

Health authority skips ayurveda in Ayushman Bharat

J GOPIKRISHNAN ■ New Delhi

In a classic case of how the system works, ayurveda is yet to be included in Modi Government's flagship project Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). Ironically, AB-PMJAY focuses on traditional medicinal practise. The project, launched in September 2018 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi was meant to give a health insurance cover of ₹5 lakh to individuals below the poverty line. The scheme covers 40 percent of the Indian population. Now everyone

above 70 years of age, irrespective of income limits, is also covered under the scheme, making it the world's biggest health insurance scheme. Sources in the Government said the basic reason for the inordinate delay is formulation and finalisation of health insurance protocols for ayurveda treatment. Almost a year ago, Ayush Ministry submitted a health insurance package protocol in mid 2024 to National Health Authority (NHA), the controlling organisation of AB-PMJAY. NHA is an expert-cum-bureaucratic body, works under the Union Health



PM Modi announcing the scheme in 2018

Ministry, which finalises the inclusion of health insurance protocols of Ayushman Bharat scheme. According to Ayush Ministry officials and members of Ayurveda Hospitals' Association, till date NHA has not even convened a meeting with the Ministry officials on the submitted health insurance protocols. Health Ministry and Ayush Ministry officials are tight lipped on the inertia or snail pace of NHA to approve insurance protocols to implement and inclusion ayurveda in Ayushman Bharat scheme. Why has the NHA not yet convened a meeting to discuss and implement the

health insurance protocols of ayurveda? "You may simply call allopathy mafia is behind the snail pace of NHA which has not even initiated discussion with Ayush Ministry officials for the past one year. In 2010, 2016, 2020, and now in 2023 — Ayush Department which became a full-fledged Ministry under the Modi-led first regime in 2014 is working on ayurveda Insurance protocols. There are some big players in ayurveda who also want to limit the insurance cover to themselves and not include all ayurveda hospitals," said Members of Ayurveda Hospitals' Association.

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Fire kills 17 in Hyderabad, PM Modi condoles deaths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Hyderabad

A blaze triggered by a suspected short circuit in a building near the iconic Charminar here on Sunday killed 17 people, including eight children, belonging to an extended family. The fire broke out at a building in Gulzar House here, police said. "All 17 who were shifted to hospitals were brought dead," a senior police said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed anguish over the loss of lives and announced ex-gratia. A narrow staircase was the only escape route for the inmates of the building, but they could not rush out, a Fire Department official said. The building housed jewellery shops on the ground floor and people were residing in a flat above, police said adding smoke spread and people suffocated. AIMIM chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi told reporters that the family has been residing there for 125 years, indicating that generations from the particular family have been living there for over a century. The family is said to be running a jewellery shop in the city. "Now only two members of the family are left. I want to offer my condolences. I was informed by

DG Fire Services that most of the deaths happened due to asphyxiation and fumes...Let the report come, it is very painful," he said. Telangana State Disaster Response and Fire Services Director General Y Nagi Reddy, who inspected the spot, told reporters that the fire was reported between 6.00am and 6.15 am. The building housed jewellery shops on the ground floor and people were residing in a flat above, police said adding smoke spread and people suffocated. During the rescue operation, one Fire official was also injured and admitted to hospital. There was a call to the fire department at 6.16 am and the fire engine was turned out at 6.17 AM, he said. There were shops on the ground floor while the first and second floors were residential spaces, he said. "Prima-facie cause of the fire is short circuit in the mains in the shopping area," Reddy said, adding the victims were sleeping when the fire broke out.

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IMF imposes 50 conditions on Pakistan bailout

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Islamabad

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has slapped 11 new conditions on Pakistan for the release of the next tranche of its bailout programme and warned that tensions with India could heighten risks to the scheme's fiscal, external, and reform goals, according to a media report on Sunday. The new conditions imposed on Pakistan include the parliamentary approval of a new ₹17.6 trillion budget, an increase in the debt servicing surcharge on electricity bills and lifting restrictions on import of more than three-year-old used cars. The Express Tribune newspaper said the Staff Level report, which the IMF released on Saturday, also said that "rising tensions between India and Pakistan, if sustained or deteriorate further, could heighten risks to the fiscal, external and reform goals of the programme". The report further stated that tensions between Pakistan and India have risen significantly over the past two weeks, but so far, the market reaction has been modest, with the stock market retaining most of its recent gains and spreads widening moderately. The IMF report has shown the defence budget for the next fiscal year at ₹2.414 trillion, which is higher by ₹252 billion or 12 per cent.

LET MILITANT KILLED IN PAKISTAN
New Delhi: Top Lashkar-e-Taiba(LeT)terrorist Razaullah Nizamani Khalid alias Abu Saifullah Khalid, who was the brain behind the 2006 attack on the RSS headquarters, was killed by three unidentified gunmen in Sindh province of Pakistan on Sunday, officials here said. Khalid used to head the terror operations of LeT from Nepal in early 2000 and had many aliases including Vinode Kumar, Mohammed Salim and Razaullah. He was involved in multiple terror strikes in India, they said. He left his residence at Matli this afternoon and was gunned down by assailants near a crossing at Badni in Sindh province, the officials said. A close associate of Abu Anas of Lashkar, Khalid was the mastermind of the attack on the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) headquarters at Nagpur in which all three terrorists were shot dead. Besides the RSS attack, the Lashkar operative was involved in the Indian Institute of Science terror attack of 2005 in Bengaluru, in which IIT professor Munish Chandra Puri was killed and four others injured. The terrorists had escaped from the

scene. Later, police investigated the case and chargesheeted Abu Anas, who is still at large. Khalid was also the mastermind of the 2008 attack on a Central Reserve Police Force(CRPF)camp at Rampur in Uttar Pradesh in which seven personnel and a civilian were killed. The two terrorists escaped under the cover of darkness. From mid-2000, Khalid was the in-charge of the Nepal module of LeT, responsible for the recruitment of cadres, providing financial and logistic support and facilitating the movement of LeT operatives across the Indo-Nepal border. Khalid was working closely with LeT's so-called "launching commanders" — Azam Cheema alias Babaji and Yaqoob (LeT's chief accountant). Khalid left Nepal and returned to Pakistan after Indian security agencies exposed the module. He later worked closely with several leaders of LeT and Jamaat-ud-Dawah, including Yusuf Muzammil, LeT commander for Jammu and Kashmir, Muzammil Iqbal Hashmi and Muhammad Yusuf Taibi.

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structure early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that killed 26 people. Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. India and Pakistan reached an under-

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The Bystander



PIONEER IN SHORT

Central forces secure Amarnath Yatra route
Following the Pahalgam massacre, ensuring a safe Amarnath Yatra is a major focus for Jammu and Kashmir's administration. The 38-day pilgrimage, beginning July 3 from both Pahalgam and Baltal routes, concludes on August 9. Security forces have ramped up anti-terror operations in South Kashmir to secure the region. Chief Minister Omar Abdullah emphasised the Government's commitment to an incident-free yatra amid declining tourist inflows. Over 3.5 lakh devotees have registered. Officials, including DC Ganderbal and Director Tourism Jammu, have inspected camps and directed timely completion of preparations. Central paramilitary forces will provide route security, and facilities are being arranged from Lakanpur to the holy cave.

FULL REPORT ON P2

PSLV fails to place satellite into orbit after anomaly
ISRO's PSLV-C61 rocket failed to place the EOS-09 earth observation satellite into orbit after an anomaly occurred during the third stage, minutes after its successful lift-off on Sunday. The rocket, launched from Sriharikota, experienced a fall in chamber pressure during the third stage, causing the mission to fail. This marks the third failure of the PSLV rocket, which has had 63 successful launches. EOS-09, designed for all-weather imaging, aimed to support applications in agriculture, forestry, and national security. Former ISRO Chairman S. Somanath expressed confidence that the team would quickly identify the issue's root cause and take corrective action to ensure future mission success.

Government critic, spies arrested in Haryana

MANOJ KUMAR ■ Chandigarh

Few days after the Haryana State Commission for Women issued a showcase notice to Sonapat — based Ashoka University Associate Professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad over his remarks allegedly disparaging women officers in the Indian Armed Forces and promoting communal disharmony, a team of 15 Haryana Police on Sunday morning entered his Delhi residence and took him into custody. Rai police had on Saturday night registered the case based on a complaint filed by Yogesh Jatheri, a BJP Youth Morcha leader and the sarpanch of Jatheri village. Later, Mahmudabad, who, an Associate Professor in the Political Science Department at Ashoka University, was taken into custody on Sunday morning. Talking to Reporters, Rai's Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP) Ajeet Singh said: "Ali Khan Mahmudabad has been arrested from Delhi". Moreover, in a statement, the Ashoka University official spokesperson, said: "We have been made aware that Assistant Professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad has been taken into police custody earlier today. We are in the process of ascertain-



Arrested vlogger Jyoti Malhotra

ing details of the case." "The University will continue to cooperate with the police and local authorities in the investigation, fully," it said. Notably, Haryana State Commission for Women (HSCW) chairperson Renu Bhatia took suo motu cognizance of Mahmudabad's remarks on 'Operation Sindoor' and press briefings by Col Sofiya Qureshi and Wing Commander Vyomika Singh. The Commission had summoned the Assistant Professor to appear on May 14; however, he failed to do so. The Associate Professor had later said that the Commission has "misread" his

comment. Mahmudabad referred to the media briefing on 'Operation Sindoor' conducted by women officers as "optics" and "just hypocrisy". "I am surprised that the Women's Commission, while overreaching its jurisdiction, has misread and misunderstood my posts to such an extent that they have inverted their meaning," he said further on a different post. Simultaneously in just a week, the security agencies in Haryana have uncovered a sprawling espionage network by arresting three persons — 26-year-old Nuh-resident Armaan, Hisar-based YouTuber Jyoti Malhotra, and Panipat-based private security guard 24-year-old Nauman Elahi — for their alleged involvement in spying for terror outfits and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). In the matter related to espionage arrests, police sources said that all three individuals were allegedly in frequent contact with the ISI and actively passed sensitive information to their Pakistani handlers. The evolving nature of threats has made real-time intelligence and public vigilance even more crucial.

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India, Bangladesh trade hits low with reciprocal terms

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India's decision to curb Bangladeshi exports of ready-made garments and several other consumer goods through land ports is aimed at ensuring fairness and equality in bilateral trade, Government sources said on Sunday. India's trade relationship with Bangladesh will be based on "reciprocal terms" and the decision on restricting exports of ready-made garments from the neighbouring country is in response to Dhaka imposing similar trade barriers on Indian yarn and rice as well as increasing inspection of all Indian goods, they said. New Delhi on Saturday decided to allow entry of ready-made garments from Bangladesh only through Kolkata and Nhava Sheva sea ports and barred imports of a range of consumer items through land transit posts in the Northeast. Besides ready-made garments (RMG), plastics, wooden furniture, carbonated drinks, processed food items, fruit flavoured drinks, cotton and cotton yarn waste will not be allowed to

enter India through land customs stations and check posts in Meghalaya, Assam, Tripura and Mizoram, and Phulbari and Changrabandha in West Bengal, according to a Government notification. The new restrictions for Bangladeshi consumer goods were imposed five weeks after New Delhi ended a nearly five-year-old arrangement for transshipment of Bangladeshi export cargo to third countries via Indian airports and ports. Land port restrictions imposed by India on select exports from Bangladesh to the Northeast region are expected to restore equality in the relationship, the sources said. While India had hitherto allowed all exports from Bangladesh without restrictions, the transit and market access to the Northeast had been restricted by Bangladesh, they said. This measure by India restores equal market access for both countries, the sources added. New Delhi's position is that the relationship with Bangladesh will be on reciprocal terms, the sources said.

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Schrodinger's DGP in Ranchi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Ranchi

Even God becomes helpless in Jharkhand," once said a former Governor of Jharkhand. The air in Jharkhand, already thick with the aroma of Mutton-Dhuska and political intrigue, has recently acquired an extra layer of perplexity. The state's Director General of Police (DGP), Anurag Gupta, it appears, is in a unique career situation. He has, depending on who you ask, both retired and not retired. The Central Government, in its infinite wisdom and adherence to rules, says that Gupta has hung up his uniform and has retired on 30 April, 2025 after attaining the age of 60 years. Their logic is simple: he's reached that age where most mortals start contemplating their pension plans and the best place to get dentures. The Jharkhand Government, however, seems to be operating under a different set of rules, possibly written in disappearing ink on a very old scroll. It has amended rules and these new, improved (and slightly confusing), rules allow Gupta to continue his reign as DGP even after retirement without getting a service extension from the Centre. The State Government cites a Supreme Court directive about a minimum tenure of two years for DGPs once appointed to the post. The whole situation has become a bureaucratic version of a tug-of-war,



Jharkhand DGP Anurag Gupta

with Gupta seemingly in the middle, possibly wondering if he should be taking notes for his memoirs or ordering new stationery. Leader of Opposition in Jharkhand Assembly, Babulal Marandi, not one to let a good controversy go to waste, has waded into the fray, armed with legal arguments and a healthy dose of political outrage. He's taken the matter to court, perhaps hoping that a judge, in their infinite wisdom, can make sense of a situation that has baffled everyone else. Meanwhile, the people of Jharkhand are watching this drama unfold with a mixture of amusement and bewilderment. Some are placing bets on how long Gupta will remain in office, while others are simply shrugging and saying, "This is Jharkhand, year. What else is new?" The saga continues, with no clear end in sight. Will Gupta continue to defy the laws of retirement? Will the courts intervene and restore some semblance of order? Or will this become another legendary tale in the history of Jharkhand? Only time will tell.

