

# Share your socials: US to visa seekers

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

Tightening its processes for visa seekers including Indian students and professionals, the US Embassy here on Thursday asked applicants to disclose all social media usernames and handles from the past five years for background checks. The Embassy cautioned violating this could lead to rejection of visas and ineligibility for future visas. “Visa applicants are required to list all social media usernames or handles of every platform they have used from

the last 5 years on the DS-160 visa application form. Applicants certify that the information in their visa application is true and correct before they sign and submit,” the Embassy said in a statement on social media. “Omitting social media information could lead to visa denial and ineligibility for future visas,” it added. Outlining each visa adjudication as a “national security decision”, the US has asked applicants to reveal their social media usernames or handles of each platform they have used in the last five years.

**The US requires visa applicants to provide social media identifiers on application forms. We use all available information for visa screening and vetting — US EMBASSY IN NEW DELHI**

On June 23, the US Embassy asked applicants of F, M, or J non-immigrant visas to switch the privacy settings of their social media accounts to “public” to facilitate vetting, which it said was necessary to establish their identity and admissibility to the US under law.

The embassy had also said since 2019, the US has required visa applicants to provide “social media identifiers” on immigrant and non-immigrant visa application forms. The F visa is primarily for academic students enrolled in universities, colleges, or other academic institutions, while the M visa is designated for vocational or non-academic students attending technical or trade schools. Meanwhile, the J visa is for exchange visitors participating in approved cultural and educational exchange programs. In Thursday’s communication,

the embassy also attached two related digital posters. “Every US Visa adjudication is a national security decision,” read the caption on the top of a poster followed by a note. The note read, “The United States requires visa applicants to provide social media identifiers on visa application forms. We use all available information in our visa screening and vetting.” It comes against the backdrop of an immigration crackdown by the Trump administration in California’s Los Angeles recently.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during the SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in China

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## India skips SCO joint statement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi/Qingdao(China)

Expressing strong displeasure, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday refused to sign a joint communique of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) following the omission of the Pahalgam terror attack and not explicitly addressing India’s concerns over Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorism.

The draft communique neither figured the Pahalgam terror attack nor reflected India’s position on cross-border terrorism, he said.

Rajnath Singh also took a swipe at Pakistan for its relentless support to cross-border terrorism and underlined the need to bring “perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of terrorism to justice”. The SCO operates under the framework of consensus, and Rajnath Singh’s refusal to endorse the document resulted in the SCO defence ministers’ conclave in Chinese port city Qingdao ending without a joint commu-

nique, sources said. Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun were among those who attended the conclave.

Sources said China, which holds the SCO chair, and its “all-weather friend” Pakistan tried to divert the attention from terrorism in the SCO document, skipping any mention of the Pahalgam attack. However, the document mentioned Balochistan, a veiled attempt to accuse India for unrest in Pakistan.

Over the years, Pakistan has claimed that India supported the Baloch armed groups in the province. However, India has maintained that it was an internal issue of Pakistan.

The SCO Summit saw the Indian and Pakistani defence ministers come face-to-face for the first time since the Pahalgam attack and Operation Sindoor. The chill was evident as no pleasantries were exchanged with Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif at the meeting, sources said.

The summit brought together defence leaders from the

organisation’s ten member States, including China, Russia, Pakistan, and India.

Rajnath Singh, meanwhile, in his address criticised Pakistan for its continuing support to cross-border terrorism and underlined the need to bring “perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of terrorism to justice”. “Some countries use cross-border terrorism as an instrument of policy and provide shelter to terrorists. There should be no place for such double standards. The SCO should not hesitate to criticise such nations,” he said.

The defence minister, who arrived in Qingdao on Wednesday, laid down the broad contours of India’s “transitional shift” in its policy against terrorism and urged the SCO member nations to unite in combating and shun “double standards”.

Singh said “Peace and prosperity cannot co-exist with terrorism and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the hands of non-State actors and terror groups.”

## The ByStander



## CBI detects lakhs of bank accounts used by cyber criminals

New Delhi: The CBI has detected 8.50 lakh mule bank accounts in over 700 branches nationwide which are being used by cyber criminals to launder proceeds from scams involving digital theft, impersonation, fraudulent investments and UPI-based frauds, an enquiry by the agency has found. The central agency’s crackdown on these mule accounts, opened using fake IDs for the limited use of siphoning victims’ money, came through a coordinated search operation recently at 42 locations in Rajasthan, Delhi, Haryana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh during which nine suspects were taken into custody, officials said Thursday.

Those taken into custody include alleged middlemen, agents, aggregators, account holders and banking correspondents, all believed to be instrumental in orchestrating and facilitating the opening of these fictitious accounts, they said. A mule account opened in the name of an individual who may or may not be aware that the account is used to launder illicit money. The CBI has found that these mule accounts — established using falsified identification documents — were primarily used as conduits for siphoning funds from unsuspecting victims. Alarmingly, the CBI’s preliminary findings suggest that some bank officials, e-Mitra agents, and third-party facilitators may have actively colluded with fraudsters by facilitating account creation and enabling fund withdrawals. “We have observed that mule accounts are being used only once in most cases. Once the money comes into the account, it is distributed to other accounts, and the mother account is closed, making it difficult to catch the criminal,” said CBI officers.

The searches came after a new CBI FIR, which was necessitated after the agency’s findings during an enquiry. The CBI had launched an inquiry to unravel the architecture of this laundering ecosystem and assess the complicity of financial personnel and the deficiencies in institutional safeguards. “Enquiry revealed that more than 700 branches of various banks across India have opened around 8.5 lakh mule accounts. These accounts were opened either without proper KYC norms, due diligence, or initial risk assessment. The branch managers of the banks have also failed to conduct enhanced due diligence,” CBI’s spokesperson said.

## One terrorist killed by army in Valley

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Shortly after Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday appealed to the devotees to turn up in large numbers at Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra, which is scheduled to begin from July 3, a joint team of security forces gunned down a terrorist in the Basantgarh area of Udhampur district.

An elite Para Commando of the Indian Army was earlier ‘killed in action’ during a similar cordon and search operation in the forest area of Dudu Basantgarh on April 24 this year. The Indian Army’s White Knight Corps, in collaboration with the Jammu and Kashmir Police, launched Operation Bihali after receiving credible intelligence about the presence of terrorists in the Bihali area of Basantgarh. “Contact was established with the terrorists early this morning, and one terror-



A security personnel in a search operation after an encounter broke out between security forces and terrorists in a remote forested area in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur district on Thursday

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ist has been neutralised so far,” an Army spokesperson confirmed.

At the time of filing the report, at least two more terrorists belonging to the same group were trapped by the forces.

Inspector General of Police, Jammu Zone, Bhim Sen Tuti, said, “Security forces, including elite Para Commandos and

CRPF units, have been deployed to cordon off the area, with drones and sniffer dogs assisting in the search. Reinforcements have been rushed to the site to tighten the cordon and prevent the terrorists’ escape.

Addressing a press conference at Raj Bhawan in Srinagar, LG Manoj Sinha acknowledged the impact of the April 22 Pahalgam

attack on pilgrim registrations. “Before April 22, 2,36,801 people had registered. After the incident, there was a slight drop of about 10.19 per cent compared to last year’s 5.12 lakh pilgrims. However, as of yesterday, over 85,000 pilgrims have confirmed their Yatra, and I am hopeful the numbers will continue to rise,” he said.

## India moves to restrict Indus waters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Government is looking to restart the long-stalled Tulbul Navigation Project, as part of a broader strategy to optimise the country’s share of water from the western rivers under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT). A detailed project report (DPR) for the Tulbul project is being prepared and is expected to take about a year to complete.

The move comes amidst Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s repeated resolves to use Indus waters for India. The Government is working out a plan to utilise Indus river water for domestic purposes in four States — Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Delhi. It is looking to restart the project in the backdrop of the IWT being put “under abeyance” following the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

In a related development, addressing a press conference, Union Jal Shakti Minister CR Patil on Thursday asserted that political stability in Bangladesh is crucial for any progress on the long-pending Teesta water-sharing agreement. Patil’s comments come amid concerns over the stalled pact, which has



The project is a lock-cum-control structure at the outlet of Wullar lake, largest freshwater lake in India

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been a contentious issue between the two neighbours for more than a decade.

“The political situation in Bangladesh is not stable at the moment. So, the country is not in a position to take any decision,” Patil said in response to a question. “When the situation becomes stable there, only then will we be able to move forward,” he added. The Teesta River, which flows through Sikkim and West Bengal before entering Bangladesh, is crucial for irrigation and agriculture in northern Bangladesh. Bangladesh has repeatedly sought a fair share of Teesta waters, especially during the

dry season, to meet the needs of its farmers. India, however, has cited domestic water requirements and the need for consensus with States like West Bengal before moving ahead.

On the other hand, under the IWT, India has limited rights over the western rivers — the Indus, Chenab and Jhelum — which primarily flow into Pakistan. India continues to grapple with limited water-storage capacity, particularly during the monsoon season — a challenge that affects its ability to fully utilise its share of water from the western rivers allocated under the IWT.

## Blackbox of AI 171 being analysed: Centre

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

In a major breakthrough, the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) has recovered, downloaded and begun analysing the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and the Flight Data Recorder (FDR), which together are colloquially known as the Black Box. The black box of Air India 171 was brought from Ahmedabad to Delhi on June 24. This means the probe agencies are now a step closer to understanding why AI 171, Air India’s Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner, crashed seconds after take-off.

Providing a detailed update a fortnight after the fatal accident, the Ministry of Civil Aviation shared the status report, amid speculations that the black boxes were damaged in the crash and questions over the recovery of usable data. There were reports that the Government may send black boxes to US to retrieve data.

“Following the unfortunate accident involving Air India Flight AI-171, the AAIB promptly initiated an investigation and constituted a multidisciplinary team on 13 June



File Photo

2025, in line with prescribed norms. The team, constituted as per international protocol, is led by DG AAIB, and includes an aviation medicine specialist, an ATC officer and representatives from National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), a US-Government investigative agency, as required for such investigations,” the ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

The ministry also said on June 24 evening, the team led by AAIB Director General GVG Yugandhar with technical members from AAIB and NTSB began the data extraction process. “The front black box arrived AAIB Lab, Delhi with the DG, AAIB at 1400 hrs on 24 June, 2025. The rear black box was brought by a sec-

ond AAIB team and reached AAIB Lab, Delhi at 1715 hrs on 24 June, 2025,” the statement added. The AAIB Lab was inaugurated in the national capital in April this year.

