



North India turns into sauna

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

North India including Delhi and NCR faced an uncomfortable sultry Tuesday which felt like an unrelenting furnace, making outdoor conditions tough. Alarmingly, a study by the Council on Energy Environment and Water (CEEW), also revealed that the number of very hot days are increasing in India, but the number of very warm nights is increasing even more posing health risks. The study said that Delhi, Maharashtra, Goa, Kerala, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh are among the 10 States with the highest heat risk. It further found that about 57 per cent of Indian districts, home to 76 per cent of the country's population, are currently at high to very high risk from extreme heat.

Delhi and NCR clocked a hot and humid day as a combination of clear skies and increased moisture on Tuesday making outdoor conditions uncomfortable for Delhiites. Although a maximum temperature of 41.8 degree Celsius, that 1.4 degree Celsius above the normal, was recorded on the day which is normal for this time of year, high relative humidity ranging from 43 per cent to 70 per cent gave Delhi a heat index (HI) or "real feel" temperature of 47-48 degree Celsius, a brutal combination of temperature and humidity that leaves the city feeling like a pressure cooker. Usually, May is typically one of the driest months for Delhi, accompanied by extreme high temperatures and dry conditions. But this year seems an exception.

The IMD data said the combined effect is a sultry atmosphere, with temperatures hovering around 40 degree Celsius, but increased moisture making it feel hotter and more oppressive. Interestingly, on paper, Delhi was supposed to have a "pleasant day" on Tuesday.

The IMD had issued a yellow alert — thunderstorms, dust storms, some strong surface winds, maybe a touch of lightning. But as any Delhiite could tell you, the city felt more like a 'tandoor'. Amid the prevailing hot and humid weather, the national capital's power demand clocked at 7,401 MW on Tuesday afternoon, the highest for the



A pedestrian carries an umbrella to shield herself from the scorching sun during a hot summer day in New Delhi on Tuesday
RANJAN DIMRI/THE PIONEER

INDIA REPORTS MILD SURGE IN COVID-19 CASES

A new wave of COVID-19, driven by Omicron sub-variants JN.1, LF.7 and NB.1.8, is affecting parts of Asia, including India. India currently reports 257 active cases, mostly mild. Kerala leads with 69 new cases, followed by Maharashtra (44) and Tamil Nadu (34). Two COVID-19 linked deaths were reported in Mumbai, both involving patients with serious health issues. Symptoms remain similar to earlier Omicron strains, including sore throat, fever, and fatigue. Health experts warn of waning immunity and advise vigilance, mask-wearing, and early testing, especially with pre-monsoon illnesses on the rise.

summer season, so far. The State Load Dispatch Centre Delhi's real-time data showed the peak demand was 7,401 MW at 3:11 pm. BSES discoms — BRPL and BYPL "successfully" met the peak power demand of 3,285 MW and 1,559 MW, respectively, on the day, said a company spokesperson. The BSES discoms were prepared to handle the growing power

demand in the city, aided by over 2,100 MW of green power during summer months, he added. The oppressive weather comes as the India Meteorological Department issues fresh warnings on the severity and persistence of heatwaves expected this summer.

Meanwhile, as part of the study, CEEW researchers developed a Heat Risk Index (HRI) for 734 districts, using 40 years of climate data (1982-2022) and satellite images to study heat trends, land use, water bodies and green cover. They also included data on population, buildings, health and socio-economic factors, along with night temperatures and humidity, for a comprehensive picture of heat risk.

"About 57 per cent of Indian districts, home to 76 per cent of India's total population, are currently at 'high' to 'very high' heat risk. It also found that the number of very warm nights has increased faster than that of very hot days in the last decade.

Very warm nights and very hot days are defined as periods when minimum and maximum temperatures rise above the 95th percentile threshold, i.e., what was normal for 95 per cent of the time in the past," it said.

Three years practice must for judicial services: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a significant verdict, the Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered that a candidate should have at least three years of practice as a lawyer to enter judicial services. A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih reaffirmed the importance of courtroom exposure for prospective judges.

"The appointment of fresh law graduates has led to several difficulties, as noted by multiple high courts. Practical experience in court is essential for ensuring judicial efficiency and competence," the CJI said while pronouncing the judgement. The bench said the minimum of three years of legal practice is mandatory for appearing in the judicial service examination for entry-level civil judge posts that are lower division cadre.

The CJI said allowing fresh law graduates direct entry into the judiciary has created practical challenges, as reflected in reports submitted by various High

Courts. "All the high courts and the State Governments in the country shall amend the relevant service rules to the effect that candidates desirous of appearing in the examination for the post of Civil Judge (Junior Division) must have practiced for a minimum period of three years to be eligible for the said examination," the SC ordered. Judgment said that such amend-

The experience of various high courts has also shown that such fresh law graduates, upon their entry in judicial service, begin to show behavioural and temperament problems

— SUPREME COURT

ments to the rules must be carried out by high courts within three months, and that these amendments must then be approved by the State Governments within a further period of three months. The SC, however, clarified that this requirement of having at least three

years of legal practice for entry to judicial service will not apply to ongoing judicial recruitment but will only apply prospectively.

"The judges from the very day on which they assume office have to deal with the questions of life, liberty, property and reputation of litigants. As rightly observed, neither knowledge derived from books nor pre-service training can be an adequate substitute for the first-hand experience of the working of the court-system and the administration of justice.

"This is possible only when a candidate is exposed to the atmosphere in the court by assisting the seniors and observing how the lawyers and the Judges function in the court. The candidate should be equipped to understand the intricacies of the functions of a Judge. The experience of various high courts has also shown that such fresh law graduates, upon their entry in judicial service, begin to show behavioural and temperament problems," the judgment reads.

Centre, petitioners clash over Waqf in SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Centre on Tuesday urged the Supreme Court to confine the hearing on pleas challenging the validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act for passing interim orders to three issues, including the power to identify properties declared as "waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed". A bench comprising Chief Justice BR Gavai and Justice Augustine George Masih was asked by Solicitor General (Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, to confine the proceedings identified by the earlier bench.

"The court had earmarked three issues. We had filed our response to these three issues. However, the written submissions of the petitioners now exceed several other issues. I have filed my affidavit in response to these three issues. My request is to confine it to the three issues only," argued Solicitor General (SG). SG's submission was opposed by senior advocates Kapil

Sibal described the law as a "complete departure from historical legal and constitutional principles" and a means to "capture waqf through a non-judicial process"

Sibal and Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for those challenging the provisions of the 2025 law, that there cannot be any piecemeal hearing. One of the issues is the power to identify properties declared as waqf by courts, waqf-by-user or waqf by deed.

The second issue raised by the petitioners relates to the composition of State waqf boards and the Central Waqf Council, where they contend only Muslims should operate except ex-officio members. The third issue relates to a provision that says a waqf property will not be treated as a waqf when the collector conducts an

inquiry to ascertain if the property is Government land. "There is a presumption of constitutionality in favour of every statute. For interim relief, you have to make out a very strong and glaring case. Otherwise, presumption of constitutionality will be there," the CJI said when senior advocate Kapil Sibal, leading the charge against the legislation. Sibal described the law as a "complete departure from historical legal and constitutional principles" and a means to "capture waqf through a non-judicial process".

"This is a case about the systematic capture of waqf properties. The Government cannot dictate what issues can be raised," Sibal said. Sibal said the amended law enables a systematic expropriation of waqf properties through executive means, bypassing due judicial process and moreover, waqf properties can become non-waqf ones that too by an executive order denying the right to access courts by the aggrieved parties.

The Bystander



Astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar passes away

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Renowned Astrophysicist Jayant Vishnu Narlikar — who along with British mathematician and astronomer Fred Hoyle proposed the theory of conformal gravity as an alternative to the Big Bang theory — passed away at his residence in Pune on Tuesday.

Recognised internationally for his pioneering contributions to cosmology and for propounding an alternative model to the widely-accepted Big Bang theory, Prof Narlikar was 86.

He is survived by his three daughters Geeta, Girija and Leelavati, all of whom have followed their father's suit and opted for research careers in Science. His wife Mangala Rajwade, a PhD in Mathematics, had died a few years ago.

Govt quarters sublet in city Drive launched to evict illegal occupants

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The General Administration Department and other government agencies on Tuesday began a drive to evict the occupants from government quarters in State capital which have been illegally occupied or rented out.

Notably, several government quarters, meant for officials, have been taken over either forcibly or are being sublet illegally in the government colonies.

During the drive, a hotel operating on the Rajmahal to Master Canteen stretch was found operating from a government quarter.

Similarly, quarter number VA 25/3, for instance, has been turned into a private warehouse for construction materials like cement and rods. Liquor bottles were seen stacked inside. Sources said an influential person allegedly set up a workshop inside the premises, manufacturing manhole covers and selling them back to the government.

"Subas Babu is the supervisor of the unit. Though we know this property belongs to the government, we four people are living here and working in the unit," said a worker.

Similarly, quarter number VA 23/4, originally allocated to the Hind Mazdoor Sangh office, was occupied by a woman who uses the space to sell leaf plates and other items. She has allegedly encroached on the entire premises. As per reports, out of 765 government quarters in Unit-2, 250 lie vacant, and more than a hundred are under illegal occupation. Locals allege that influential persons have occupied these government accommodations and are running their own businesses or staying there rent-free.

Odisha caste census to prioritise backward classes

BJP slams Opposition for 'confusing people'

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The forthcoming caste census is set to prioritise backward classes, a decision that has ignited debates over the implications for their reservation rights, informed BJP State president Manmohan Samal on Tuesday.

Moreover, Samal criticised opposition BJD and Congress for their alleged confusing stance on the caste census. He accused them of opposing the initiative habitually without considering their own past actions.

Samal alleged that despite being in power for an extended period, they (BJD and Congress) failed to make any significant impact on the issue. He further accused them of 'shedding crocodile tears', implying insincere concern.



Emphasising the progress made under the current BJP government, Samal stated that they have delivered on their promises related to reservation rights as outlined in their manifesto.

"The BJP has consistently supported the Mandal Commission," he affirmed.

"What was their (BJD) role in it? Those who were only giving speeches don't have the moral courage to tell anything about the matter. Their late leader Biju Patnaik had even moved the Supreme Court against the recommendation

of the Mandal Commission. Later, they only made a campaign of supporting it," he claimed.

"Though Congress and BJD were in governance for a long time, they could not implement it. BJP is consistently in support of the Mandal Commission. And when we have started its implementation process, they are trying to confuse people by giving different kinds of comments," said Samal.

The BJD and the Congress are yet to respond to Samal's allegations,

Andhra pushes for Polavaram project completion by 2026

Odisha raises alarm
RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The Andhra Pradesh Government has intensified efforts to complete the controversial Polavaram irrigation project by 2026 with Rs 59,36 crore allocated by the Union Government in the 2025-26 budget. Further Budgetary Resources for Infrastructure Development in Government (BRIDG) arrangement have been earmarked for the project between 2025 and 2027.

Amid the Centre's push, Odisha has once again raised concerns over the potential impact of the project, particularly on its southern district of Malkangiri. The State alleges that the Union Government is ignoring repeated warnings regarding the

threat of massive backwater submergence.

In January, a Central team from the National Project Construction Committee under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti visited five States, urging fast-tracked construction and uninterrupted funding. However, Odisha's apprehensions about displacement, environmental impact and submergence of tribal villages remain unaddressed.

According to former Chief Engineer Lalit Patnaik, the Polavaram dam stands at 150 feet and water levels are expected to rise by nearly 50 meters above the standard flood level. "The worst-hit area will be near Motu in Malkangiri district, where large tracts of land are vulnerable to submergence," he

warned.

Senior BJD leader and former MP Prasanna Acharya lashed out at the Centre, saying, "Odisha is being completely ignored. The Union Government continues to bulldoze ahead without respecting the federal structure. Our repeated appeals have been met with silence."

Echoing similar concerns, Congress Legislature Party Leader Ramchandra Kadam demanded immediate action from the State Government. "The displacement of thousands and environmental degradation in tribal belts cannot be overlooked," he said.

In response, Odisha Law Minister Prithviraj Harichandan assured that the State Government would take all necessary measures. "We

will present a detailed report on Polavaram's impact on Odisha at the upcoming meeting chaired by the Prime Minister. Odisha's interests will not be compromised," he said.

Despite Andhra Pradesh's Centre-approved surveys in Dhengana and surrounding areas, no such effort has been initiated on the Odisha side to assess submergence. Experts have warned that with 70% of the project already completed, the threat to Malkangiri has grown significantly.

The Polavaram project, declared a National Project in 2009, continues to stir political controversy with Odisha's Opposition accusing the Union Government of acting with bias and indifference.

Odisha curtails secretaries' role in Cabinet, empowers ministers

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The Odisha Government has reduced the role of departmental secretaries in Cabinet meetings, vesting greater decision-making authority in the hands of ministers. A notification to this effect was issued on Tuesday by the Parliamentary Affairs Department following the approval of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Mahi.

The notification reiterates the importance of adhering strictly to Part III of the Rules of Business, which governs Cabinet procedures. As per the new norms, Ministers and Ministers of State will now play a more decisive role in Cabinet deliberations while Secretaries will offer inputs only when specifically asked.

Notices for Cabinet meetings are to be circulated at least five days in advance, although the Chief Minister may relax this in urgent cases. To comply with Instruction No 17(i) of the Rules, no Cabinet memorandum will be accepted beyond 5.00 pm three working days before the meeting. Departments have been

directed to take timely action to obtain necessary approvals within this deadline.

Departments must prepare a Cabinet memorandum outlining key facts and decisions when proposing any matter for discussion. These papers must be circulated to the Chief Minister, relevant Ministers or Ministers of State and the Secretary to the Cabinet. Agenda papers, once approved by the Chief Minister, must reach all concerned two working days before the meeting. No case will be taken up without prior circulation, unless permitted by the Chief Minister.

The role of Secretaries inside the Cabinet Room has also been redefined. Only the Chief Minister, relevant Cabinet Ministers or Ministers of State and the Secretary to the Cabinet are allowed inside during discussions. Departmental Secretaries will be seated in a separate room and may be called in only when required to assist.

Once a decision is made by the Cabinet, the concerned minister will be responsible for implementing it.

5 get lifer for brutal murder of youth in BBSR

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

A court in Bhubaneswar on Tuesday awarded life imprisonment to five persons in the sensational 2023 Sushant Nayak murder case at the GED Slum near Unit 1 under the Capital police station.

Additional District Judge Court, Bhubaneswar Bandana Kar sentenced all five accused Vishal Nayak, Sujit Nayak, Ajit Nayak, Tikili Nayak and Subash Nayak to life imprisonment.