Yoga stretches in Mumbai local trains

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

Every morning, Mumbai's local trains are packed with people heading to work. In the middle of all the hustle, however, something special has been happening. Some passengers close their eyes, sit straight, and engage in light breathing and stretching exercises. This is Mumbai's most unusual yoga class, which happens inside moving trains. This idea came from Ruchita Shah, the founder of Heal-Station, a group that promotes wellness. She started this on International Yoga Day in 2017 as a small experiment. Today, it has become a large movement with over 100 volunteer yoga teachers and thousands of commuters joining in. "People are surprised when we say we do yoga in crowded trains," Shah said. "But we show them that it is possible. It's not about doing difficult poses. It is about simple things like hand movements, breathing, and small stretches that you can do even while sitting." Especially for working women, juggling household duties, long commutes and jobs, this becomes a moment of recharge, she said. "We have demonstrated that yoga does not need a yoga mat but a mindset," Shah said. As part of Heal-Station's 100-day countdown to International Yoga Day 2025, two trained instructors each daily board different suburban trains across the city, guiding passengers through a 15-minute routine that include stretches, breathing tech-



Passengers performing yoga in a train in Mumbai

PTI

niques and posture corrections. These exercises are carefully designed to suit the train environment, requiring no mats or space beyond what a commuter normally occupies. "We began this countdown on March 13 right inside Mumbai locals," said senior yoga teacher and campaign coordinator Varsha Ahuja, who leads the 100-day Travel Yoga initiative by Heal-Station. "Every day, two teachers board from their

nearest station during non-peak hours and provide guidance on simple, seated yoga practices in reasonably filled trains. From Panvel to CST, Virar to Churchgate, Mulund, Ghatkopar, Dadar and Bandra, we have covered the city coach by coach, station by station," Ahuja said. At Heal-Station, the majority of yoga teachers volunteering for this demanding campaign are senior citizens.

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PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

"Schools are required to maintain updated building layouts, install CCTV cameras, and secure their perimeters to assist police and fire personnel during threat assessments and evacuation," the statement

Delhi Police and Fire Services have been assigned defined responsibilities under the SOP. While the police will take the lead in evaluating threats, securing the premises, and coordinating searches, the fire department will assist with fire control and evacuation protocols, it stated.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

“Only 10-15 pumps are left where cameras have to be installed. We are installing cameras at all petrol pumps and CNG stations,” he said. There are around 400 petrol pumps in Delhi and



The Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR and Adjoining Areas (CAQM) had earlier directed authorities in the national capital not to allow “end of life” or overage vehicles to refuel in Delhi from July 1.

A 2014 National Green Tribunal order also prohibits parking of vehicles aged over 15 years in public areas.

Tiranga Yatra organised by BJP in New Delhi on Sunday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Minister of Art, Culture and Tourism and Karawal Nagar MLA Kapil Mishra led a "Vishal Tiranga Yatra" (Grand Tricolor Rally) in his constituency from Khajuri Chowk to Signature Bridge. The rally saw hundreds of citizens raising the tricolor and chanting patriotic slogans such as "Bharat Mata Ki Jai," "Vande Mataram," and "Jai Hind." Delhi Minister Ashish Sood led a march in his Janakpuri Assembly constituency. For the third consecutive day, the BJP continued district-level Tiranga Yatras in Outer and North West Delhi. North West Delhi MP

"This rally pays tribute to the unparalleled valor and sacrifice of our soldiers who protect the nation's borders. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India's zero-tolerance policy on terrorism has been clearly demonstrated to the world," said Mishra. He con-

Carrying the national flag high, participants raised loud slogans of 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai,' echoing through Janakpuri's streets. In northwest tiranga rally, MP Yogendra Chandel praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, stating that the Operation Sindoor demonstrated India's resolve to respond firmly to any terror threats. "The brave actions of our soldiers have sent a clear message to Pakistan that India will not

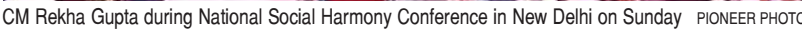
MLA Shikha Rai called the yatra an expression of gratitude towards soldiers who exhibited extraordinary courage during the operation.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

This decision offers temporary relief but also reinforces the importance of sustained efforts in combating air pollution across Delhi-NCR. Stage-I of GRAP focuses on cutting pollution at its source, especially from dust, vehicles, and industrial emissions. Under this stage, 27 preventive actions are strictly implemented by all relevant agencies. These include use of anti-smog guns, water sprinkling, dust suppression measures in road construction, repair projects and maintenance activities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prominent attendees included UP Cabinet Minister Baby Rani Maurya and former Minister Rajveer Singh (Raju



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Aurobindo Marg, a vital north-south stretch connecting Delhi to Gurugram, had increasingly become a hotspot of congestion due to widespread encroachments by vendors, hawkers and illegally parked vehicles, including private cars, auto-rickshaws and taxis. In some stretches, even shopkeepers had extended their commercial areas onto the road, significantly narrowing the carriageway and obstructing pedestrian access, officials said. The special enforcement operation was conducted under the overall super-

“The initiative was undertaken to restore the road’s intended capacity and ensure the safety of commuters and pedestrians,” said an official statement. “Encroachments had reduced the usable road width to such an extent that even walking was becoming difficult for citizens.” Officials confirmed that photographic documentation was collected for all removed encroachments and that traffic movement showed marked improvement following the drive. The move also received support from local residents, many of whom had long expressed concern over deteriorating traffic conditions on the stretch. The Delhi Traffic Police stated that similar drives will continue across the Southern Range as part of a sustained campaign to remove unauthorised structures and ensure unimpeded access to public roads.

VAISHNAVI MISHRA ■ New Delhi

"We raised this issue in court and got a stay order. But instead of removing illegal shops, the authorities removed shops that are authorised and protected by the court. We stand united and, if necessary, will shut down the market tomorrow to protest," he added.



Another jewellery shopkeeper questioned why his shop was damaged during the drive.

"If the demolition is for illegal encroachments, why are authorised shops

Ashok Kalra, Market President, appealed to Chief Minister Rekha Gupta for intervention and demanded action against those who conducted the demolition without warning.

Congress calls diplomatic outreach insincere, cheap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Sunday said it was not stopping anyone from being part of diplomatic delegations to be sent to various countries following Operation Sindoor and that its leaders who have been named at the instance of the Government must listen to their conscience and contribute to the exercise.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh accused the Government of politicising the exercise of choosing leaders for the delegations and having “malicious intent” with only one out of four Congress leaders nominated by the party making the cut.

On Saturday, the Congress said it was asked by the Government to submit the names of four leaders for the all-party delegations to be sent abroad to explain India’s stance on Pakistan-backed terrorism.

It nominated Anand Sharma, Gaurav Gogoi, Syed Naseer Hussain and

Amrinder Singh Raja Warring.

Of the four, only Sharma has been included in the seven delegations that will be visiting various countries.

Four Congress leaders — Shashi Tharoor, Manish Tewari, Amar Singh and Salman Khurshid — who were not part of the list forwarded by the Congress have been included in the delegations by the government.

“They included only one leader out of the four names we sent. Four other names were added by the government, who are senior MPs and leaders of our party, they should listen to their conscience and contribute in the delegations,” Ramesh said.

“For the Congress, national interest is paramount. This matter should not be stretched and more politicisation is not appropriate in this regard,” he said.

The Congress has not stopped anyone and all our MPs named in the delegations will go and contribute, he said.

The selection of Tharoor to head one of the delegations was frowned upon by the Congress, which accused the

Government of playing politics with a “mischievous” mindset.

Referring to Congress leader Salman Khurshid, Ramesh said the four names added by the Government include a former foreign minister who is experienced in foreign policy.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh accused the Government of politicising the exercise of choosing leaders for the delegations and having “malicious intent”

With just one of its four nominated leaders being accommodated in the diplomatic outreach delegations, the Congress has said it proves the “complete insincerity” of the Narendra Modi Government and shows the “cheap political games” it plays on serious national issues.

The Opposition party, however, said the four eminent Congress MPs and leaders who have been included at the instance of the Modi Government will go with the delegations.

Fifty-one political leaders, parliamentarians and former ministers cutting across party lines will be part of the seven delegations travelling to world capitals to put across India’s resolve to tackle terrorism against the backdrop of Operation Sindoor.

In a statement last night, Ramesh said, “On May 16th morning, the Modi Government asked for four names of Congress MPs/leaders to represent the Congress in the delegations being sent abroad to explain India’s stance on terrorism from Pakistan.” These four names were conveyed in writing by the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, to Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju by 12 noon on May 16, he said in the statement.

“Very late tonight (May 17th), the full list of members of all delegations has been officially released. Most regrettably,

only one of the four names suggested by the INC leadership has been included,” he said.

“This proves the complete insincerity of the Modi Government and shows the cheap political games it always plays on serious national issues,” Ramesh said. The four eminent Congress MPs and leaders who have been included at the instance of the Modi Government will, of course, go with the delegations and make their contributions, he said. “The Congress will not stoop to the pathetic level of the PM and the BJP. It will always uphold the finest traditions of Parliamentary democracy and not play partisan politics on national security issues, like the BJP does,” Ramesh said.

The Congress wishes the delegations all the very best, he added.

Ramesh said these delegations should not, however, divert attention from the Congress’ demands to have All-Party meetings chaired by PM Modi and for a special session of Parliament to reiterate the resolution adopted on February 22, 1994, while also taking note of

developments thereafter.

The seven delegations led by Baijayant Panda, Ravi Shankar Prasad (both BJP), Sanjay Kumar Jha (JDU), Shrikant Shinde (Shiv Sena), Shashi Tharoor (Congress), Kanimozhi (DMK) and Supriya Sule (NCP-SP) will visit a total of 32 countries and the EU headquarters in Brussels, Belgium.

Each delegation comprises seven or eight political leaders and is assisted by former diplomats. Of the 51 political leaders, 31 are part of the ruling NDA, while the remaining 20 are from the non-NDA parties. “One mission. One message. One Bharat. Seven All-Party Delegations will soon engage key nations under #OperationSindoor, reflecting our collective resolve against terrorism,” Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju said in a post on X on Saturday.

The delegations include former Union ministers Ghulam Nabi Azad, M J Akbar, Anand Sharma, V Muraleedharan, Salman Khurshid, S S Ahluwalia, who are not members of parliament at present.

President, PM extend greetings to Dhankhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday greeted Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on his birthday.

Prime Minister Modi also greeted former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda on his birthday.

Born on May 18, 1951 in Kithana village of Rajasthan’s Jhunjhunu district, Dhankhar was sworn in as the country’s 14th Vice President on August 11, 2022.

“Hearty greetings and best wishes to @VPIndia Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar Ji on his birthday! I wish him good health and very many years in the service of the nation,” President Murmu said in a social media post.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeted Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on his birthday and said he has made commend-

able efforts to boost the productivity of the Rajya Sabha.

“Greetings to our Vice President, Shri Jagdeep Dhankhar Ji on his birthday. He is blessed with tremendous knowledge of our Constitution, reflecting from his years of work as a leading lawyer,” Modi said in a social media post.

“He has made commendable efforts to boost the productivity of the Rajya Sabha. His interest towards serving society is also immense. May he lead a long and healthy life,” the prime minister said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh called on Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar. His meeting with the vice president comes days after Chief of Defence Staff(CDS)General Anil Chauhan called on Dhankhar.

The meeting comes against the backdrop of the India-Pakistan military conflict in the aftermath of the terror attack in Pahalgam. It is also the vice president’s

birthday. The vice president secretariat shared pictures of the meeting between Dhankhar and the defence minister.

Prime Minister Modi greeted former Prime Minister and Janata Dal (Secular) president H D Deve Gowda on his birthday on Sunday. Deve Gowda, who served as prime minister between June 1996 and April 1997, turned 92 on Sunday.

In a social media post, Modi said Gowda is widely respected for his statesman-like approach and passion towards public service.

“Birthday wishes to our former Prime Minister, Shri HD Deve Gowda Ji. He is widely respected for his statesman-like approach and passion towards public service,” Modi wrote.

“His wisdom and insights on several issues are a source of great strength. May he be blessed with a long and healthy life,” he added.



Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairman Harivansh headed India’s official delegation to the Solemn Ceremony of the Inauguration of the Pontificate of His Holiness Pope Leo XIV in Vatican City today. Deputy Chief Minister of Nagaland Yanthungo Patton, accompanied. PIONEER PHOTO

NCC expedition team summits Mt Everest



An expedition team of NCC after summiting the Mt Everest PFI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

An expedition team of the National Cadet Corps on Sunday summited Mt Everest — the world’s highest peak, the NCC said. “Historic moment Mt Everest Expedition Team of NCC summited Mt Everest today at 0445 hours. Summit photos awaited,” the NCC posted on X.

On January 3, the director general of the NCC, during an annual press conference here, announced an NCC expedition to Mt Everest in 2025 and that a team was preparing for it at the Siachen Battle School.

Mt Everest was first conquered by New Zealand’s Edmund Hillary and his sherpa guide Tenzing Norgay in 1953 and has ever since fascinated climbers and mountaineers to scale the famed peak in the mighty Himalayas.

During the press briefing in January on the NCC Republic Day Camp 2025, the DG spoke about other mountaineering expeditions undertaken by the NCC cadets in the past, including to Mt Kang Yatse II (6,250m) and Mt Abi Gamin (7,335m).

Would prefer hell over Pakistan: Javed Akhtar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Noted lyricist and screenwriter Javed Akhtar, who is often targeted for his views on patriotism and religion, says that if there comes a time he has to choose between Pakistan and hell, he would prefer to go to hell.

Akhtar, 80, was speaking at Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut’s book launch on Saturday night in Mumbai. At the event, the lyricist — who identifies himself as an atheist — said extremists from both India and Pakistan shower abuses on him on a daily basis.

“Some day, I’ll show you my Twitter (now X) and WhatsApp. I am abused by both sides. I’m not thankless so I’ll say there are also people who appreciate what I say, encourage me. But it’s true that extremists from both here and there abuse me. This is right. If one of them stops abusing me, it’ll be a matter of concern for me.

