rafale fighter, to the high-end Falcon family of business jets, military drones and space systems.

The joint venture between

Dassault Aviation and Reliance Aerostructure (DRAL) was established in 2017. The operations commenced with the setting up of a state-of-the-art manufacturing facility at Miham, Nagpur, later that year.

Since delivering its first Falcon 2000 front section in 2019, RAL has assembled over 100 major sub-sections for the Falcon 2000, underscoring its world-class precision manufacturing capabilities and playing an integral role in the Falcon global production program.

The partnership represents a significant step in advancing India's aerospace manufacturing capabilities.

"This pioneering initiative will see India emerge as a strategic centre for high-end business jet manufacturing," the statement said. "It marks a historic moment for Indian aerospace and manufacturing industry, as the landmark agreement paves way for India's entry into the elite club of countries producing next-generation business jets, alongside the United States, France, Canada, and Brazil."

KYC registration agencies get a shot in the arm from SEBI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

Markets regulator SEBI on Wednesday proposed that all KYC registration agencies should be eligible to function as accreditation agencies, which is currently restricted to subsidiaries of stock exchanges and depositories.

Additionally, it has been proposed to facilitate the onboarding of accredited investors based on first-level due diligence by the manager of an AIF.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has sought public comments till July 8 on the proposals.

There are two accreditation agencies in the securities market — CDSL Ventures Ltd, and NSDL Data Management Ltd

In its consultation paper, SEBI has proposed that "eligibility criteria for accreditation agencies may be expanded such that all KRAs (KYC registration agencies) are eligible to function as accreditation agencies, as against only the subsidiaries of stock exchange and depositories as per current eligibility".

Under the current regulatory framework, only subsidiaries of stock exchanges (with certain

conditions) and depositories are eligible to become an accreditation agency.

Presently, there are two accreditation agencies operational in the securities market —CDSL Ventures Ltd, a subsidiary of CDSL, and NSDL Data Management Ltd, an arm of NSDL. Both entities are also registered as KYC registration agencies (KRAs) with SEBI.

There are five KRAs registered with the market regulator.

Also, the watchdog believes that it would be an opportune time now to make this transition since both the currently operational accreditation agencies are KRAs and there would be no disruption to the existing accreditation ecosystem.

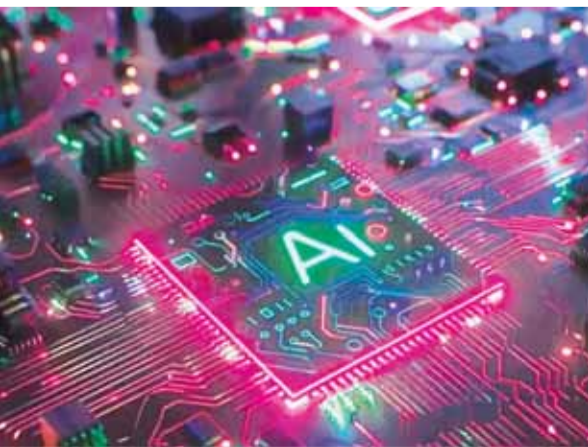
Embedding AI into operations will lead next phase: Tata Consumer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

Artificial Intelligence is rapidly transforming almost every function in the FMCG sector and investments in digital ecosystem will help Tata Consumer Products operate with greater precision and speed, a senior company official said on Wednesday.

Stressing the importance of Artificial Intelligence (AI), TCPL Director PB Balaji while chairing the company's AGM, said the companies that embed AI deeply into operations will lead the next phase of value creation.

Artificial Intelligence is also rapidly transforming every function, right from demand forecast to inventory optimi-



sation and pricing resilience to pricing intelligence, Balaji said, adding that digital first marketing and hyper-personalisation are rewriting the brand playbook in the FMCG sector.

TCPL, the Tata group FMCG arm, is "leveraging these trends with a bold strategy, disciplined execution and ambition to build a future-ready FMCG powerhouse."

"Our investments in AI, talent, and the digital ecosystem will help us operate with greater precision and speed," he said, adding, "We have built a strong foundation, which has been shaped by the values of the Tata Group, and a portfolio of purposeful brands, a resilient operating model."

Now, consumers are becoming more health-conscious, seeking better products from you and organic options. There is a clear trend of "pre-miiumisation", which is happening across the vertical, even in staples, he said.