The court also directed them to pay a fine of Rs 25,000 and in default to undergo another year's imprisonment.

Sushant Nayak, a house-keeping staff at Central Horticultural Experiment Station (CHES) in Aiginia, was hacked to death at GED Slum in the

wee hours of May 24, 2023.

According to reports, Vishal, Sujit, Ajit, Tikili and Subash chased Sushant while he was returning home after dropping his wife, a BMC worker, and attacked him with swords and other lethal weapons. Reports said Sujit's nephew Vishal had allegedly molested Sushant's niece in April 2023.

The police investigation revealed that Sujit and his relatives committed the gruesome murder after Sushant's family lodged a complaint at the Capital police station on April 25, 2023.

Sujit, a resident of Nayagarh district, had fled along with other accused after killing Sushant. The police launched a hunt and nabbed all five from Cuttack, Nayagarh and Khordha districts.

YouTuber Priyanka under probe in espionage-linked case

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

The investigation into Puri-based YouTuber Priyanka Senapati (21), allegedly linked to Jyoti Malhotra, a content creator, recently arrested on espionage charges is intensifying. Puri Superintendent of Police Vinit Agrawal confirmed on Tuesday that the probe is ongoing and being conducted with utmost diligence.

"We are still in the process of investigation and have not yet reached any conclusion. Once all inquiries are complete, a detailed report will be shared," Agrawal said. Authorities are scrutinising



every angle of the case in co-ordination with multiple Central and State agencies to ensure a thorough and transparent investigation. "We remain

in contact with all relevant departments and will provide information as requested," he added. A key development in the

case is the discovery of a drone video that Priyanka had posted on her Instagram account. The video, which was deleted shortly after posting, is now under detailed examination by the police to trace its origin and intent.

The investigation has broadened to include an audit of Priyanka's social media accounts and the financial records of her and her family. "All possible leads are being explored," the SP confirmed. Priyanka Senapati and her family have reportedly been cooperative throughout the investigation. She continues to reside in Puri as the probe advances.

4 cops reinstated in Army officer torture case

But IIC's suspension continues

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha Police headquarters on Tuesday revoked the suspension orders of four police personnel who were earlier implicated in the alleged custodial torture of an Indian Army officer and his fiancée at the Bharatpur police station in Bhubaneswar.

Sub-Inspector Baisalini Panda, Assistant Sub-Inspectors Sagarika Rath and Salilamayee Sahoo and Constable Balaram Hansda

have been reinstated. However, the suspension order against then Inspector-in-Charge Dinakrushna Mishra remains in force as the investigation against him continues.

Notably, the controversial incident dates back to the night of September 14, 2024 when the Army officer and his female companion had approached the Bharatpur PS to report a road rage incident. The couple had allegedly been harassed by a group of youths on the road.

Instead of addressing their complaint, the police allegedly subjected both the officer and his fiancée, a

practicing lawyer to physical assault. The woman was reportedly stripped, beaten and later jailed on unsubstantiated charges. She sustained serious injuries, including a dislocated jaw and hip and was treated at AIIMS Bhubaneswar.

Following public outrage and pressure from the defence community, the government had ordered a judicial probe into the matter. Retired Justice Chittaranjan Das headed the inquiry.

The reinstatement of the four officials came amid demands from the Odisha Police Association, which had opposed the suspensions and

called for a fair hearing pending the outcome of the inquiry.

Meanwhile, former IIC Dinakrushna Mishra has undergone a series of scientific tests, including polygraph and narco-analysis, as part of the ongoing investigation. His suspension continues, reflecting the gravity of the allegations against him.

The case had drawn nationwide attention with human rights groups, the Army fraternity and legal experts demanding strong action to prevent custodial excesses and uphold accountability within the police force.

CSIR-IMMT, NTPC Mining Ltd sign pact

For promoting critical minerals research, devt

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research - Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the NTPC Mining Limited (A wholly owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited), to pursue research initiatives of direct interest and relevance to coal, mineral processing and extraction industry, including critical minerals.

The MoU was signed by Dr Ramanuj Narayan, Director,

CSIR-IMMT and Naveen Jain, CEO, NTPC Mining Limited, co-ordinated by Dr Kali Sanjay, Head, Hydro, Bio and Electrometallurgy Department and Business Development from CSIR-IMMT, and Dhananjay Shrikhande, General Manager (Technical Services and Commercial) and Anil Kumar Soni, Additional General Manager (Technical Services and Business Development) from NTPC Mining Limited.

NTPC Mining Limited has emerged as a key contributor to India's energy security, supplying nearly 15% of NTPC's coal requirement in FY 2024-25, with over 134 million tonnes of coal produced since

its inception in 2018. The signing of the MoU with the CSIR-IMMT reflects NTPC Mining's commitment to innovation-led sustainable growth.

CSIR-IMMT brings decades of experience in critical minerals research and technology commercialization, delivering advanced solutions to the mining and materials sectors.

As part of the collaboration, the NTPC Mining delegation visited CSIR-IMMT's critical minerals technology development facilities and deliberated on focussed R and D and technological collaboration on critical minerals vital for Atmanirbhar Bharat and Viksit Bharat.

Scuba Diving Training Centre at Ramchandi soon

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

A Scuba Diving Training Centre at Ramchandi in Puri district will be established by the Odisha Government to bolster disaster response capabilities and promote adventure tourism. The centre will function under the Odisha State Waterways and Life Guard Institute (OSWALI).

The proposed centre will offer specialised training to personnel engaged in emergency rescue operations, particularly for underwater and deep-sea scenarios. The government has earmarked Rs 5 crore for the project, with the

Odisha Police Housing Corporation tasked with executing the infrastructure works.

The facility will include a diving tank with a glass observation panel, a decompression chamber and a training tower. It will be managed by the OSWALI under the Fire Service Directorate.

Officials said the unit would be strategically located near the Kushabhadra river mouth and the Bay of Bengal offering practical training in real water conditions. At present, OSWALI functions without a dedicated campus, offering limited training since 2014. The upcoming facility is set to bridge that gap and

transform into a centre of excellence for aquatic rescue and diving operations.

Trainers will utilise the nearby river and sea for field exercises while infrastructure at the centre will enable simulation-based training. Fire Service personnel, who were earlier sent to naval institutions for scuba training, will now be trained within the State.

The project, officials added, would not only bolster the state's disaster preparedness but also pave the way for adventure tourism and watersports. The facility is expected to be operational by next year.

'Advanced Materials in Energy, Env' conf at IIT



35 oral presentations, 50 posters presented during 3-day event

PNS ■ Bhubaneswar

An international conference on "Advanced Materials in Energy, Environment and Sustainability" (AMEES-2025) was held at the Indian Institute of Technology Bhubaneswar, in association with Materials Research Society of India (MRSI) during May16-18.

The conference was inaugurated by Dean (Continuing Education), IIT Bhubaneswar Prof V Pandu Ranga and MRSI-Bhubaneswar Chapter Prof Kulamani Parida. Prof Snehasis Chowdhuri, HOD, Department of Chemistry, School of Basic Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar,

Prof Umapasana Ojha, Convenor and Dr Palas Roy, Co-Convenor also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the importance of this conference.

Several practicing researchers from premier research institutes of the country and abroad with an exceptional track record, participated in the conferences and presented their research outputs in the key areas of renewable energy, water purification, solar photovoltaics, environment restoration, energy storage devices and nanotechnology etc.

More than 35 oral presentations and 50 posters were presented during the three-day event. Several awards from the American Chemical Society and Royal Society of Chemistry were distributed to the poster participants in recognition of their efforts. The Anusandhan National Research Foundation of Government of India financially supported the conference along with several equipment and chemical suppliers.

The conference was aimed to contribute towards the promotion of renewable energy utilisation, environmental restoration and adoption of sustainable practices of the nation.

Forest Rights claims rejected

State's 1.44 lakh tribal families face eviction threat

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ Bhubaneswar

Over 1.44 lakh tribal and traditional forest-dwelling families in Odisha face the risk of eviction after their claims for forest land rights were rejected by district-level committees under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. The move has sparked widespread concern across tribal regions of the State.

As per official data from the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes Development Department, a total of 1,44,175 individual forest rights claims have been turned down by February this year. These include 73,838 claims by mem-

bers of Scheduled Tribes and 70,266 by Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs), leaving tens of thousands vulnerable to displacement from lands they have inhabited for generations.

Among the worst-hit districts are Gajapati with 16,585 rejected claims, Nuapada with 16,367, Sundargarh with 16,320, Keonjhar with 15,270, Sambalpur with 14,853, and Mayurbhanj with 8,729. Significant numbers have also been reported in Koraput (4,355), Balangir (4,130), Cuttack (3,583), Malkangiri (2,976), Jajpur (2,787) and Kendrapada (2,545), with rejections recorded across other districts as well.

The Forest Rights Act was enacted in 2006 to correct historical injustices by granting legal recognition to forest dwellers' traditional rights over forest land. Section 4(5) of the Act specifically prohibits the eviction of forest dwellers until the entire process of recognition and verification of their rights is complete. However, tribal rights groups allege that this provision is being ignored, putting thousands at risk of forcible removal.

A deeper analysis of the rejected claims reveals troubling grounds. Over 94,000 families were denied rights on the basis that they occupied forest land after the December 13,

2005 cut-off date. Around 60,000 were rejected for failing to provide three-generation proof of residence. Another 27,567 claims were turned down on the grounds of non-forest land occupation while 2,125 applications were rejected due to lack of supporting documents. An additional 25,641 claims were dismissed citing vague "other reasons," sparking allegations of arbitrary and opaque procedures.

Adding to the complexity, recent policy changes at the national level have not been taken into account. In January 2024, the President of India approved the inclusion of two new communities and 23 synonymous groups into the

Scheduled Tribes list. As a result, many applicants who were previously categorized as OTFDs are now eligible for recognition as Scheduled Tribes. Rights groups argue that the government's failure to update its records and re-evaluate claims accordingly has unjustly disqualified thousands of rightful claimants.

"This is not just a bureaucratic failure; it's a moral and legal betrayal," said a tribal rights activist from Gajapati. "The law was enacted to restore dignity and justice to forest dwellers. But instead, we are witnessing another wave of historical injustice."

According to official fig-

ures, 6,91,757 claims for individual forest land rights were submitted to Gram Sabhas across the state by December 2024. The rejection of more than one-fifth of these, especially in light of recent legal and demographic shifts, has led to growing calls for a fresh state-wide survey and urgent intervention by both the State and Union Governments.

Unless the government halts the eviction process and initiates a thorough re-verification of claims, Odisha may soon face a grave humanitarian crisis, one that threatens to displace lakhs of forest dwellers and undermine the very spirit of the Forest Rights Act.

To tackle heat woes in BBSR

Reinvent natural streams, thick green cover in city



PIYUSH RANJAN ROUT



SWAPNA SARITA SWAIN

With early summer arrival and day temperature on a constant rise, Bhubaneswar has already experienced the worst so far this year. Early summer in fact has been a trend for the city. Population rise, infrastructure expansion, heavy constructions, vehicular movements, loss of urban sponges and green areas have only added to the woes.

Bhubaneswar is actually trapped inside the urban heat island effects. This happens when cities trap more heat than its sur-

rounding. Roads, buildings, and pavements soak up sun's energy during the day and release it slowly at night. Trees and open land, which naturally keep places cool, are often missing in the urban areas. As a result, Bhubaneswar's temperatures can be several degrees hotter than surrounding rural regions.

Extreme heat events are projected to become more frequent and severe with continued climate change, and public policy along with public health efforts are appropriately needed to focus on

helping communities and individuals better prepare for such events.

In simple terms, if you don't plan and manage cities then you will be left behind in the race towards economic prosperity of people living in cities.

Cities and towns are currently being tested to the extreme heat wave the way they face health, social and economic crises. Arrival of early summer opened up our vulnerabilities as to how ill-equipped our cities are planned and managed. Its impact is showing the extent to which each city is able to function or not especially during times of crisis.

Cities trying to be more resilient expanded their borders, developed early warning facilities, opened larger and less cluttered public spaces and deployed professionals with specialized expertise, from surveyors to architects to engineers to urban planners. Similarly, cities across the globe are now taking appropriate steps to bounce back from heat wave conditions. However,

Bhubaneswar still is going by the old traditional approach of dealing with heat waves by shutting down educational institutions, issuing advisories, creating artificial sheds on major traffic junctions etc.

At the individual level, air conditioning provides the most obvious protection against extreme heat, but access to air-conditioned spaces is far from ubiquitous, particularly more at public places. Air conditioning can be provided in multiple settings, including homes, places of work, and public spaces.

In various parts of the globe, cooling centers have become an important place to seek refuge from the heat for at least some of the hundreds of thousands of residents that do not have access to air conditioning in their homes or place of work. Cooling centers are a common, low-cost extreme heat intervention, currently being used in many major cities across the globe under the common-sense premise that providing relief to people from the heat and distrib-

uting water help reduce the risk of heat-related morbidity and mortality. However, this intervention deserves further scrutiny in order to determine how to optimise its effectiveness and guide appropriate implementation.

Distribution of drinking water, shutting downs schools, restricting working hours under the sun, and carrying water bottles are just the tip of the iceberg that local leaders are doing but innovation is the key to running cities. Because the way cities are being governed will drastically change, of course for the best interest of inhabitants.

These innovations will see new building design that would function like passive cooling systems, encourage the work from home culture, adding more AC buses to the existing fleets etc. Green roofing canopy trees over roads also are quite useful. Cycling is a viable option to support mobility.

South Korean capital Seoul has created many public plazas like water park for the public, integrated trees to cool the streets,

more buses running without fossil fuels, cycling favourable streets, dedicated air conditioning buses, long canopy-based trees and revitalisation of rivers inside the city for amusement as well as cooling the city.

In Bhubaneswar, public spaces are the heart of the city. Parks, plazas, sidewalks, and squares-they're where people gather. They are more than just "empty" land; these are places that make a city feel alive and inclusive. There is a saying 'A city without good public spaces is just a collection of buildings. A city with them is a home.' Hence Bhubaneswar must integrate these sites with canals or ponds or fountains for making them cool.

Bhubaneswar used to have a history of having extensive trees and vegetation. The trees are the first line of defence against urban heat. Bhubaneswar must bring back its lost defence system as street trees are not just decorative, they are climate champions.

Together with trees, Bhubaneswar once used to have many natural urban sponges along

with a series of parallel streams flowing from Chandaka forest in west into the Gangabati river on the east, making it a valley of wonder. But those are now the city's archives. Which means Bhubaneswar needs to reinvent the natural streams and urban sponges with artificial interventions. Such as constructing a series of canals parallel to major streets to rejuvenate urban biodiversity just like irrigation canals for agriculture.