“The Crash Protection Module (CPM) from the front black box was safely retrieved, and on 25 June, 2025, the memory module was successfully accessed and its data downloaded at the AAIB Lab. The analysis of CVR (Cockpit Voice Recorder) and FDR (Flight Data Recorder) data is underway. These efforts aim to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the accident and identify contributing factors to enhance aviation safety and prevent future occurrences,” the statement added. CVR data is expected to

shed light on cockpit conversations, crew responses, and ambient sounds, while the FDR contains parameters like altitude, airspeed, flight control inputs and engine performance.

Air India’s Boeing 787-8 aircraft enroute to London Gatwick crashed into a medical hostel complex soon after take-off from Ahmedabad on June 12, killing over 270 people, including 241 people who were onboard the plane. India, as a signatory to the ICAO Chicago Convention (1944), investigates aircraft accidents in accordance with ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) Annex 13 and the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017, the ministry said.

Meanwhile, a high-level multi-disciplinary committee, headed by the Union Home Secretary, is examining the causes that led to the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad, and also suggest comprehensive guidelines to prevent such incidents in the future.

The ministry also emphasised that all actions have been taken in full compliance with domestic laws and international obligations in a time-bound manner.

## A swan in space to symbolise aspirations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India’s Shubhanshu Shukla and three other astronauts reached the International Space Station (ISS) on Thursday as the Dragon spacecraft docked to the orbital laboratory after a 28-hour journey around the earth.

The new spacecraft — fifth in the Dragon series, named Grace — achieved a soft capture with the space station at 4:01 pm IST over the North Atlantic ocean. This is the first time an Indian astronaut has travelled to the International Space Station.

“At 6:31 am EDT (4:01 IST) on Thursday, the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft docked to the International Space Station for the fourth private astronaut mission to the orbiting laboratory, Axiom Mission 4,” the National Aeronautics and



Shubhanshu Shukla (centre) aboard the International Space Station on Thursday

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Space Administration (NASA) announced in a statement.

A live video link from the NASA showed the spacecraft approaching the space station. The docking sequence was completed at 4:15 pm

IST. After the soft capture of the spacecraft, the hard-mating was completed when the two orbiting bodies were connected with 12 sets of hooks with each other and communication and power links were

established.

The hatch-opening procedures take about two hours before the astronauts walk on board the space station.

## Poll body to delist 345 parties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a move to clean up electoral process, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has started proceedings for the delisting of 345 non-existent political parties which have failed to fulfil the essential condition of contesting even a single election for the last six years since 2019 and the offices of these parties could not be physically located anywhere.

According to ECI, these 345 parties also known as or registered unrecognised political parties (RUPPs) are from different States and UTs across the country and they were found to be non-existent during physical verification. It has come to the notice of the commission that of the over 2,800 RUPPs, currently registered with ECI, many have

**The ECI’s clean-up drive was guided by the assessment that a majority of the RUPPs had little electoral activity to show**

failed to fulfil the essential conditions which are required to continue as an RUPP.

“It has come to the notice of the commission that of the over 2,800 RUPPs, currently registered with ECI, many RUPPs have failed to fulfil the essential conditions which are required to continue as an RUPP. Thus, a nationwide exercise was conducted by the EC to identify such RUPPs and 345 such RUPPs have already been identified till now,” the poll body said in a statement.

The poll body further stated that in order to ensure that

no party is unduly de-listed, the CEOs of the respective States/UTs have been directed to issue show-cause notices to such RUPPs following which, these parties will be given an opportunity through a hearing by the concerned CEOs.

“The final decision regarding the de-listing of any RUPP shall be taken by the Election Commission of India. Political parties (National/State/RUPPs) in the country are registered with the ECI under the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act 1951. Under this provision, any association once registered as a political party, gets certain privileges and advantages such as tax exemptions amongst others,” it said.

The ECI’s clean-up drive was guided by the assessment that a majority of the RUPPs had little electoral activity to show.



## Continuity Pg. No. 05



# ‘No One Will Be Spared...Big Fish Will be in Net in Coming Days: CM Mann

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Thursday declared that the war on drugs had entered a decisive phase, with the State Government now going after the masterminds of Punjab's drug trade, not just the foot soldiers. Without naming Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia, who was arrested a day earlier by the Vigilance Bureau in a disproportionate assets case linked to laundering over Rs 540 crore alleged drug money, Mann asserted that "more big fish" will be in the net soon in coming days and no one — regardless of power or position — will be spared.

"All this time, they questioned us for not catching the big fish. Now that we have, they're crying political vendetta," said Mann, visibly unflinching in tone. "Those opposing our action are themselves involved. Those backing them are equally guilty and will be brought to book, even if they're party presidents," he said while addressing the media at Chandigarh.

Though Majithia's name was never explicitly mentioned during the entire conference, the message was unmistakable. "The action is based on irrefutable, substantive evidence — mobiles, laptops, documents, hawala records, and a clear money trail. We have strong cases against 90 percent of the accused, many of whom haven't



even been granted bail," Mann said, adding that this time, "assi pakke pairi han" (loosely translated as we have indisputable evidence against Majithia).

He warned that more arrests were imminent, hinting at the impending demolition of properties built using drug money. "You will soon see mansions made from drug proceeds being bulldozed," he said, emphasizing that this was not a symbolic campaign but a full-blown offensive to dismantle the drug empire in Punjab. "This isn't just a government drive anymore — it's a people's movement. Panchayats are passing resolutions declaring zero tolerance for drug dealers. The houses of smugglers are being razed. This is all being done legally, with solid groundwork," he said.

The Chief Minister also expressed concern for his own safety, indicating that the crackdown had rattled powerful networks. "They may want to harm me. But I am not afraid. I've lived twice the age of Bhagat Singh. If I lose my life in the process of

cleaning this filth, so be it. That would be a life well spent," he said.

Responding to whether the real war on drugs began with Majithia's arrest, Mann remarked, "The war began much earlier. Initially, we caught the sipahi (peddlers) — now the jarnails (generals) are being hunted down. Supply lines are broken, the cartel is shaken."

He said that drug lords with political and bureaucratic patronage operated with impunity until now. "They ruined generations by pushing youth into addiction while building palatial houses on the ruins of broken families. We are here to dismantle this structure — brick by brick," he said.

Revealing that previous raids had failed due to moles within the police force, Mann said that several officers were transferred after it was found they were tipping off traffickers. "We revamped the rehab centres. We knew that just breaking the supply line wasn't enough — we needed to help those already

addicted. That's why this campaign was carefully planned and is now showing results," he added.

Brushing aside the allegations of political vendetta, Mann cited SAD's humiliating defeat in the Ludhiana West bypoll, where it polled just 8,000 votes. "This is not vendetta. Had earlier governments acted properly, these people would already be behind bars. But they were watching each other's backs," he said.

Responding to reports that Majithia's arrest was linked to fresh financial trails, Mann confirmed that hawala transactions worth crores had surfaced recently. "We received multiple complaints, but waited until we had clinching evidence. We will go after every person responsible — whether they are politicians, officers or well-connected individuals."

Mann reaffirmed his commitment to the people of Punjab, reiterating that those responsible for pushing drugs into society will be exposed and punished. "People sold their land to send children abroad just to save them from drugs. We will reverse this. We'll build a Rangla Punjab where youth dream big, not fall prey to addiction," he asserted.

Concluding, Mann called the campaign 'Yudh Nasheyen Virudh' — a war against narcotics — saying that its success lies in public participation. "People call us now saying the cartel is broken. That's the change. This mission has gained momentum. This is AAP versus all — and the people are with us," he declared.

# Haryana Cabinet approves renaming of ACB to State Vigilance & Anti-Corruption Bureau

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Haryana Cabinet, presided over by Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, on Thursday, gave approval for the renaming of Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to State Vigilance & Anti-Corruption Bureau, Haryana.

"The decision was taken after a comprehensive review of the Bureau's evolving role and responsibilities. The revised name—State Vigilance & Anti-Corruption Bureau, Haryana—better captures the dual focus of the Bureau: combating corruption and ensuring vigilance within the administrative framework," a statement said. The Bureau's responsibility goes beyond anti-corruption efforts alone and also encompasses a broader vigilance framework. The combined nomenclature of "Vigilance & Anti-Corruption" captures the full scope of its operations, including investigations into malpractices, corruption, and

transparency issues across various government departments, the statement added.

The proposed nomenclature also better reflects the synergy between the various operational arms of the Bureau, allowing for clearer delineation of roles in combating corruption, misconduct, and administrative inefficiency.

**ADOPTS UNIFIED PENSION SCHEME UNDER NPS, BENEFITS OVER 2 LAKH EMPLOYEES**  
To give assured minimum pension and family pension to government employees, the Cabinet has adopted the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) notified by the Government of India under the National Pension System (NPS). Effective from August 1, 2025, this move will benefit over 2 lakh State government employees appointed on or after January 1, 2006. The UPS will provide 50% of the average basic pay drawn by a State government employee during the 12 months prior to retirement, provided the

employee completes 25 years of service. A minimum guaranteed payout of Rs. 10,000 per month will be assured if the employee retires after completing 10 or more years of qualifying service. In the event of the pensioner's death, the family will receive 60% of the last-drawn pension amount.

**LAUNCHES SCHOLARSHIP SCHEME FOR CHILDREN OF MARTYR SOLDIERS AND PARAMILITARY PERSONNEL**

In a tribute to the sacrifice made by the nation's bravehearts, the Cabinet has decided to roll out a dedicated scholarship scheme for the children of martyred soldiers and paramilitary personnel. The present government in its Sankalp Patra, had promised to provide a scholarship to the children of martyrs of the armed forces. Now, the government has decided to grant scholarships to children of martyrs of the armed forces as well as paramilitary personnel. As per the newly framed policy, students from

Classes 6 to 12 will receive an annual scholarship of Rs 60,000. For those pursuing graduation, the scholarship amount will be Rs 72,000 per year, while post-graduate students will receive Rs 96,000 annually.

Revises royalty rates for mineral materialsThe Cabinet has revised the royalty rates for mineral materials like stone and sand. This step is expected to generate additional revenue for the state. The royalty for stone has been increased from Rs. 45 to Rs. 100 per tonne, while the royalty for sand has been raised from Rs. 40 to Rs. 80 per tonne. The cabinet has also approved the implementation of an interstate mineral transportation fee. A charge of Rs. 100 per tonne will be levied for interstate transportation of minerals. The inter-state transit fee has been fixed at Rs 100 if the destination mentioned in the e-transit is within Haryana, and Rs 20 if the destination in e-transit is anyplace outside Haryana.

## Joining for 7500 Group-D posts soon: Haryana CM

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Thursday said that joining for approximately 7,500 Group-D posts will be provided soon. He was addressing a press conference in Chandigarh after presiding over a meeting of the state Cabinet.