TCPL, which was formed five years ago after merging the consumer products business of Tata Chemicals with Tata Global Beverages, has undergone significant transforma-

tion. It operates across multiple categories and brands "that touch millions of lives on a daily basis."

At a time when global growth is expected to moderate in the near-term, India remains one of the fastest-growing large economies in the world, and there are significant shifts in consumer behaviours and business models.

With factors such as growing urbanisation, time constraint, consumers are seeking convenience, leading to rising demand for cooking aids, ready-to-drink beverages and snacking.

In revenue terms, TCPL has grown at an annualised rate of 13 per cent, EBITDA has grown at 14 per cent and net profit at 23 per cent.

Monterrey draws with Inter Milan in Club World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Pasadena (USA)

Inter Milan was held to a 1-1 draw by Monterrey in the Club World Cup opener Tuesday night in the Italian power's first match since losing the Champions League final.

Veteran Spanish star Sergio Ramos scored on a stunning first-half header for Monterrey, delighting the decidedly pro-Mexico crowd in Southern California for Monterrey coach Domènec Torrent's own debut.

Lautaro Martínez evened it late in the first half for Inter, but the Champions League finalists couldn't generate a second goal despite having nearly 62 per cent possession while Monterrey got only one shot on target.

Inter manager Cristian Chivu made his debut as the Nerazzurri returned to competition at the Rose Bowl just 17 days after taking that 5-0 thrashing from Paris Saint-Germain in Munich.

After the 39-year-old



Ramos put Los Rayados ahead, Martínez answered in the 42nd minute with a tap-in of Carlos Augusto's pass after a world-class sequence of ball movement from a setpiece.

Martínez thought he scored again in the 68th minute, but was offside. Both teams narrowly missed goals in the final minutes and Martínez picked up a yellow card in second-half injury time.

Chivu started only seven of Simone Inzaghi's choices for the Champions League final. Ailing striker Marcus Thuram came on early in the second half to replace 22-year-old Sebastiano Esposito, who started his first game back from seven loan stints since his previous appearance for Inter in 2020. Key momentInter carried play early, but Ramos capitalized on Monterrey's first

corner kick by outjumping two defenders and converting an acrobatic header. The Real Madrid stalwart and World Cup winner joined Monterrey four months ago.

TakeawaysInter still hasn't shaken off the disappointment in Munich, but both teams now have a good chance to advance from a group also including River Plate and Urawa Red Diamonds.

River Plate beat Urawa Red Diamonds in Club World Cup



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Seattle (USA)

Sebastian Driussi scored for River Plate but was injured in the process, Marcos Acuña recorded two assists and the Argentine club beat the Urawa Red Diamonds 3-1 in the Club World Cup at Lumen Field on Tuesday.

Driussi's goal three minutes into the second half made it 2-0, but he collided with goalkeeper Shusaku Nishikawa and fell to the ground in pain, grabbing his ankle. He limped off the field with assistance

and was replaced by Miguel Borja. Coach Marcelo Gallardo said after the game that Driussi will undergo testing on the ankle. Facundo Colidio and Maximiliano Meza also scored for River Plate.

Yusuke Matsuo converted a penalty for the Japanese club in the 58th minute. Takuro Kaneko drew the foul and yellow card on Acuña. The kick was delayed by pushing and shoving at the penalty box's edge, resulting in a yellow for German Pezzella.

Colidio scored in the 12th minute on a header off a

cross from Acuña, and Meza restored River Plate's two-goal advantage in the 73rd minute off Acuña's corner kick service.

Key momentFranco Armani saved a strong shot from the center of the box by Thiago Santana in the 90th minute to preserve River Plate's two-goal advantage.

TakeawaysAttendance for the noon kickoff was announced at 11,974.

Lumen Field has a capacity of 68,740. But both teams had a significant fan presence for their Club World Cup opener.

Borussia Dortmund, Fluminense end in draw

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
East Rutherford (USA)

Borussia Dortmund and Fluminense played to a 0-0 draw in the Club World Cup on Tuesday in rainy conditions before a crowd of just less than half capacity at MetLife Stadium that heavily favored the Brazilian club.

Fluminense's best scoring chance came in the 58th minute on a left-footed shot by Agustín Canobbio from the center of the box that was saved by Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

Newly signed Jobe Bellingham, the brother of Real Madrid star Jude Bellingham, made his debut for Dortmund in the 59th minute as a substitute for Pascal Gross.