Bhubaneswar is at the centre of the heat island effect. This is a pressing issue that exacerbates the challenges posed by climate change. By implementing effective mitigation strategies, Bhubaneswar can become more livable and resilient. Public policy collaborative efforts between governments, communities, and individuals are essential to cool our cities and protect public health.

(Dr Rout and Swain are faculty members in Department of Planning, Odisha University of Technology and Research (OUTR). They can be reached in X at @piyushrout)

In early 2021, the CAPF contingent for a Mount Everest expedition of which Geeta was part, was unfortunately called off due to technical reasons.

The report has cast a shadow over law enforcement in Varanasi, a city often held up as a model for development and governance. With public trust in the police at stake, the revelations are expected to trigger administrative and political repercussions in the days ahead.

Editor's TAKE

India-Turkey relations at their lowest ebb

Backlash over Turkey's support for Pakistan pushes India-Turkey Relations to a new low

Once defined by shared civilisational ties, mutual trade interests, and diplomatic engagement, the bilateral relationship between India and Turkey is now under strain following Turkey's overt support for Pakistan in the wake of a deadly terrorist attack on Indian soil. The resulting public backlash in India has snowballed into a wide-ranging boycott campaign affecting tourism, education, trade, and aviation; raising serious questions about the future of India-Turkey relations.

The current diplomatic fallout began after a heinous terror attack in Pahalgam claimed the lives of 26 tourists. In response, India launched precision strikes on terrorist infrastructures in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and air defence systems in Pakistan. While much of the international community called for restraint, Turkey stood out in its explicit support for Pakistan. This perceived bias from Ankara, particularly given President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's repeated calls for a multilateral solution to the Kashmir dispute sparked widespread outrage in India.

The response from Indian civil society, businesses, and institutions has been swift and sweeping. A grassroots boycott campaign, amplified through social media with hashtags like #BoycottTurkey, has taken on a life of its own. Bookings to Turkey have dropped by 60 per cent. Major Indian travel platforms, including MakeMyTrip and EaseMyTrip, have suspended Turkish promotions. Indian traders have begun rejecting Turkish goods. The Indian civil aviation ministry revoked the security clearance of Turkish ground-handling company Celebi, citing national security concerns.

Historically, India and Turkey have maintained cordial if not deeply strategic relations. Erdogan's visit to India in 2017 focused on economic cooperation and counter-terrorism. Despite ideological differences, trade between the two countries has flourished — India exported \$5.2 billion worth of goods to Turkey between April 2024 and February 2025. The present strained relations would result in massive loss to both countries. While the current crisis is steeped in emotion and national interest, it is not beyond repair. However, both countries will have to work deliberately — and delicately — to untangle this knot. Immediate high-level talks may be politically unviable, but diplomatic backchannels must remain active. Turkey's leadership must recalibrate its public stance on Kashmir and adopt a more balanced position. Turkey must acknowledge India's legitimate security concerns. Acknowledging Turkey's complex geopolitical compulsions without excusing one-sidedness can offer a more nuanced understanding to an emotional public. International diplomacy is far more complex than emotional outburst. Boycotts may offer immediate satisfaction, but lasting diplomacy demands patience and vision. The public sentiment in India is strong and justified in its condemnation of terrorism and foreign support for it.

But as history has often shown, anger is a poor long-term strategist. If India and Turkey can find a way back to honest dialogue, mutual respect, and pragmatic cooperation, this rift may yet become a turning point — not an end — in their long-shared journey.

PICTALK



A beautiful sight in Morigaon, Assam: A farmer's toil meets nature's flow. Egrets patiently follow the plough, finding sustenance as the land is prepared. A perfect example of peaceful coexistence. PTI

A new era for Catholic church

With deep ties to both the United States and Peru, Pope Leo steps into spiritual leadership of 1.4 billion Catholics, inheriting a Church divided by doctrine, challenged by global crises, and yearning for unity, reform, and renewal

The world's attention has been on Rome for the past few days. The Catholics have made history with the election of Robert Francis Prevost, a 69-year-old American cardinal of Spanish descent.

He has taken over as the 267th occupant of the throne of St Peter. This momentous event, the first time an American has ascended to the papacy in the 2000-year history of the Catholic Church, is a significant milestone.

The Pope is the leader of the Roman Catholic Church. He guides about 1.4 billion Catholics worldwide and is the head of Vatican City. Due to his position, the Pope is regarded as one of the world's most powerful people. He has extensive diplomatic, cultural, and spiritual influence. He is considered the successor of St Peter, the first apostle. He is believed to have the highest teaching authority in faith and morals.

Though born in Chicago, Pope Leo XIV spent over two decades working in Peru. He became a dual US and Peruvian citizen in 2015.

What do the global Catholics want from a new Pope? Pope Leo will lead a divided Catholic Church of 1.4 billion members, almost the size of India or China. The Church may be losing strength in Europe but is growing rapidly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. About 40 per cent of all Catholics worldwide are in Latin America, roughly a quarter in Europe, and 16 per cent to 18 per cent in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While his predecessor, Pope Francis, accomplished many things during his 12-year papacy, he left an unfinished agenda and many challenges for the new Pope to address. These, such as divorce and remarriage, LGBTQ Catholics, the role of women, and climate change, are significant and will require careful consideration and action.

The new Pope will exercise supreme power in faith, morals, church discipline, and Government. He is expected to continue the reforms started by his predecessor, focus on poverty and marginalised people, and build a "bridge" between different groups within the Church.

Many watched with interest when Pope Leo appeared on the Vatican balcony. In his first speech, Pontiff spoke to the crowd in Spanish, mentioning "his beloved Diocese of Chiclayo in Peru." This shows that his identity as both an American and a Peruvian will influence his papacy. Many Peruvians remember him as a priest who stood with the country's poorest people.



KALYANI SHANKAR

Within the Vatican, he was informally known as the "Latin American Yankee," a nickname that captures his dual identity and capacity to bridge a hemisphere. The crowd cheered when he said, "Peace be with you."

What reforms will Pope Leo XIV focus on during his papacy? How will he address the issue of sexual abuse in the Church? How will he balance traditional beliefs with modern concerns? These will become clear as time goes on.

The new Pope has to take several key steps. The new Pontiff has given hints about his priorities as head of the Catholic Church — peace, climate change and technology. But abuse scandals and the role of women will remain important.

Like his predecessor, Pope Leo wants to support the poor and marginalised. He

would like to continue to open the Vatican and listen to voices outside the church hierarchy.

Pope Leo XIV's vision is global and inclusive, following Pope Francis's path. He must find ways to balance the Church's rich traditions with important modern issues like climate change and technology. Pope Leo has taken charge of the Catholic Church during a challenging time.

The Vatican faces serious financial issues, including a budget deficit of over £73 million and a pension fund deficit exceeding £2 billion. The late Pope Francis started important reforms at the Vatican Bank, known as the IOR, to fix long-standing financial problems, but this work is still unfinished. Pope Leo needs to continue these reforms and address the economic issues to maintain the Church's stability and integrity. A sensitive topic is same-sex couples.

In 2023, Pope Francis said Roman Catholic priests can bless same-sex couples. Also, that year, he allowed transgender people to be baptised and to act as god-

parents. People around the world will closely watch how he addresses these issues.

Pope Leo has recognised that artificial intelligence significantly challenges human dignity, justice, and labour.

He has stated that the Church will address these issues. Vatican observers see this commitment as a positive sign of his leadership. It gives people confidence in his ability to guide the Church through modern problems.

Additional challenges include balancing tradition with modernity, maintaining unity while implementing reforms, and navigating an increasingly volatile global environment. These are the hurdles that Pope Leo must overcome.

Pope Leo XIV's leadership can change the Church, bringing hope for the future. His background, challenges, and goals suggest that he could lead to significant changes and progress for the Catholic Church.

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

When entertainment crosses the line

Opinion

The recent announcement by the I&B Ministry of the Indian Government regarding the banning of some OTT platforms for publishing obscene and vulgar content has sparked widespread attention and has reignited the discussions on the crucial issue of women's safety in society. That's because the ministry took the above decision under the provisions of the IT Act, 2000 after consultations with other Ministries and Departments of the Government of India, and domain experts specialising in media and entertainment, women's rights, and child rights.

We all know about the #MeToo movement, which started as a #hashtag and became a global phenomenon. But then how many of us remember that movement? Not many. But, the recent growth in the number of cases of people holding high public offices being held for charges of crimes against women is an indicator of the extent of moral downfall in our society.

It's a fact that most women around the world have experienced sexual harassment, assault, and violence, or have at times been pushed into a zone where they knew it did not feel right. In a recent high-profile case involving an ambassador of a powerful country, it was a maid at a big establishment accusing the international figure of

the charges. But this is only the tip of the iceberg, as in most of the cases, many economically weaker and socially backward victims are silenced under pressure. As a result, many such crimes and lesser crimes go unreported across the world due to fear, shame, absence of social support or lack of will on the part of the authorities to pursue the case.

The media highlights such reports as a custodian of the public. However, if statistics of people involved in adultery or having a criminal eye were to be taken, the results would be shocking and go beyond the limits of class, age, gender and public profiles. So, when such cases are mounting in the media and courts, and even juveniles and senior people are being tried for them, what is civil society doing to stop them?

We look at three of the most influential mediums of our times — the television, cinema and the internet and we realise that every segment of society is instrumental in fanning the fire of lust.

The entertainment channels and filmmakers manufacture suggestive, indecent images and sell them in the name of entertainment, the concerned authorities also allow them to be aired or screened in the name of freedom of speech and expression and the public consumes them day in and day out.

It is shocking to see that nowadays even ice cream ads or animations meant for children are stuffed with such

imagery which is in no way relatable to the actual product. Even if a film gets an 'A' certificate, how does it ensure that younger people do not watch it? And who can confirm that such films are not detrimental to the moral health of adults? How do we expect a generation fed on skin shows to bring up a society safe for women? In light of the situation, our society is doomed to an even greater moral downfall.

The present state is thus a distress call to spiritual organisations, women groups and human rights custodians like the UN to take up the fight against the objectification of women in a big way.

Channels that affect public mentality must be properly guarded and proper steps like the ones mentioned above should be taken to nurture high moral principles in our society that's reeling under the crisis of varied forms as the monster of lust has been on the loose. Such organisations and Government agencies need to impress upon the people that the moral strength of any society is strongly linked with the respect it accords to its women.

Lastly, it has been found that the role of education & media becomes very important in propagating values in society. For, unless and until education is value-based and media, especially electronic and film media make their contribution to creating awareness for values like respect, gender equality, tolerance, and humility, there will not be any peace and harmony in society nor will there be safety for women.

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

Letters to the Editor

Hardline Turkey drifts away

Turkey has long shared historical ties with undivided India and, quite understandably, enjoys even closer relations with present day Pakistan, with whom it shares a common sectoral identity within Islam. However, India had nurtured a warm relationship with a modern, forward-looking, and secular Turkey. President Erdogan was once admired for his efforts to harmonise democracy with Islamic values, all while driving impressive economic growth. Though Turkey showed an openness to integrating with the European Union, its deep-rooted, complex love-hate relationship with the Arab world remained a persistent undercurrent.

The country found itself entangled in regional conflicts, first Iran's imbroglio, then Syria's civil war — reflecting the geopolitical intricacies of its neighborhood. Today, many hardline Muslim-majority nations are facing internal turmoil, much like other states, but their struggles are often cloaked in the language and force of religious fundamentalism. It is disheartening to see historically secular Turkey increasingly pulled toward religious extremism.

Even Bangladesh, once a symbol of progressive moderation, is facing ideological regression. Pakistan continues its slow descent into deeper Talibanisation. Across the board, current leadership in many of these countries appears ill-equipped to counter this rising tide.

R NARAYANAN | MUMBAI

Social media: The new battlefield

Social media has emerged as a pivotal weapon in the evolving hybrid warfare between India and Pakistan, shifting the battlefield from land to the digital realm. Platforms like X, WhatsApp, and Facebook are now central to psychological operations, influence campaigns, and the spread of disinformation.

During recent skirmishes, Pakistan's ISPR circulated deepfake videos and doctored images of supposed victories, including fake footage of downed Indian jets. These viral posts aimed to confuse, demoralise, and distort public perception.

In response, Indian agencies like PIB Fact Check and Maharashtra Cyber debunked thousands of fake posts while countering with narratives highlighting Pakistan's human rights abuses. This digital conflict often coincides with cyberattacks. Pakistani hackers disrupted Indian networks as troll armies spread fake news about fuel shortages and unrest. Social media also deepens internal divides. Pakistan pushes communal tensions in India, while Indian actors exploit sectarian rifts in Pakistan. Both aim to destabilise societies from within.

Alarming, viral falsehoods have even risked military escalation. As Lt Gen Shivane noted, social media now delivers "psychological bullets" — cheap, deniable, and dangerously effective.

AMARJEET KUMAR | HAZARIBAGH

Pak must change its way for lasting peace

The question arises when there will be peace in the region. We are fighting with Pakistan since its birth. Pakistan started to sow the seeds of terrorism and now harvesting too. America financed the war against Russians. And, the ground for terror infrastructure started to built. It was helped by US to fight Russians in Afghanistan.

Once the Russians left the terror machinery started its actions against Kashmir. It's army got radicalised. A whole generation grew with India hate in their syllabus. Mullas got powerful. Pakistan politics got controlled by the army.

Pakistan army became the kingmaker. US and Europe were not concerned as all the problems remained in another continent. Pakistan got funds from sources and countries taxpayers paid. Things started to change when they got hit. Osama bin Laden was the US creation. For peace in the region we need terrorist free and dismantling of terror schools. Start an education system which teaches peace. An elected Government which controls the army. Peace will come when selfish interest is shed to make way for healthy democracy.

The core contention is that lasting peace necessitates a complete eradication of terrorist infrastructure, a fundamental shift in Pakistan's education system towards peace, and the establishment of a truly democratic, civilian-controlled Government.

SUNIL PRADHAN | NUAPADA

COLONEL SOFIYA QURESHI FACES POLITICAL FIRESTORM



Colonel Sofiya Qureshi, along with Wing Commander Vyomika Singh, has become the face of 'Operation Sindoor'! Unfortunately, Sofiya Qureshi appears differently to different people; and so affects them also differently! Ashoka University, HOD of Political Science, Ali Khan Mahamudabad welcomes her appointment, though he considers it as tokenism!

Mahamudabad hopes that such sensitivity and care should also be shown to the lynch victims. On the other hand, a nameless lady files a complaint and in a blink of eye Harayna police arrests the Professor for insulting the country and the gallant Indian Army!