“One side says ‘You are a kaafr (non-believer) and will go to hell. The other side says, ‘Jihadi, go to Pakistan’. If the choice is between Pakistan and hell, I would prefer to go to hell,” Akhtar said amid a round of applause from the audience. The award-winning writer further said it’s important to have citizens not subscribing to the ideology of any political party. “That way they can say what they feel is right and what is wrong. There should be no party loyalty. All parties are ours and yet no party is ours. I’m also one of those citizens. If you speak from one side, you’ll make the other side unhappy. But if you speak out from different points of view, you make many more people unhappy,” he added.

Jaishankar to visit Netherlands for three-days officially

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will embark on a six-day visit of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany beginning Monday during which he is expected to highlight Pakistan’s relentless support to cross-border terrorism.

It will be Jaishankar’s first foreign visit after the four-day-long military confrontation between Indian and Pakistani armed forces.

“External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will pay an official visit to the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany from May 19 to 24,” Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Sunday.

It said Jaishankar will meet the leadership of the three countries and hold dis-



Kharge talks to Reddy about Hyderabad blaze

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday spoke with Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy after the horrific blaze in Hyderabad that claimed 17 lives and said he is assured that the Government is taking all necessary relief measures, including providing speedy and adequate compensation to those affected.

Kharge also urged Congress workers to rally around the affected families and offer any assistance they can.

The blaze triggered by a suspected short circuit in a building in Gulzar House near the iconic Charminar here on Sunday left 17 people dead, with a majority of them being children.

“I am deeply saddened by the devastat-

ing fire tragedy in the Charminar area of Hyderabad, which has claimed several precious lives. My heartfelt condolences go out to the families of the victims during this difficult time,” Kharge said.

Kharge urged Congress workers to rally around the affected families and offer any assistance they can. The blaze was triggered by a suspected short circuit in a building

“After speaking with the chief minister of Telangana, I am assured that the Government is taking all necessary relief measures, including providing speedy and adequate compensation to those

affected,” he said. “Let us come together to support those in need and help them through this challenging period,” he said. In a Facebook post in Hindi, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said the news of several people being killed and injured in a massive fire in Hyderabad is extremely saddening.

“I express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families in this difficult time and hope for the speedy recovery of the injured,” he said.

A lone, narrow staircase was the only escape route for the inmates of the building, but they could not rush out, police said.

The building housed jewellery shops on the ground floor and people were residing in a flat above, they said, adding that smoke spread, suffocating the people in the building.

Prevent terror strikes to ensure governance: Mayawati

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) supremo Mayawati on Sunday urged the Government to ensure that terror strikes do not happen again in the country so that the administration can focus on alleviating the plight of people facing unemployment and inflation.

Speaking at an all-India meeting of BSP coordinators here, the former Uttar Pradesh chief minister also supported the government’s stand that India will not tolerate nuclear blackmail from Pakistan.

Besides preventing future terror strikes, there is a need to rein in criminal, casteist and communal elements who seek to pollute the peaceful atmosphere in the coun-

try with their narrow-minded, hateful and venomous language and actions, Mayawati said. Terrorist incidents are a hindrance to development. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the central Government to ensure appropriate measures to prevent terror attacks, she said.

According to a BSP statement, Mayawati said the unity displayed by the people after the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed 26 lives, helped the armed forces give it back to Pakistan in the language it understands.

She said the uniformed Bahujan Volunteer Force (BVF) of the BSP should be organised afresh and used as before to maintain order and discipline in party programmes across the country.

A journey of stillness, strength and spiritual awakening through yoga

ANTARA MOHAN

Sarbari Roy is an educator and a long-time practitioner of Kriya Yoga based in Kolkata. For the last 25 years, she has followed the path of self-realisation, gracefully weaving together her worldly responsibilities and inner journey. In this interview for *The Pioneer*, she speaks about her journey. Edited excerpts follow:

What first led you on the path of Kriya Yoga and the teachings of Swami Yogananda? Could you take us back to the beginning?

Thank you. That is such a thoughtful question. I have been walking this path since 1998. I was a mathematics teacher in some of Kolkata’s reputed schools and genuinely enjoyed my profession. But despite all the external comfort, I often felt a deep inner emptiness — a yearning for something I could not quite name. My search led me to experiences like Vipassana and Art of Living, which were beautiful in their own way, but my heart still did not feel fulfilled. As the scriptures say, when the disciple is ready, the guru appears. One day, my father took me to

the YSS Ashram in Dakshineswar, right after Gurudeva’s birthday celebration on January 6th. The moment I stepped in, I was overcome with emotion — I started weeping. I felt love, joy and immense gratitude all at once. I knew then, with complete certainty, that I had come home. From that day on, there was no looking back.

How have the teachings of your guru shaped how you see life?

I believe our body and mind are deeply connected — any shift in one affects the other. Our minds, as Gurudeva beautifully puts it, can sometimes be like a drunk monkey stung by a scorpion! So calming both the mind and body is a sacred science. One simple way is through breathing. By using effective breathing techniques, we can clear the lungs. When our lungs are free and fully oxygenated, the heart relaxes. And when the heart rests, so does the body — and eventually, the mind. Over time, the mind naturally shifts from a conscious state to a superconscious one — where no thoughts disturb us. This state brings deep rest and inner silence. This wisdom has come slow-



Sarbari Roy

PIONEER PHOTO

ly, with years of practice and perseverance. I have stumbled, I have fallen, but I have always returned. God is not something we experience through the five senses — only when we quiet those senses, in deep stillness, does the sixth sense — our intuition — awaken. That is when we begin to experience the divine as peace, calm, joy, love — all qualities of the soul and of God.

How has this journey shaped you emotionally, mentally and spiritually over the years?

Kriya Yoga, as taught by Paramhansa Yogananda, has transformed me at every level — physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. But beyond all that, the most precious gift is the presence of a Sadguru — someone who is always with you, guiding, protecting, forgiving like a mother, father,

friend, beloved — all in one. The love of a true Guru is unconditional. It is divine, like the love between a mother and her child. I often reflect on how I used to be even five years ago and I truly feel I have become a better version of myself. But I still have a long way to go. My only prayer has always been: God, change no circumstances of my life — just change me. When we learn to master our body and mind, the Kurukshetra — the great inner battle — can be won. And when that happens, we may no longer need to return to this earth school to repeat the same lessons.

You mention that your son, in the US, too has also embraced this path. As both a mother and a seeker, what does it mean to you to see him walking the same inner journey?

It fills me with deep gratitude. Walking this path myself has helped me cultivate qualities like patience, faith, resilience and empathy. And seeing my son take up the same path, especially while living in a fast-paced, often isolating environment like the USA, is such a blessing. This path has given him strength, inner clarity and the quiet guidance of Gurudeva. I see him face

life with more confidence and calm. It is one of the greatest gifts I could ever hope for as a mother.

For those who are new, what’s the most loving and sincere way to start walking the path of Kriya Yoga?

I am so glad to hear that — it is a joy to share what has touched my own heart. Here are a few suggestions for those just beginning: Start by reading the spiritual classic Autobiography of a Yogi by Paramhansa Yogananda. It’s a life-changing book that introduces both his teachings and his spirit. Visit a YSS (Yogoda Satsanga Society) centre — they are spread across India and offer a beautiful spiritual community. And most importantly, never give up, even when the path gets difficult. I would like to leave you with a few guiding thoughts that have helped me deeply. The true purpose of life is God-realisation. Keep your eyes fixed on the goal, no matter what. The events in your life — whether joyful or painful — do not define you. What matters is who you become through them. Each day, accept both the good and the bad as coming from God. And finally, before you sleep, offer everything back into His hands.

Destination Uttarakhand

CHAR DHAM YATRA 2025



Shri Yamunotri (April 30)



Shri Gangotri (April 30)



Shri Kedarnath (May 2)



Shri Badrinath (May 4)



Shri Hemkunt Sahib (May 25)



Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision for the holistic development of Uttarakhand is deeply inspiring. As we welcome devotees to the sacred 'Chardham Yatra', our government remains fully committed to ensuring their safety for a spiritually fulfilling experience. We urge all visitors to come experience the soul of Devbhoomi, Uttarakhand.

-Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

There are two main pillars for the creation of a developed India in the 21st century—pride in our heritage and making every possible effort for development. Today, Uttarakhand is strengthening both these pillars. This decade will be the decade of Uttarakhand.

-Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

Easy & safe Char Dham journey

Char Dham Yatra 2025 is set to commence from April 30, coinciding with the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya, as the portals of Yamunotri and Gangotri reopen. This revered pilgrimage spans four sacred sites—Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath, and Badrinath—located in Uttarakhand. Each year, lakhs of devotees set out on this spiritual journey in pursuit of divine blessings and inner peace. For easy access, the Uttarakhand government has

established both online and offline registration procedures for pilgrims to provide a seamless and well-organised experience.

- Prior to journey registration is mandatory
- Please enter the correct mobile number during registration
- Make sure to obtain 'Darshan' token at the dhams
- Always carry sufficient woolen clothes, umbrella and raincoat with you
- Provide the correct health

information during the registration process

- Senior citizens are advised to get a health check-up done prior to journey
- If you take any medicine, keep sufficient stock with you
- If you are not feeling well then don't travel
- Take rest breaks at various stops during the journey route so that the climate suits you better
- Book the ticket for helicopter ride on heliyatra.ircct.co.in
- Beware of unauthorised

persons assuring to provide helicopter tickets

- Beware of unauthorised persons who assure you to do darshan at the dhams
- Please extend help to keep the journey routes neat and clean by not littering the same
- Please keep control on the speed of your vehicle and park the vehicle only

GOVERNMENT'S INITIATIVE TO ENSURE CLEAN AND HEALTHY FOOD AT THE CHAR DHAM JOURNEY ROUTE

This initiative will improve the quality of food served on the route and ensure healthy and safe food for millions of pilgrims who visit every year.

'AAJ SE THODA KAM' CAMPAIGN

PM Narendra Modi, during his last visit to Uttarakhand, emphasised on reducing the usage of salt and sugar by 10%, which is being promoted by the Uttarakhand government in the Char Dham Yatra. The main objective of this initiative is to control the quantity of excess salt, sugar and fat in food, so that diseases like heart disease and high blood pressure can be prevented. Restaurants and hotels are being encouraged to prepare healthy dishes with the help of chefs and food experts and keep nutritional balance in mind.

'RUCO' INITIATIVE

To further strengthen health security, the department has launched the Re-purpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative. Under this, strict monitoring is being done to reduce the harmful effects of re-used oil and prevent it from entering into the food chain again



Decisions taken by the U'khand government to make Char Dham Yatra 2025 'Sugam, Sukhad aur Surakshit'

For the past few years, the number of devotees coming to Char Dham Yatra has been continuously increasing. The state administration is constantly making efforts to provide proper facilities for the devotees. In this sequence, to provide better facilities for the devotees in the upcoming Char Dham Yatra, U'khand government is committed to ensure a 'Sugam, Sukhad aur Surakshit' journey for pilgrims, for which several

steps have been taken for their convenience:

- Aadhar-based registration is compulsory for the pilgrims
- For those who have not registered online, on spot registration facilities are available at Rishikesh, Haridwar and Vikasnagar (Herbertpur, Nayagaon)
- Darshan will be allowed on the date for which registration is done

- On spot registration will be done based on the number of pilgrims present at the dham, considering the security/ safety of pilgrims
- Chief Secretary, Uttarakhand, has requested all the dignitaries, state officials and members of judiciary to avoid visiting the dhams during the period from May 2 to 31, 2025, for the sake of the convenience of the pilgrims

During the Char Dham Yatra, you can also visit the following nearby places

- Triyugi Narain Temple • Gartang Gali • Valley of Flowers
- Harshil Valley • Devprayag • Auli



Kedar Gufa



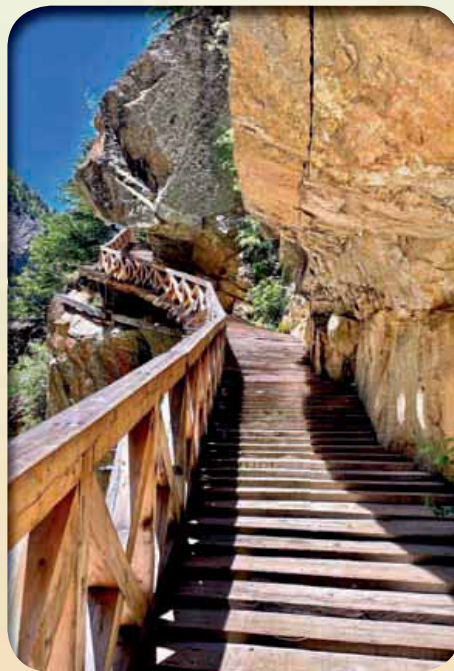
Auli



Valley of Fower



Triyugi Narain Temple



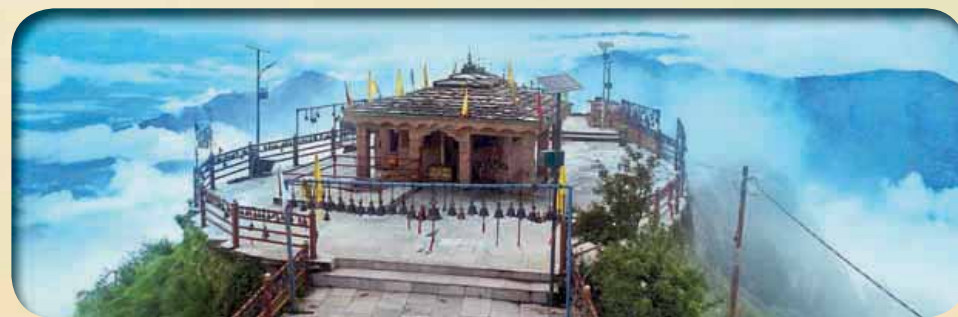
Gartang Gali



Tungnath Temple



Omkareshwar Temple



Kartik Swami Temple



FEEL THE THRILL OF ADVENTURE IN UTTARAKHAND

Uttarakhand is the ultimate adventure destination—the perfect answer to every thrill-seeker's dream. Bestowed with snow-carpeted slopes ideal for high-altitude skiing; the Himalayan ranges for trekking, mountaineering and rock climbing; gurgling rivers for white water rafting, pristine lakes for canoeing and kayaking, and mountain paths best suited for biking challenges—there is no dearth of adventure sports here.