American midfielder Gio Reyna was dressed for Dortmund but did not play.

The crowd of 34,763 was tilted toward Fluminense, with fans waving flags and singing for their team.

Liverpool defends Premier League title against Bournemouth

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
London

Liverpool will begin its latest Premier League title defense at home to Bournemouth on August 15, while Manchester United will host Arsenal in the opening round of next season.

The Premier League released its fixture schedule for the 2025-26 season on Wednesday, giving teams and their fans a chance to start planning less than a month since the last campaign finished.

Liverpool will be bidding for a third league championship in six years, likely with Florian Wirtz in its squad and will play the first match of the season in a Friday night start at Anfield against a Bournemouth team that finished in ninth place.

It's quite a tough beginning for Arne Slot's champions, with a trip to Newcastle in the second round followed by a home match against Arsenal — another team in the Champions League — a week later.

Arsenal, which finished second for a third straight year last season, heads to Old Trafford for its first game and will play Liverpool, Manchester City and Newcastle in its opening six matches. Everton bade farewell to its long-time home at Goodison Park at the end of last season and the first game in its state-of-the-art, 53,000-capacity stadium at Bramley-Moore Dock will be against Brighton on Aug. 23. Thomas Frank's first Premier League game in charge of Tottenham will be at home to promoted Burnley on Aug 16. That comes three days after Frank's competitive debut with Tottenham, the Europa League champion, against Champions League winner Paris Saint-Germain in the UEFA Super Cup.

Not even Saudi Arabia or FIFA could get Cristiano Ronaldo to Club World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Miami Gardens (Florida, USA)

In the end, not even Saudi Arabia or Gianni Infantino could engineer a way to get Cristiano Ronaldo to the Club World Cup.

FIFA president Infantino certainly tried — last month making a public appeal ahead of the tournament.

"If any club is watching and is interested in hiring Ronaldo for the Club World Cup," he teased during an interview with YouTube iShowSpeed.

Ronaldo's contract with Saudi Arabian club Al-Nassr was due to expire and FIFA's decision to create a specially-made mini transfer window for its newest competition meant the path was clear for the Real Madrid great to sign a short-term deal with a new team just in time to take part.

Given his connection to Saudi Arabia, where he was the face of the oil-rich kingdom's spectacular drive to sign some of soccer's biggest stars in recent years, rumors began to circulate about a move to Al Hilal — the country's most successful team and its sole representative at the Club

World Cup.

The problem was that Al Hilal and Al-Nassr are cross-city rivals in Riyadh. And even if Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund majority owns both teams - along with others - that was a step too far.

"As much as I respect Ronaldo as a huge player, as we all recognise he is, it's certainly completely counter-intuitive that you bring the biggest player of your biggest opponent to play with you," Al Hilal chief executive Esteve Calzada told the BBC. "Even more when it's only for three to four weeks."

Maybe so, but Saudi Arabia, with its vast wealth, has a made habit out of turning the improbable into the possible. And the very fact the prospect of a short-term move between clubs was even rumored, points to the boundaries it has been able to push while making its big play to become a force in global sport.

It has, after all, already changed the face of golf and virtually cornered the market for big time boxing. F1 racing is a fixed event and top class tennis has been lured, as well.

It's ambitions in soccer have been the most spectacular of

all - winning the right to host the 2034 World Cup, buying one of the Premier League's most iconic teams in Newcastle and luring a slew of superstar players to a league that has nothing like the profile of those in Europe or Latin America.

Most recently it has played a role in helping to fund the Club World Cup — either directly or indirectly — with a reported \$1 billion investment in tournament broadcaster DAZN and a commercial partnership with FIFA, which has put up a (USD one) \$1 billion prize pot for teams competing.

The Club World Cup is the chance for Saudi Arabia to make a latest statement on the international stage in its first chance test one of its elite clubs against the best from around the globe — starting with 15-time European champion Real Madrid at Miami's Hard Rock Stadium on Wednesday.

That is why it is surprising there wasn't more of a push to furnish Al Hilal with the type of marquee signing Saudi Arabian clubs have been collecting since Ronaldo's move opened the floodgates at the end of 2022.

The four-time Asian champion even released Brazil great Neymar in January after an ACL injury reduced him to just seven appearances following his \$94 million move from Paris Saint-Germain in 2023. A move was made for Manchester United captain Bruno Fernandes just before the Club World Cup, but the Portugal midfielder rejected the offer. There was also reported interest in striker Victor Osimhen and Darwin Nunez, though no major deals were secured before the team flew out to the United States.