When asked about the Common Eligibility Test (CET), he said that this time, 13.48 lakh youth have registered for the CET, compared to about 11 lakh registrations last year. He said that there were some issues due to heavy load on the SARAL portal; however, over 3 lakh youth from the BC-A and BC-B categories, as well as around 3 lakh Scheduled Caste youth, successfully downloaded their caste certificates and registered for the exam. He further said that youth who were unable to download their caste certificates will still be allowed to appear in the exam, and the remaining formalities will be completed concurrently. In response to a question, Saini said that the departments have been instructed to rationalize posts based on current requirements and send the requisition letters to the Haryana Staff Selection Commission (HSSC). He said that some existing posts are no longer necessary, while new posts are being created to meet present-day needs. He emphasized that this is a continuous and ongoing process.

When asked about the ongoing strike by students of Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University, Hisar, the Chief Minister said, "They are all our children, and this is the time for them to focus on their studies. They should not be misled by political parties." He urged political parties to refrain from instigating students, emphasizing that while it is commendable for youth to take an interest in politics, their current priority should be education.

## Punjab Mid-day meal staff get 16L insurance cover, MoU signed



PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The Punjab School Education department has partnered with Canara Bank to introduce a comprehensive insurance scheme to provide accidental insurance cover of Rs. 16 lakh and other benefits for the security of as many as 44,301 Mid-Day Meal Cook-cum-Helpers working in state government schools across the state, Harjot Singh Bains, Minister of School Education, Punjab said on Thursday.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the Directorate of Elementary Education (Mid-Day Meal) and Canara Bank Chandigarh, in the presence of the School Education Minister and School Education Secretary Anindita Mitra. This collaboration aims to provide vital financial

protection and security to Cook-cum-Helpers.

Highlighting the key features of the insurance scheme, Bains said it offers comprehensive benefits, including Term Insurance with Rs. 1 lakh coverage for death with natural causes, Rs. 16 lakhs for death due to accident, Air Accident Cover with Rs. 18 lakhs coverage. Furthermore, the scheme provides hassle-free banking with no minimum balance requirement, an Instant Overdraft Facility of up to Rs. 10,000 or 50% of the previous month's net salary credited into their bank accounts to ensure ease and convenience for account holders.

"This scheme will greatly enhance the well-being of these essential workers to enable them to focus on their critical role in supporting our education system," said the minister.

## Punjab Cabinet approves Industrial Reforms: Doors Opened for Diversified Land Use

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Taking a step toward industrial reform and administrative efficiency, the Punjab Cabinet on Thursday approved two crucial policies — the conversion of leasehold industrial plots to freehold, and permission for change in land use (CLU) of industrial plots for non-industrial purposes. These long-awaited measures are expected to unlock economic potential across the state's industrial belts.

The state's New and Renewable Energy Minister Aman Arora, addressing the media alongside Industry Minister Tarunpreet Singh Sond after the Cabinet meeting, said that these reforms were introduced in response to persistent demands from industrialists and entrepreneurs. "These decisions will simplify business operations, boost investment, and generate significant revenue for the state," said Arora.

Under the revised policy, industrial plots between 1,000 and 4,000 square yards can now be utilized for commercial ventures such as hotels, hospitals, hostels, and convention centres — a shift from the previous restriction to purely industrial activity. Additionally, plots of 40,000 square yards or more can be developed into industrial parks, with 60 percent area

reserved for industrial purposes, 30 percent for residential use, and 10 percent for commercial development. All such plots will be treated as freehold, ensuring ownership clarity and ease of transaction.

For leasehold plots allotted by the Punjab Small Industries and Export Corporation (PSIEC), the Cabinet approved their conversion to freehold at a nominal rate of Rs 20 per square yard. This move is expected to fetch over Rs 1,000 crore for the state while reducing litigation and ambiguity in property dealings. A conversion charge of 12.5 percent of the industrial reserve price will be applicable for freehold plots seeking change in land use.

The Cabinet also gave its nod to amendments in the MSE Facilitation Council Rules-2021, under the MSME Development Act. Going forward, awards related to delayed payments to micro and small enterprises can be recovered as arrears of land revenue under the Punjab Land Revenue Act-1887, ensuring faster resolution of payment disputes.

In a move to enhance administrative efficiency and reduce redundant expenditure, the Cabinet approved the merger of various directorates under the Finance Department. The Directorates of Small Savings,

Banking and Finance, and Lotteries will now function as a single unit named the 'Directorate of Small Savings, Banking and Lotteries'.

Similarly, DPED and DFREI will be merged into the Directorate of Public Enterprises and Financial Resources. Treasury and Accounts, Pensions, and NPS will also be consolidated under the Directorate of Treasury and Accounts, Pensions and NPS. This restructuring is projected to save the state Rs 2.64 crore annually.

To operationalize the newly established State SNA Treasury in Chandigarh — mandated under Government of India guidelines for centrally-sponsored schemes, the Cabinet approved the creation of nine posts, including a District Treasury Officer, Treasury Officer, two Senior Assistants, four Clerks, and one Peon.

Further, the Cabinet amended service rules for Group-B Junior Engineers in the Water Resources Department. Canal Patwaris and Revenue Clerks holding diplomas or degrees in Civil, Mechanical, or Electrical Engineering will now be eligible for promotion under the 10 percent reserved quota — a move aimed at recognizing field-level experience and encouraging skill upgradation.

## Majithia Remanded for 7 Days in DA Case Linked to Rs 540-cr Undisclosed Assets

AAP-SAD SUPPORTERS CLASH OUTSIDE MOHALI COURT

PNS ■ MOHALI/CHANDIGARH

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader and Punjab's former Minister Bikram Singh Majithia was sent to seven days of police remand by a Mohali court on Thursday in connection with a high-profile disproportionate assets and money laundering case, allegedly linked to Rs 540 crore drug money. The Vigilance Bureau, which had arrested Majithia from his Amritsar residence a day earlier, sought 12 days of custody, but the court granted seven after a prolonged hearing.

Presented under tight security, Majithia's appearance created chaos outside the court premises, with Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) and SAD supporters clashing in heated protests. Police detained over two dozen SAD workers, including senior leaders like former Minister Daljit Singh Cheema,

as they attempted to rally outside the court in Majithia's support. Cheema called the entire case "politically motivated" and accused the state government of "misusing" the judicial system.

"The security arrangements made it seem like Majithia is some terrorist," said Simranjit Singh Chandumajra, associated with SAD rebel faction 'Sudhar Lehar', condemning the heavy police presence.

Inside the courtroom, the public prosecutor made serious allegations. He told the judge that Majithia had failed to explain assets worth Rs 540 crore, which were far in excess of his known income. "There are bank entries showing Rs 286 crore in transactions, but only Rs 125 crore is recorded in official accounts — leaving a gap of Rs 161 crore unaccounted for," the prosecutor said. "In another case, Rs 236 crore was deposited in company accounts during Majithia's ministerial tenure, but there is no explanation in the financial records," he added.

Further, the court was informed about suspicious foreign transactions involving companies based in Cyprus and Singapore — widely known tax havens. "A Cyprus-based firm bought shares worth Rs 35 crore

in Majithia's Indian company and sold them for just Rs 3.5 crore despite the company being profitable. Later, it gave a Rs 90 crore loan to another firm named Saraya, which accrued Rs 44 crore in interest but was settled for just Rs 51 crore," the prosecutor said, calling it a clear case of Rs 80 crore financial manipulation.

Adding to the drama, the prosecution revealed that Majithia had behaved in a threatening manner with Vigilance officials and even directed intimidating remarks toward Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann during his transit from Amritsar to Mohali — details that were brought to the court's attention while seeking remand.

Majithia's lawyer strongly contested the remand, calling the case baseless and accusing the state of hatching a conspiracy against the senior leader. "This is nothing but vendetta. They want to silence the opposition by using state machinery," he argued.

The courtroom proceedings brought work in the complex to a halt for several hours as security was ramped up, and movement restricted. Court officials were only allowed inside after

thorough identity checks.

Outside, the political slugfest intensified. While SAD workers shouted slogans against the government, AAP supporters countered with placards and chants demanding strict punishment for those responsible for pushing Punjab's youth into drugs. The heavy police deployment eventually dispersed both groups, and some protesters were taken away in police buses.

The case is now set for its next hearing on July 2. **SAD SLAMS AAP FOR 'VENDETTA POLITICS', ALLEGES ILLEGAL ACTION AGAINST MAJITHIA**

Launching a scathing attack on the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Government in Punjab, SAD on Thursday accused it of misusing state agencies to frame senior leader Bikram Singh Majithia in a disproportionate assets case without any preliminary or regular inquiry.

Addressing a press conference in Amritsar, senior SAD leaders Balwinder Singh Bhundar, Maheshinder Singh Grewal, and Daljit Singh Cheema termed the arrest politically motivated. "This case is a clear attempt to silence Majithia and divert attention from the AAP government's failed anti-drug campaign, Yudh Nashean Virudh,"

said Grewal, adding that no formal complaint or evidence supports the Rs 540 crore figure cited in the case.

Grewal dismissed the allegations as baseless, claiming that the listed properties have been in the Majithia family long before Bikram Majithia was born. "The family's wealth predates his political career. The government has fabricated a case for political mileage," he said while highlighting that Majithia had resigned as director of Saraya Industries in 2007, distancing himself from the company's decisions.

Cheema added that the same allegations had earlier been submitted to the Supreme Court during a plea to cancel Majithia's bail in the NDPS case, but the court had not taken cognizance. He further criticized the Mohali court security, likening it to a "curfew-like situation" that inconvenienced litigants.

Bhundar compared the developments to the Emergency era, calling it a "murder of democracy." He alleged that the AAP Government had been pressuring officials for over three years to implicate Majithia and thanked opposition parties for their support in "exposing the political vendetta."

## NIA Raids 9 Locations in Punjab in Ongoing Terror Conspiracy Probe

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Thursday conducted coordinated raids at multiple locations across Punjab, including Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur, as part of an ongoing investigation into a larger terror conspiracy case aimed at reviving militancy in the state.

According to the officials, searches were carried out at six to seven locations in Punjab — part of a broader operation involving 18 raids across Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. The action is linked to a suspected terror module allegedly connected to pro-Khalistani networks and gangsters with foreign links, who are believed to be orchestrating targeted killings, extortion, and arms smuggling to destabilize the state.

In Jalandhar, the NIA team, assisted by local police, reached the posh Friends Colony area around 7 am and interrogated a tenant staying in a rented house. The homeowner is currently abroad. During the operation, officials seized documents and digital devices.

## BRIEFS

RIJUJU MEETS HIMACHAL CM



**Shimla:** Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Minority Affairs Kiren Rijiju called on Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu at his official residence, Oak Over on Thursday. It was described as a courtesy call.