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For any type of support please contact our 24x7 toll free number: **0135-1364**
For more details please contact: **0135-2559898, 0135-2552627**
E-mail: touristcare.uttarakhand@gmail.com



For Chardham Heli booking please log on heliyatra.ircct.co.in or scan the QR code

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE

Editor's
TAKE

India reaches out to the world

The Govt dispatches seven delegations to various countries to present its perspective on the Indo-Pak conflict

In the wake of heightened tensions with Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack and India's swift military response under "Operation Sindoor," the Modi government has embarked on a bold and strategic diplomatic campaign — dispatching seven all-party delegations to key international capitals. These delegations, which include voices from across the political spectrum, aim to assert India's uncompromising stance against terrorism and unify international opinion in support of New Delhi's position. This outreach isn't just a routine diplomatic exercise — it's a calibrated move with far-reaching implications for India's global standing, security narrative, and internal democratic ethos. India's relations with Pakistan have always been delicate, often swinging between dialogue and confrontation. However, after the recent terror attack in Pahalgam and subsequent military operations, there's an urgent need for India to take charge of the international narrative. By sending high-level delegations to countries that are members of the United Nations Security Council and other strategic partners, India seeks to disseminate a unified national message: Terrorism, particularly cross-border terrorism, is an assault on India and thus has a right to retaliate and strike back. India's outreach emphasises zero tolerance for terrorism and seeks to convey to the global community that the entire Indian political class stands united against such threats. With Pakistan expected to launch its own international counter-narrative, India's proactive engagement is essential to highlight ground realities and reinforce its moral and strategic position.

The inclusion of opposition leaders demonstrates that India can rise above partisan divides when national interest is at stake—a trait that strengthens India's global image as a mature democracy.

The Modi government's invitation to senior Congress leader and former UN diplomat Shashi Tharoor to lead one of the delegations has been largely praised, but it hasn't come without controversy. Tharoor, despite being a vocal critic of the Modi regime on several fronts, accepted the role unhesitatingly. Besides, the consideration of Mani Shankar Aiyar—a figure often mired in controversy and known for his candid and sometimes polarising remarks—to lead delegation to Gulf countries sparked some internal criticism within Congress circles. While some party members frowned upon the decision, the Congress leadership has wisely chosen not to express any formal dissent. Its silence can be seen as tacit endorsement of the idea that in matters of national importance all have to cooperate regardless of political animosities. Critics who see this move as unusual or driven by political motives should remember that this isn't unprecedented. India has a long-standing tradition of cross-party cooperation in international diplomacy. One of the most notable examples dates back to Jawaharlal Nehru, who sent Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then a rising star in the opposition, to the United Nations to advocate India's position during a critical period. The message is loud and clear: when it comes to India's sovereignty, security, and global standing, all Indians speak in one voice!

Time to recalibrate ties with Turkey

Under President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkey has aligned itself militarily and ideologically with India's adversaries. What was once a partnership is now a cautionary tale of misplaced trust — and India is waking up to the betrayal

India has always extended a hand of friendship across continents, faiths, and ideologies. From standing by the Ottoman Empire during the Khilafat Movement to cooperating with modern Turkey in trade, technology, education and cultural exchanges, India believed in long-term goodwill. But today, it is betrayed by a country it once supported during its most critical moment in history.

Turkey, under the authoritarian leadership of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has chosen to side with Pakistan not just diplomatically, but militarily, feeding New Delhi's enemies with deadly drones and rhetoric, revealing Ankara's dangerous ambitions to become the ideological capital of a pan-Islamist world order - even at the cost of peace in South Asia.

The most recent Indo-Pak tensions, especially after Pakistan's proxy aggression in Kashmir and elsewhere, have seen Turkey abandon any pretence of neutrality. Turkish-made drones, notably the Bayraktar TB2 - manufactured by Baykar Technologies, whose CEO Selçuk Bayraktar is none other than Erdogan's son-in-law - are now in Pakistan's hands. These drones are not for humanitarian use or border surveillance.

They are war machines, tested in Libya, Syria, and Armenia, and now weaponized against Indian interests. It is no coincidence that the Pakistani military, flush with Chinese and now Turkish support, is emboldened in its provocative acts across the LoC. India is no longer watching silently. Turkish firms operating in India are now facing a quiet but firm rollback. The government is reportedly targeting those firms that have indirect connections with the Turkish ruling family. One such firm, closely linked to the Baykar CEO, had ongoing collaborations with Indian industries. But post the revelations about Ankara's defence dealings with Islamabad, New Delhi is beginning to sever ties. This is not just about foreign policy; this is about national security.

The diplomatic frost has started touching academia as well. Several Indian universities, including Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University, have now either cancelled or stalled their memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with Turkish educational institutions. What began as cultural and academic exchanges have now turned into cautionary tales of misplaced trust. It is becoming increasingly clear that Turkish academia, like many other arms of the state, is influenced - if not controlled - by the ideological machinery of Erdogan's administration. India cannot afford to keep its windows open to propaganda disguised as intellectual cooperation. This betrayal stings more because of the historical goodwill India extended to Turkey. During the



1920s, when the Ottoman Caliphate was being dismantled by Western colonial powers, Indian Muslims - and Indian leaders - came forward in solidarity. The Khilafat Movement was supported not just by Indian Muslims, but also by Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress.

Indian freedom fighters, fighting their war against the British Raj, paused to lend moral and political support to a foreign empire, simply based on civilizational and religious empathy. And yet, a century later, the Turkish state pays back with hostility, aligning itself not with the world's largest democracy, but with a failed terror-sponsoring regime in Islamabad.

The hypocrisy is complete when one looks at Erdoğan's domestic policies. Once hailed as a reformer, Erdogan has now dismantled Turkish secularism, jailing dissidents, muzzling the media, and openly promoting an Islamist agenda.

The conversion of the Hagia Sophia, a UNESCO World Heritage site, from a museum back into a mosque was not merely a religious act - it was a political message to the world. It marked the triumph of a neo-Ottoman, pan-Islamist narrative over Turkey's secular past. Erdogan is no longer content being the president of Turkey; he aspires to

be the caliph of the Islamic world.

And for that, he sees India - a pluralistic, secular, majority Hindu nation - as an ideological rival. Turkey has repeatedly raised the Kashmir issue in the United Nations and other global forums, parroting Pakistan's false narratives.

It has criticized India's internal matters, including the abrogation of Article 370 and the Citizenship Amendment Act, conveniently ignoring its suppression of Kurdish identity, Armenian history, and democratic freedoms. Turkey's silence on China's atrocities against Uighur Muslims further exposes the selective outrage of its leadership. It has become clear that Erdogan's Turkey is not defending Muslims; it is defending authoritarian alliances and petrodollar loyalties.

The Indian business community is also waking up. Traders in several states have begun quietly boycotting Turkish goods - from dry fruits and confectionery to Turkish apples and marble. India does not need Turkish imports when it has friendlier and more reliable partners elsewhere.

When Indian soldiers face Turkish drones in Kashmir, how can Indian citizens in good conscience buy Turkish dates for Ramadan? This is not a call for jingoism but for economic nationalism. A sovereign nation must ensure that its economy does not empower those who want to destabilize it. India is neither against Islam nor against Muslims. It remains home to the second-largest Muslim population in the world. But India cannot and will not tolerate foreign governments using religion as a tool of geopolitics against it.

Turkey's ambitions to become the new head of the Islamic Ummah come with the price tag of instability and ideological confrontation. Erdogan has found common cause with Pakistan, Qatar, and certain radical outfits, hoping to revive a caliphate that the modern world has long buried.

Turkey's betrayal is not just strategic, it is civilizational. It is a deliberate choice to side with India's enemies and undermine a century-old bond.

India must now recalibrate its foreign policy with clarity and strength. We have friends in West Asia - the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt - who have shown greater pragmatism and respect. India must deepen ties with them while sending a clear message to Ankara: betrayal has consequences. In the years to come, Indian policymakers, industrialists, students, and common citizens must remember that partnerships must be rooted in mutual respect and shared values. Turkey under Erdogan has lost both. And until it regains them, India must look elsewhere - not back at a friendship that has been stabbed from behind.

The road from Khilafat to today's crisis is a painful reminder that not all historic bonds endure - especially when one side uses them as tools of manipulation. For now, the sun sets on India-Turkey ties. Whether it rises again will depend on when, or if, Turkey chooses principles over politics.

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

Finding purpose when recognition falls short

SECOND Opinion

In the world of civil services, rejection can sting in deeply personal ways. A missed dream posting doesn't just feel like a professional hiccup-it can feel like a public verdict on your worth. And ironically, landing a coveted assignment doesn't always bring celebration. It often invites envy, cold shoulders, and whispered judgments from peers. The very structure of this prestigious career can feel like a paradox: being overlooked feels like failure, while succeeding sometimes means being quietly resented.

Consider the young officer who dreams of a high-profile metropolitan post, only to be sent to a rural subdivision after months of anticipation. The disappointment is layered-not just personal, but echoed by family and friends who had their hopes tethered to the officer's trajectory. For another officer, finally securing a prestigious posting can spark a new challenge: peer envy disguised as distant professionalism, veiled jabs, or even quiet exclusion from group camaraderie.

This dual-edged sword of public service-where rejection cuts deep and success triggers reverse snubs-is one of the profession's greatest emotional trials. That's why learning to become "snub-proof" is not just helpful; it's essential. It means building resilience to face setbacks without crumbling, and emotional maturity to stay ground-

ed amidst subtle hostilities.

Why do these slights hurt so much? Because rejection threatens four essential psychological needs: belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaning-identified by psychologist Kipling Williams. In civil services, where identity and purpose are so tightly intertwined with public perception and rank, these needs feel amplified. A posting isn't just a job-it's a symbol of validation.

But here's the truth: many outcomes in civil services are shaped by variables outside your influence. Political considerations, timing, administrative reshuffles, or sheer luck can dictate who lands where. Missing out isn't always about merit. It's about circumstances. Understanding this can ease the internal sting.

So, what do you do when the sting arrives?

First, pause. Emotional reactions-like anger, self-doubt, or the compulsion to prove yourself-can spiral if left unchecked. Process the moment. Ground yourself in the knowledge that one posting doesn't define your career.

Next, shift your perspective. Not every role will be high-profile, but that doesn't mean it lacks value. Some of the most transformative public service work happens in places the public doesn't see. One seasoned officer put it best: "The satisfaction of service is in the work itself, not the

applause."

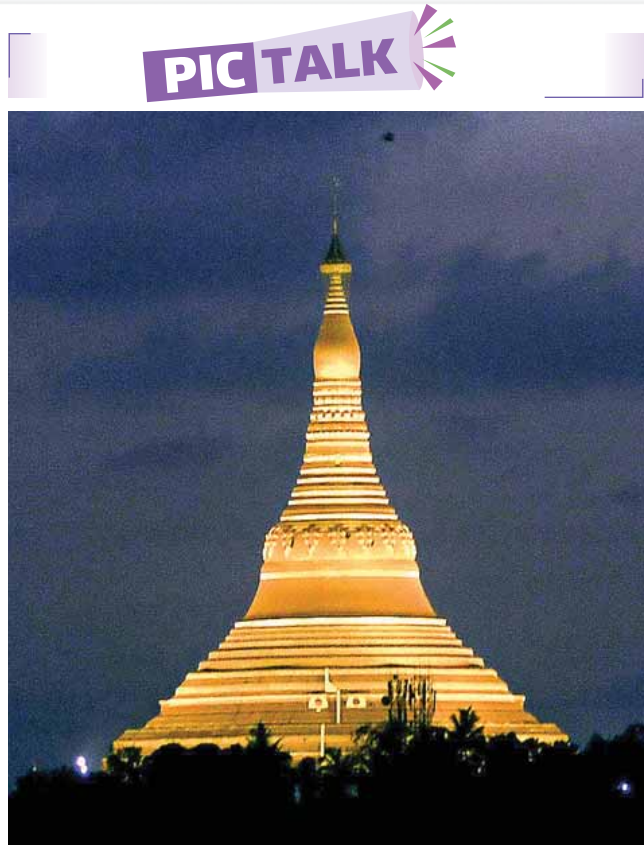
For those experiencing reverse snubs, the approach must shift from defense to empathy. Peer envy is often rooted in



SANTHOSH
MATHEW



OP
SINGH



Global Vipassana Pagoda is illuminated after sunset, in Mumbai PTI

Letters to the Editor

IMF assistance to Pakistan

A day after defence minister Rajnath Singh urged the IMF to rethink its assistance to Pakistan, the Congress Party on Saturday, 17 May, blasted the Modi government for "simply buckled under US pressure" at the IMF Executive Board meeting when the loans to that country were deliberated upon. Singh is now criticizing the IMF for approving loans to Pakistan on 9 May 2025, "but on 29 April itself - before the Modi government woke up - the Congress had said that the IMF Executive Board was meeting on May 9th to consider this issue and that India should oppose it forcefully". As it turns out India only abstained on 9 May.