On the other side we have a Minister in Madhya Pradesh who calls Sofiya Qureshi 'sister of terrorists'. The intellectual qualification of this BJP Minister, Kunwar Vijay Shah, is unknown but he has won the elections 8 times! He also has a prominent reputation of serial foul-mouthed insults to others. The High Court is outraged and directs the party to take action, even the Supreme Court has displayed serious disappointment. However, the party or police has their heads firmly buried in the sand! The CM Mohan Yadav and other leaders of BJP have come out to defend him! He joins a horde of arrogant and tainted BJP leaders who are roaming free.

ANIL BAGARKA | MUMBAI

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com in not more than 200 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Self-reliance in natural gas: Clearing hurdles in the way

The share of natural gas in India’s energy mix has barely moved, reaching only 6.7 per cent. Achieving a boost will require scaling up indigenous output, lowering import dependence, and establishing a supportive policy and regulatory framework

FIRST
Column

Delivering the 75th Independence Day (ID) address on 15th August 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to achieve self-reliance in energy production by boosting the gas-based economy. He wished the share of natural gas (NG) in the total energy mix to go up from subsisting at around 6 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030. He reiterated this at India Energy Week (IEW) held on February 11-14, 2025. Presently, the share is a mere 6.7 per cent. The only way to reach the target is to build indigenous production capabilities to the desired scale.

Where do we stand?

According to the Petroleum Planning and Analysis Cell under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas (MPNG), during the financial year (FY) 2024-25, India’s consumption of NG was 72.293 billion metric standard cubic meters (bmscm) — an increase of 7 per cent over the level during FY 2023-24. However, the import of NG (it is imported in a liquefied form commonly known as LNG) during FY 2024-25 was 36.699 bmscm — an increase of 15.4 per cent. Taken as a proportion of consumption, imports were 50.8 per cent during FY 2024-25 up from 47.1 per cent during FY 2023-24. In contrast, the country’s production of NG registered declined by 1 per cent to 36.113 bmscm during FY 2024-25. The State-owned major Oil and Natural Gas Corporation or ONGC produced 18.736 bmscm of NG during FY 2024-25, which was 3 per cent less than 19.316 bmscm during FY 2023-24. The share of production in consumption of NG during FY 2024-25 was 49.2 per cent down from 52.9 per cent during FY 2023-24. The upshot is: that even to comply with the 6 per cent share, India had to import more than 50 per cent of its NG requirement.

Increasing the share of NG in the total energy mix to 15 per cent would require its consumption to increase from its current annual of 72.293 bmscm to 161.791 bmscm (72.293x15/6.7). The current consumption includes domestic production of 36.113 bmscm. If domestic production stagnates at the current level (in sync with the trend of the last few years) then, to achieve the 15 per cent target, the import of LNG will have to be 125.678 bmscm (161.791-36.113) which works out to about 77 per cent of the consumption.

The above calculation assumes no increase in total energy consumption. But, it is increasing at a rapid pace. The country’s power demand alone is projected to grow at a compound annual rate of 7 per cent during the next five years (according to the Central Electricity Authority). In that scenario, reliance on imports will be even higher.

How can India increase production?

India has 26 sedimentary basins (SBS) covering an area of 3.4 million sq km that could be searched for



hydrocarbon resources. However, only six of the SBS are under commercial exploitation; these too are sub-optimally utilised. Hydrocarbon exploration is a highly capital-intensive and technology-intensive business involving a long gestation period. It is risky, especially when drilling in deep/ultra-deep and high-pressure/high-temperature (D/UD/HP/HT) fields in offshore areas such as the Krishna-Godavari (KG) basin.



UTTAM GUPTA

Multinational companies (MNCs) such as ExxonMobil, Chevron, Total etc. which have the technology and resources can be enthused to take long-term bets in the Indian hydrocarbon sector provided the Government offers them an opportunity to earn an attractive return on their investment on a ‘sustained’ basis. This, in turn, requires that their efforts in the discovery and development of NG fields don’t face regulatory hurdles and that they can sell

the gas ‘freely’ at a ‘remunerative’ price.

On the regulatory front, Modi — Government has removed many hurdles. In recent years, its major

INDIA HAS 26 SEDIMENTARY BASINS (SBS) COVERING AN AREA OF 3.4 MILLION SQ KM THAT COULD BE SEARCHED FOR HYDROCARBON RESOURCES. HOWEVER, ONLY SIX OF THE SBS ARE UNDER COMMERCIAL EXPLOITATION; THESE TOO ARE SUB-OPTIMALLY UTILISED

decisions are: releasing 0.69 million sq km of hitherto ‘No go’ area (out of a total of 1.73 million sq km SB area lying offshore) for exploration and production (E&P) activity; granting lease rights over the entire economic life of the allotted fields instead of the extant system of short tenure with extensions; amendments to the Forest (Conservation) Act to enable prompt access to forest areas for exploration of hydrocarbon resources; allowing E&P firms to pick up a block of their choice and give the operator a composite license to search for hydrocarbon in whatever form vis NG, ‘shale gas’, CBM (coal bed methane) etc under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing.

Policy decisions ease the process

For long, E&P efforts were hamstrung by cumbersome procedures, multiple approvals and bureaucratic red tape. Approvals were needed at every stage. As many as 37 procedures were required to be followed by a firm awarded block under the New Exploration Licensing Policy or NELP (NELP was launched in 1999 and blocks awarded under it till 2016).

Team Modi has substantially liberalised and de-bureaucratised approvals by providing for self-certification of documents and pre-approved clearance of blocks. Under the Oilfields (Regulations and Development) Amendment Bill, 2024 passed by the

Parliament on March 12, 2025, the definition of mineral oils has been broadened/expanded to include crude oil, NG, petroleum, condensate, CBM, shale gas and oil, and other varieties (the earlier definition included only petroleum and NG). Besides, the Bill introduces the concept of ‘petroleum lease’ to separate oil and gas exploration projects from mining projects. This will prevent the former from getting hamstrung by delays due to land and environmental clearances germane to the latter. The latest amendments in the ORD Act, 2024 also moot an alternative dispute resolution method within or outside India besides decriminalising violations.

The MPNG has also proposed joint development of fields where these are found to be interconnected. This will help avoid disputes like the one seen between ONGC and Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) when the former accused latter of stealing gas from fields given in the KG basin area under NELP. It will also ensure better utilisation of assets and cost savings.

What about freedom of pricing?

Of the domestic gas, on around two-thirds of supplies (mostly from so-called ‘legacy fields’ given on nomination to ONGC and OIL and from fields given under NELP), the Centre has full control over ‘to whom’ the supplies will be made and at ‘what price’.

Although, from April 1, 2023, based on the recommendations of the Kirit Parikh committee, this price expressed on a per million British thermal units (Btu) basis is arrived at by taking 10 per cent of the monthly average of the Indian crude basket in the preceding month and notified every month, the price thus calculated is subject to a ceiling of US\$ 6.50 per Btu.

Even the pricing of the remaining one-third of domestic NG supplied from the D/UD/HP/HT fields isn’t free from control.

Technically though, the firms can go for competitive bidding to determine the price for such supplies (referred to as a ‘premium’ price), this too is subject to a ceiling linked to the prices of alternate fuels including fuel oil, naphtha, and LNG.

The legacy fields also suffer from high taxes such as an oil industry development (OID) cess of @20 per cent, higher royalty payments and land taxes in Assam and Rajasthan. Andhra Pradesh Pollution Control Board (APPCB) also levies the so-called ‘consent for operation fees’.

Besides, NG is not covered under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) which means E&P companies don’t get credit for taxes paid on inputs leading to higher cost of gas. The Government should de-regulate the price, allow full freedom of marketing and withdraw taxes and duties.

(The writer is a political analyst. Views are personal)

Precision, Power, and Innovation: The Science Behind Operation Sindoor

BY VINAY PATHAK AND SANDEEP JOSHI

On a night, while around 1.7 billion people across two countries were asleep, India decided to settle a score for a cowardly act done by terrorists in Pahalgalam.

No declarations. No televised warnings. Just precise and impactful action. In a few minutes, retaliation wasn’t just delivered — it was redefined and reframed. That night, revenge gave way to a new doctrine: swift, surgical, tech-driven warfare. A clear and loud message was sent by the top leadership to the harbinger of terror.

But that night, instead of just revenge, a new chapter was silently written — neither in speeches nor headlines, but in the precise language of strategic retaliation.

It is a remarkable new lesson in modern warfare and technology-driven military tactics where silence carries the weight of power and revenge. A hard-hitting message — enough is enough, the nation will not sit quietly in the face of such acts — was sent, powerful enough to reflect the intent of bold leadership. It echoed far beyond borders, impossible for global leaders to ignore. The world took notice of it.

Operation Sindoor — from a precision missile strike by India across the border, deep into the heart of Pakistan, targeting the terrorist camps they had nurtured — was not just a military response to the wounds inflicted in Pahalgalam, but it was also a message to our adversaries about our technological advancement.

It signified that India is no longer merely a buyer of military equipment; rather, it has become a proud producer capable of indigenously developing and deploying next-generation war technologies with excellence.

This wasn’t a case of luck or last-minute brilliance. It was the result of the hard work of our scientific community, and its years of relentless effort which was highly focused and deeply purposeful. Behind the calm and composure was a nation often underestimated, steadily transforming the way it thinks about, builds, and commands its defence sector.

Operation Sindoor wasn’t just a mission; it became a milestone in the journey that began with one bold, simple idea: What if India no longer had to depend on anyone else to defend itself? That question became a vision, that vision became a resolve, and that resolve became a reality.

This transformation is the result of the grand vision of the nation’s visionary leadership — a vision patiently nurtured over the last decade years through bold initiatives like NIDHI (National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations), Make in India, the rise of defence-tech startups, and the emergence of a thriving innovation ecosystem. Operation



Sindoor is not just a mission; it has become the grand proclamation of this transformation.

This vision became a reality. It stepped out of boardrooms and policy papers and roared onto the global stage. In the labs where startups take birth our young engineers and scientists are fighting a silent war, battling challenges with innovative ideas, crafting technologies that ensure peace through power and strength. Warriors working in the field of science, technology and research are fighting a different kind of battle — not with guns and grenades, but with the grit, code and relentless innovative imagination.

These are the warriors working in the startups. Each breakthrough is a victory for them which motivates them to undertake a new challenging task.

There are quite a few remarkable startups that have made us proud by showcasing their capabilities in drone technology and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS). Apart from HAL and IIT-Bombay, it is companies like L&T, Paras Defence and Space Technologies, Drone Destination, IdeaForge Technology and Zeus Numerix are doing path-breaking work.

Their innovations tackle real-world problems, from defence tech to climate solutions, proving that technology is India’s strongest shield and startups are its sharpest edge.

Rafale, the magic of engineering from France, soared in perfect synchrony with our very own BrahMos, together executing one of the most precise strikes the modern world has witnessed. This was not mere retaliation; it was a symphony of bold intent and sovereign resolve, where every note was calibrated, every movement deliberated against the attack made by terrorists on the sovereignty of the nation.

India’s method of retaliation, language of retaliation, and grammar of retaliation in response

to the point-blank killings by asking about the religion of innocents by Pakistani terrorists in Pahalgalam have now become a case study for military strategists and defence experts across the globe.

This wasn’t just a military manoeuvre — it was a calibrated expression of resolve and bold intent. With the help of fifth-generation fighter jets like Rafale in the skies and the S-400 Sudarshan Chakra air defence system on guard, India showed that the fusion (Sangam) of global firepower and homegrown innovation isn’t just possible — it’s formidable and too powerful.

At a critical hour, indigenously developed technology spoke louder than words, with precision, clarity, and impact and delivered a message that — one the world won’t soon forget. The unwavering contribution of our armed forces — marked by sacrifice, dedication, and deep love for the nation — is truly invaluable and incomparable.

We salute their valour and honour their commitment towards protecting our country. And how can we forget the contributions of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, the “Father of India’s missile programme”? Dr Kalam was instrumental in adding muscle to India’s defence capabilities.

Operation Sindoor was not just retaliation — it was India’s declaration of a new era in warfare: silent, swift, tech-driven, and sovereign. It marked the rise of indigenous innovation, the boldness of visionary leadership, and the resilience of a nation ready to defend its people with precision and pride. From Pahalgalam’s pain emerged a powerful message: India will not bow — it will build, strike, and lead. A new doctrine was born, and the world could no longer look away.

(Vinay Pathak is Assistant Professor, IIIT-Sonepat, and Sandeep Joshi is a freelance journalist. Views are personal)

Indus Waters Treaty: A watershed moment for India-Pakistan relations

The brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgalam, Jammu and Kashmir — claiming the lives of 26 innocent tourists — has not only shocked the nation but reignited a serious conversation about India’s ongoing relations with Pakistan, especially in the context of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). The gruesome nature of the attack has prompted a broader reassessment of strategic, diplomatic, and humanitarian ties between the two countries. One major outcome of this reassessment is a renewed scrutiny of the IWT — an agreement that has endured since 1960, but now appears increasingly outdated given Pakistan’s repeated provocations.

In a significant development for the first time since the Treaty’s inception, Pakistan has expressed a willingness to revisit its terms. This shift comes amid India’s stern measures following the attack, including the bold decision to consider suspending elements of the Treaty. It is a move that has been debated in the past but never seriously acted upon — until now.

The Indus Waters Treaty, brokered by the World Bank in 1960 after nine years of negotiations, governs the distribution of water from six rivers in the Indus basin. It allocates exclusive use of the eastern rivers — Sutlej, Beas, and Ravi — to India, while granting Pakistan control over the western rivers — Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab. India, under the Treaty, is allowed to generate hydroelectric power on the western rivers through “run-of-the-river” projects, but is prohibited from altering the flow through large-scale storage or irrigation.

At the heart of the Treaty lies a spirit of cooperation, goodwill, and mutual trust. The preamble clearly states both countries’ intent to achieve the most equitable and satisfactory utilisation of river waters through a cooperative framework. Unfortunately, while India has largely honored this commitment, Pakistan has repeatedly violated the underlying principles by abetting terrorism and interfering in India’s internal affairs. The recent Pahalgalam massacre — unprecedented in its direct targeting of tourists — underscores a serious breach not only of bilateral trust but also of the moral framework that underpins the Treaty.

India’s response was swift. Recognising the attack as a violation of the basic tenets of peace and diplomacy, the Government of India announced a reassessment of the IWT, signaling that continued goodwill cannot be taken for granted. Unlike in previous instances where debate on the Treaty was limited to academic and diplomatic circles, this time the Government took proactive steps, sending a clear message to Islamabad and the international community.