"The club is working in order to improve the team, and I believe this will be done. Now it's pointless to talk about market because the market is closed," coach Simone Inzaghi Tuesday. And he still has big money recruits from overseas in the form of players like Aleksandar Mitrovic, Joao Cancelo, Kalidou Koulibaly and Ruben Neves. But the significant acquisition made ahead of the tournament was Inzaghi himself, who left Italian giant Inter Milan earlier this month to become arguably the highest profile coach to head to Saudi Arabia.

Alex Freeman breaks through with US football team



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
California

Antonio Freeman had tears in his eyes when 20-year-old son Alex walked onto the field for his US Debut against Turkey on June 7.

"It just gives me chills," the former All-Pro wide receiver and Super Bowl champion said. "He has on a USA jersey. He's representing his country. That's probably the top level of recognition you could possibly get."

With Sergiño Dest still regaining fitness after a torn ACL, Freeman started at right back Sunday in the Americans' opening win over Trinidad and Tobago at the CONCACAF Gold Cup. He is among the young players hoping to impress coach Mauricio Pochettino as he considers next year's World Cup roster.

Freeman's ascent has been unexpected. He played just 11 minutes of first-team league soccer before this season.

"Alex, to be honest, I had no idea who you were before you got called up," American midfielder Luca de la Torre said Tuesday, turning toward Freeman and smiling during a news conference.

Now 53, Antonio played nine seasons in the NFL, mak-

ing the All-Pro team in 1998 and winning the 1997 Super Bowl with the Green Bay Packers.

"Growing up I always got asked if football was the path, but when I was younger I always had a secret love for soccer," Alex said.

He also played basketball as a kid. Alex's mom rejects the notion she directed him away from American football.

"The real story is Alex didn't want to play football and he didn't want to tell his dad that," Rochelle Hinkle said. "They all use me as an excuse. He just wanted to make his own lane and his own path. He didn't have, I guess, the words to say it then."

Alex played for youth teams at Weston FC, near his home in the Fort Lauderdale suburb of Plantation. He wanted to play for Inter Miami's youth academy but was turned down.

Freeman then was recruited for Orlando City's academy by Javier Carrillo, his former Weston coach.

"Without him taking me in, maybe I might not be where I am today," Alex said. "Obviously moving at the age of 15 was something that was hard for me, being away from my family and everything, but I feel like it made me grow

up fast and I feel that that's something that I needed to do."

He moved to Orlando in 2020, during the coronavirus pandemic.

"I still have PTSD from that 'cause I wasn't done raising him," his mother said.

Freeman debuted for Orlando City B in the third-tier MLS Next Pro on March 26, 2022, and played his first match for the senior team in Major League Soccer on April 29, 2023, entering in second-half stoppage time.

He had two more substitute MLS appearances last year, totaling 10 minutes, then took over as starting right back this season from Dagur Dan Thórhallsson.

"Alex is player with little experience, but in soccer the desire, the capacity and the talent usually rise above experience," Pochettino said. "The reports we got on him were really good."

Freeman is competing for likely two right back roster spots with Dest, Joe Scally, Nathan Harriel, Bryan Reynolds, Shaq Moore and Marlon Fossey. Pochettino envisions narrowing his focus from a current group of 60 players when he makes roster selections for autumn friendlies.

England pick Pope over Bethell

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Leeds

Experienced pace bowler all-rounder Chris Woakes returned to the England line-up while Ollie Pope was preferred over Jacob Bethell as the hosts on Wednesday named their playing XI for the opening Test against India.

Woakes, who missed the previous two Tests due to an ankle injury, replaces Sam Cook, while Brydon Carse comes in for Gus Atkinson, who is sidelined with a hamstring issue.

Woakes' inclusion at number eight adds valuable all-round strength, allowing England to field Jamie Smith as a specialist wicketkeeper-batter at No. 7 while maintaining a deep batting line-up.

The hosts also named vice-

captain Ollie Pope at number three, opting for experience over youth as 21-year-old Bethell was sidelined.

Pope, who made 171 against Zimbabwe in his most recent outing, keeps his place despite a modest average of 22.05 from 18 combined Tests against India and Australia — a figure well below his career average of 35.49. The decision underlines England's emphasis on continuity and batting depth.