Later the Modi government's drum-beaters argued that this was the only option available to India. This is a lie. There is indeed a provision to vote 'No' in the Executive Board. Russia had voted 'No' on a loan proposal to Ukraine in September 2016 and India herself had voted No on 11 September 2005, on the issue of the expulsion of Zimbabwe. India pressed IMF to reconsider its USD 1 billion assistance to Pakistan, saying Islamabad could use a large part of it to fund the terrorist infrastructure. In its board meeting in Washington on 9 May, the IMF cleared a USD 1 billion tranche for Pakistan as part of its USD 7 billion funding programme for the country.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Food scarcity in Gaza is terrifying

The 'Integrated Food Security Phase Classification' is an international authority that assesses the severity of food crises. According to their findings, around 500,000 Palestinians are on the brink of starvation, while nearly 1 million are facing an emergency situation.

For the past 10 weeks, Israel has blocked the entry of food, shelter, medicine, and other essential supplies into Palestinian territories. In addition, airstrikes and military operations are ongoing. Israel's military campaign, ongoing for the past 19 months, has destroyed most of Gaza's food production capacity.

As a result, the population of 2.3 million in Gaza is entirely dependent on external aid for survival. The supply of food grains is rapidly diminishing. Community kitchens, which provide cooked meals, are the only source of food for most citizens in Gaza and they too are shutting down quickly.

Every day, thousands of Palestinians wait in lines outside these public kitchens, where scuffles are common.

If Israel does not lift the blockade or stop the military campaign, experts warn that Gaza could face a severe famine and a critical shortage of food. The suffering of civilians caused by the war is proving to be more terrifying than the war itself.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

Indians give Turkey, Azerbaijan a miss

In light of recent developments, tensions have escalated between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam terror attack. Amid this backdrop, several online travel platforms have announced the suspension of hotel and flight bookings to certain countries, including Turkey and Azerbaijan.

This decision appears to be a response to the support these nations have extended to Pakistan during the ongoing conflict. Indian authorities have also advised tourists to reconsider travel to countries such as Turkey and Azerbaijan. Last year alone, Indian tourists contributed over Rs 4,000 crore to these economies—supporting employment, the hospitality industry, the wedding sector, and aviation. The support shown by these nations to Pakistan has been met with disappointment in India. Such actions from major global economies are unexpected and risk straining geopolitical relationships. Terrorism is a global threat, not an issue to be viewed through a narrow, national lens. Addressing it requires a unified and cooperative international approach. Travel advisories and booking suspensions reflect public sentiment. As terrorism remains a global threat, true progress demands unity, not division, urging nations to act beyond alliances and uphold shared security values.

DIMPLE WADHAWAN | KANPUR

SYCOPHANCY OVER SOVEREIGNTY?



After the successful execution of Operation Sindoor, a series of fresh controversies has erupted within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Madhya Pradesh. The latest storm surrounds Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda, who recently claimed that "the country's army and soldiers bow at the feet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." The statement has drawn sharp criticism from the Congress party, which has called it an insult to the armed forces and demanded an apology.

This controversy comes close on the heels of another—BJP minister Vijay Shah allegedly linked Colonel Sofiya Qureshi to terrorism. Despite a high court-ordered FIR, upheld by the Supreme Court, Shah issued an apology but retained his position. Sources suggest the central BJP leadership is considering asking for Shah's resignation, but his standing as one of

the party's few influential tribal leaders complicates the move. Similarly, in Devda's case, the BJP has come to his defense, accusing the Congress of targeting him because he is a Dalit.

There's a growing concern that identity politics—whether tribal or Dalit—are being used as shields to excuse sycophancy. Political leaders are often seen lauding their superiors to gain favor, but doing so at the cost of insulting India's brave soldiers is crossing a red line.

We can and should commend Prime Minister Modi for the successful Operation Sindoor. But does that mean the entire nation must metaphorically fall at his feet? There must be a boundary to political loyalty. When it begins to overshadow the honor of those who protect our borders, it's not just bad politics—it's a betrayal of national dignity.

BIDYUT KUMAR CHATTERJEE | FARIDABAD

Misinformation: The new frontline in geopolitics

As digital content becomes ammunition, the world faces a critical challenge: to restore information. No longer confined to diplomacy or defense strategy, today's power struggles are fought in the realm of perception — through deepfakes and manipulated media.

FIRST
Column

In today's war-torn world, images and videos don't just go viral, they explode. Like digital bombs, they scatter shards of truth, half-truths, and outright falsehoods across borders, screens, and minds. We are living in an age where one deepfake can shatter diplomatic trust, one AI-generated image can incite unrest, and one viral headline can sabotage years of negotiation. When misinformation and fake news enter this roster of weaponry, the tragedy is compounded. What could have been a moment of resilience turns into a spectacle of doubt and chaos.

The recent escalations in the Indian subcontinent stand as a burning example of this. As tensions rose, misinformation surged; fabricated visuals, misattributed videos, and misleading narratives flooded social media. But what stood out was the Indian government's prompt and proactive response: deploying fact-check units, engaging official handles, and taking down false content in real-time. It wasn't just governance; it was communication warfare.

Strategic communication in today's geopolitical space has become a battlefield of contending ideas, contrasting perceptions, diverse strategies and complex narratives.

In 2025, the framework of the geopolitical landscape has been affected by the geostrategic communication architecture. The entire ecosystem has become a "Bitter Platform of pulls and pressure" a "Tug of War" and "Slanging Match" being played out on different media formats by stakeholders whose image is at stake. The moot question is whether geostrategic communication requires overriding restraints to focus on limits of misuse of content through deepfakes, AI-generated images, falsehood promotion and trigger-generated perception and response.

Recent events have shown that the geopolitical space is on a "24x7 Communication Alert". The buzz thereby generated has influenced the contours of the core diplomatic interface and messaging structure. It has also sent warning signals that wrap around "Communication Disorder", misinformation and hyped ecosystem content. The entire communication operation is not a messaging tool, rather it is being positioned as a strategic weapon to misguide and negatively align thereby disturbing the "Information Equilibrium and Discourse".

In the good old days, geopolitics was dominated by conventional tools and channels of dissemination, bilateral interface and personal diplomacy interference to counter negative narratives, perceptions and sentiments. Today, the conventional wisdom has been overtaken by "Communication Strikes" which thrive on utilising the space to destabilise, manipulate and churn unwanted crises, narratives and unending falsehoods in an era of instant communication. Policymakers and strategists grapple with the matrix of complex "Communication Intersections" where ground rules are not constant and thrive on fakery and "Communication Escalation" points. Any crisis



sis that impacts geopolitics today thrives on communication disorder, imbalance and asymmetry.

The lack of understanding to dissect the negative content amongst the audiences leads to being prey to biased hostile reporting. This has been one of the biggest obstacles to transparency in communicating the right message through the appropriate medium.

Fact-checking units have become the new normal of the global order. Image depiction and messaging consistency within the diplomatic landscape have suffered pitfalls due to a lack of reciprocity in outlining events, issues and themes.

The Indian subcontinent witnessed this first-hand. As tension escalated, certain media outlets and social platforms were flooded with images and videos purportedly from conflict zones. Many of these were from unrelated incidents or were digitally manipulated



CHAITANYA K PRASAD

IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS, GEOPOLITICS WAS DOMINATED BY CONVENTIONAL TOOLS AND CHANNELS OF DISSEMINATION, BILATERAL INTERFACE AND PERSONAL DIPLOMACY INTERFERENCE TO COUNTER NEGATIVE NARRATIVES, PERCEPTIONS AND SENTIMENTS

lated to incite public panic. However, Indian authorities acted swiftly: real-time fact-checking, dissemination of verified updates, and coordinated efforts with social media platforms helped curb the impact. The government of India's Fact Check Unit PIB, under the aegis of the I&B Ministry, played a critical role in stalling the flow of disinformation that flooded the social media space in the recent events of neighbourhood tension.

The result? Temporary restoration of the information order in a region otherwise on the brink of digital chaos. The need for a new global information order is acute and arises on account of the gaps and fissures that appear in the messaging and perception terrain.

Due to the deep impact of social media, every medium and tool within the geostrategic space is suffering from "Asymmetrical Dynamics". Dynamics related to information overload, overhype infodemics, lack of credibility and the growing role and interplay of non-state elements in the ecosystem.

The need today is to use communication not as an adjunct to a strategy and policy, but rather utilise the platform to build trust, confidence, self-belief and transparency and "Positioning Communication

Perspective'. The problem is that the institutional structures that govern the ecosystem thrive on the "Imbalances Related to Resources, Reach, Accountability and Non-Regulation" of the mediums. It is no rocket science when one notices the biased projection of the Western media on issues that create ripples in the image, perception and narratives. These structures do not facilitate a fair discourse of narratives rather they suffer from communication distortion due to their mantra of knee-jerk communication.

Globally, geostrategic practitioners have suffered the menace of fact-checking, to ensure fairness and ethics in information management. This unwanted phenomenon has also thrived due to the lack of "Media literacy" and awareness amongst people, and the inability to critically understand and evaluate content.

This phenomenon is one of the biggest push factors ailing the current global information order and has led to distortion and lack of understanding of key issues dominating the media space.

In the current global order, geostrategic considerations are certainly playing out in the public domain, rather than in hush-hush corridors of power. Policymakers face the challenge of gestures, curated visuals, amplified images, and digital tools. Invasion that erases trust, cohesion and transparency in the information ecosystem.

Geostrategy, today requires a holistic narrative-building exercise wherein traditional and new media formats weave together a predictable and comprehensive narrative. It is a critical factor that must be to weave and check the role and responsibility of AI.

Technology-driven communication, that does not obliterate transparency and ethics in the domain of strategic messaging. Global consensus should not fall prey to the wonder tools and algorithms of AI as it would expose the inbuilt fragility of communication through modern tools techniques and content.

What the world needs now is a globally accepted fact-checking protocol; a cooperative network of governments, tech platforms, and neutral watchdogs committed to immediate and effective debunking of misinformation.

It must be matched with international investments in media literacy initiatives and cross-border transparency frameworks. In these volatile times, when geopolitics is dictated by optics and perception, the cost of unchecked misinformation is far too high. Strategic communication must be wielded not as a megaphone for chaos, but as a lighthouse of clarity and trust because the war for truth is no less important than the war for peace.

(The writer is former civil servant writes on Cinema and Strategic Communication. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavi Srinivasan. Views expressed are personal)

The Modi Doctrine: India's historic shift from restraint to retaliation

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's doctrine will be etched in history as a transformative policy that decisively redefined India's approach to Pakistan's terror-driven provocations. For decades, cross-border terrorism was treated with diplomatic exchanges and measured responses. But under Modi's leadership, India has declared that terror attacks will henceforth be regarded as acts of war-meriting the severest punishment, including cross-border strikes and direct retaliation against both terrorists and their patrons.

An in-depth analysis of Modi's speech exhibits that his doctrine is not mere rhetoric-it has been enforced with unmistakable resolve. The obliteration of nine terror camps and the destruction of eleven Pakistani air bases by India stand as irrefutable evidence of this new policy. The message is unequivocal: extremists, whether sheltered by rogue regimes or operating independently, will be treated as state actors, and both will face retribution.

Modi has also used this doctrine to convey a broader global message-Pakistan's terror agenda is not just India's problem. The prime minister has highlighted that Islamabad's terror network has targeted Western powers as well. The tragic 9/11 attacks on the United States and the deadly London Tube bombings have direct links to terrorists trained in Pakistan. In Modi's view, the state and terror are intertwined in Pakistan, making the country complicit in its proxies' actions.

India's resolute response during Operation Sindoor, a high-stakes military offensive, has further cemented this policy. The doctrine is clear-Pakistan will face identical, severe consequences if it continues to harbour terrorists or allows its territory to serve as a breeding ground for extremism.

Modi's doctrine is a multifaceted strategy with significant diplomatic, military, and strategic implications. His speech has been widely recognised as a statement of India's future policy, echoing the American operation that eliminated Osama bin Laden on Pakistani soil and Israel's retaliatory strikes against Hamas following the murder of innocent civilians. rime Minister Modi's stance has thus placed India in the league of proactive, decisive nations that prioritise their security and sovereignty without succumbing to diplomatic dithering or strategic ambiguity.

Modi's doctrine on terrorism has redefined India's strategic response to Pakistan's persistent cross-border terror, establishing a historic precedent where acts of terror are equated to acts of war. This transformative policy shift has not only fortified India's defence posture but has also

sent an unequivocal global message-India will retaliate decisively against terrorism, even if it means crossing the Line of Control (LoC).

The Modi Doctrine will be remembered for ending the decades-old ambiguity over India's response to Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. By categorically treating terror attacks as acts of war, the doctrine authorises the Indian armed forces to launch punitive strikes, including cross-LoC operations, against terror camps and their patrons. This paradigm shift has brought an end to the era of 'restraint' in the face of terror provocations, ushering in a new era of active deterrence.

The 2016 surgical strikes following the Uri attack and the 2019 Balakot airstrikes after the Pulwama incident are vivid examples of this proactive policy. These actions shattered the myth that Pakistan's nuclear arsenal would prevent India from striking back. India's response has forced global powers to re-evaluate their approach to state-sponsored terrorism. It has positioned India as a nation unwilling to bow before terror blackmail, marking a strategic elevation.

Under this doctrine, the long-held diplomatic approach of maintaining simultaneous dialogue, trade, and counter-terrorism efforts has been discarded. Modi has clearly asserted that terror, talks, and trade cannot coexist-a principle that has recalibrated India's diplomatic engagements with Pakistan and beyond. Diplomatic isolation, suspension of bilateral dialogues, and cutting off trade relations have been part of India's calibrated response.

India's firm stance has also been reflected in its ability to rally international support against Pakistan's terror infrastructure, a feat that was previously difficult due to diplomatic hesitations. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF)'s grey-listing of Pakistan was significantly influenced by India's persistent diplomatic efforts and now it will be renewed by providing concrete evidences of terror camps and patronage by Pakistan executive and military.

Another cornerstone of the Modi Doctrine is the obliteration of the nuclear threat myth propagated by Pakistan.