**UT ADMINISTRATOR PAYS SURPRISE VISIT TO SPCA, SECTOR 38 Chandigarh:** Punjab Governor and UT Administrator Gulab Chand Kataria on Thursday paid a surprise visit to the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA), located in Sector 38 (West). During the visit, he expressed dissatisfaction with the existing infrastructure and facilities available for the care of animals and directed the officials to take immediate steps to upgrade the veterinary services and overall infrastructure. Kataria observed that there were inadequate facilities, particularly for the treatment of large animals. He emphasized the urgent need to upgrade essential areas such as the operation theatre and medical units to ensure comprehensive treatment for all types of animals. He further stressed the importance of improving the maintenance of the building and ensuring proper hygiene and care for the animals housed there.

**CHANDIGARH CS FLAGS OFF RALLY TO CELEBRATE "INT'L DAY AGAINST DRUG ABUSE & ILLICIT TRAFFICKING"**

**Chandigarh:** To celebrate "International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking", the Chandigarh Chief Secretary Rajeev Verma on Thursday flagged off a rally from Sukhna Lake and administered 'Nasha Mukht Bharat' pledge to the assembled participants and dignitaries. He lauded the coordinated efforts of all involved agencies and emphasized the need for continued collaboration across all sectors to ensure long-term results. The Department of Social Welfare, Women and Child Development, Chandigarh Administration, in convergence with the Chandigarh Police, National Service Scheme (NSS), and National Cadet Corps (NCC) organised an Anti-Narcotics Pledge and Rally at Sukhna Lake. The program witnessed the participation of 700 NCC cadets, 400 NSS volunteers, and 100 Chandigarh Police personnel, all coming together under a shared spirit to tackle the serious issue of drug abuse and to make Chandigarh truly Nasha Mukht.

**2 MASKED MEN OPEN FIRE OUTSIDE HOTEL IN KURUKSHETRA Kurukshetra:** Two masked men opened fire in front of a hotel located on National Highway 44, about 5km from Shahabad Markanda in Kurukshetra on Thursday. Talking to Reporters, Kurukshetra Superintendent of Police Nitish Aggarwal said that the two assailants arrived at the hotel at around 5 am on a motorcycle and fired 10 to 15 rounds. They briefly entered the hotel and left a note at the reception counter, and then fired several more rounds outside the premises before fleeing. No injuries were reported in the incident. Aggarwal said that eight police teams have been formed to investigate the case and apprehend the culprits. Some clues have been achieved as footage from nearly 60-70 CCTV cameras is being scanned, he said. Replying to a query, Aggarwal said the content of the note left by the attackers did not contain any ransom demand.

**JOINT SECRETARY REVIEWS JAL SHAKTI ABHIYAN INITIATIVES IN CHANDIGARH**

**Chandigarh:** As part of the Government of India's continued push for sustainable water management under the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain 2025, Gurneet Tej, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry (DPIIT), along with Sujatro Ray Chowdhuri, Scientist-C, Central Ground Water Board, conducted a comprehensive three-day review visit to Chandigarh. The visit commenced with a formal reception at the Sector 17 Municipal Corporation Office by Amit Kumar, Commissioner, MCC. The MC Commissioner presented the city's major water conservation initiatives, highlighting the installation of rainwater harvesting systems across public and private buildings, use of tertiary treated water for non-potable purposes, rejuvenation of lakes, including Amrit Sarovar, and afforestation drives near the Sukhna Wildlife Sanctuary. Tej lauded the integrated efforts of the city, stating, "Chandigarh stands out as a model for sustainable urban water management. The blend of innovation, infrastructure, and community engagement is commendable."



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Editor's TAKE

Looming water crisis: Act now or pay the price later

With demand poised to outstrip supply by 2030. Water emergency is not a distant threat, it is already unfolding

In India we have taken natural resources for granted. We care little about them but exploit them to hilt realising little that these resources are limited and if not consumed in a responsible way would perish faster than we can imagine. India today stands on the brink of a monumental water crisis that threatens to derail its economic progress, destabilise food security, and imperil public health. Despite housing 18 per cent of the world's population, India holds only 4 per cent of its freshwater resources. NITI Aayog's 2018 Composite Water Management Index had already sounded the alarm — 600 million Indians are living under high to extreme water stress. By 2030, demand could double the available supply. Yet, despite the growing evidence, the country continues to respond with fragmented policies and piecemeal solutions. The roots of this crisis are deep and multi-layered.

One of the primary causes is the grossly unequal distribution of water across the country. While some states struggle with devastating floods, others face year-round droughts. Climate change has intensified this disparity. Adding to this challenge is India's overwhelming dependence on groundwater. Excessive extraction has pushed India to become the world's largest user of groundwater. Replenishment rates simply cannot keep up. Climate change has transformed the water equation from a future threat to a present crisis. Erratic rainfall patterns have made agriculture precarious. The shrinking glaciers have further led to the shortage of water across storage systems. Glaciers in the Himalayas — the lifeline of rivers like the Ganga and Indus — are melting at alarming rates.

The contamination of water sources presents an equally serious challenge. The 2024 Annual Groundwater Quality Report revealed that 70 per cent of India's water is contaminated, with arsenic and fluoride contaminating drinking water for over 230 million people across 19 states. Untreated sewage and industrial waste continue to choke rivers, rendering them unfit for use. The toll on public health is staggering. According to NITI Aayog, nearly 200,000 lives are lost each year to waterborne diseases — a tragedy that is preventable. Cities like Bengaluru, Chennai, and Delhi have already experienced water crises of a scale once thought unimaginable. According to NITI Aayog, 21 Indian cities could exhaust their groundwater by 2030, impacting over 100 million people. There is, however, a way forward. But it requires systemic transformation. Integrated Water Resource Management (WRM) must become the norm rather than the exception. Water cannot be viewed in isolation — it is intricately connected with energy, agriculture, climate, and health. National policies must reflect this reality. Nature-based solutions like wetland restoration need to be scaled up alongside cutting-edge technologies such as real-time monitoring and water accounting systems that can track usage and redistribute resources more equitably. A water-secure India is the bedrock of economically vibrant, and socially just future. The consequences of inaction will be huge. What remains to be seen is whether India will rise to the challenge.



Karakoram anomaly: Relook Indus Water Treaty

With India suspending the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), the abeyance of the IWT, combined with a renewed focus on harnessing water resources from the western rivers, signals a decisive policy shift regarding natural resource sharing

Islamabad's preference for terror on India's civilian and armed forces using ISI-trained terrorists, as compared to the belief in conventional warfare has misfired after the Pahalgam terror attack on April 22nd, where 26 civilians, mostly tourists including a Nepalese national lost their lives. Immediately after the attack India expelled Pakistani nationals, reduced its diplomatic presence and kept the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance. In response to the April 22nd attack, India launched Operation Sindoor in the wee hours of May 7th, and hit and decimated terrorist infrastructures at nine locations — five in PoK and four in Pakistan's Punjab province including Muridke and Bahawalpur, the headquarters of two major terrorist organisations Lashkar-e-Taiba or Jaish-e-Mohammed.

The operation also resulted in the killing of more than a hundred terrorists in these camps. Pakistan's response using Turkey and Chinese-made weapons was foiled and in four days of conflict, considerable damage was inflicted on Pakistan's eleven airbases and air defence system. Even after the ceasefire was announced at 5.35 pm on May 10th, IWT continued to be kept under abeyance. Two countries have fought several wars and India has faced many terrorist attacks orchestrated by our neighbour, but it is for the first time since 1960 that IWT has been suspended. A permanent cost has been inflicted on Pakistan for the misadventure. In recent years India has been seeking bilateral modification of IWT. The treaty signed in 1960 divides six rivers of the basin between the two. Indus, Jhelum and Chenab are the western rivers allocated to Pakistan, while Ravi, Beas and Sutlej are the eastern rivers allocated to India. Further, the treaty allocated 80 per cent of water for Pakistan and only 20 per cent for the upper riparian state, India. No other water treaty in the world has ignored an upper riparian state like this and has been the most generous treaty favouring the lower riparian state. The treaty also did not take into account global warming, climate change issues and environmental impact assessment, as brought out in the departmentally related Standing Committee report 2021.

While the treaty was operational, Pakistan has continuously objected to India's hydro-electric projects. In recent years, the objections to the Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects are for anyone to take note of. With such baseless objections, Pakistan moved International Court of Justice, Hague, which is quite irksome and hampers our growth. Further, it is challenging for the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir to progress economically. Reports have substantiated that UT suffered hundreds of millions of rupees



annually due to IWT. Sixty-five years into the treaty, climate change has altered the scenario considerably. The glaciers located on the eastern side that feed water to Sutlej, Beas and Ravi rivers are at relatively lower altitudes as compared to the glaciers in the Karakoram mountain ranges that feed water to western rivers namely Indus, Jhelum and Chenab. The glaciers at lower altitudes are losing mass at a higher rate and are retreating faster.

In higher Karakoram mountain ranges, glaciers are not losing masses, and are relatively stable. In the scientific community, it is called the 'Karakoram anomaly'. From the depleted glacier mass there has been a considerable reduction in the flow of water in the eastern rivers namely Sutlej, Beas and Ravi. This has impacted water availability for irrigation and power generation in the Indian states of Punjab and Rajasthan, as well as in the UT of J&K. Thus, despite IWT allocated 20 per cent water share for India, we got only 5 per cent. 'Karakoram anomaly' is termed as the stability or the anomalous growth of glaciers in



central Karakoram, in contrast to the retreat of glaciers in other nearby mountainous ranges of the Himalayas and other ranges of the World. Studies have highlighted the role of temperature in establishing and sustaining the anomaly over the years. Western disturbances are the primary feeder of the snowfall for the region in winter. It has also been found in the study that 53 per cent of precipitation and 65 per cent of snowfall in the region is

powered by western disturbances. This has resulted in an increase of precipitation intensity in the Karakoram ranges by 10 per cent in the last two decades. This explains the role of Western disturbances in sustaining the anomaly. In other words, the flow of water in western rivers namely the Indus, Jhelum and Chenab is sustainable and may increase by 10 per cent, while that in eastern rivers Ravi, Beas and Sutlej shows a depleting trend. Given scientific findings, IWT must change. Post Pahalgam, PM Modi has reiterated that the treaty will remain suspended till our neighbour stops supporting terrorism in all forms and manifestations.

Especially given the 'Karakoram anomaly' owing to climate change, IWT in its present form cannot be revived, even if Pakistan supports terrorism. PM Modi has directed officials to expedite the planning and execution of projects on the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus rivers. The central Government has also committed to fast-track environmental clearances of all pending and proposed projects in the Indus River basin in J&K to utilise the maximum amount of water from the river system. Canals on Chenab are also being planned to be extended to cover more areas for irrigation. Uri Stage II, Kirthal-II and Sawalkot projects are for the generation of power and also for irrigating agricultural fields, and are already listed for single window clearance. The work on the Tulbul navigation barrage in the Wullar Lake in north Kashmir, essential for providing navigation in the Jhelum river, was suspended in the 1980s, under pressure from Pakistan, but can now be revived. After keeping IWT in abeyance, India released water from the Baglihar and Salal dams for the desiltation of reservoirs. This caused swelling of the Chenab River and flooding in Pakistan.