Bethell had impressed with three fifties against New Zealand last year including a career-best 96 from his modest three Test outings.

Shubman Gill-led India are yet to name their XI as they are expected to field a new-look top order following the retirements of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli.

Sergio Ramos scores for Monterrey in Club World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Pasadena (USA)

Sergio Ramos leaped in the air and soared back in time. The 39-year-old center back slipped through the penalty area, outfoxed two Inter Milan players and artfully headed home the first goal for Monterrey in the Club World Cup on Tuesday night. Just as he did for so many years in the shirts of Real Madrid and Spain's national team, Ramos combined smarts, timing and physicality to make an enormous play on an international stage.

Ramos' clever goal and his overall defensive play at the Rose Bowl were major factors in Monterrey's impressive 1-1 draw against the Champions League finalists in the clubs' first match of the tournament. "There is always a joy to



contribute to the team by scoring," Ramos said through an interpreter. "But if we can get points, that's even better. We played very well as a team. Of course, football showcases the goal, but we're here to share this experience."

Still, the moment was exactly what Ramos had in mind four months ago when he eschewed the comfortable life at a Saudi club or the lure of Major League Soccer to continue his professional career in Liga MX with Monterrey — a

proud and relatively wealthy club, but hardly the Mexican equivalent of Real Madrid or Paris Saint-Germain.

When he returned to the sport from a nine-month break, Ramos chose Rayados in part because they had

already qualified for the Club World Cup and he wanted to play with the world watching.

FIFA has been similarly eager to showcase the world's most famous players in this tournament, whether it's by quickly including Lionel Messi's Inter Miami on curious grounds, or by creating a special transfer window in an unsuccessful attempt to encourage a CWC club to sign Cristiano Ronaldo.

Ramos made it happen for himself - and then one of the greatest center backs in soccer history delivered in Monterrey's first match, complete with an appropriately flashy celebration with his thrilled teammates and their ecstatic fans.

While he showed his usual defensive prowess for much of the match against Inter, Ramos also has been a regular contrib-

utor on offense since signing with Monterrey, which has already made him its captain and a fan favorite.

Monterrey qualified for the Club World Cup way back in 2021 by winning the CONCACAF Champions League. At that time, Ramos was at PSG, only a few months removed from the end of his 16-year career at Madrid.

"He comes from football that we all know, and he has a lot of information that he can share with his teammates," new Monterrey coach Domènec Torrent said after his debut.

"This is always something that's very helpful. His character, his personality, he's a leader every day. The players, he expects much of them, but that's (good) because I have a leader on the pitch every day who knows what we expect."

Kohli will be missed in England: Boycott

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Leeds

India will miss Virat Kohli more than Rohit Sharma in the marquee Test series against England and the duo's recent retirement from the format will "hurt" the transitioning team's chances in the rubber starting on Friday, reckons the legendary Geoffrey Boycott.

The two heavyweights of world cricket will engage in five matches over the next six weeks, beginning their campaigns in the new World Test Championship (WTC) cycle. "The retirement of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma hurts the chances of India beating England. Kohli is the biggest loss as he has been their best batsman and talisman in all three formats," Boycott wrote in his latest column.

"With so much international cricket played by India, and so little rest, it takes its toll and the mind becomes fatigued." The former England captain called Kohli's absence a bigger blow.

"It does not matter how much talent or experience you have, if you are not mentally fresh and up for the challenge then it becomes



draining. "Rohit was a superb batsman. At his best, a beautiful stroke player, but he won't be missed as much as Kohli because his Test record was good rather than exceptional.

In the last couple of years his batting was a little inconsistent, which was not surprising in his late 30s.

"Rohit was never a natural athlete like Kohli and he

knows that opening the innings in England can be pretty tough because the new ball moves around more. You really have to be up for the challenge to have any chance of success.

"I just think that over time the wear and tear of opening the innings and being captain in all three formats wore him down," observed Boycott. The two stalwarts of Indian

cricket announced their retirement from the game's traditional format last month, after which, the BCCI appointed Shubman Gill as the team's captain in place of Rohit.

India last won a Test series in England in 2007, while the hosts come into the rubber after defeating Zimbabwe in a one-off Test at Trent Bridge last month.

Boycott has urged the Ben Stokes-led side to temper their Bazball style of batting and apply some common sense, as winning is more important than entertaining. "England should beat India if they temper Bazball and use some common sense. At times their cricket has been thrilling and super enjoyable but also reckless batting has lost them Test matches.