Islamabad's habitual nuclear blackmail has been rendered ineffective, as India has demonstrated its resolve to retaliate decisively without being deterred by the nuclear bogey. Surgical strikes and Balakot airstrikes are living testimony to this changed approach.

By openly rejecting the fear of nuclear escalation, India has signalled its confidence in its strategic capabilities and its willingness to call out Pakistan's nuclear bluff. This approach has



KS TOMAR

fundamentally altered the deterrence dynamics in South Asia, reassuring Indian citizens while unsettling adversaries.

India's willingness to cross the LoC to eliminate terror camps has not only safeguarded its security but has also sent a powerful global message.

It has demonstrated that nations have the sovereign right to strike at the roots of terror if left with no other option, a principle resonating well with other countries like America, Israel etc. facing similar threats.

This doctrine is not merely India's security strategy-it has set a global precedent, encouraging other nations to adopt a proactive stance against cross-border terrorism. Countries like France, Israel, and the United States have echoed India's position in their counter-terror operations.

The doctrine is underpinned by the superiority of India's Indigenous and Russian S-400 integrated missile defence systems and American weapons over the Chinese weapon and radar systems deployed by Pakistan.

This technological edge has significantly enhanced India's strategic confidence in dealing with cross-border threats. India's procurement of Rafale fighter jets, induction of advanced missile systems, and modernisation of its armed forces have reinforced this doctrine, ensuring that any retaliatory strike is backed by technological superiority. These advancements serve as both a deterrent and a force multiplier.

Domestically, the Modi Doctrine's success is expected to boost the BJP's prospects in the 2029 Lok Sabha elections and the upcoming Bihar polls. The firm stance against terror is likely to consolidate nationalist sentiments like the 2019 surgical strikes after the Pulwama attack, a critical factor in electoral dynamics.

The Modi government's decisive actions have been used effectively in electoral campaigns, projecting Modi as a strong leader capable of safeguarding India's sovereignty. Opposition parties may struggle again to counter this narrative, often appearing defensive on national security issues.

Global Implications and Strategic Legacy
The Modi Doctrine has transformed India from a reactive state to a proactive power willing to defend its sovereignty by all means necessary.

It has cemented India's image as a nation that not only possesses the military capability but also the political will to protect its interests. This doctrine has been studied by global think tanks, with many nations acknowledging its relevance in their own security strategies.

(The writer is strategic affairs columnist and senior political analyst. Views expressed are personal)

Moscow showcases diversity and fosters people-to-people connect

Moscow is a stunning blend of history, culture, and modern energy. From the iconic Red Square and the colorful domes of St. Basil's Cathedral to the grandeur of the Kremlin, the city immerses you in centuries of rich heritage. Its vibrant arts scene, world-class ballet, and buzzing nightlife offer unforgettable experiences, while the ornate metro stations alone feel like underground palaces. Moscow is where imperial legacy meets contemporary charm. In recent years, Moscow has been making significant strides in establishing itself as a premier destination for business and cultural tourism. At the forefront of this transformation is Anastasia Popova, the Head of the Business Department at the Moscow City Tourism Committee. She was in Delhi to attend the OTOI's 6th convention.

Gyaneshwar Dayal sat down with Anastasia Popova to discuss Moscow's growing appeal as a destination for Indian business travellers. Excerpts:

What initiatives has Moscow undertaken to attract Indian MICE travellers?

Anastasia Popova: Over the last few years, we've made great efforts in India. We've organised road-shows across major cities, participated in key travel trade fairs like SATTE and BLTM, and engaged directly with Indian MICE professionals. One of our standout initiatives is the MICE Ambassadors Program-a sort of educational outreach that guides Indian event organisers on how to bring their business to Moscow. It's been warmly received, and we're seeing a growing number of Indian companies eager to explore Moscow for business events.

What's the conversion rate from business to leisure travel among Indian visitors?

AP: significant number of Indian business travellers return to Moscow later with family or friends. About 40 per cent of Indian tourists who come for business eventually come back for leisure. It's a natural transition-when someone visits for a meeting and discovers the city's charm, they want to share it with loved ones.

Has the simplified visa process helped increase interest from Indian travelers?

AP: Absolutely. A new visa program launched last August has made it much easier to travel. It now takes only four days to obtain, with minimal paperwork. This has helped boost travel interest significantly, especially as Moscow works toward building a more India-friendly experience.

What is being done to make Indian tourists feel more comfortable in Moscow?

AP: We're very focused on cultural and practical comfort. Many hotels now offer Indian cuisine, vegetarian options, and are staffed with English-speaking personnel. We also support training programs to ensure that people working in hospitality understand the needs of Indian travellers. We've even begun integrating Indian chefs in restaurants and provid-



ing dedicated services for special events like weddings, which are a growing area of interest.

Are Indian weddings in Moscow becoming more common?

AP: We're still building toward that, but we've already hosted several weddings from India. Indian weddings are complex, so we're enhancing our infrastructure to meet those specific needs-like accommodating Indian chefs, vegetarian meals, ceremonial requirements, and family logistics. We aim to position Moscow as a premium wedding destination within the next couple of years.

What has been the trend in Indian tourist arrivals?

AP: In 2024, we welcomed around 85,800 Indian travellers. It's a modest figure, but growing steadily. We're optimistic that upcoming events-like tourism conventions hosted in Moscow-will allow Indian travel agents and organisers to experience the city firsthand. That's crucial because once they see it themselves, they can more confidently sell it to their clients.

Are you planning more cultural collaborations?

AP: Yes. Just like we celebrate Chinese New Year in Moscow, we're planning more Indian cultural festivals here. These events foster people-to-people connections, celebrate diversity, and deepen bilateral understanding. Collaborating with Indian communities and embassies is part of our broader engagement strategy.

What is the best time to visit Moscow?

AP: Indians often prefer April to October for the pleasant weather, but winter has its own magic. In December, Moscow transforms into a fairy-tale landscape, with snow, lights, and festive cheer. Some visitors who came in winter told us it was like living in a storybook.

Any message for Indian travellers?

AP: We want Indians to see Moscow not just as a place for meetings, but as a vibrant, welcoming, and memorable destination. Whether it's through luxury train journeys or winter festivities, Moscow has something for everyone. We're here to make that experience smooth, enriching, and unforgettable.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Vatican City

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Goma (Congo)

Hundreds of Rwandan refugees

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bucharest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Houston

Resident Chris Cromer said he got the first of two tornado alerts on his phone around 11:30 p.m. Or so, about a half-hour

70 applications received for e-manufacturing scheme

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Government has received 70 applications for ₹23,000-crore electronics component manufacturing scheme, and majority of applicants are small and medium enterprises, Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said. These applications have come within half a month of opening the window for the scheme. “Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme has received tremendous response. Within 15 days of opening the application, around 70 applications have come,” Vaishnaw said media. The Minister did not disclose the name of applicants. However, sources have earlier mentioned that Tata Electronics, Dixon Technologies and Foxconn were among the big players that have shown interest in the scheme.

Vaishnaw said that while some of the big players have applied, there has been huge interest in the scheme from small and medium players. “80 per cent of the applications have come from small and medium enterprises,” the Minister said.

The government opened applications for the ₹22,805-crore electronics component manufacturing scheme (ECMS) on May 1. The scheme aims to address demand-supply deficit in the electronic component segment. Electronic Industries



Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw

PIONEER PHOTO

Association of India (Elcina), the country's oldest industry body of the Indian electronics sector, estimates that the demand-supply deficit for inputs in the electronics segment will increase to \$248 Billion (about ₹21 lakh crore) by 2030 to cater to projected \$500 Billion electronics production and it would be met largely by imports in absence of any measure from the government.

The major portion of the scheme, ₹21,093 crore, is earmarked for sub-assemblies like camera module, multi-layered printed circuit board (PCB), flexible

PCB, passive components that are fixed on the PCB by machines.

A total of ₹1,712 crore has been earmarked for making parts used in sub-assemblies and capital goods used in electronics manufacturing.

The scheme classifies display module and camera module sub-assembly in A category, while category B products include bare components like non-surface mount devices (non-SMD), multi-layered printed circuit board, lithium-ion cells for digital applications, enclosures for mobile, IT hardware products and related devices.

SEBI mandates e-book mechanism for private debt securities

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi has made the electronic book mechanism mandatory for all private placement debt issues of ₹20 crore or above and expanded the platform's scope to include REITs and InvITs. The move, based on recommendations from a working group and public feedback, is aimed at enhancing the efficiency of the Electronic Book Provider (EBP) platform. Under the new framework, the use of the EBP platform is now mandatory for private placements of debt securities, non-convertible redeemable preference shares (NCRPS) and municipal bonds, where the issue size is ₹20 crore or more, including single, shelf and subsequent issues within a financial year, according to a Sebi circular.

Earlier, the mechanism was mandato-

ry for all private placements of debt securities with an issue size of ₹50 crore or more. SEBI has extended products on the EBP platform to infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) and real estate infrastructure trusts (REITs).

“An issuer, if desirous, may choose to access EBP platform for private placement of securitised debt instruments or security receipts or commercial papers (CPs), certificates of deposit (CDs) and issuers constituted as REITs, SM REITs and InvITs can also access the EBP platform for private placement of units of REITs, SM REITs and InvITs,” Sebi said on Friday.

The regulator said that issuers are required to submit the placement memorandum and term sheet — containing key terms and conditions — at least two working days before the issue opens, or three working days in the case of first-time users of the EBP.

Projects worth ₹60,000 crore announced in Advantage Assam Summit underway: CM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Guwahati

Implementation of projects worth over ₹60,000 crore, out of investment proposals for ₹5.18 lakh crore received during a business summit in February, has already commenced, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Sunday. The state government was expecting a total investment in projects worth ₹1.50 lakh crore within the first year of the summit, he said.

Sarma was speaking at an MoU-signing ceremony of 20 projects worth ₹22,900 crore here, proposals for which were received during the Advantage Assam 2.0 summit. He said several projects in the infrastructure space were being implemented, with focus also on

Adani-Sparton to develop anti-submarine warfare solutions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Billionaire Gautam Adani's group has signed a deal with a US undersea warfare company Sparton to develop electronic sensors and navigation systems that could be used for anti-submarine warfare, the conglomerate said on Sunday. Adani Defence & Aerospace has signed a binding collaboration agreement with Sparton (DeLeon Springs LLC) to assemble anti-submarine warfare (ASW) solutions for the Indian Navy, it said in a statement. The partnership aims to localise the assemblage of sonobuoys and other ASW systems in India under the 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' initiative.

It will be the first private company in India to offer indigenous Sonobuoys solutions to the Indian Navy. Headquartered in De Leon Springs, Florida, Sparton develops, produces and supplies electronic systems to support undersea warfare for the US Navy and allied military forces. The firm was, in December 2020, acquired by Israeli defence electronics company Elbit Systems Ltd.

Prior to the current deal, the Adani Group had in 2018 set up a joint venture partnership with Israeli weapons giant Elbit Systems to manufacture lethal Hermes 900 drones. In 2020, Adani-Elbit announced 'mini' drone missile weapons production.

Adani Group has also partnered with

Israel Weapon Industries to manufacture assault weapons, sniper rifles and machine guns. In a statement on Sunday, Adani Defence & Aerospace said it “has signed a binding collaboration agreement with Sparton (DeLeon Springs LLC), a group company of Elbit Systems and a leading provider of advanced anti-submarine warfare systems. This partnership marks a significant step toward localising the assembly of complex electronic systems and advanced Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) solutions for the Indian and global markets”.

The partnership will combine Sparton's pioneering ASW technology with Adani Defence's established expertise in development, manufacturing, and sustenance for the Indian Navy.

Sonobuoys are mission-critical platforms for enhancing Undersea Domain Awareness (UDA), providing an effective means to detect, locate and track submarines and other underwater threats. Playing a key role in anti-submarine warfare (ASW) and other naval operations, they support in maintaining naval security and protecting carrier strike groups.

Sparton manufactures electronic sensor systems, navigation systems and undersea warfare delivery systems.

For decades, India has been importing this critical naval capability from global markets, increasing our dependence on foreign OEMs.

India largest market for electric three-wheelers: IEA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India continues to be the world's largest market for electric three-wheelers for a second year in a row as sales rose nearly 20 per cent to reach about seven lakh vehicles in 2024, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in a report.

In its Global EV Outlook 2025, the Paris-based energy watchdog said India continues to drive most growth in the global electric three-wheeler market.

Despite the global three-wheeler (3W) market shrinking five per cent from the previous year, electric 3W sales grew more than 10 per cent to surpass 1 million vehicles in 2024. Electric 3W sales represented almost one-quarter of all 3W sales, up from one-fifth in 2023, it said. The market is highly concentrated, with China and India together accounting for more than 90 per cent of electric and conventional 3W sales.

“Electrification of 3Ws in China has stagnated at less than 15 per cent over the past three years. In 2023, India overtook China to become the world's largest market for electric 3Ws, and it maintained this position in 2024, with sales growing close to 20 per cent year-on-year to reach nearly 7,00,000 vehicles,” it said.

This translated into a record 57 per cent electric sales share in 2024, 3 per cent up on the previous year.

This growing trend, it said, looks set to continue thanks to policy support under the new PM E-DRIVE scheme, which allocated Budget in 2024 to support the roll-out of more than 3,00,000 electric 3Ws for commercial use — for which the total fleet (electric and ICE) was estimated at more than 10 million vehicles in 2023.

IEA said China, India and Southeast Asia remain the world's largest 2/3W markets, accounting for around 80 per cent of 2024 global sales, with 2/3Ws serving as the primary mode of private passenger transport in these regions.

“India's increasingly dynamic electric 2W market hosted a total of 220 OEMs in 2024, up from 180 in 2023, although the four market leaders accounted for a combined 80 per cent of the 1.3 million electric 2Ws sold in the country in 2024 (6 per cent of the overall 2W market),” the report said.