After completion of de-siltation, the gates are closed, disrupting the agriculture sowing/paddy transplant in Pakistan's Punjab and Sindh.

Even India is not obliged to share rainfall data now. Pakistan has come up with another bluff, saying that China in a similar way can stop Brahmaputra water, where India is the lower riparian state. China can never punish us in that way. The Brahmaputra originates in the Angsi glacier in Tibet and flows through China as Yarlung Tsangpo before entering India's Arunachal Pradesh. It is called Siang and Dibang in Arunachal Pradesh and Brahmaputra in Assam and Bangladesh. China has already announced the building of a hydropower dam on Yarlung Tsangpo, but Indian experts opined that it cannot cut the flow of water in Brahmaputra. IDSA's peer-reviewed data suggests that even during lean periods Yarlung Tsangpo's annual outflow from China is far lower than Brahmaputra's total discharge in India. Assam CM Hemanta Bishwa Sarmah recently responded to this bluff and posted on X, "Brahmaputra is not a river India depends on upstream — it is a rain-fed Indian river system, strengthened after entering Indian territory."

Only 30 to 35 per cent flow is fed by glacier melting and some rainfall in Tibet in Chinese territory and the remaining 65 to 70 per cent is fed from Indian monsoon through the rivers Subansiri, Lohit, Kameng, Manas, Dhansiri, Jia-Bharali, Kopili, Krishnan, Digaru and Kulsri in the catchments spread in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya. Any Chinese upstream intervention will have no impact on India.

(The writer is a retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, Head of Forest Force, Karnataka. Views are personal)

Telangana's fight against child labour

SECOND Opinion

A recent report on child labour rescues has found that Telangana outpaced all other states in pulling children out of unlawful employment in 2024–25. Of the 53,651 children rescued in India during this period, 11,063 were given a new lease of life in Telangana. The state not only carried out the most number of rescue operations in the country but it also topped the list of arrests made against the offenders.

While this is good news for all the vulnerable children rescued from exploitative work, their lives will still be in limbo in the absence of appropriate rehabilitation. This crucial task may be an easier one for Telangana as it already has a successful rehabilitation roadmap, thanks to MV Foundation, the Hyderabad-based, not-for-profit, which has managed to withdraw over one million children from work. By mainstreaming them into formal schools, MVF has also made 1500 villages child-labour-free. This is no mean achievement. The cornerstone of their success has been their belief that any child out of school should be considered a child labourer and that school and education were the only options for eliminating child labour. The model adopted to reach this goal is simple. First, a survey of all children out of school is con-

ducted in each of the intervention villages. Villagers were often taken aback to see a sari-clad lady outside their homes asking about their children. But Shantha Sinha, founder trustee MVF and Magsaysay awardee for her work to eliminate child labour, had no compunctions in sitting on the floor of their homes to persuade them to send their children to school. This personalised approach helped in facilitating permission for their children to attend residential bridge course camps (RBC).

These provide short-term intensive education programmes to help children who had dropped out of school to work or those who had never been to school, fill their knowledge gaps. Then they are mainstreamed into government schools. Establishing Child Rights Protection forums comprising the community, parents, local panchayat members and school teachers, ensures children enrolled stay in school. Had it not been for this house-to-house survey, 11-year-old Amritha would have continued to work with her family as agricultural labourers.

She was reconciled to going to sleep most of the nights on an empty stomach. But her life changed when MVF came to her village to spread awareness about education. They motivated her parents to send her to the RBC.

When it became known that Amritha had gone to the camp, five other children, who heard about the life-chang-



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

ing experience, also joined her there. One of them was working at a roadside eatery and afraid that he wouldn't be allowed to join the RBC, ran away without informing his employer. He walked 10 km to catch a train to the MVF camp. The MVF approach has given hundreds of children a chance at a second childhood by fostering a sense of community ownership to ensure the elimination of child labour. This has provided support for a large number of such children to go beyond primary schooling. Many of them have achieved their dream of becoming doctors, lawyers, engineers and media personalities. Equally vulnerable to exploitation are those reported missing as they too are at risk of being trapped in working in dangerous trades.

Over 11,400 children were reported as missing in 2024–25, according to India Child Protection, a voluntary organisation, that prepared the report on child labour rescues in conjunction with Just Rights for Children, a civil society network of over 250 organisations working in coordination with law enforcement agencies to combat child labour and trafficking. Although a large number of these missing children have been found, they face similar challenges of rehabilitation. Adapting the community-based, child-protection approach to mainstream them back to school could be life-changing for all these children.

(The author is a journalist writing on development and gender. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Restored Sholay to premiere in Italy

The iconic Bollywood classic Sholay will screen in its original, uncut form — including its long-lost climax and deleted scenes — at the prestigious Il Cinema Ritrovato Festival in Bologna, Italy, this Friday, June 27, 2025.

The film will be showcased on a grand open-air screen at Piazza Maggiore, the city's historic central square. This restored version is the result of painstaking efforts by the Mumbai-based Film Heritage Foundation, led by Shivendra Singh Dungarpur, in collaboration with India's National Film Archive and international restoration experts. The screening marks the world premiere of the restored Sholay, offering global audiences a rare glimpse of Ramesh Sippy's vision as it was originally conceived.

As it will subsequently screen in Indian theatres, its changed ending will disturb the five-decades-formed image in the audience, giving relief to some while it may not affect the new generation. Indeed, it is a proud moment for film lovers in India.

The world premiere of the restored Sholay on June 27, 2025, at Il Cinema Ritrovato in Bologna marks a historic cinematic moment. Audiences will witness Ramesh Sippy's complete vision for the first time, including the original climax. The restoration, led by the Film Heritage Foundation and global partners, will soon reach Indian theatres.

RS NARULA PATIALA

Tripura becomes fully literate state

Tripura has become the third fully literate state after Mizoram and Goa. In 1961 Tripura's literacy rate was 20.24 per cent; in 2011 it reached 87.22 per cent.

For the last decade or so, Tripura's literacy rate was more than 90 per cent, but it was lagging behind on some parameters; hence, it could not attain fully literate state status earlier.

It is to be noted that any state acquires this status once it reaches more than 95 per cent literacy rate. But we need to dig deeper and introspect as to why it took so long — precisely more than six decades for a population of 40 lakh people of Tripura to achieve this feat. Mediocrity is so ingrained in our blood that we do not aim for high goals and accept tortoise-pace growth as a way of life. This thinking has to change.

Hopefully, other states can take a cue from Tripura and keep promoting learning to all their citizens and take help of digital mediums to reach this level and attain full literacy. Collaborating with NGOs can also help the cause to bridge the digital gulf between rural and urban as education has to reach the remotest village in the country. Tripura's achievement of full literacy is commendable, but the six-decade journey for a small state signals deeper systemic complacency.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

India's complacency cost it the match

Anyone imagined that after having scored five centuries — three in the first innings and two in the second — can any team suffer a loss when they have put up a formidable 371 for the opponent to chase in the fourth innings in a Test match? Indeed, team India has now become the first team in the 148 years of Test cricket history to face such an unexpected defeat against England at Headingley sheerly by their complacency in their approach, by the slipshod fielding of dropping as many catches and a mediocre bowling attack.

Little the skipper Shubman Gill tried to rotate the bowlers and solely depending on Jasprit Bumrah won't pave the way for the team to come victorious all the time; this never happens must be realised. Only the individual records were the highlight: Skipper Shubman Gill rose up to his captaincy debut and his deputy Rishab Pant scored two brilliant tons back-to-back in the same Test — all went in vain at the end for India's own fault. KL Rahul's extraordinary ton in the second innings was not utilised in their failed attempt to dismiss England when the target set was reasonable enough to grab a victory. In a way it was a gifted match by India while Yashasvi Jaiswal dropped four catches, which includes a costly one of Ben Duckett on 97, whom England relied much upon to score in a fast-paced strategy which worked in their favour as Duckett went on to reach 149.

AP THIRUVADI | CHENNAI

MAMATA'S BOLD QUESTION SPARKS DEBATE ON DISCRIMINATION

No kudos is enough for Mamata Banerjee for asking the most relevant and burning question in a straightforward way whether speaking the language of Rabindranath Tagore and Swami Vivekananda has become an "offence" in the "Double Engine" states ("Is speaking Bengali an offence: CM Mamata Banerjee asks BJP?", June 25)! Yes, just speaking Bangla (language of India's National Anthem and National Song) and hailing from Bengal (land of Khudiram Bose, Surya Sen, Netaji and innumerable other valiant bravehearts selflessly sacrificing their all for the sake of Indian independence) are enough "excuse" for according such step-motherly treatment to the Bengalis in their very own country, now dubbed "New India"!

At first the hard-working migrant labourers from Bengal were getting heckled by the goons from Odisha to Rajasthan and often compelled to leave the concerned states without their

belongings and unpaid wages, and this ugly phenomenon has increased in deadly proportions recently! Also they are regularly being summoned by the police or detained for days in the name of "interrogation" and "identification"! But now the situation has attained such a height of absurdity that many of them have been "pushed" into Bangladesh by the security force of India! Have the hapless souls committed a "quintuple sin" of sorts — hailing from Bengal, speaking Bangla, professing Islam and daring to venture to "Double Engine" states for earning an honest livelihood!

And if their "authenticity" as an Indian citizen gets questioned despite possession of Aadhar and EPIC, then immediately the Government must declare that these cards have no legal value and stop demanding the former right from pregnancy cases in hospital to the crematorium!

KAJAL CHATTERJEE | KOLKATA



# Drug abuse and illicit trafficking: The role of RPF under the NDPS act

On this International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, RPF stands as a vigilant and evolving Force, committed to securing the lifelines of the nation from the scourge of drugs. RPF is not only protecting the Indian Railways but also fortifying the nation's resolve against narcotics trafficking

FIRST  
Column

Every year, June 26 is observed as the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, serving as a global reminder of the need to combat one of the most serious threats not only to human health and safety but also to the future of humanity. As India faces increasing challenges related to the rising consumption of narcotics in the younger sections of our population due to the easy availability of narcotics, the Indian Railways, and RPF have resolved not to allow the railways to be used by narcotics smugglers for their nefarious designs.