Pakistan’s sudden openness to renegotiation reflects a quiet but clear acknowledgment of its vulnerability. Much of the country depends heavily on the western rivers, especially Jhelum and Chenab,

for agriculture and daily consumption. Any change in India’s approach to water flow — whether through infrastructure expansion or short-term flow adjustments — could have significant consequences for Pakistan’s water security. This looming reality may have prompted Islamabad to reconsider its rigid stance. It is also worth noting that the IWT includes provisions for revision. Changes can be made, but only through a newly ratified treaty agreed upon by both nations. Given the evolving geopolitical and ecological realities, and especially in light of persistent hostilities, India is well within its rights to propose modifications. The infrastructure required to implement such changes, like increased storage and diversion capacity, would demand long-term planning, but the very possibility is enough to concern Pakistan’s leadership.

The Treaty also includes mechanisms for resolving disagreements. These range from bilateral discussions through the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC), to more structured dispute resolution methods involving a Neutral Expert or even an ad hoc Court of Arbitration. Disagreements have arisen in recent years over India’s construction of two hydroelectric power plants — Kishenganga (330 MW) and Ratle (850 MW) — in Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan has claimed that aspects of these projects violate Treaty provisions, particularly in terms of design parameters. However, these are “run-of-the-river” projects, and India maintains that they fall within its rights under the IWT. The World Bank is not funding either project, and technical design disputes have remained unresolved despite multiple rounds of talks. India’s recent steps to enhance the reservoir capacity of these hydroelectric projects — through desilting and other improvements — are within the permissible framework but carry potential for temporary control over water flow. Even short-term restrictions, such as temporarily closing dam gates, could have significant repercussions downstream, further highlighting Pakistan’s dependence on Indian goodwill.

The Pahalgalam attack has exposed the fragility of any agreement rooted in one-sided responsibility. India has abided by the IWT even during the most challenging times, while Pakistan has continued to harbor and support terrorism. The attack has given India the moral and strategic justification to question whether the current form of the Treaty serves its national interest. Pakistan’s expressed willingness to engage in renegotiations could mark a turning point — either toward genuine cooperation or further tension. The burden now lies on both sides to either reforge a partnership based on mutual respect or prepare for a prolonged period of uncertainty.

(The writer is a political and national affairs analyst. Views are personal)



ANIL ANAND

Syria driest winter triggers severe water crisis in Damascus

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barada Valley

Inside a mountain above the Syrian capital, Hassan Bashi walked through tunnels that used to be filled with water from a spring famous for its pure waters. The spring rises inside the ruins of a Roman temple in the Barada Valley and flows toward Damascus, which it has been supplying with drinking water for thousands of years.

Normally, during the winter flood season, water fills all the tunnels and washes over much of the temple.

Now, there is only a trickle of water following the driest winter in decades. Bashi, who is a guard but also knows how to operate the pumping and water filtration machines in the absence of the engineer in charge, displayed an old video on his cell phone of high waters inside the ruins. "I have been working at the Ein al-Fijeh spring for 33 years and this is the first year it is that dry," Bashi said. The spring is the main source of water for 5 million people, supplying Damascus and its sub-

urbs with 70 per cent of their water. As the city suffers its worst water shortages in years, many people now rely on buying water from private tanker trucks that fill from wells. Government officials are warning that the situation could get worse in the summer and are urging residents to use water sparingly while showering, cleaning or washing dishes.

"The Ein al-Fijeh spring is working now at its lowest level," said Ahmad Darwish, head of the Damascus City Water Supply Authority, adding that the current year witnessed the lowest rainfall since 1956.

The channels that have been there since the day of the Romans two millennia ago were improved in 1920 and then again in 1980, he said.

Darwish said the springwater water comes mainly from rainfall and melted snow off the mountains along the border with Lebanon, but because of this year's below-average rainfall, "it has given us amounts that are much less than normal." There are 1.1 million homes that get water from the spring, and in order to get

through the year, people will have to cut down their consumption, he said.

The spring also feeds the Barada River that cuts through the capital. It is mostly dry this year.

In Damascus's eastern area of Abbasids, Bassam Jbara is feeling the shortage. His neighbourhood only gets water for about 90 minutes a day, compared with previous years when water was always running when they turned on the taps.

Persistent electricity cuts are making the problem worse, he said, as they sometimes have water but no power to pump it to the tankers on the roof of the building. Jbara once had to buy five barrels of undrinkable water from a tanker truck that cost him and his neighbours \$15, a large amount of money in a country where many people make less than \$100 a month. "From what we are seeing, we are heading toward difficult conditions regarding water," he said, fearing that supplies will drop to once or twice a week over the summer. He is already economising.

"The people of Damascus are used to

having water every day and to drinking tap water coming from the Ein al-Fijeh spring, but unfortunately the spring is now weak," Jbara said.

During Syria's 14-year conflict, Ein al-Fijeh was subjected to shelling on several occasions, changing between forces of then-President Bashar Assad and insurgents over the years.

In early 2017, government forces captured the area from insurgents and held it until December when the five-decade Assad dynasty collapsed in a stunning offensive by fighters led by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham group, or HTS, of current President Ahmad al-Sharaa.

Tarek Abdul-Wahed returned to his home near the spring in December nearly eight years after he was forced to leave with his family and is now working on rebuilding the restaurant he owned. It was blown up by Assad's forces after he left the area. Abdul-Wahed looked at the dry area that used to be filled with tourists and Syrians who would come in the summer to enjoy the cool weather.

Greece's top diplomat calls war in Gaza 'nightmare'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ United Nations

The world is facing the most turbulent times since World War II, Greece's top diplomat says, pointing to a crossroads in democracy and saying Europe is facing a "political identity crisis."

In a wide-ranging interview with The Associated Press, Foreign Minister Giorgos Gerapetritis weighed in on two of the globe's major conflicts, saying the "nightmare" and escalating death toll in Gaza must end and Greece stands by Ukraine.

He also noted that US President Donald Trump's tariffs are not "good news."

Here are some takeaways from Monday's interview:

A crisis in democracy tied to inequality Gerapetritis, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the UN Security Council this month, said inequalities between nations and people are challenging "the essence of democracy and the rule of law." As a result, "we have turned into an era where populism and demagogues are essentially ruling the state," he said.

He said global turmoil is also the result

of technology and the world's mobility, which mean every challenge — from pandemics to climate and migration — touches everyone.

The upheaval also follows a crisis in overall global cooperation and belief in international organisations, which have failed to address challenges in recent years. Nonetheless, Gerapetritis said, Greece believes "democracy has a self-corrective mechanism" and what's needed at this challenging time is strong leadership in major nations and international organizations "to make people believe in the noble cause of being together in peace and prosperity."

Europe is seeking resilience amid the war in Ukraine

The Greek foreign minister said the European Union's requirement that decisions be adopted unanimously by its 27 members — giving a single nation veto power — has become an obstacle.

On the other hand, he said, the veto reflects national interests that should be at the core of European politics.

At the moment, Gerapetritis said Europe is in a "political identity crisis."

Pakistan should hand over terrorists to India: Indian envoy to Israel

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jerusalem

Pakistan should hand over key terrorists Hafiz Saeed, Sajid Mir, and Zakiur Rehman Lakhvi to India, just like the US did with one of the masterminds of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, Tahawwur Hussain Rana, India's Ambassador to Israel JP Singh has said.

Contending that terrorism is a global menace, Singh also called for the formation of an international coalition against it. In an interview with Israeli TV channel i24 on Monday, Singh stressed that India's Operation Sindoor against Pakistan is "paused" and "not over".

Narrating the incidents leading up to India's offensive, Sing said that the oper-

ation was against terror groups in Pakistan.

"The terrorists killed people based on their religion. They asked people about their religion before killing them, and 26 innocent lives were lost," the Indian ambassador said on the

Pahalgam attack of April 22.

"India's operation was against terror groups and their infrastructure to which Pakistan responded by attacking India's military installations," he emphasised.

Citing a long list of terror attacks

in India that originated from Pakistan, Singh said that the "root cause is these two groups — Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba".

The leaders of Lashkar-e-Taiba, which was behind the Mumbai attack, in which several Jews were also

killed, continue to roam free, he noted.

"They need to do a very simple thing - when the preamble includes goodwill and friendship, they just need to hand over these terrorists to us," the envoy stressed.

SOUTH EASTERN COALFIELDS LIMITED
"A MINI RATNA COMPANY"
NOTICE
All the tenders issued by SECL for procurement of Goods, Works and Services are available on website of SECL <http://www.secl-cil.in>. CIL e-procurement portal <http://coalindiatenders.nic.in> and Central Public Procurement Portal <http://eprocure.gov.in> In addition, procurement is also done through GeM portal <http://gem.gov.in>. SECL's mining services tenders are also now available on GeM portal <http://gem.gov.in>

Ashnoor Textile Mills Ltd.
Regd. Office : Behrampur Road, Village Khandas, District Gurugram, Haryana-122001
E-mail: atml.delhi@yahoo.com
Phone: 91 0124 4809756
CIN: L17226HR1984PLC033384
NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given, pursuant to Regulation 29 read with Regulation 47 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, that a meeting of the Board of Directors of the Company will be held on Thursday, May 29, 2025, inter-alia, to consider and approve Audited Financial Results of the company for the Fourth Quarter & Financial Year ended March 31, 2025.
This information is also available on Company's website at www.ashnoortext.com and also on the website of BSE, i.e. www.bseindia.com.
By the order of Board
Sd/-
Suneel Gupta
Managing Director
DIN-00052084
May 20, 2025
Gurugram, Haryana

INVITING APPLICATIONS FOR RUNNING THE CANTEEN AT DWARKA DISTRICT COURT COMPLEX
R/M
Applications are invited from the reputed firms/CATERERS and others Vendors with minimum 3 years experience and sound financial capability for running the Canteen at Dwarka Court Complex.
The application form in all respects including the rate chart of items should be completed in all respect, and be submitted in Bar Office of Dwarka Court Bar Association, New Delhi on or before 25th May 2025.
The application received after the said date and time shall not be entertained and considered in any case. All the applications received previously along with then new application will be considered.
Karan Veer Tyagi, Hon'y. Secretary, DCBA, Dwarka Court Complex, Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-110 075, Tel: 011-28041409.

VASTO
HOUSING FINANCE
VASTU HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LIMITED
A Public Ltd. Company Incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956
Date of Incorporation: 04.02.2005;
CIN: U65922MH2005PLC2272501,
Registered & Corporate Office: Unit Nos. 203 & 204, 2nd Floor, Awing, Navhargar Estates, Zakaria Bunder Road, Sewri (West), Mumbai-400015
Tel No: 022-24190911;
Email : cs@vastuhfc.com
Website: <https://www.vastuhfc.com>
SHIFTING OF BRANCH OFFICE
The Branch office of Vastu Housing Finance Corporation Limited ("Company") at Noida shall be shifted to the new premises as mentioned below from 08th September, 2025 (effective date).
Old Address
Ground Floor, Plot No. 272, Block-G, Sector 63 NOIDA, Pincode-201309
New Address
Plot No.187, Block G, Sector-63, Phase III, Dist. Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida-201301, Uttar Pradesh
The Old Premises will remain operational till 07th September, 2025 From 08th September, 2025 onwards, all transactions / customer service requests of the Company should be sent to the new address only.
In case of any queries, you may contact us at: customer.care@vastuhfc.com
Address: Unit Nos. 203 & 204, 2nd Floor, A wing, Navhargar Estates, Zakaria Bunder Road, Sewri (West), Mumbai-400015
Date: 18-05-2025, Place: NOIDA, U.P.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, भोपाल
राष्ट्रीय शहरी आजीविका मिशन
हर्षवर्धन शॉपिंग कॉम्प्लेक्स, माता मंदिर, भोपाल
E-Mail ID. nulmbhopal@gmail.com, PH No.- 0755-2701123
भोपाल दिनांक 13.05.2025
कं.276/रसोई/2025
-:: निविदा सूचना ::-
नगर निगम भोपाल द्वारा मजदूर वर्ग एवं जरूरतमंद व्यक्तियों को सस्ती दरों पर पौष्टिक सस्ता एवं स्वच्छ भोजन उपलब्ध करवाने के उद्देश्य से नगरीय क्षेत्र में दीनदयाल रसोई योजना के तहत 5 स्थाई एवं 3 चलित रसोई केन्द्रों के संचालन हेतु निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है :-

क्र.	कार्य का नाम	निविदा प्रपत्र शुल्क	ईएमडी
1.	5 स्थाई एवं 3 चलित रसोई केन्द्रों का संचालन	3,00,00/- रुपये	1,39,000/- रुपये

- इस योजना के अंतर्गत रुपये 05/- (पांच रुपये) प्रति व्यक्ति की दर से भरपेट भोजन उपलब्ध कराया जायेगा। राज्य शासन द्वारा रुपये 10/- (दस रुपये) प्रति थाली की दर से अनुदान उपलब्ध कराया जावेगा।
- रसोई केन्द्रों के संचालन हेतु इच्छुक संस्थाओं/एरिया लेवल फेडरेशन/सहायता समूह/व्यक्तियों से प्रस्ताव ऑन लाईन आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं।
- स्थाई रसोई केन्द्र के साथ चलित रसोई केन्द्रों का संचालन किया जा सकता है।
- निविदा नियम एवं शर्तें वेबसाईट www.mptenders.gov.in से डाउनलोड किए जा सकते हैं।
- सभी प्रकार के पूर्ण मोहरबंद निविदाएं एवं प्रति दिनांक 18.6.25 को सायं 4:30 PM बजे तक माता मंदिर, हर्षवर्धन कॉम्प्लेक्स स्थित एन.यू.एल.एम. नगर निगम कार्यालय में जमा करना होगा। संस्था द्वारा अपने अर्हता संबंधित समस्त अभिलेख निविदा के साथ संलग्न करना आवश्यक है, कोई भी अन्य अभिलेख निर्धारित तिथि के पश्चात स्वीकार नहीं किया जायेगा। निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय के पश्चात प्राप्त होने वाली निविदाओं पर विचार नहीं किया जावेगा।
- निविदा से संबंधित कोई भी संशोधन सामाचार पत्रों में प्रकाशित न करते हुए केवल उल्लेखित वेबसाईट पर ही सूचित किये जावेंगे।
- जिला स्तरीय समन्वय अनुश्रवण समिति भोपाल के पास एक अथवा सभी निविदाओं को बिना कारण निरस्त करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित रहेगा।
(टीना यादव)
अपर आयुक्त
(आयुक्त महोदय द्वारा अनुमोदित)
(ई-टेंडर क्र 2025_UAD_424755_1)
नि.क्र. 1771/025/026
नगर निगम भोपाल

Chief Engineer, Uttarakhand Rural Roads Development Agency,
First Floor, Directorate of Panchayatiraj, Opp-IT Park, Sahastradhara Road, Dehradun
Ref. No.:I/174752/2025
Dated : 19-05-2025
PRADHAN MANTRI GRAM SADAK YOJANA (PMGSY) e-Procurement Notice- 04(P-III)/2025-26
The Chief Engineer, URRDA on behalf of Governor of Uttarakhand invites the item rate bids in electronic tendering system for construction of works under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana in the Districts of **Udhham Singh Nagar** for **01** number of packages with estimated cost totaling to **Rs. 3.66 Crore** including their maintenance for five years from the eligible contractors (Class-A and above) registered with PWD/CPWD or equivalent".
Date of release of Invitation for Bids through e-procurement: 20-05-2025.
Availability of Bid Documents and mode of submission: The bid documents are available online and should be submitted online in www.pmgsytendersuk.gov.in. The bidder would be required to register in the web-site which is free of cost. For submission of the bids, the bidder is required to have Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) from one of the authorized Certifying Authorities.
The bidders are required to submit original affidavit regarding correctness of information furnished with bid document as per provisions of Clause 4.4 B (ii) of ITB with **CONCERNED CIRCLE OFFICES, mentioned in SBD on a date not later than three working days after the opening of technical qualification part of the bid**, either by registered post or by hand, failing which the bids shall be declared non-responsive. No physical documents will be accepted after the closing date and time of submission of bids.
Last Date/Time for receipt of bids through e-procurement: 26-05-2025 01:00 PM.
For further details please log on to www.pmgsytendersuk.gov.in
Chief Engineer,
URRDA, Dehradun
* *Non Registered bidders may submit bids, however, the successful bidders must get registered in appropriate class with appropriate authorities before signing the contract.*
Note : For e-Procurement for any sort of queries 0135-2608125 number may be contacted 10:00 AM to 05:00 PM.