"Their only thought should be winning because it is no use telling us how good you are when the last three World Test Championship finals have been played in our country but England have not qualified for any of them. They should be embarrassed. Their aim should be to make the next WTC final.

"The new cycle starts now and somebody needs to get through to the England players that being a winner is better than being known as an entertainer. If you can win and entertain, that is a bonus. At the moment England are like a one-trick-pony."

The absence of Kohli and Rohit has certainly weakened the Indian batting but Boycott has cautioned England getting complacent and overconfident.

"It's Bazball or Bazball and that is the way we play; take it or leave it. They don't want to change or learn from their losses. It doesn't seem to make any difference that so many top class ex-England Test players keep telling them to moderate their batting.

"So please, get your act together, bring your best game and apply some cricket nous," Boycott concluded.

India has all bases covered: Joe Root

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Leeds

The void left by the retirements of Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma notwithstanding, England's top batter Joe Root feels the touring Indian side have got "all their bases covered" for the upcoming Test series, an opinion that contrasts with the views of some of his compatriots.

The two sides will feature in a five-match Test series starting at Headingley from Friday.

In the absence of Rohit and Kohli, who have announced their retirements from Test cricket last month, Shubman Gill will lead the team, which is a mix of youth and experience. "You can only be excited. These are the series you play for. The opportunities in front of us are epic," Root, 34, told former team-mate Stuart Broad on Wednesday.

"You know The Ashes is coming and you will be asked about it. People will be trying to relate stuff in the India series to that but you have a job to do against a brilliant team.

"You look at India's progression as a team across all formats and they have all bases covered

— great seam attack, talented batters and a very strong spin attack.

"They are going to compete anywhere in the world but our record at home makes for a fantastic series. We will go into it with confidence but also with a huge amount of respect for what they will bring," Root added.

With just over 1,300 runs in the traditional format, Root has already cemented his place among the greats of the game, and he will look to add to his tally in the upcoming matches against India and Australia.

Of his current tally of 13,006 runs, the Yorkshireman has scored 3,117 of them in the three years since he was replaced as captain by Ben Stokes.

Root has averaged 56.67 during what he describes as the most enjoyable period of his career. "Ben did so much for me as my vice-captain, now it's my turn to give a bit back to him," he said.

"It was difficult and weird coming back into the team after being leader. I didn't want to get in Ben's way or step on his toes but I wanted him to know I was there to support him."

Suryakumar Yadav flies to England

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Mumbai

India's T20 skipper Suryakumar Yadav has flown to England to consult a specialist for treating a sports hernia related injury, and, if necessary, he could undergo surgery.

Surya, 33, had a terrific Indian Premier League (IPL) for Mumbai Indians scoring over 700 runs, and also played the Mumbai Premier League T20 soon after.

It is not known if the pain

aggravated during the Mumbai T20 league as Surya had a gruelling three months of travelling and playing at a stretch.

"Surya is suffering from Sports hernia on right side lower abdomen. He has gone to the UK for consultation. If required, he will be going under the knife," a source close to the cricketer said on conditions of anonymity.

Suryakumar Yadav, who has played a lot of matches in his career through pain, wanted to fulfil his IPL and Mumbai T20 commitments.

AITA chief requests court to declare elections null, void

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

All India Tennis Association (AITA) President Anil Jain, against whom a no-confidence motion was proposed by State associations last year, has requested the Delhi High Court to declare null and void the federation elections conducted in September 2024, prompting irate Executive Committee (EC) members to call for a meeting on June 27.

One of the affiliated units of the AITA had alleged at that time Jain had used his position in the federation for personal

gains. The no-confidence motion, though, was withdrawn ahead of the AGM that elected a new body.

But since the election results remained with the court in a sealed envelope due to a petition filed by Somdev Devvarman and Purav Raja challenging the validity of the polls, the newly-elected office bearers remained outside the system. Responding to the same petition, Jain in his prayer, filed on May 26, said that the AITA elections should be declared null and void but requested the court not to appoint a Committee of Administrators (CoA), saying

it would "invite objections and adverse reactions from the ITF (world governing body) as well as the ATF (Asian body) and would also hinder the functioning of AITA."

The prayer said the ultimate objective of amending the constitution and ensuring efficient functioning of AITA at the same time can be achieved by the present management under the supervision of the court. However, the EC members claimed that Jain did not consult them before filing the reply on behalf of the federation.