Since the Indian Railways, due to its vast network and high passenger volume, was beginning to emerge as a significant conduit for narco-trafficking, a major development occurred in 2019 when the Government of India empowered the Railway Protection Force (RPF) under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985. This authorisation enabled the RPF to search for and seize narcotics being transported through the railway network, thereby strengthening efforts to combat narcotics trafficking across Indian Railways. This decision aligned with the Government of India's comprehensive "whole-of-government approach" in the war against narcotics, reinforcing the RPF's role in national security beyond its traditional duties.

### RPF's Mandate under the NDPS Act

The grant of authority under the NDPS Act enabled the RPF to act not only as a custodian of railway property but also as a proactive law enforcement agency in the domain of narcotics control. The large and relatively unmonitored railway ecosystem—characterised by open-access platforms, high-frequency passenger movement, and vast geographical spread—was being increasingly exploited by traffickers to move contraband, particularly Ganja, and this timely decision has brought about a transformational change.

### Notable achievements of RPF in controlling the drug menace

In the year 2024 alone, RPF undertook a record number of operations resulting in over 1700 contraband seizure cases involving significant quantities of contraband articles. Big Seizures and Operational Successes of RPF during 2024-25 include:

- On 01.03.2024, in a joint operation with DRI Tuticorin & Madurai teams, RPF/Madurai to the seizure of 31.5 kg of Methamphetamine worth ₹150 crore from a passenger on Pothigai Express (Train No. 12661) during a targeted operation.
- On 08.05.2025, at Nabadwip Dham Railway Station (ER), a joint team seized 1.03 kg of Brown Sugar worth ₹4 crore during a surveillance operation based on intelligence generated by STF Kolkata.



MANOJ YADAVA



- On 19.06.2025, at Sealdah Station (ER), a routine RPF check led to the recovery of 3.14 kg Morphine and 3.198 kg Heroin, valued at ₹3.35 crore. The seized quantity was later handed over to NCB.

- On 05.12.2024, at Burhwal Station (NER), a joint operation intercepted two women aboard a train with 11 kg Charas worth ₹5.5 crore which was being transported from Sugauli to Kota.

- On 05.03.2025, a joint RPF-GRP team recovered 24.39 kg of Charas valued at ₹6 crore in unclaimed backpacks at Sagauli Railway Station (ECR).

- On 26.03.2025, in Varanasi Station (NR), a checking operation on Tapti Ganga Express led to the seizure of 10 kg Charas, valued at ₹5 crore, from an unattended bag.

The RPF seized contrabands valued at over ₹227.5 crore in 2024, contributing 1.34 per cent to the overall seizure quantity in the country. RPF has also arrested 1489 traffickers during the year. This significant recovery marks a noteworthy addition to the collective efforts towards building a Drug-Free India.

The outcome of the targeted and successful operations and seizures underscore RPF's evolving capabilities and intelligence-led policing approach.

bilities and intelligence-led policing approach.

### Emerging patterns

An analysis of drug trafficking patterns on the Indian Railway network has revealed distinct smuggling corridors and modus operandi of traffickers. The North-Eastern Corridor (Lumding-Arunachal) acts as a critical source route for cannabis cultivation and transportation. Eastern-Central-Southern Routes (Odisha to Southern States) facilitate the movement of narcotics from Odisha to high consumption — demand centres such as Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Chennai, Kochi and Mumbai. Major cities act as the primary endpoints of the trafficking network, where narcotics are distributed through local networks, making them the urban consumption hubs. The affordability of Ganja, combined with its recreational nature, makes it one of the most commonly trafficked narcotics via railways. The contraband is often packed in bulk quantities and concealed ingeniously in passenger and freight luggage.

### Learnings and Strategic Insights

From years of tracking illicit narcotics movements while actively pursuing the role of Sentinels of Indian Railways, RPF has developed key learnings in the domain. Traffickers rely on anonymity pro-

vided by general class compartments and unreserved ticketing. Night trains and long-distance express trains are frequently misused due to the reduced presence of uniformed personnel at night time. Concealment techniques have become increasingly sophisticated, necessitating enhanced detection methods. Youth and vulnerable populations in urban centres are primary targets for drug consumption, fueling demand.

### Capacity Building and RPF's Commitment

RPF has taken concrete steps to build institutional capacity to tackle narcotics trafficking. Specially trained dog squads are now deployed at major railway stations and are actively participating in targeted operations. RPF personnel undergo intensive training on NDPS provisions, detection methods, and procedural law and inter-agency coordination in collaboration with the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB). Data analytics and crime pattern analysis have led to the systematic mapping of drug routes and the identification of vulnerable trains. Cooperation with NCB, State Police and Intelligence Agencies has led to a productive partnership based on real-time intelligence sharing and the constitution of joint taskforces for action. This progress directly reflects the Union Home Minister's strate-

gic directive that combines top-down guidance and bottom-up implementation, ensuring uniform policy application with local adaptability.

### Challenges and the Road Ahead

Despite the success stories, several challenges remain. The need for more resources including narcotic detection equipment and canine units, slow judicial processes under NDPS hindering deterrence, rapid changes in trafficking routes and methods, cross-border smuggling through the porous borders of the country, and imperatives of passenger privacy is a visssurveillance concern which demands balancing individual rights with stringent checks etc needs systematic and concentrated approach to be addressed effectively.

To counter these challenges, enforcement agencies must continue to leverage advanced technological solutions such as Artificial Intelligence and scanning systems with pattern recognition capabilities for route and passenger profiling, thereby enabling predictive policing in the detection of drugs and narcotics. Community sensitisation programs to generate public awareness are essential to address the issue of consumption. The canine force is the backbone of any Force involved in the detection of narcotics, but it has its operational limitations. Possible technology solutions to enhance detection need to be explored in the field. Further, the human capabilities in the field demand capacity augmentation through specialised training and intervention in the domain.

The Indian Railways handles a substantial quantity of parcel traffic through the Seating cum Luggage Rake (SLR) vans of long-distance passenger trains. At present the contents of the parcel are not being scanned through X-ray scanners. Realizing the possibility of utilisation of parcel traffic for drug trafficking, Indian Railways has started the process of installing large-sized baggage scanners at important railway stations.

### A-Pillar in the Whole-of-Government Effort

The RPF's contribution to narcotics control is not an isolated initiative but a net addition and an important part of the Government of India's integrated anti-drug effort. Its success exemplifies the whole-of-government approach, working in unison with central and state agencies to safeguard national security and public health. On this International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, RPF stands as a vigilant and evolving Force, committed to securing the lifelines of the nation from the scourge of drugs. By recognising patterns, enhancing capabilities, and strengthening inter-agency collaboration, RPF is not only protecting the Indian Railways but also fortifying the nation's resolve against narcotics trafficking in the years to come.

(The writer is Director General, Railway Protection Force. Views are personal)

# MSME Day: Celebrating the backbone of sustainable growth and innovation

June 27 is MSME Day. It is a day dedicated to celebrating the significance and achievements of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). In 2017, the United Nations (UN) designated this day to recognise the vital role of MSMEs in promoting innovation, job creation, and sustainable economic growth. MSME Day highlights the need for ongoing support and innovation to help these enterprises thrive in a changing global environment.

The UN estimates indicate that MSMEs are the cornerstone of economic growth worldwide, accounting for 90 per cent of global businesses, 60-70 per cent of employment and 50 per cent of the world's gross domestic product (GDP).

The World Bank notes that 60 crore jobs will be needed by 2030 to absorb the growing global workforce, which makes MSME development a high priority for many Governments around the world. Furthermore, in emerging markets, most formal jobs are generated by Small and Medium Enterprises, which create 7 out of 10 jobs.

In India, MSME Day is particularly significant. The country has over 6.5 crore registered MSMEs, contributing 31 per cent to the GDP and 45 per cent to total exports, employing more than 28 crore people. Today, MSMEs are omnipresent, traversing all sectors from Charkha to Chandrayaan.

They are spread over variegated sectors, stretching from retail trade to repair of computers, from food and beverage services to land transport, from the manufacturing of apparel to manufacturing of furniture, from pharmaceuticals to tourism, from khadi and village industries to literally catapulting Missions into space by manufacturing aerospace components. Accordingly, these enterprises get covered by schemes and policies of different administrative Ministries of the Central Government, accentuating the essence of the Whole of Government approach.

The theme of this year's MSME Day is 'Enhancing the role of MSMEs as drivers of Sustainable Growth and Innovation'. This underscores both the relevance of the sector and its potential role in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It is a well-known fact that the definition of MSMEs followed across the world is not uniform. While some countries follow an asset-based definition, MSMEs in some other countries are identified in terms of their employment. In 2020, India became one of the countries that adopted twin cri-



teria based on investment in plant and machinery and turnover of enterprises to classify them as MSMEs. The overall ceiling for MSMEs was ₹50 crore for investment and ₹250 crore for turnover. To allay apprehensions of losing entitlements related to MSMEs, from 1st April 2025, the ceilings were raised to ₹125 crore and ₹500 crore for investment and turnover, respectively. The Indian MSME sector is also unique in its recognition and purposeful formalisation of informal micro-enterprises.

The closest proxy measure of the universe of MSMEs is the number of non-agricultural unincorporated enterprises estimated by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE). The latest report of ASUSE of January 2025 estimates 7.34 crore such enterprises. Since 1st April 2023, the number of formalised enterprises has grown fourfold, to 6.5 crore. The effort to bridge the formalisation gap is discernible. Formalisation extends the twin benefits of providing an identity to the enterprise and creating entitlements for it because of its MSME status. Enterprises registered on the Udyam Registration Portal or Udyam Assist Platform not only become eligible for Priority Sector Lending but also for schemes meant for MSMEs run by the Central Government and some State Governments.

With recently determined interventions from the Government of India to ensure affordable finance, accessible technology, and the availability of domestic and international markets, the sector has undoubtedly made great strides. While during 2000-2023, as many as 70.7 lakh guarantees worth ₹4.27 lakh crore were given under the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Micro and

Small Enterprises (MSEs), during 2023-2025, there were 44.39 lakh guarantees worth ₹5.08 lakh crore, indicating larger coverage of enterprises in a shorter period and a higher average guarantee amount. Recent reports corroborate the accomplishments of the sector. Niti Aayog's report, released in May 2025, states that the share of MSEs accessing credit through scheduled banks rose from 14 per cent in 2020 to 20 per cent in 2024.

The share of Medium Enterprises increased from 4 per cent to 9 per cent during the same time. SIDBI's survey report for May 2025 elucidates affirmative findings. 90 per cent of the survey respondents claimed to be using digital payments. 18 per cent had benefited from digital lending platforms. While one-third of the respondents stated that they had adopted at least some form of sustainable practice, an equal proportion also mentioned that limited awareness was the main hindrance to adopting sustainable practices. Mandatory procurement of CPSEs from MSEs gives enterprises the comfort of certainty. While in 2023-24, CPSEs procured ₹74,828 crore from MSEs, the corresponding figure in 2024-25 grew by 25 per cent to ₹93,697 crore.