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

LOST & FOUND

I, Abhishek Grover S/o Parveen Kumar Grover R/o G-11 Jangpura Extn. New Delhi-110014. I have lost my BBA degree (Bachelor of business Administration) my Roll No.- 9345505, degree year 2004 S.I. No. 04-23960.

CHANGE OF NAME

PD(2066)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shakuntla Devi Mother Of No. 16020895N Hav Vikas Kumar, R/o- Vill- Kalali, PO- Mandholi Khurd, Teh- Siwani Dist- Bhiwani, Haryana-127046, have changed my name from Shakuntla Devi to Shakuntla, vide affidavit dated 20/05/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME

PD(2069)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, J, J-771712Y Rank Sub M Tech 'B' Veh Virender Singh R/o- Shastri Nagar, Bala Ji Colony, Bhiwani, Haryana-127021, Now at Unit-6121 (I) Fd Wksp Coy (608 EME BN) C/O 56 APO, I have changed my name from P. Saravani to Ponduru Saraveni, vide affidavit dated 20/05/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME

PD(2070)C

CHANGE OF NAME

I, P. Saravani M/o- JC- 774717H Sub Kantarao Ponduru, R/o- 1-83, Vill- Kesavaraopeta, PO- Shermahmmadpuram, Teh- Etcherla, Dist- Srikakulam, A.P.- 532402, have changed my name from P. Saravani to Ponduru Saraveni, vide affidavit dated 20/05/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME

PD(2068)C

HARERA GURUGRAM

PUBLIC NOTICE
FOR INVITING OBJECTIONS REGARDING REGISTRATION OF THE PROJECT NAMED "TULIP VIOLET" UNDER LICENSE NO. 34 OF 2024 DATED 07.03.2024 IN ADDITION TO LICENCE NO. 78 OF 2010 DATED 15.10.2010 LOCATED AT SECTOR 69 & 70, GURUGRAM BEING DEVELOPED BY M/S. TULIP INFRATECH PVT. LTD.
It is for the information of the general public that M/s. Tulip Inftratech Pvt. Ltd. has applied for grant of registration of the project measuring 4.176 acres forming part of licence no. 34 of 2024 & 78 OF 2010 granted by DTCF Haryana on 07.03.2024 & 15.10.2010. The project was earlier registered with the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram measuring 8.44 acres vide Registration No. 36 of 2018 dated 18.12.2018 valid upto 31.12.2020 namely "TULIP VIOLET (Phase-II)".
It is further informed that the Director, Town and Country Planning Department granted licence over an additional area measuring 7.64375 acres (Licence No.34 of 2024 dated 07.03.2024) in Group Housing Colony area measuring 25.44 acres (Licence no. 78 of 2010 dated 15.10.2010) thereby total site area 33.08375 Acres in Sector 69 & 70, Gurugram. Meanwhile the Town & Country Planning Department, Haryana has approved the phasing plan (Phase-I- 23.18875 acres, Phase 2 – 1.301 acres, Phase 3 – 2.875 acres, Phase 4 – 2.577 acres, Phase 5 – 1.0 acres, Phase 6 – 0.75 acres, Phase 7 – 1.392 acres) vide DRG No. DTCF 11019 having memo no. ZP-663-III/PA/(DK)/2025/13925 dated 18.04.2025 and revised building plan vide Memo No ZP-663-II/PA/(DK)/2025/6649 dated 20.02.2025. Thereafter the promoter have applied for registration of Phase 2 & 3 and has approached the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram for the registration of the project namely "Tulip Violet".
As per approval granted by the Director, Town and Country Planning Department, the promoters have already obtained consent of two-third of existing allottees in respect of earlier licence no. 78 of 2010 dated 15.10.2010.
If anyone concerned have any objection with respect to above, the details are available in the office of the Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram which can be seen by any concerned on any working day during office hours i.e., 11.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. upto 30.05.2025. Objections, if any, may be filed on or before 30.05.2025, 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and he or she may appear before the authority in person on 02.06.2025 at 11:00 am.
Given under the approval of the Authority and its seal.
Secretary,
Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority,
Gurugram
Dated: 21.05.2025

DELHI TRANSCO LIMITED

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS
Delhi Transco Ltd (A Government of NCT of Delhi Undertaking) intends to invite online tender for the following work:
Tender No.T25P111787: Purchase of O/D 245 kV SF6 Circuit Breakers as per DTL Technical Specifications.
For complete details of the tender please visit following website:- <https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in> (Tender ID No.: 2025_DTL_272311) and www.dtl.gov.in with Unique No. DTL-9602-160525.
Last date for bid submission: 17.06.2025 at 1.30 P.M.
All Corrigendum/Addendum/ Amendments/Date of Extension/Clarifications, if any, to the above e-tenders would appear only on the above mentioned websites.

NORTHERN RAILWAY

TENDER NOTICE No. 18/2025-2028 Dated: 19/05/2025
Invitation of Tenders through E-Procurement system
Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi - 110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items :-

S.No.	Tender No.	Brief Description	Qty.	Closing Date
01	19253871	IOH KIT FOR FRAG POLYMERS	111 SET	09-06-25
02	03252226	DECORATIVE THERMOSETTING SYNTHETIC RESIN	33059 NOS	09-06-25
03	02250052A	BLOWER MOTOR 1.1 KW	745 NOS	16-06-25
04	09252404	SNUBBER SPRING FOR BLC WAGON	4445 NOS	16-06-25
05	07251096	HELICAL SPRING (CENTRELESS GROUND)	442 NOS	19-06-25
06	01251725	CONTACT WIRE PARALLEL CLAMP	39000 SET	23-06-25
07	19253339	GEAR CASE ASSLY	236 NOS	30-06-25

Note : 1. Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for details. 2. No Manual offer will be entertained. 1477/2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

NORTHERN RAILWAY

OPEN E-TENDER NOTICE
The Sr. Divisional Engineer-III, Northern Railway, Delhi Division invites E-Tender for the following work:-

Name of Work	Annual operation and maintenance of track 2025-26 in the section of SSE/P-WAY/SSB under ADEN/DLI.
Approx. Cost of work	₹99,88,898.27 (Rs. Ninety Nine Lakh Eighty Eight Thousand Eight Hundred Ninety Eight and Twenty Seven Paise Only)
Earnest Money to be deposited	₹1,99,800/- (Rs. One Lakh Ninety Nine Thousand Eighty Hundred Only)
Cost of tender document	₹70.00
Date & Time of submission of tender bid and opening of Tender	09.06.2025 at 15:00 Hrs.
Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.ireps.gov.in

• The tenderer/s must be registered on the Indian Railway E-Procurement system (IREPS) site i.e. www.ireps.gov.in for participating in the e-tender system.
• For all terms and conditions please refer tender document.
• No manual offers are acceptable. • Cost of tender document and Earnest money will be acceptable through net banking or payment gateway only.
No.: 128-W/280/e-Tender Notice/NI/08/2025-26/W-3 Dated : 19.05.2025

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1470/2025

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot (Admission Branch)

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot Admission Notice
M.Sc. Nursing Courses (PMNET-2025)
Online applications are invited alongwith requisite fee for admission to M.Sc. Nursing course, session-2025 in the Govt./University constituent /Private colleges of Punjab through University website from **22.05.2025 to 16.06.2025**. Prospectus for admission to M.Sc. Nursing course will be available on university website from **22.05.2025**. The Entrance Test (PMNET-2025) for admission to M.Sc. Nursing course will be conducted on **28.06.2025**
Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing Courses (PBBNET-2025)
Online applications are invited alongwith requisite fee for admission to Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing course, session-2025 in the Govt./University constituent /Private colleges of Punjab through University website from **22.05.2025 to 16.06.2025**. Prospectus for admission to Post Basic B.Sc. Nursing course will be available on university website from **22.05.2025**. The Entrance Test (PBBNET-2025) for admission to B.Sc. Nursing course will be conducted on 28.06.2025
Note:- Any Notification/Corrigendum/Amendment by Govt. of Punjab will be followed. For Prospectus/fee details/schedule/online counseling/details & updates visit us at: www.bfuhs.ac.in.
Registrar
00/12/440/2023/44623 Dated CHD :- 5/20/2025

Baba Farid University of Health Sciences
Sadiq Road, Faridkot -151203
Ph. 01639-256232, 256236

E-TENDER NOTICE
E-tender are invited for the procurements of following items upto 05-06-2025
1) Replacement of car door set, binding door with panel, header and skill, ARD with batteries for 2 nos. Lifts make ECE 8 person at BFUHS, Faridkot 2) Comprehensive maintenance contract (CMC) for 1.5 ton window a 1.5 ton a 2 ton split Air Conditioner for Faridkot site under BFUHS, Faridkot 3) Construction of Building to set up Medical Gases and laundry plant at TCCC, Fazilka 4) Providing and installation of Copper pipes for Medical Gases, Vacuum Compressed Air, Oxygen Manifold and LMO Tank 10KL for TCCC, Fazilka 5) Construction of Pharmacy Block Building in Hospital Complex in GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot 6) Supply and laying of 400 sq. M (3 1/2 acre) Cable for new MRI installed Radio-Diagnosis department at super specialty block at GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot 7) Construction of Additional Block for University College of Nursing, Faridkot
E-tender are invited for the procurements of following items upto 12-05-2025
1) Re-Construction of damaged boundary wall in front of University College of Nursing Nurse Hostel in GGS Medical College & Hospital, Faridkot 2) Special Repair of Radiation Oncology Department (Cancer Department) of GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot 03) Refilling of 1020 No. Cylinder Fire Extinguisher Hose Assembly and 119 No. New Fire Extinguisher for different department under BFUHS, Faridkot 4) Providing & installing Oxygen, Suction & Air Point, isolation valve & Copper pipe in different department at GGS Medical Hospital, Faridkot.
Note:- Tender Document can be downloaded from <http://eproc.punjab.gov.in>, and www.bfuhs.ac.in
Registrar
00/12/441/2023/44632 Dated CHD :- 5/20/2025

India, US discuss speeding conclusion of first phase of bilateral trade pact

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Tuesday held discussions with US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in Washington to expedite negotiations on the first phase of the proposed bilateral trade agreement between the two countries. Goyal is in Washington for a ministerial-level meeting to review the progress of negotiations of the trade pact.

“Good discussions with Secretary of HowardLutnick towards expediting the first tranche of India-US Bilateral Trade Agreement,” Goyal said in a post on X. Goyal was in Washington in March also for the trade talks. The minister-level meeting is followed by the deliberations between chief negotiators of the two countries, which will continue until May 22. The meetings come against the backdrop of both countries exploring the possibility of an interim trade arrangement in goods to secure “early mutual wins” ahead of final-



Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal with US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick during a meeting in USA

ising the first phase of the trade agreement by fall (September-October) this year. The main issues that will figure in the negotiations include market access, rules of origin, and non-tariff barriers.

Officials from New Delhi and Washington aim to take advantage of the 90-day tariff pause window to advance the talks. The US has suspended the additional 26 per cent tariffs on India till July 9. It was announced on April 2 to bridge the widening trade deficit.

However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed on the countries will continue to remain in place. To boost bilateral trade, India is seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, chemicals, grapes, and bananas in the proposed pact with America. On the other hand, the US wants duty concessions in sectors like certain industrial goods, automobiles (electric vehicles in particular), wines, petrochemical products, dairy, agriculture items

such as apples, and tree nuts. The terms of reference (ToRs) for the BTA have been finalised by India and the US, which include around 19 chapters covering issues like tariffs, goods, services, rules of origin, non-tariff barriers, and customs facilitation.

The US has on multiple occasions raised concerns over certain non-tariff barriers being faced by American goods in the Indian markets. The US remained India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year in 2024-25, with bilateral trade valued at USD 131.84 billion. The US accounts for about 18 per cent of India's total goods exports, 6.22 per cent in imports, and 10.73 per cent in the country's total merchandise trade. With America, India had a trade surplus (the difference between imports and exports) of USD 41.18 billion in goods in 2024-25. It was USD 35.32 billion in 2023-24, USD 27.7 billion in 2022-23, USD 32.85 billion in 2021-22 and USD 22.73 billion in 2020-21. The US has raised concerns over this widening trade deficit.

NITI Aayog's paper bats for revision of defence laws

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

NITI Aayog's working paper has proposed amendment and revision in defence laws to develop a resilient and efficient defence supply chain in the face of evolving geopolitical tensions, cybersecurity threats, and global supply chain disruptions.

The Aayog in the working paper said a resilient and efficient defence supply chain is vital for national security and operational readiness, and it is imperative to develop a robust logistics strategy that ensures supply chain resilience, efficiency, and security. “Legal and policy frameworks play a crucial role in safeguarding national defence supply chains and ensuring operational readiness,” it said.

The paper noted that as defence supply chains are increasingly vulnerable to cyber threats, including espionage, data breaches, and sabotage, integrating robust cybersecurity measures, including blockchain security and end-to-end encryption, is critical to safeguard defence supply chains.