"Such a reply needed EC concurrence. He can't just go

and file it in the court like this. EC has to pass a resolution, only then a petition or a reply can be filed. He is trying to disqualify all other members," Hironmoy Chatterjee, who issued the EC meeting notice, said. "As of today unauthorised people are running the organisation," Chatterjee added.

Jain said that he did not need to consult anyone.

"I am still President of AITA. They did not consult me when they filed a writ against the Secretary General. They have vested interest. I did not agree with the election process so I did not file my nomination. They did not follow tenure

guidelines of the Sports Code," Jain said. "AITA should be compliant of the Sports Code. It is fair. The EC meeting they have called is also illegal. The Secretary General has not called it and I have not been consulted for it," he said.

"They had brought that no-confidence motion against me on filthy and baseless ground."

AITA constitution says that it is the Secretary General, who can convene meetings of the Central Council and Executive Committee with the consent of the President.

Chatterjee, who is also President of Bengal Tennis Association (BTA), explained

that the constitution also empowers the EC members to call a meeting if the Secretary General does not do so within a month of the receipt by him of a requisition in writing from three members.

"We can call EC meeting. Clause 8 (d) (iii) of AITA Rules and Regulations empowers us to do that," Chatterjee, who is also AITA Vice President (Sports) said.

When Secretary General Anil Dhupar was approached, he admitted that such a rule empowers the members to call for a meeting but that should be under 'normal circumstances'.

England wants to have good surface against India: curator

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Leeds

The unusually dry weather, combined with England's aggressive style of play, has increased expectations of a "good surface" for the opening Test against India beginning on Friday, Leeds head of grounds Richard Robinson has said.

Leeds usually hosts a Test in the middle of a series but staging of the opening game has attracted a lot more attention.

"They (England) just want to have a good surface so it's true, really, so we can hit through the line of the ball.



That's really what they're looking for," Richard Robinson, head of grounds at Leeds, was quoted as saying by 'ESPNcricinfo'.

Robinson expects the pitch to aid the fast bowlers on the opening day before flattening out due to the expected heat.

A batting surface would not only suit England's Bazball, it would also bring the inexperienced Indian batting line-up much more into the contest.

Following the retirement of Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, KL Rahul will be the senior-most in the Indian side led by Shubman Gill, who will have a point to prove considering his ordi-

nary record in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia) countries.

The line-up also includes Yashasvi Jaiswal, who is on his maiden tour of England with the senior team, and Karun Nair, who last played a Test in 2017.

While India arrived here on Monday, England had a training session at Headingley where the surface remained covered during the day.

India have not played here a lot over the last two decades. They suffered an innings defeat in 2021 and in their previous outing in 2002, they registered a famous victory.

Missing James Anderson: A constant in India-England rivalry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

To say the least, a relatively inexperienced batting line up led by Shubman Gill would be relieved to see the name of James Anderson, once a constant in the multiple chapters of India-England rivalry over the past two decades, missing in the opposition roster.

From Anderson's first series against India in 2006 to the last one in 2024, the age defying fast bowler kept the celebrated Indian batting line-up on their toes — his battles with the great Sachin Tendulkar in late 2000s or the much more animated duels with Virat Kohli in the previous decade still fresh in one's mind.

Fast forward to 2025, both India and England have moved on from Kohli and Anderson respectively but considering the injuries to the likes of Jofra Archer and Mark Wood, Ben Stokes may have indulged in wishful thinking, imagining the holder of a record 704 Test wickets opening the bowling at Leeds.

If Anderson can return to county cricket to bail out a



struggling Lancashire 12 months after his fitting farewell, trust him to do the same for a depleted England attack.

That is unlikely to happen but by sheer weight of his performances over his 21-year-old career, Anderson has immortalised himself in India-England cricket history with the series trophy named after him and Tendulkar, whom he was able to dismiss nine times.

Anderson not only defied age to last as long as he did for

a fast bowler, the hallmark of his career was relentless accuracy and exemplary control over his ability to swing the ball both ways.

Courtesy these special skills, Anderson was able to exploit Kohli's weakness around the off-stump in the 2014 series before the latter overcame those mental demons four years later to "dominate" the world's most prolific pacer in the longest format.

"I really exploited, he had a weakness outside off stump,

really exploited that and then the next time I played against him (in 2018) he'd obviously gone away and worked on that and it was like bowling at a different player," Anderson told talkSport recently.