In recognition of the achievements of MSMEs, National Awards for MSMEs have been instituted to encourage entrepreneurship and enthuse potential risk-takers to emerge as successful entrepreneurs.

The MSME Day is more than just a celebration; it is a vital call for action to strengthen this essential pillar of economies around the world. Awareness among all stakeholders, robust and integrated central databases, strengthened digital public infrastructure for addressing various issues faced by MSMEs, including access to finance, academia-industry collaboration for effective technology transfer and incentives for adopting green technologies are some steps that will cement the role of MSMEs in designing sustainable Viksit Bharat.

(The writers are officers of the Indian Economic Service. Views are personal)

# Rate cuts to reforms: Fiscal policy must power India's growth engine

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) statement on June 6 announced a reduction in the Repo rate by 50 basis points to 5.50 per cent, cumulatively cutting the repo rate by 100 basis points since February.

It also surprised the economy by reducing the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) by 100 basis points to 3 per cent. This expansionary monetary policy (MP) move is expected to boost economic activity, as banks can borrow more and lend it to consumers and investors at lower interest rates. Following this, four public sector banks have already reduced the repo-related lending rates. The reduction in CRR further supports the lending spree, as it would release ₹2.5 lakh crore, giving banks further impetus to lend.

MP could choose to be accommodative, as the inflation rate has been at a comfortable target level of an average of 4 per cent, and the outlook for the year is being further revised downwards to 3.7 per cent.

Hence, inflation is not a major concern for now, but growth remains below expectation, with the projected growth for 2025-26 being 6.5 per cent, the same as the actual real growth in 2024-25.

With enough leverage provided to support growth, MPC has announced a reversal to a neutral stance for the future, and the economy cannot expect further cuts in the interest rate easily. With this future course of action of MP, they have set the ball rolling for fiscal policy (FP) measures to take the onus of stimulating growth.

The Government will now have to proactively take measures to ensure optimistic consumer, investor and producer confidence, the lifelines of a resilient economy. With the uncertainties looming due to expected tariff impositions from the US and subsequent trade wars, the Government has to be vigilant of even the smallest aberrations from the norm. On the revenue front, the Government had already reformed the income tax rate structure in this year's Union Budget, with tax exemptions, to boost consumption.

Additionally, there is an expectation of rationalisation and restructuring of the complex GST framework soon. The four-tier slab structure needs to be streamlined and simplified, which will help to incentivise consumption and production.

Further, the Government has planned its capital expenditure policy to lift the business mood. It has already front-loaded the capital expenditure in the current financial year, spending ₹1,59,790 crore in April, an increase of 61 per cent spent in the corresponding month of the previous year. The cost of Government borrowing, according to the RBI, has decreased over the years, releasing liquidity, which, if provided as



loans to the states, with assured productive expenditure, can encourage consumption, and investment, and strengthen the macroeconomy.

On the global front, India is gaining strength, as global investors are shifting their manufacturing base to India, due to production link incentives, strong global supply chains, easing of business policies, low labour cost, and high demand, to name a few.

Further, the IMF World Economic Outlook (April 2025) shows India acquiring the status of the fourth-largest economy in the world, surpassing Japan in terms of nominal GDP as reported by BVR Subrahmanyam, Chief, Niti Aayog.

Analysts, however, caution that this does not guarantee the improvement in the internal socioeconomic issues such as poverty, health, education, large income inequalities, etc. With a neutral MP stance for the future, now the Government needs to play its cards well amidst the domestic and global uncertainties for a better-performing economy.

### Conclusion

The MPC's expansionary measures, including rate cuts and CRR reduction, aim to revive growth amidst subdued inflation. With monetary policy turning neutral, the spotlight shifts to fiscal policy. The Government must now drive momentum through tax reforms, GST rationalisation, and increased capital spending. Despite global headwinds, India's rising global stature and investor interest offer optimism. However, sustained progress depends on addressing domestic socioeconomic disparities while navigating uncertain global tides with prudent fiscal strategies.

(The writer is an Assistant Professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, Delhi University. Views are personal)



ISHITA G TRIPATHY



ANURADHA GURU



KAJLEEN KAUR



# Trump officials to give classified briefing on Iran strikes

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

Senators are set to meet with top national security officials on Thursday as many question President Donald Trump's decision to bomb three Iranian nuclear sites — and whether those strikes were ultimately successful.

The classified briefing, which was originally scheduled for Tuesday and was delayed, also comes as the Senate is expected to vote this week on a resolution that would require congressional approval if Trump decides to strike Iran again.

Democrats and some Republicans, have said that the White House overstepped its authority when it failed to seek the advice of Congress and they want to know more

about the intelligence that Trump relied on when he authorised the attacks.

“Senators deserve full transparency and the administration has a legal obligation to inform Congress precisely about what is happening,” said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, who said Tuesday that it was “outrageous” that the Senate and House briefings were postponed. A similar briefing for House members was pushed to Friday.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth are expected to brief the senators on Thursday.

Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard was scheduled to be at the Tuesday briefing, but will not be attending, according to a person familiar with the schedule.



President Donald Trump, right, speaking at the NATO summit

PTI

The briefing could be contentious as questions have swirled around Trump's decision to strike Iran and whether the attacks were successful.

A preliminary US intelligence report found this week that Iran's nuclear programme had been set back only a few months, contradicting statements from Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the status of Iran's nuclear facilities, according to two people familiar with the report.

The people were not authorised to address the matter

## EU meets to discuss Russia

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Brussels

The heads of the European Union's (EU) 27 member nations will meet on Thursday in Brussels to discuss tougher sanctions on Russia, ways to prevent painful new US tariffs and how to make their voices heard in the Middle East conflicts.

Most of the leaders will arrive from a brief but intense NATO summit where they pledged a big boost in defense spending, and papered over some of their differences with US President Donald Trump. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will join the EU summit by videoconference, after meeting Trump on Wednesday.

US-led NATO downgraded Ukraine from a top priority to a side player this week, but Russia's war in Ukraine remains of paramount concern for the EU. Members will be discussing an 18th round of sanctions against Russia and whether to maintain a price cap on Russian oil, measures that some nations oppose because it



European Parliament President Roberta Metsola, left, speaking with Portugal's Prime Minister Luis Montenegro as they arrive for an EU summit at the European Council building in Brussels

PTI

could raise energy prices.

Meanwhile, Trump's threatened tariffs are weighing on the EU, which negotiates trade deals on behalf of all 27 member countries. He lashed out at Spain on Wednesday for not spending more on defense and suggested yet more tariffs.

France's president called Trump to task for starting a trade war with longtime allies.

European leaders are also concerned about fallout from the wars in the Middle East, and

the EU is pushing to revive diplomatic negotiations with Iran over its nuclear programme. EU members have internal disagreements to overcome. They are divided over what to do about European policy toward Israel because of its conduct in Gaza.

And left-leaning parties are attacking European Commissioner Ursula von Der Leyen's pivot away from the EU's climate leadership in favour of military investment.

## California must change transgender policies: US

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Sacramento

The Trump administration said on Wednesday that California must change its policies allowing transgender girls to compete on sports teams consistent with their gender identity.

The US Department of Education said it determined California's education department and governing body for high school sports are violating Title IX, a federal law banning sex discrimination in education.

The federal Government said California must agree to change its policies in 10 days or “risk imminent enforcement action.”

The administration could otherwise refer the state to the US Justice Department, the Education Department said.

California, though, said it has no plans to change its policies. “The California Department of Education believes all students should have the opportunity to learn

and play at school and we have consistently applied existing law in support of students' rights to do so,” agency spokesperson Liz Sanders said in a statement.

US Education Secretary Linda McMahon invoked Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom's remarks on his podcast in March questioning the fairness of trans girls competing in girls sports. “The Trump Administration will relentlessly enforce Title IX protections for women and girls, and our findings today make clear that California has failed to adhere to its obligations under federal law,” she said in a statement.

She told Fox News the agency may pull federal funding if the state does not comply.

The Education Department said the state should apologise and restore awards to girls who lost sports titles to trans athletes, and notify school sports programmes that receive federal funding that Title IX prohibits trans girls

from participating in girls sports.

The announcement comes weeks after a trans student athlete garnered national attention over her participation in the California high school state track and field championship.

The student, AB Hernandez, placed first in the girls high jump and triple jump and second in the long jump. The California Interscholastic Federation, which ran the meet, awarded gold and silver medals to both Hernandez and other competitors who would have placed had she not participated. It was the first time the federation made such a rule change.

The issue is part of a nationwide battle over the rights of transgender youth in which states have limited transgender girls from participating on girls sports teams, barred gender-affirming surgeries for minors and required parents to be notified if a child changes their pronouns at

school. At least two dozen states have laws barring transgender women and girls from participating in certain sports competitions. Some of the policies have been blocked in court.

Former California Gov Jerry Brown signed a law in 2013 allowing students to participate in sex-segregated school programmes, including on sports teams and use bathrooms and other facilities that align with their gender identity.

Newsom spokesperson Izzy Gardon said McMahon's threat to pull federal funding over the state's policy was “dramatic, fake and completely divorced from reality.” The California Interscholastic Federation declined to respond to the announcement, saying it does not comment on legal matters.

The federation is violating the US Constitution by allowing trans girls to compete in sex-segregated sports consistent with their gender identity, said Harmeet Dhillon, US

assistant attorney general for civil rights, in a letter after the state track and field finals.

The California Family Council, a conservative group that opposes trans girls' competition in girls sports, applauded the federal government's findings Wednesday.

“This decision is a critical step toward restoring fairness and protecting the integrity of girls' sports in our state,” Sophia Lorey, an advocate for the group, said in a statement.

But Equality California, an LGBTQ+ advocacy organisation, said the findings were a “dangerous distortion of Title IX and a direct attack on transgender youth in California.”

“Let's be clear: this isn't about fairness in sports and never has been — it's about a federal administration weaponising civil rights laws to target transgender students and force California to comply with their hateful anti-transgender agenda,” Tony Hoang, the group's executive director, said in a statement.

## Colombia's president Petro signs labour overhaul into law

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Bogota (Colombia)

Colombian President Gustavo Petro signed into law on Wednesday a controversial labour overhaul with the potential to profoundly shift the balance of power from employers to workers, a key victory for the left-wing leader even as Congress compelled him to scale back his more radical ambitions.

The enactment of the law marks a milestone for a president who has struggled to

deliver on his promises to reduce inequality in one of the region's most unequal nations. But it's faced opposition from business leaders and Colombian government bonds have suffered as markets worry about the fiscal and economic effects.

The law increases overtime pay for salaried workers and limits the use of short-term contract workers, while requiring companies to provide medical coverage and social security for gig workers like food delivery drivers. It also promises student interns proper con-



tracts and benefits like vacation time and severance pay.