“Update the Defence of India Act

(1962) to address cyber resilience, supply chain security, and geopolitical risks, simplify procurement processes and mandate domestic sourcing for critical components, enforce mandatory cybersecurity audits and impose penalties for noncompliance,” the paper suggested.

The paper also pitched for providing legal incentives for domestic manufacturers and simplify export regulations and establishing a review committee for periodic updates to defence procurement and cybersecurity laws. Noting that reliance on foreign suppliers for critical defence components poses significant risks during geopolitical conflicts, trade embargoes, and supply chain disruptions, it said strategic supplier diversification, regional sourcing, and domestic manufacturing are essential to mitigate these risks and enhance supply chain resilience.

While pointing out that the traditional ‘Just in Case’ inventory model used in military logistics results in high carrying costs and storage inefficiencies, the paper suggested that implementing advanced inventory management systems can optimise stocking strategies.

BRICS nations call for increased financing for energy transition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India along with BRICS countries has called for increased concessional and low-cost financing from developed nations to help emerging nations transition towards low-carbon energy usage.

Union Minister for Power Manohar Lal is leading a delegation to attend the BRICS Energy Ministers’ Meeting which began on May 19 in Brazil. Apart from India and Brazil, BRICS countries include Russia, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran and the United Arab Emirates.

“Affirming each country's right to determine its own energy transition path and pace, the ministers advocated efficient use of all energy sources and called for increased concessional and low-cost financing from developed to developing nations,” a power ministry statement said on Tuesday. The energy ministers also highlighted the role of the New Development Bank (NDB) in promoting sustainable energy infrastructure, especially through local currency financing. At the Energy Ministers’ meeting, the

participants called for stronger partnerships, supported open, fair, and non-discriminatory international energy markets, and encouraged the use of local currencies in energy trade, the statement said. The ministers also advocated for the adoption of fair, transparent, and consistent guidelines for assessing carbon intensity, energy classification, and mutual recognition of taxonomies and certifications. Underscoring energy security as vital for socio-economic development, they highlighted the importance of market stability, resilient infrastructure, diversified energy sources, and critical minerals for clean technologies.

In his address, Lal underscored the vital role of fossil fuels in the global energy mix — especially for developing countries — and urged greater cooperation to promote their cleaner and efficient use through technologies such as coal gasification, carbon capture and storage, and green chemical innovations.

BRICS energy ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening energy security and advancing UN Sustainable Development Goal 7.

Mango irradiation operations normalised at Mumbai facility

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India's mango exports to the US are registering healthy growth, and irradiation operations at a key mango treatment facility in Mumbai have been normalised after a brief disruption due to a data recording error earlier this month, an official said on Tuesday. The Mumbai-based irradiation facility, which handles the highest volume of mangoes destined for the US, faced an issue during the irradiation process conducted on May 8 and 9, 2025.

The error led to the rejection of 12 mango consignments by US authorities due to discrepancies in treatment data.

“While the error and its cause are being examined at the senior level by the facility management, the mango irradiation process and its clearance were normalised at the impacted facility with effect from May 10, with no impact on the other two approved facilities,” the official said.

The exports of mangoes to the US are done under the Cooperative Service Agreement between APEDA (Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

FSSAI SEEKS CURBS ON ILLEGAL RIPENING AGENTS

New Delhi: Food regulator FSSAI has asked all states to check illegal use of ripening agents and synthetic coatings for fruits as part of its efforts ensue safe food for people.

“The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has urged all States and Union Territories to intensify inspections and carry out special enforcement drives to curb the illegal use of non-permitted fruit ripening agents, as well as colouring and coating of fruits with synthetic colours or non-permitted wax,” the regulator said in a statement on Tuesday.

The Commissioners of Food Safety of all States/UTs and Regional Directors of FSSAI have been requested to maintain strict vigilance over fruit markets and mandis, to curb illegal use of fruit ripening using agents like calcium carbide, commonly known as ‘masala’. As part of the enforcement drive, FSSAI has suggested that inspection of godowns and storage

facilities, particularly those suspected of using substances like calcium carbide for ripening, may be carried out. “The presence of calcium carbide on the premises or stored alongside crates of fruits will be treated as circumstantial evidence against the Food Business Operator (FBO), potentially leading to prosecution under the Food Safety and Standards (FSS) Act 2006,” it said.

Calcium carbide is strictly prohibited for the artificial ripening of fruits under the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restrictions on Sales) Regulations, 2011. “The use of this substance poses serious health risks and is known to cause mouth ulcers, gastric irritation and has carcinogenic properties,” the regulator pointed out. Further, FSSAI has also identified cases where FBOs are using ethephon solution to artificially ripen bananas and other fruits by dipping them directly into the chemical.

which are then graded and sorted at APEDA and NPPO (National Plant Protection Organisation) recognised pack-houses, then followed by fungicidal treatment of hot water and finally irradiated at USDA approved irradiation facilities, which are three, in the current year. “All such treatment facilities have Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) addressing irradiation of commodities for the mitigation of plant pests,” the official said.

In the 2024-25 period (as per First Advance Estimates), India produced about 22.66 million metric tonnes of mangoes, marking a 9 per cent increase over the previous year. The country contributes around 43 per cent of global mango production.

Major mango producing states include Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh, contributing 6.07 million metric tonnes (27 per cent) and 4.98 million metric tonnes respectively, followed by Bihar, Karnataka and Gujarat.

India is the sixth largest exporter of mangoes in the world. India's exports of fresh mangoes, in terms of value have increased by 66 per cent to the world in the last four years from \$36.22 million in FY21 to \$60.14 million in FY 24.

Sensex, Nifty tumble 1 per cent on third day of decline

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Falling for the third day in a row, benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled 1 per cent on Tuesday dragged down by profit taking in blue-chips such as HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank. Retreating from early highs, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 872.98 points or 1.06 per cent to settle at 81,186.44 as 27 of its constituents closed lower and three with gains. During the day, it dropped 905.72 points or 1.10 per cent to 81,153.70 as profit taking emerged in auto, financials and defence stocks.

The broader NSE Nifty tumbled 261.55 points or 1.05 per cent to 24,683.90. Analysts said investors opted for profit-booking as they awaited more clarity on the India-US trade agreement.

From Sensex firms, Eternal dropped the most by 4.10 per cent. Maruti, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Power Grid, Nestle, Bajaj Finance, Hindustan Unilever and Asian Paints were also among the laggards. HDFC Bank dropped by 1.26 per cent and index major Reliance Industries by 1.13 per cent. Tata Steel, Infosys and ITC were the gainers.

US tariffs unpredictability has negative credit consequences: Moody's

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Moody's Ratings on Tuesday said the uncertainties around US tariffs have negative credit consequences for debt issuers across emerging markets, including companies, governments and banks.

“The on-again, off-again US tariffs and difficulty predicting US trade policy have negative credit consequences for debt issuers across emerging markets,” Moody's said. Besides, geopolitics is an additional stress for emerging markets, including the

flare-up of tensions between India and Pakistan. Exporters are most directly exposed to US tariff changes, but most debt issuers face indirect effects, Moody's said, adding tariffs will reach a much bigger and varied group of debt issuers indirectly through slowing economic growth and, for many, commodity price declines, currency depreciation and investor risk aversion.

“The raft of tariffs the US administration has announced, altered and paused this year has negative credit consequences for debt issuers across emerging markets,

including companies, governments and banks,” Moody's said. Companies that rely on exports to the US are most exposed. But the wider effects of tariffs and trade uncertainty on consumer, business and financial activity will affect most emerging market entities, even as tariff deals emerge, it added. In early April, the US administration announced and then paused for 90 days the implementation of sweeping, country-specific tariffs on trading partners.

It maintained a base 10 per cent tariff with exemptions for some sectors and

higher tariffs imposed previously for other sectors including steel and aluminum. The US also raised tariffs to 145 per cent on imports of most goods from China, prompting China to raise tariffs on US goods to 125 per cent - both in addition to already existing tariffs.

A month later, the US and China reached an agreement to lower some of the tariffs on each other for 90 days, effective May 14 to 30 per cent for US imports of Chinese goods and to 10 per cent for Chinese imports of some US goods. “This development in US-China trade

talks will help reduce some of the drag on global trade and improves the balance of risks around the global growth outlook,” Moody's said. But, US tariffs on other key trading partners and sectoral tariffs are either in place or still to be negotiated, and trade uncertainty will continue to weigh on consumer and business confidence and on spending and investment decisions, it added. The US has begun trade discussions with a number of countries. And it reached a temporary tariff agreement with China in May, just days after reaching a separate deal with the UK.

POWERGRID posts PAT of ₹15,521 crore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a ‘Maharatna’ Company under Ministry of Power, GoI, has announced financial results for period ended Q4FY25 and FY25. For Q4FY25, on standalone basis, company has reported PAT of ₹4,336 crore and total income of ₹12,482 crore registering a YoY growth of 5 per cent and 2per cent respectively. On consolidated basis company has reported PAT of ₹4,143 crore and Total Income of ₹12,591 crore. For FY25, on standalone basis, company posted PAT (including discontinued operations) and Total Income of ₹15,354 crore and ₹46,325 crore respectively. On consolidated basis, company posted PAT and Total Income of ₹15,521 crore and ₹47,459 Crore respectively.



The Company has proposed a final dividend of ₹1.25 per share on a face value of ₹10/- each (12.50per cent of the paid-up share capital) in addition to interim dividend of ₹7.75/- per share. The total dividend for the year thus amounts to ₹9 per share. During FY25, the Company

incurred a Capital Expenditure of ₹26,255 crore and capitalised assets worth ₹9,014 crore (excluding FERV) on a consolidated basis. POWERGRID's Gross Fixed Assets on consolidated basis (including lease receivable) stood at ₹2,90,715 crore as on March 31, 2025.

Need five per cent growth in agriculture, says Chouhan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Tuesday said India requires a five per cent annual growth rate in agriculture and allied sectors to become a developed nation by 2047. Chouhan highlighted that food-grain is grown on 93 per cent of farmland, but the growth is just 1.5 per cent.

“We are working towards bridging the yield gap in crops and achieving a national average yield... If we have to make India a developed nation by 2047, agriculture and allied sectors have to grow at 5 per cent annually,” he said. He was speaking at a press conference on the sidelines of the annual conference of Vice Chancellors of Agricultural Universities

and Directors of ICAR Institutes. The minister expressed confidence that the five per cent annual growth rate is achievable, emphasising that various agricultural institutes play a key role in this endeavour. “Research plays a very important role in increasing agricultural production and reducing costs. Our target is to maintain an annual agricultural growth rate of 5 per cent. Our effort is that all the research institutions work in one direction to achieve the goals,” he said. Chouhan noted that the agriculture and allied sector must achieve \$1 trillion for India to become a \$5 trillion economy.

He also stressed the need to enhance farm exports to 20 per cent from the current level of six per cent.

Amrit Bharat station scheme: Transforming icons of change, mirrors of cultural identity



JAYA VARMA SINHA

India's transformation today is swift and visible-not just in policy documents or political statements, but in its physical landscape. The changes are apparent in newly built roads, high-speed expressways and world-class airports that rival international standards. These developments reflect a deeper shift in how India connects its cities and empowers its people. Once neglected, the railway sector is now emerging as a crucial part of this progress, shedding its image of overcrowded and outdated stations to become a showcase of culture, efficiency and innovation. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme is a central component of this transformation. Led by Indian Railways, the initiative aims to modernise over 1,300 railway stations across the country. But this mission goes far beyond

architectural upgrades or technological enhancements. It represents a fundamental shift in how India approaches public infrastructure-blending functionality with inclusivity, heritage with modernity and convenience with sustainability. The scheme envisions railway stations not just as transit points but as vibrant, integrated spaces that reflect a city's character and support its community.

At the heart of the scheme is the principle that quality public services contribute directly to the dignity and well-being of every citizen. Where stations once focused only on managing high footfall, they are now being repositioned as important civic spaces-hubs that interconnect culture, economy and daily life. The scheme involves preparing specific master plans for each station, tailored to its location, passenger traffic and local identity. These plans are not rigid; they are designed to evolve and adapt to emerging technologies, population growth and shifting urban

needs. Development proceeds in phases, ensuring minimal disruption to existing operations while allowing space for innovation.

Rather than relying on cosmetic changes like new paint or expanded platforms, the initiative reimagines the entire purpose of a railway station. Stations are now seen as spaces that offer more than transportation-they serve as shopping areas, tourism gateways, business zones and community centers.

Every design decision is centered on improving user experience. Passenger entry and exit points are being reorganised to reduce congestion and ensure smooth movement at all times. This is especially valuable for senior citizens, families with young children and those with mobility challenges. Inside the stations, modern waiting lounges, better lighting, improved air circulation and ergonomic seating have replaced the once-cramped and dimly lit spaces. Toilet facilities are being

modernised to meet high standards of hygiene and comfort. Digital kiosks provide multilingual support and reduce queues at ticket counters, enhancing accessibility for all travelers. To ensure universal design, features like elevators, escalators and clearly marked signage are being added, empowering persons with disabilities and the elderly to navigate the space independently.

The project also emphasises cleanliness, cultural expression and environmental consciousness. Clean stations are seen not just as a hygiene requirement but as a sign of respect and dignity for passengers. Free Wi-Fi at stations allows travelers from even the most remote or underserved areas to stay connected, access information and continue working while in transit. This digital connectivity bridges gaps for rural users and supports modern professionals alike.

In promoting sustainability, the scheme incorporates eco-friendly features such as

green pathways and climate-sensitive landscaping.

These not only reduce the environmental footprint but also enhance the beauty and comfort of the station environment. Measures like energy-efficient systems, better air flow and the use of ballastless tracks help reduce noise, pollution and long-term maintenance challenges. Rooftop plazas, where feasible, add community value by creating public gathering spaces and opportunities for commercial activities. One of the most unique aspects of the scheme is the One Station One Product initiative. This program transforms stations into marketplaces where local artisans can showcase and sell regional handicrafts, handlooms, foods and specialty products. In doing so, it strengthens the local economy, revives traditional art forms and forges a deeper connection between travelers and the communities they pass through. This also promotes greater cooperation between local governments and the

railway system.

As the scheme continues to roll out, stations are being equipped with executive lounges, meeting areas and real-time digital updates to cater to tourists, pilgrims and business travelers alike. The design philosophy is deeply rooted in human-centered thinking-ensuring that every traveler feels welcome, supported and represented in the space.

It marks a shift from a utilitarian design model to one that emphasises user comfort, civic pride and long-term resilience. India's railway stations are becoming spaces where journeys begin not just physically, but emotionally and socially. They serve as mirrors of the nation's diverse culture and as gateways to opportunity and unity. The Amrit Bharat Station Scheme is not simply upgrading infrastructure-it is redefining the role of railway stations in Indian life.