While the upfront purchase price of electric 2Ws remains higher on average than that of conventional 2Ws, increasing competition is prompting OEMs to offer more affordable electric models.

BEYOND BORDERS: INDO-ARAB CHAMBER FUELS ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL REVIVAL



DR WAEEL AWWAD

In the rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape of the 21st century, the alliance between India and the Arab world is gaining remarkable momentum. At the forefront of this transformation stands the Indo Arab Countries Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (IACCIA), headquartered in New Delhi. The Chamber has emerged as a dynamic force in transforming historical ties into modern economic partnerships, ushering in an era of shared prosperity, mutual growth, and strategic collaboration.

A Historic Bond Reimagined

India and the Arab world share centuries of cultural and commercial connection-woven together through trade routes, cuisine, language, spirituality and intellectual exchange. From the ancient spice routes of Gujarat to the philosophical and linguistic confluence during the Islamic Golden Age, this enduring relationship is being redefined by the demands of the modern era: technology, capital and innovation.

The IACCIA is playing a pivotal institutional role in revitalising this legacy with a forward-looking mission-to foster trade, investment, and industrial partnerships between India and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the broader Arab world.

Strategic Convergence: Technology Meets Capital

India has emerged as a global technology hub, home to more than 14 million skilled tech professionals, leading IT firms, biotech centres, AI start-ups, fintech disruptors and space innovation programs. Meanwhile, the Middle East/West Asia holds vast capital



reserves, with sovereign wealth funds in the GCC (UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Sultanate of Oman, Bahrain and Qatar) managing trillions of dollars.

This presents a unique opportunity for synergy: India offers innovation and human capital; the Middle East offers financial strength. While China has aggressively pursued regional influence through initiatives like the Belt and Road, India's democratic institutions, strategic autonomy and innovation-driven economy position it as a trusted and stable partner for the Arab world.

India and Arab Countries Chamber: Driving the Transformation

The IACCIA serves as the strategic bridge

between these complementary strengths, with initiatives that include:

■ **Facilitating B2B and G2G Engagements:** Organising trade delegations, bilateral forums, and expos to connect Indian businesses and policymakers with Arab counterparts.

■ **Attracting Sovereign Investments:** Engaging with funds such as ADIA, PIF, and QIA to channel investments into India's infrastructure, clean energy, agritech, fintech, and healthcare sectors.

■ **Promoting Joint Ventures:** Supporting Indo-Arab collaborations in smart cities, petrochemical transformation, electric mobility and AI-enabled governance.

■ **Policy Advisory:** Offering actionable insights, trade policy recommendations,

and strategic roadmaps for bilateral cooperation in a post-oil world.

Cultural Affinity as a Soft Power Anchor

An often-overlooked asset in Indo-Arab relations is the deep cultural affinity. With over 9 million Indians living and working across the GCC, 14 million visit the region annually and more than 70 billion US Dollar revenue, India is more than a trading partner-it's a familiar presence. Shared values, linguistic ties (such as Arabic with Urdu and Hindi) and mutual respect for traditions create a strong foundation for deeper economic integration. The Chamber recognises the importance

of cultural diplomacy in fostering trust. Through film festivals, educational exchanges, halal industry forums and joint cultural celebrations, the IACCC ensures that human connection remains central to commerce.

A Roadmap for Strategic Partnership

To unlock the full potential of Indo-Arab cooperation, the IACCIA has outlined a bold and pragmatic roadmap:

■ **Technology Transfer and Co-Innovation Hubs:** Aligning Indian expertise in AI, renewable energy, cybersecurity, and space tech with Arab economic diversification strategies like Saudi Vision 2030 and UAE's Operation 300bn.

■ **Investment Corridors and SEZs:** Establishing India-Arab corridors with Special Economic Zones and tech parks to streamline trade, investment and workforce mobility.

■ **Green Energy Collaboration:** Combining India's leadership in solar, hydrogen, and clean tech with the Middle East's energy transition goals to create solar farms, hydrogen pipelines, and carbon-trading systems.

■ **Digital Trade Agreements:** Advocating for India-GCC digital trade frameworks encompassing e-commerce, data security, localisation, and digital services.

■ **Skill Development and Human Capital Exchange:** Partnering with Indian institutions to train Arab youth in emerging fields like AI, robotics, fintech, and healthcare, building a future-ready workforce.

A Pillar in a Multipolar World

As the global order evolves toward multipolarity, India and the Arab world are emerging as key players in a broader South-South alliance. The Middle East is transforming beyond its identity as an energy supplier, just as India transcends its service economy label. The IACCIA is at the heart of this recalibration-promoting deep, transformative engagement over transactional trade.

In a world fraught with supply chain shocks, technological disruption and climate instability, true resilience lies not in isolation but in strategic interdependence. Through platforms like the IACCIA, India and the Arab world can forge one of the most future-ready and resilient partnerships in the world.

The Way Forward

The future of India-Arab collaboration is more than economic-it is civilisational. With India's unmatched technological capabilities and the Arab world's financial prowess and strategic location, the two regions have the potential to shape a new model of prosperity for the Global South-equitable, inclusive, and innovative.

As Dr APJ Abdul Kalam once said, “When there is harmony between the mind, heart, and hands, great things happen.” The India and Arab Countries Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture, embodies this harmony-blending innovation (mind), culture (heart) and trade (hands) to craft a shared destiny.

With a clear roadmap and deep cultural roots, the time is ripe for India and the Arab world to leap forward-together.

(The author is Acting Secretary General, IACCIA)



Unplugging for a Clearer Mind

BY DR PARUL MALHOTRA

Let's be honest — when was the last time you managed to get through an entire day without checking your phone? In our ultra-connected age, where screens are basically omnipresent, the notion of going off-screen may seem far-fetched or even alienating; FOMO creeps in. The need of constant connectivity and the gratification feeds this fear. Welcome to the world of digital detox, a mindful escape from technology that guarantees not only peace of mind, but a renewed, more focused you.

Why We Need a Break from the Digital World

Technology is not the culprit. It actually brings us together, teaches us, and even entertains us. For many of us, it is a medium of staying connected and updated. But when our daily routines become a whirlwind of constant screen time, the effect on our mental health becomes impossible to ignore. Checking emails all the time? That's causing chronic stress, even if you don't know it. We have fallen victims of overloading from technology, and what comes is a distorted perception, scrambled emotions, work life imbalance and a deep craving for silence.

What Is a Digital Detox?

A digital detox is a time when you consciously get away from digital gadgets — phones, laptops, tablets, TVs - to live in the real world and tap into your inner self. When you clear the clutter, what's left is clearer, more accessible. It is like a sense of accomplishment making you feel lighter and less stressed.

The Magic of Mental Clarity

Mental Clarity is the sense of being mentally clear, focused, and emotionally levelled. It's when your mind is in alignment, your energy is consistent, and making decisions is easy. But in a world filled with notifications, gaining this clarity is more difficult. It is really hard to resist that temptation to check a text message or an email from your colleague and that overwhelming desire to check social media.

WHEN YOU EVEN BRIEFLY LEAVE SCREENS BEHIND, YOU'RE GIVING YOUR BRAIN THE OPPORTUNITY TO RECHARGE. YOU SLEEP MORE SOUNDLY, YOUR ATTENTION IS IMPROVED, AND YOU BEGIN TO PAY ATTENTION



RECLAIMING CONTROL

A digital detox doesn't mean rejecting technology entirely; it's about using it mindfully. In a world where screens dictate our time and attention, unplugging helps us regain mental clarity, emotional balance, and presence. By setting boundaries we turn technology from a master into a tool.



ALL YOU REQUIRE IS THE COURAGE TO STOP, AND LISTEN — NOT TO ALERTS, BUT TO YOURSELF. YOU MIGHT FEEL ANXIOUS BUT THIS IS REWARDING



START YOUR OWN DIGITAL DETOX

Set clear boundaries: Begin by declaring screen-free spaces, such as your bedroom or dining room.

Digital Avoidance: Pick one day of the week to go device-free.

Take a social media break: Even a Facebook-free or Instagram-free weekend might feel like fresh air.

Use tech to restrain tech: You can use screen time controls to track and limit your use.

Swap scrolling with quiet: Sit quietly, write in a journal, take a walk, read a book — and pay attention to what you experience.

Adopting Digital Minimalism: Choosing quality over endless scrolling. It's not about quitting tech, but being aware of your screen time and opting for intentional use.

Precise detox: If one particular app, site, or a game is taking up too much of your time, try to limit your use.

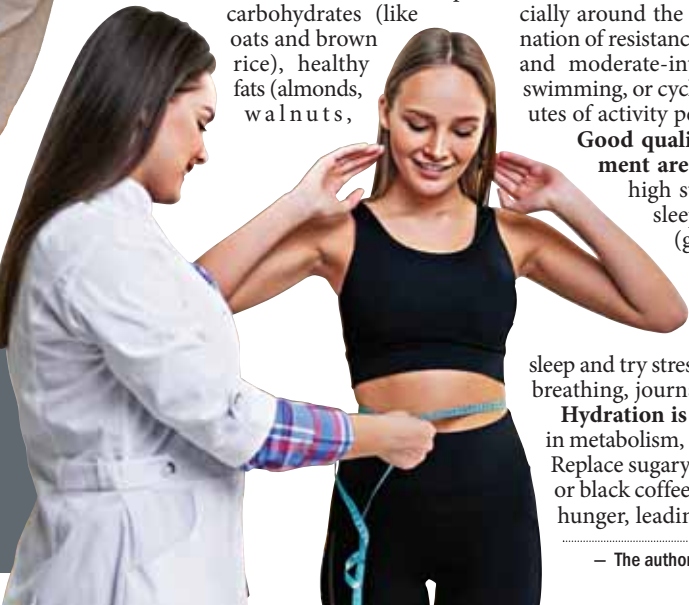
Losing Weight Without Harming Your Body

BY DR ARUSH SABHARWAL



PROFESSIONAL HELP

If you're unsure where to start, consult a doctor or registered dietitian. A personalised plan tailored to your medical history, lifestyle, and goals is always safer and more effective. Fat loss is not something that should be punishing and extreme for your bodies.



cottage cheese, avocado, olive oil), and protein (lean meat, fish, eggs, legumes). Regular meals every 3-4 hours help regulate blood sugar and reduce binge eating.

Fats or carbohydrates are your friends, not your enemy — Contrary to popular belief, fats and carbs are not your enemies. Healthy fats support hormone production, while whole carbs provide lasting energy. Eliminate ultra-processed foods and refined sugars, but keep natural, fibre-rich carbohydrates in your diet such as millets.

Regular physical activity — Overtraining can raise cortisol levels, leading to fat storage — especially around the abdomen. Focus on a combination of resistance training (to preserve muscle) and moderate-intensity cardio (like walking, swimming, or cycling). Aim for at least 150 minutes of activity per week.

Good quality sleep and stress management are crucial — Lack of sleep and high stress both affect weight. Poor sleep disrupts hunger hormones (ghrelin and leptin), making you crave high-calorie foods. High stress raises cortisol, which increases belly fat. Prioritise 7-8 hours of restful sleep and try stress-reducing habits such as deep breathing, journaling, or mindfulness.

Hydration is key — Water plays a key role in metabolism, digestion, and appetite control. Replace sugary drinks with water, herbal teas, or black coffee. Often, we confuse thirst with hunger, leading to unnecessary snacking.

— The author is the Bariatric & Metabolic Surgeon at SCOD

When Food Meets Emotion

When we pause to listen to our body and then eat, food becomes a source of healing

BY PRATIKSHA VATS

In our fast-paced world, food has increasingly become just fuel — we eat on autopilot mode, rarely have time to truly taste or appreciate our meals. But let us reawaken our understanding; eating or cooking food is basically — an emotional experience only.

Our body responds in a positive way, when we cook or eat with gratitude. Our thoughts affect our hormones, digestion, and even nutrient absorption, and it heals physically, emotionally and spiritually.

Transferring Energy into Food

The phrase “cook with love” isn't just poetic - it's a powerful act. The emotions of the cook subtly transfer into the meal itself. Food prepared with a chaotic mind often carries that energy forward. Conversely, meals made with care and affection tend to feel more nourishing.

Every Bite is a Mirror

Each meal is a mirror — reflecting not just our food choices, but our state of mind. It's also important to recognise how we treat food and those who prepare it. Criticism at the dining table, especially toward the cook or the



food, creates tension that disrupts digestion and emotional balance. Such negativity silently impacts our health and relationships. Research shows that this is one of the common reasons a person lies ill, as he/she consumes food with a negative state of mind.

Mind Over Meal

How we feel while eating matters deeply. Stress, anxiety, guilt, or sadness can hinder digestion and trigger hormonal imbalances. Even a perfect diet can fall short if our emotions aren't in harmony while eating. I recall an elderly patient who battled digestive issues despite a healthy diet and treatments. The real cause was emotional — guilt over her son's struggles. Once she embraced self-forgiveness, her health began to improve.

Emotional Eating vs. Conscious Eating

Like many, I've turned to food during emotional highs and lows — eating not out of hunger, but as a way to celebrate. Emotional eating may offer short-term comfort, but it often leaves behind guilt. At times, I ate simply because others were eating or because my favourite food was available and not the need.