Come Friday, the likely opening combination of K L Rahul and Yashasvi Jaiswal will have one less challenge to deal with: no Anderson with a brand new Dukes ball.

In the 39 Tests he played against India home and away, Anderson amassed 149 wick-

ets at a very fine average of 25.47.

The best of fast bowlers struggled in India but he reinvented his game to end with 44 wickets in 17 Tests in polar opposite conditions. His mastery of reverse swing allowed him to do that.

Former England opener Nick Knight said the Indian batting line up minus Kohli and Rohit Sharma would be happy to see Anderson out of the park but England made the right call by looking at the future.

"England will move forward now. And they've got plenty of talent, plenty of abilities like all these guys. But I'm certainly sure that India would be happy to see him getting retired now.

"And I think the last series that Indian won (in England) was in 2007, probably Jimmy was part of that series as well. So, he's been a constant," Knight said.

He feels the timing to rename the trophy after Tendulkar and Anderson could not be better.

"It's a very, very fine tribute. And the right sort of timing for the Jimmy Anderson-

Tendulkar trophy. Just the kind of right thing to do in such an iconic series. I played with Jimmy when he first came in.

"I was sort of someone at the back end of my career. And he was just starting out. You could see right from the start he was a lad who had great control of the swinging ball.

"And very little discernible difference between the one that went in and the one that went away. I think that of all the little skills he had, technically that was a great skill. It's very difficult to predict which way the ball was going out of his hand.

"Very similar action as well. Did not give away tell-tale signs. So, he was very difficult to face. Obviously, he had enough nip and pace as well. Yeah, I mean, obviously the numbers look after themselves," added Knight.

If not rescuing Lancashire in county cricket, Anderson would have been plotting the Indian batters' downfall as a fast bowling mentor in the England dressing room.

The absence of Anderson and Kohli would certainly take some sheen off the series but expect new stars to be born.

India to face Pakistan in Women's T20 WC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Dubai

India will take on arch-rivals Pakistan in their Opening match of ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026 at Edgbaston on June 14.

The ICC and hosts England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on Wednesday announced the full schedule of the tournament, featuring 12 teams.

The 24-day long tournament will be held from June 12 to July 5 next year and will consist of a total of 33 matches to be played across seven venues in England.

Arch-rivals India and Pakistan will kickstart their campaigns at Edgbaston, whereas the opening match of the tournament will be between hosts England and Sri Lanka at Edgbaston on June 12.

Hampshire Bowl, Headingley, Old Trafford, The Oval, Bristol County Ground and Lord's are the other venues of the competition.

The two semifinals will be played at The Oval on June 30 and July 2, and the final will be at Lord's on July 5.

The 12-team competition will have two groups of six teams each. The Group 1 consists of six-time winners Australia, last edition's runner-up South Africa, India, Pakistan and two qualifying teams.

The Group 2 consists of defending champions New Zealand, West Indies, Sri Lanka, hosts England and two qualifying teams.

The top two teams from each group will advance to the semifinals. After their opening clash against Pakistan, India will move to Headingley for their contest against a qualifying team on June 17, followed by contest against South Africa at the Old Trafford on June 21.

While India will face the second qualifying team of Group 1 on June 25 at Old Trafford, their toughest game will be against Australia on June 28 at the 'Home of Cricket'.

Indian junior men's hockey team leaves for Berlin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

India's junior men's hockey team left for Berlin on Wednesday to compete in a four-nation Tournament from June 21 to 25, continuing its preparations for the World Cup to be held later this year.

Led by captain Arijait Singh Hundal with Amir Ali as his deputy, the Indian colts, who left early this morning from Bengaluru, will begin their campaign against host nation Germany on June 21.

They will then face Australia on June 22, followed by Spain on June 24 during the round-robin stage. All matches will take place in Berlin.

The tournament will con-

clude with classification matches on June 25, where the top two teams from the pool will compete for the championship, while the remaining two will contest the third-place position.

Speaking ahead of departure, captain Arijait Singh Hundal emphasised the tournament's significance in the lead-up to the World Cup later this year. The World Cup is scheduled to take place in Chennai and Madurai from November 28 to December 10. "This tournament is crucial for us ahead of the FIH Junior World Cup 2025. With just a few months to go, it's the perfect opportunity for us to assess our strengths, try out new combinations, and identify areas for improvement," he said.