(The author is former chairperson, Railway Board)

Ministry unveils directives for competitions, discomfort in IOA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Citing the “prime importance” of national events in the context of India’s bid to host the 2036 Olympics, the Sports Ministry has unveiled directives on the procedure and timeline for the conduct of marquee domestic competitions which has caused some discomfort in the Indian Olympic Association (IOA).

In a six-page directive issued to the IOA, the Paralympic Committee of India and the National Sports Federations (NSFs), the ministry said it is imperative that the

National Games and the Championships “honour their national character.”

“Towards this end, the IOA/PCI/NSFs shall adopt a system of Olympic and Paralympic Cycle planning and publish in advance their respective annual calendars, so that all the stakeholders have a clear idea and opportunity to plan interventions and allocate and deploy resources,” the ministry stated. “Compliance with the above-mentioned procedure and requirements will be reviewed at the time of annual recognition process in terms of the Sports Code,” it added in the missive.

The ministry said the Games Technical

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Conduct Committee, list of disciplines in the National Games, and eligibility criteria for participants should be communicated to it at least six months prior to the

showpiece. It then goes on to direct the IOA and the NSFs to submit a schedule of the events to be held at least 45 days before the actual commencement. The IOA and NSFs have also been told to provide a “written description of all measures that will be undertaken in respect of anti-doping, age-fraud, match integrity, prevention of sexual harassment and athlete welfare and safety...Whistle-blower and reporting protocols and grievance redressal measures.”

Although no official response was forthcoming from the IOA, it is reliably learnt that the body is not happy to these directives as they are being seen as govern-

ment interference in what has purely been a domain of the NSFs and the IOA. The ministry said speedy dispute resolution is an essential aspect of well-organised events and all national competitions must have a robust ad-hoc panel to handle complaints from athletes and officials.

Government interference in the day-to-day functioning of the NSFs and the national olympic committee is viewed as violation of Olympic Charter by the International Olympic Committee. The ministry, on its part, acknowledged that the Olympic Charter, the Paralympic Charter and the National Sports Development Code “pro-

vide for the autonomy and responsibility of the IOA, the PCI and the NSFs for conduct of events such as the National Games and National Championships in association with their affiliate units.” But it then went on to state that the ministry too has a role as these events also enable the medal winners to “enjoy the benefits of different government policies and programmes...”

These include “Sports Quota benefits for admission in educational institutions and in recruitments, as also in the opportunities for recognition as Sportspersons of Outstanding Merit under various governance instruments.”



Fitness prime focus of Indian women’s hockey team: Salima

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Noida

Indian women’s hockey team captain Salima Tete on Tuesday said fitness is the side’s “prime focus” currently as it’s the key in their quest to become a force to reckon with globally.

Harendra Singh, who took over as head coach of the team in April 2024, has always emphasised on the importance of fitness, strength, and speed, and Salima concurred. “Fitness is an area which (Harendra) sir always emphasised on after taking charge of the team. If you are an athlete and have fitness you can achieve everything in life. Our main focus right now is on fitness, if you have fitness you can beat any team in this world,” Salima said.

She was speaking after a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Hockey India and Amity University Online here. “I have speed but what I have observed is that players like

Sunelita Toppo, Navneet Kaur, Laremsiami, Sharmila and all others who didn’t have speed, are now very quick on the pitch. “Our main focus is on fitness now. After every break when we rejoin the camp we have to go through yo-yo test.”

Asked about their average yo-yo test score, Salima said it is 19.4. The Indian women recently toured Australia for a three-match exposure series which they lost 1-2 against the world no 5 side. But Salima preferred to look at the positives from the tour. “Have learnt a lot from the Australia tour. Australia is a very good team but we played well against them. The learnings from Australia tour is that whatever mistakes we did, we will rectify them in European FIH Pro League,” she said. “We lacked in finishing and Harendra sir is working a lot in that area.

“What we learnt is not to give up ever, which was visible in our 1-0 win against Australia in the last match.”

Khelo India Beach Games reflect power of sports: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Diu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday hailed the “transformative force” of sports while describing the inaugural Khelo India Beach Games as a watershed moment in the country’s sporting history. The Games, being held under the ever-expanding Khelo India umbrella for the first time, were formally declared open on Monday by Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, in a colourful ceremony on the Ghoghla Beach here.

Promising that the Games would make waves in India’s sporting calendar, Modi congratulated the Games’ organisers, and extended his best wishes in his message.

In a nation as diverse as ours, sports has always held a unique power that unites cultures, regions and languages,” Modi said in his message. “The vibrant energy of sports goes beyond entertainment and has become a transformative force, symbolising national pride and aspirations of our youth. “It is in this context that the Khelo India Beach Games hold a greater significance,” he added. The PM said the choice of Diu as the venue for the inaugural KIBG was “fitting”. “An amalgamation of sun, sand and water, they enhance the physical challenge and at the same time, celebrate our coastal heritage. As waves lash the shores and athletes compete, India will script a new sporting chapter,” he added. Over 1,350 athletes from over



30 states and Union Territories will compete in the KIBG. Athletes will compete across six medal sports: football, volleyball, sepaktakraw, kabaddi, pencak silat and open water swimming. Mallakhamb and tug-of-war are the two non-medal (demonstration) disciplines.

The opening ceremony showcased India’s rich diversity through traditional dance forms. It was attended by several dignitaries including Praful Patel, Administrator of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu and Lakshadweep, K Kailashnathan, Lt Governor of

Puducherry and Admiral DK Joshi, Lt Governor of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

Mandaviya reiterated India’s commitment to become a sporting superpower by 2047. “Today, we are not just inaugurating a sports event, we are heralding India’s first beach sports revolution. I believe that where there are waves, there should be passion; where there is sand, there should be a fire of enthusiasm - and the Khelo India Beach Games have ignited that fire in all our hearts today,” Mandaviya said.

Mandaviya laid emphasis on how the government has made significant investments over the last few years to strengthen the sporting ecosystem through improved infrastructure, better training facilities and enhanced support for sportspersons. Mandaviya said the Games are a way to “strengthen the domestic sports infrastructure and send a strong message to the world that India is capable of hosting international sporting events of any scale.”

Mandaviya also added that the KIBG should be given their due significance. “Such sports like beach volleyball not only appeal to the youth as a hobby but also offer them career opportunities. This is the first time that competitive sports are being held on such a large scale on the beaches of India,” he said. The minister added that India is becoming a fitness conscious nation and a culture of sports has become the “new normal”.

Javelin thrower Shivpal fails dope test, maximum 8-year ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Delhi

Olympian javelin thrower Shivpal Singh has failed a dope test for the second time in his career, a development which may see him being banned for a maximum period of eight years if found guilty.

The 29-year-old, who competed at the Tokyo Olympics, is learnt to have returned positive for a banned substance when his urine sample taken out of competition earlier this year was tested. He was training at the NIS Patiala then.

He has been provisionally suspended by the National Anti-Doping Agency



(NADA). “Yes, he has tested positive for a banned substance. It’s his second dope offence,” a source privy to the

development told to media on conditions of anonymity.

If proven guilty and handed a lengthy ban, Shivpal’s career will be as good as over.

Under the NADA and WADA rules, an athlete can be banned for a maximum eight years for a second doping offence.

Shivpal’s best achievement in his career is the silver medal he had won at the 2019 Asian Championships in Doha, where he had thrown his personal best of 86.23m.

Earlier in 2021, Shivpal’s dope sample had tested positive for a steroid in an out-of-competition test. The Anti-Doping Disciplinary Panel of NADA, in August

2022, had handed him a four-year ban beginning from 2021, holding him guilty of committing a doping offence.

He was to serve the ban till 2025 but was able to argue successfully before the Appeal Panel of the NADA that “contaminated supplements” were behind his flunked dope test.

The Appeal Panel, in January 2023, accepted his contention and reduced the ban period from four years to just one.

He returned to action in April 2023 and won a bronze at the National Inter-State Championships in Bhubaneswar in June that year. He also won gold in the 2023 National Games in Goa.

Magnus forced into draw in showdown against ‘the world’

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Berlin

Norwegian chess grandmaster Magnus Carlsen was forced into a draw Monday by more than 143,000 people worldwide playing against him in a single, record-setting game.

Billed as “Magnus Carlsen vs. The World,” the online match began April 4 on Chess.Com, the world’s largest chess website, and was the first-ever online freestyle game to feature a world champion.

The mega-match ended after Team World checked Carlsen’s king a third time, a stunning outcome after Chess.Com had predicted Carlsen would win by a wide margin.

Team World voted on each move and each side had 24 hours to make their play. Carlsen played the white pieces.

The world won on move 32 after checking Carlsen’s king three times in the corner of the board where it could not escape. The rule is called “threefold repetition,” meaning all of the pieces on the board are in the exact same position three times to prompt a draw.

Very, very sound chess/Carlsen, 34, became the world’s top-ranked player in 2010 aged 19 and has won five World Championships. He achieved the highest-



ever chess rating of 2882 in 2014 and has remained the undisputed world number one for more than a decade.

“Overall, the world’ has played very, very sound chess from the start. Maybe not

going for most enterprising options, but kind of keeping it more in vein with normal chess - which isn’t always the best strategy, but it worked out well this time,” Carlsen said in a statement Friday as

Monday’s draw seemed imminent.

Because it was a freestyle match, the bishops, knights, rooks, queen and king were randomly shuffled around the board while the pawns remained in their usual spots. Freestyle chess is popular because it allows players to be more creative and avoid memorization.

We made history’ This was the third “vs. The World” record-setting online game. In 1999, Russian grandmaster Garry Kasparov played against more than 50,000 people on the Microsoft Network and won after four months.

Last year, Indian grandmaster Viswanathan Anand won his “vs. The World” match against nearly 70,000 players on Chess.Com.

In the Chess.Com virtual chat this week, players appeared split on whether to force the draw - and claim the glory - or to keep playing against Carlsen, even if it ultimately meant a loss.

“Don’t Draw! Let’s keep playing Magnus,” one user wrote. “This is an opportunity that won’t come along again. I’d rather play the Master all the way to the end and see if we can battle it out another 20 or 30 moves! Let’s have some FUN!!!” Another added: “Thanks Magnus for such a great game.

US Open’s Arthur Ashe Stadium to get overhaul

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

The US Open’s Arthur Ashe Stadium will get an overhaul as part of an \$800 million project announced Monday that the US Tennis Association is touting as the “largest single investment” in the history of its Grand Slam tournament. The USTA said it is funding the improvements at the Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in Flushing Meadows, with no help from the city government.

According to a class-action antitrust lawsuit filed in federal court in New York in March by a players’ group co-founded by Novak Djokovic, the four major tennis tournaments — the US Open, Wimbledon, French Open and Australian Open — “generated over \$1.5 billion collectively in 2024, while only paying between (10 per cent to 20 per cent) of revenue to players.”

Separately, in April, Djokovic, Jannik Sinner, Aryna Sabalenka and Coco Gauff were among 20 leading tennis players who signed a letter sent to the heads of the Grand Slam tournaments seeking more prize money and a

greater say in what they called “decisions that directly impact us.” The USTA said there will not be interruption to scheduled play or fan access for the next two editions of the US Open. Play in the main draw this year begins on Aug. 24 — shifting to a Sunday start for the first time in the Open era, which began in 1968, and adding a 15th day of competition.

The USTA’s work, which is expected to be done in time for the 2027 US Open, includes constructing a \$250 million player performance center.

The new player area will be next to the practice courts and include additional courts, locker rooms, lounges and an open-air warm up area so players be acclimated to the conditions before they go to the court for their matches.

USTA executives did not say if ticket prices would increase as a result of the project. Ashe’s courtside-level seating capacity will increase from 3,000 to 5,000, while some seats in other sections will be removed, leaving the arena’s total similar to what it is now — around 23,000 to 24,000, the biggest in Grand Slam tennis.

Tour de France’s new Montmartre climb could be game changer

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Breaking with tradition at the Tour de France is stirring controversy. Since race organisers announced plans last week to climb the iconic Montmartre hill in Paris during the final stage in July, the cycling world has been abuzz. Could the climb actually decide the Tour winner? Or disrupt the final sprint by injecting tactical uncertainty into what is usually a celebratory day?

Well, that remains to be seen. But one thing seems certain: The stage will be a spectacle. At last year’s Olympics, massive crowds lined the streets of Montmartre — the area in the northern part of Paris that is popular among artists and offers grand vistas of the city - to cheer on riders.

Inspired by the frenetic atmosphere and willing to build on the momentum, Tour organizers said this month that riders competing in cycling’s biggest race this summer would climb the Montmartre hill and pass beneath the Sacré-Coeur basilica before “battling it out on a stage that may break from the traditions established over the past 50 years in the heart of the capital.” Traditionally, the Tour final stage is largely professional until a sprint decides the day’s winner on the Champs-Élysées. Last year’s final stage was held outside Paris for the first time since 1905 because of a



clash with the Olympics, moving instead to Nice. The world famous avenue is back on the program this year for the conclusion of the 3,320-kilometer (2,060-mile) race. The inclusion of the steep Montmartre climb could dramatically change the dynamics of the stage. If the hill features just a few kilometers from the finish line, or is climbed several times, pure sprinters will likely be dropped before they can compete for the stage win. And if the

general classification remains tight ahead of the final stage, the yellow jersey itself could be decided in Paris.

Riders not happy

Full details of the route will be presented at a news conference on Wednesday. With a peloton roughly twice as big as it was at the Olympics, organizers are working with Paris authorities and the Prefecture of police to ensure the securi-

ty of the race on the narrow and cobbled streets of the area. But some top riders have already expressed their lack of enthusiasm about the addition.

“Montmartre was nice to do in the Olympics, it seemed good, a lot of people, a really good atmosphere,” two-time Tour champion Jonas Vingegaard told reporters this week. “But when they came to the Montmartre, there was only 15 riders left in the bunch. And when we do the Tour de France, there will be 150 guys fighting for positions on a very narrow climb. It could end up being more stress than they want to have.” Even Remco Evenepoel, who won the Olympic men’s road race in Paris last year and the gold medal in the time trial, is also opposed to the idea.

“There will be enough battle for positioning in the first week of the Tour,” he told sports media Sporza. “With Montmartre added, that would mean we have to do the same on the last day. We will be tired enough by then.” Evenepoel also lamented the fact that sprinters would be robbed of a rare chance to claim a prestigious win on the world famous avenue. “They get a big chance every year to sprint for a stage win on the Champs-Élysées,” he said. “That chance is then taken away from them. In my opinion, Montmartre is an unnecessary obstacle.”