— The author is the medical writer creating informative content on healthcare and wellness

Mandaviya unveils Khelo India calendar with new sports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Sunday announced the broadening of the scope of the Khelo India initiative with the introduction of multiple Games to cover school sports, martial arts, beach and water sports from this year onwards. While launching Khelo India Annual Calendar, Mandaviya said that the government will soon introduce a series of Khelo India Games and other competitions, including Khelo India North-East Games, among others. He said the aim was to strengthen India's sporting ecosystem, provide strategic year-round schedule to boost grass-

roots competitions, talent identification. "The Khelo India Annual Calendar is not just a schedule but it is a strategic blueprint strengthening India's domestic competition structure for transforming India into a global sporting powerhouse," Mandaviya said. "Over the past decade, Indian sports have undergone a remarkable transformation.... We have created a dynamic and inclusive sporting ecosystem with regular national-level competitions under the Khelo India initiative. "Taking this vision forward, we will soon introduce Khelo India Beach Games (KIBG), Khelo India School Games (KISG), Khelo India Water Sports, Khelo India North-East Games, among others." Mandaviya said these events will be



pivotal in identifying, nurturing, and preparing India's young talent. The Khelo India platform already includes four structured national-level Games, namely the Khelo India Youth Games, Khelo India University Games, Khelo India Para Games, and Khelo India Winter Games. A special focus is being given to the Khelo India School Games (KISG), which will follow a tiered structure, starting from the district level, moving to the state level, and culminating in national-level competitions. Furthermore, the inclusion of events like the Khelo India Martial Art Games, Khelo India Tribal Games, and Khelo India Swadeshi Games aims to bring indigenous and traditional martial arts

into the mainstream, the sports ministry said. The first edition of the Khelo India Beach Games (KIBG) is set to take place in Diu from May 19-25, which will draw national attention to coastal and beach sports, while also highlighting the region's tourism potential. The calendar for the remainder of the year includes events such as the Khelo India School Games (August to December), Khelo India University Games (March-April), Water Sports and North-East Games (May-June), Tribal Games (September in Chhattisgarh), and the Indigenous and Martial Art Games (July-August in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh).

Alev Kelter sent off for stamping opponent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sydney

United States Olympic rugby star Alev Kelter will face a judicial hearing and potentially lengthy suspension after being sent off in a women's rugby test against Australia on Saturday for stamping on the head of an opponent. Kelter received a straight red card in the 79th minute of the Pacific Four Series test against Australia after referee Aimee Barrett-Theron reviewed footage that showed Kelter stamping forcefully on the head of Australian center Georgie Friedrichs.

In comments captured by television microphones, Barrett-Theron said "12 blue (Kelter) is going to receive a permanent red card because this is tuggery, it is deliberate and it is very dangerous foul play. "She's clearly stamped on the head of the Australian player. That's reckless, that's dangerous and she's going off."

Friedrichs was not seriously injured in the incident. The United States team coach Sione Fukofuka later apologized to the Australian players.

Foul play in rugby that involves contact with the head is treated with extreme seriousness. Rugby, like many contact sports, has changed its rules in an effort to limit the danger of concussion and other head injuries.

Kelter is a three-time US Olympic representative in rugby sevens and won a bronze medal in Paris last year. She previously played ice hockey and soccer for the University of Wisconsin. In rugby, judicial hearings over foul play usually take place withing 48 hours of a match.



Kevin De Bruyne may skip Club World Cup over injury fears

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Kevin De Bruyne has cast doubt over whether he will play at the Club World Cup because he fears getting injured before he leaves Manchester City.

The Belgian playmaker is out of contract at the end of the season and will become a free agent. But there is the potential he could sign a short-term extension that would enable to him to play in the newly expanded Club World Cup in June and July. "I think in a way I have to take care of myself because if I get injured in the Club World Cup, what am I going to do?" De Bruyne said. "Nobody's going to take care of me at that point. So there's a big chance probably I won't play it, but I don't know, maybe yes."

De Bruyne will leave City after 10 years and 14 major trophies after the Premier League club decided not to offer him a new deal. At the age of 33, he is now considering his options, but says there has been uncertainty over whether City wants him to be part of its squad for the Club World Cup in United States.

With two games left to go this season, he said he had to consider what is best for his own career as he prepares for his next move. "I have



to take care of my family. I've got three kids, my wife, it's not an easy process at this time," he said.

The timing of the Club World Cup, which has been expanded from seven teams to 32, has led to FIFA introducing a short-term transfer window to enable players whose contracts expire on June 30 to move to clubs participating in the tournament. It also allows players like De Bruyne to sign short-term deals purely to take part before moving on as free agents.

But that brings with it the risk of him suffering a serious injury that would jeopardise a future transfer.

If he doesn't play at the Club World Cup, De Bruyne will leave City emptyhanded after Saturday's FA Cup final defeat to Crystal Palace. City also surrendered the Premier League title this season after winning an unprecedented four in a row. "This year has just not gone the way we wanted it to. You have to accept it. You have to move on and work hard and go again," De Bruyne said. "It's alright. This doesn't change anything that's happened in the past 10 years." De Bruyne said he has yet to decide on his next move would and whether he would look to join another Premier League team.

PBKS make 219/5 against RR in IPL, Wadhera, Singh hit 50

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jaipur

Nehal Wadhwa and Shashank Singh struck fine half-centuries to rescue Punjab Kings and help them to a competitive 219 for 5 against Rajasthan Royals in an Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

PBKS, currently on 15 points and in a good position to make the play-offs, were reduced to 34/3 in only the



fourth over with RR's right-arm pacer Tushar Deshpande (2/37) getting rid of openers Priyansh Arya (9) and Prabhsimran Singh (21).

But Wadhwa blazed to a 37-ball 70, studded with five boundaries and as many sixes, and shared a 67-run fourth-wicket partnership with skipper Shreyas Iyer (30) to bail PBKS out.

Wadhwa, who struck his third half-century of the season, was also

involved in a 58-run fifth-wicket stand with Shashank Singh (59 not out, 30 balls)..

Earlier, a fit-again Sanju Samson was back to lead Rajasthan Royals and replaced Nitish Rana in the XI. Kwen Maphaka was drafted in place of Jofra Archer.

Brief scores: Punjab Kings 219 for 5 in 20 overs (Nehal Wadhwa 70, Shreyas Iyer 30, Shashank Singh 59 not out; Tushar Deshpande 2/37).

Italy eyes Grand Slam status for Italian Open tournament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

Top-ranked Jannik Sinner is dominating men's tennis and Italy swept both the Davis Cup and Billie Jean King Cup team titles last year. Jasmine Paolini just became the first home player to win the Italian Open in 40 years and is about to move up to Number 4 in the women's rankings. Players like Lorenzo Musetti, Federico Cina and Tyra Caterina Grant provide the potential for Italy to dominate tennis for years to come. Still, Italian Tennis and Padel Federation president Angelo Binaghi wants more. Much more.

Binaghi has the grandiose aim to make the Italian Open a fifth Grand Slam tournament alongside the Australian Open, French Open, Wimbledon and US Open - upending a century of tennis history. "In what other part of society is there a monopoly that lasts for more than 100 years?" Binaghi said Sunday, the final day of the Italian Open. "Why are there always four and always the same four? ... It's absolutely unfair and doesn't help tennis grow." The Italian Open is a Masters Series event that is one rung below the Slams in the hierarchy of tennis tournaments. But the event at the Foro Italico now runs for two weeks like the majors and is



booming thanks to the successes of Sinner, Paolini and many other Italian players.

Italy has also hosted the ATP Finals in Turin since 2021 and recently extended its hosting contract for the year-ending tournament featuring the top eight men's players through 2030.

Also, the Davis Cup Final 8 will begin a three-year run in Italy this November, starting in Bologna. "We're now the world

champion both on the court and at the organisational level," Binaghi said. Earlier this year, Binaghi expressed interest in acquiring the license for the Madrid Open, which immediately precedes Rome in the tennis calendar. The idea was that eliminating Madrid and making Rome bigger could constitute a fifth Slam. "We need to be attentive on the international market and try to take advantage of every

opportunity that arises, from the smallest ATP 250 all the way up to the biggest tournaments," Binaghi said.

A request for comment sent to the Grand Slam board, which represents the four majors, was not immediately answered. Retractable Roof

After years of delays, organizers announced new plans to build a retractable roof over the Italian Open's main stadium, Campo Centrale.

At a cost of 60 million euros (\$67 million), the roof is slated to be ready for the 2028 tournament and will also result in 2,000 extra seats being added - increasing the capacity to 12,500.

Larger grounds

For this year's tournament, the event grounds at the Foro Italico were increased from 12 to 20 hectares (30 to 50 acres) and another statue-lined competition arena was added. The Stadio dei Marmi hosted three courts: a 3,000-seat arena and two courts each featuring seating for 800.

The 3,000-seat arena became the tournament's third-largest show court after Campo Centrale and the Grand Stand Arena, making the Pietrangeli court — which also features an array of statues — the fourth largest.

PHF wants visa guarantee for Asia Cup: official

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Karachi

Pakistan Hockey Federation (PHF) wants the continental body to guarantee visas for its contingent to participate in the Asia Cup to be held in India from August 27 to September 7, according to an official here.

Pakistan's participation in the tournament, to be held in Rajgir (Bihar), is in serious doubt because of the tensions between the two countries after the Pahalgam terror attack, and Hockey India (HI) has said it is awaiting a government advisory on the matter.

"It is too early to say anything but we will follow the government's directive on this issue, which has been the case in the past. We can't predict anything right now especially after the recent barbaric Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor that India conducted following that," HI secretary general Bholanath Singh had said.

A senior PHF official said that the Asia Cup was vital for Pakistan as it is a qualifying tournament for next year's men's World Cup to be held in the Netherlands

and Belgium. "We don't want to lose the opportunity of going to the World Cup via the Asia Cup," the official said.

"So we believe, one solution could be moving the event from India or Asian Hockey Federation (AHF) guaranteeing visas for our team," he added.

The PHF official said there would also be the World Cup qualifying events in early 2026 but the Asia Cup represented a good chance to qualify.

Pakistan didn't qualify for the last World Cup held in 2023 in India.

Hosts India, Pakistan, Japan, Korea, China, Malaysia, Oman and Chinese Taipei are scheduled to participate in the 12th edition of the continental showpiece.

In case Pakistan doesn't get the nod to travel to India, the decision to make the tournament a seven-team affair or bring in a new team to fill the vacant slot, will be entirely in the hands of the Asian Hockey Federation.

"If the government advisory does not give an all clear, then Pakistan won't travel to India. It all depends on the government position at that time," a HI source had said.

Alex Noren was out of golf for seven months and now in final group at major

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Charlotte

Alex Noren finally made his way back to tournament golf after seven months away because of a hamstring tear. One week later, the Swede is in the final group at the PGA Championship alongside the world's number one player.

Noren last played the Dunhill Links Championship on Oct. 6. Instead of closing down the practice range every night, he spent his time at home coaching his daughter's softball team.

"It was a lot easier to have this break when I'm 42 than when I was younger," Noren said. "As soon as I kind of could play, I thought I was in sort of the same form I was in before I got injured. But I'm still extremely - not surprised - but I'm fortunate to be in this position this early, yeah."

He got there with a burst at the finish, four birdies over his last five holes, for a 66 that

gave him the lead until Scottie Scheffler played a closing stretch equally impressive. Noren, a 10-time winner on the European Tour after a college career at Oklahoma State, has only two top 10s in the majors and has never seriously contended.

The injury involved a torn tendon in his hamstring on the sit bone. It was a tough injury because it requires so much time to heal. He couldn't swing a club. He couldn't run or jump, but he otherwise lived a normal life spending time with his family. That was nice. "It's good to take a break sometimes," said Noren, who has a reputation as among the hardest workers in golf. "I missed it, but I also liked what I had at the time, which helps me maybe realize a little bit that I don't think it's the end of the world if you play bad."

Fitzpatrick falters

Former US Open champion Matt



Fitzpatrick is in a drought that has seen him go 20 straight tournaments without a top 10 dating to the Memorial last year, so it was worth noting that he worked his way into a tie for the lead at the PGA Championship.

He even had a 12-foot birdie putt for the lead on No. 12 and winced when it narrowly missed. And then two holes set him back. He three-putted on the par-3 13th from down the slope 45 feet away. On the reachable 14, he drove right in thick grass on the

hill leaving a delicate chip. He left that in the rough. The next one raced across the green into more rough. Fitzpatrick had to get up-and-down with a 5-foot putt to make bogey on the easiest hole at Quail Hollow on Saturday. He wound up six shots behind and looking at the big picture. "I made big steps in where I've been over the last four or five months, so happy I'm up front," he said.

"Always a day you like to go forward but not ideal."

Open qualifying

The final round of the PGA Championship will have big ramifications for the final two majors of the year. The top 60 in the world ranking published Monday will be exempt from US Open qualifying. The top 50 are exempt from the British Open.

Jacob Bridgeman was at No. 60 coming into Quail Hollow and missed the cut,

which could cost him. The next six players behind him not only made the cut, players like Si Woo Kim, Matthieu and Joe Highsmith (number 69) go into the final round within touch of the lead.

Pavon is already in the US Open but could still bump out Bridgeman. The US Open also takes the top 60 in the world in two weeks after the Memorial.

The British Open has one cutoff for the top 50. Davis Thompson is at number 50 and missed the cut, and could get passed. He can only wait and hope.

Boost in prize money

The PGA Championship bumped its purse by \$ 500,000 to \$ 19 million, third-high among the three U.S. Majors.

The Masters last month raised its purse by \$ 1 million to \$ 21 million. The US Open will announce its purse next month at Oakmont. It was \$21.5 million in 2024. The

British Open was \$17 million last year and its prize fund has yet to be announced. The winner of the PGA Championship gets \$3.42 million. The last time it was at Quail Hollow in 2017, the purse was \$10.5 million and Justin Thomas won \$1.89 million. This year, the runner-up will get just over \$2 million.

Hometown flavour

Duke alum Alex Smalley gave his home state fans something to cheer the opening two rounds. Ben Griffin from Chapel Hill was in the mix. And on Saturday it was JT Poston's turn. He played bogey-free over the last 15 holes and finished with a 30-foot birdie on the 18th hole for a 68, leaving him four shots behind and in the penultimate group. Poston already has experience winning before a home state crowd, having won the Wyndham Championship for his first PGA Tour title.