Many of Petro's efforts to vastly expand social programs have stalled in Congress, with lawmakers shooting down this labour law twice. Lawmakers let the legislation squeak by last week after Petro's moved to call a public referendum.

Petro signs the law at the home of Simón Bolívar

Petro signed the legislation at the historic home of 19th-century war hero Simón Bolívar, who led South America's fight against imperial Spain.

## Ecuador recaptures drug trafficker wanted in United States

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Quito (Ecuador)

A fugitive drug trafficker wanted by authorities in Ecuador and the United States was recaptured more than a year after he escaped from prison in the Andean nation, Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa announced on Wednesday.

José Adolfo Macías, alias “Fito,” who led a gang called “Los Choneros” in Ecuador and has been indicted in New York City on charges he imported thousands of pounds of cocaine into the United States, was captured in the Ecuadorian city of Manta, his

hometown, officials in Ecuador said.

Interpol had issued an arrest warrant for Macías after his mysterious prison escape in early 2024 from the Guayaquil Regional Prison, where he was serving a 34-year sentence for drug trafficking. Ecuadorian authorities have yet to explain how he escaped. They only learned of his escape when a military contingent arrived to transfer him to another maximum-security prison but didn't find him in his cell.

The Ecuadorian army confirmed Macías' recapture in what appeared to be the basement of a house. A video provided by the army showed

the moment of the arrest, with a uniformed officer aiming a gun at the head of the drug trafficker, who gave his full name. The officers had found him hiding in a small hole beneath what appeared to be a kitchen counter.

Wednesday's announcement of his arrest comes in the same week that Federico Gómez, alias “Fede,” the leader of another gang called Las Águilas, was confirmed to have escaped from an Ecuadorian prison.

Last year, US Attorney John Durham said in a news release that Macías led Los Choneros and its “network of assassins and drug and

weapon traffickers” since at least 2020. With an extensive criminal record including charges of murder and organised crime, Macías has cultivated a cult status among fellow gang members and the public in his home country.

While behind bars in 2023, he released a video addressed to “the Ecuadorian people” while flanked by armed men. He also threw parties in prison, where he had access to everything from liquor to roosters for cock-fighting matches. The seven-count indictment unsealed in Brooklyn charges Macías and an unidentified co-defendant with international

cocaine distribution, conspiracy and weapons counts, including smuggling firearms from the United States.

Los Choneros employed people to buy firearms, components and ammunition in the United States and smuggle them into Ecuador, according to the indictment. Cocaine would flow into the United States with the help of Mexican cartels.

“Los Choneros operated a vast network responsible for the shipment and distribution of multi-ton quantities of cocaine from South America through Central America and Mexico to the United States and elsewhere,” the indictment says.

## Serbian held ahead of anti-corruption rally

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Belgrade (Serbia)

Police in Serbia have arrested several people accused of allegedly plotting to overthrow the government as tensions soared ahead of a major anti-Government rally planned this weekend in the capital Belgrade.

Police said six were detained on Wednesday evening, suspected of “preparing criminal acts against the constitutional order and security of Serbia” and “calling for violent change of the constitutional order.”

At least one other university student was arrested earlier this week accused of preparing “an act of terrorism” based on his private conversations over a mobile phone.

Hundreds on Thursday demonstrated against the arrest in Belgrade. Protesting university students have called Saturday's rally to press their demand for an early election after nearly eight months of almost daily anti-corruption demonstrations that have shaken the populist government of President Aleksandar Vucic.

Persistent protests started in November after a renovated rail

station canopy collapsed that killed 16 people and which many blamed on rampant government corruption and negligence in state infrastructure projects. University students have been a key force behind the nationwide movement.

Vucic and his right-wing Serbian Progressive Party have refused the students' demand for a snap vote, instead accusing the protesters of planning to spur violence at Saturday's gathering.

Police alleged the detained group met last week in a hotel in the central town of Kraljevo to plan a violent change of government and attacks on police and pro-government media outlets. One of the suspects had a gun and ammunition, they said.

No other details were immediately available. Serbian media reported that those arrested include an opposition politician, veteran of the wars of the 1990s, and others.

Authorities made similar arrests back in March, ahead of what was the biggest ever anti-Government protest in the Balkan country, which drew hundreds of thousands of people.

## FDA expands warnings COVID-19 vaccines

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said Wednesday it has expanded existing warnings on the two leading COVID-19 vaccines about a rare heart side effect mainly seen in young men. Myocarditis, a type of heart inflammation that is usually mild, emerged as a complication after the first shots became widely available in 2021.

Prescribing information from both Pfizer and Moderna already advises doctors about the issue.

In April, the FDA sent letters to both drugmakers asking them to update and expand the warnings to add more detail about the problem and to cover

a larger group of patients.

While the FDA can mandate label changes, the process is often more of a negotiation with companies.

Specifically, the new warning lists the risk of myocarditis as eight cases per 1 million people who got the 2023-2024 COVID-19 shots between the ages of six months and 64 years old. The label also notes that the problem has been most common among males aged 12 to 24. The previous label said the problem mostly occurs in 12- to 17-year-olds.

The FDA's labelling change appears to conflict with some prior findings of scientists elsewhere in the US Government.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention previously concluded there was no

increased risk of myocarditis detected in Government vaccine injury databases for COVID-19 shots dating back to 2022.

Officials also noted that cases tend to resolve quickly and are less severe than those associated with COVID-19 infection itself, which can also cause myocarditis. The FDA announcement came as new vaccine advisers appointed by Health Secretary Kennedy met to debate the continuing use of COVID-19 vaccines for key groups, including pregnant women and children.

It's the first meeting of the CDC advisory panel since Kennedy abruptly dismissed all 17 members of the group, naming a new panel that includes several members with a history of anti-vaccine statements.

## Afro-Mexican communities in US devastated by Hurricane Erick

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Mexico City

Afro-descendant communities along Mexico's Pacific coast are calling on President Claudia Sheinbaum's administration for an immediate response a week after Hurricane Erick, saying poorer and predominantly Black communities have been disproportionately impacted by hurricanes over the past three years.

Hurricane Erick rapidly strengthened over the Pacific, making landfall as a Category 3 storm in the Costa Chica's coastal mountains south of Acapulco.

It knocked out power for nearly 300,000 people, trig-



gered landslides and flooding and killed a 1-year-old boy, who drowned in a swollen river.

In rural swaths of the coastal states of Oaxaca and

Guerrero, rights organisations reported that Afro-descendant communities — comprising more than 80 per cent of the population — were devastated by the hurricane and

have received little aid from Mexico's government. Photos and videos of towns in the region following the hurricane show collapsed tin roof houses, fields of uprooted trees and

flooded villages.

The destruction has driven these communities to appeal for help and aid supplies on social media, highlighting the hurricane's aftermath as further evidence of the historic neglect faced by ethnic minorities in Mexico and the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on some of the most vulnerable communities.

“This devastation is a direct consequence not only of climate change but also of the structural, institutional and systemic racism that has kept the Afro-Mexican people marginalised from development,” wrote MUA Afro, an Afro-Mexican women's collective in the coastal states, in a post calling for aid.



# Thailand bans cannabis sales without prescription

**ASSOCIATED PRESS ■**  
Bangkok

Thailand is further tightening control of cannabis by banning sales of the plant to those without prescriptions. Thailand became the first country in Asia to decriminalise cannabis in 2022, in a move that boosted Thailand's tourism and farming, and spawned thousands of shops. But the country has faced public backlash over allegations that under-regulation has made the drug available to children and caused addiction. Health Minister Somsak Thepsutin signed an order Monday that bans shops from selling cannabis to customers without a prescription. It also seeks to reclassify cannabis buds as a controlled herb.

Phanurat Lukboon, secretary-general of the Office of the Narcotics Control Board, said on Wednesday that his agency is ready to study and implement the change in regulations.

The order will take effect when it is published in the Royal Gazette, although it was unclear when that would happen.

The ruling Phue Thai Party previously promised to criminalise the drug again, but faced strong resistance from

its former partner in the coalition government, the Bhumjaithai Party, which supported the decriminalisation. Bhumjaithai quit the coalition last week over a leaked phone call between Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and former Cambodian leader Hun Sen. Somsak told reporters Tuesday that he would like to relist cannabis as a narcotic in the future. The move came after officials last month revealed that cannabis smuggling cases involving tourists had soared in recent months.

Phanurat said that a study done by his agency last year found the number of people addicted to cannabis had spiked significantly after it was decriminalised.

Government spokesperson Jirayu Houngsab said in a statement Tuesday that the government ordered the Health Ministry to tighten control on sales of cannabis because "many shops opened to sell cannabis both for recreational and medical purposes, allowing easy access for children and general people, which contradicts the government's purpose to crack down on drugs".

A group of cannabis advocates said Wednesday that the change in regulations was politically motivated.

# Myanmar drugs worth confiscated illegal around \$300 million

**ASSOCIATED PRESS ■**  
Yangon (Myanmar)

Nearly \$300 million worth of confiscated illegal drugs were destroyed in Myanmar's major cities on Thursday to mark the annual International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, officials said.

The drug burnings came nearly a month after UN experts warned of unprecedented levels of methamphetamine production and trafficking from Southeast Asia's Golden Triangle region and Myanmar's eastern Shan State in particular.

The country has long been a major source of illegal drugs destined for East and Southeast Asia, despite repeated efforts to crack down. The UN agency labelled it in 2023 as the world's largest opium producer.

In the country's biggest city, Yangon, a massive pile of drugs worth more than \$ 117 million went up in a spectacular blaze.

The destroyed drugs included opium, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, ketamine and the stimulant known as ice, or crystal meth, Yangon Police Brig Gen Sein Lwin said in a speech at a drug-burning ceremony.

Similar events also occurred in the country's second-largest city of Mandalay, and in Taunggyi, the capital of eastern Myanmar's Shan state, all areas close to where the drugs are produced. A police official from the capital Naypyitaw told the Associated Press that the substances burnt in three locations were worth 297.95 million US dollars. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the information has not yet been publicly announced.

Myanmar has a long history of drug production linked to political and economic insecurity caused by decades of armed conflict.

Eastern Myanmar is part of



the infamous Golden Triangle, where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet. The production of opium and heroin in historically flourished there,

milicias, some of them partners in the drug trade.

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime said in a report in May that the political crisis across the country after the military takeover in 2021 — that has led to what is now a civil war — has turbocharged growth of the methamphetamine trades.

That has caused the flow of drugs to surge "across not only East and Southeast Asia, but also increasingly into South Asia, in particular Northeast India," the report said.

Drugs are increasingly trafficked from Myanmar to Cambodia, mostly through Laos, as well as through maritime routes "linking Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, with Sabah in Malaysia serving as a key transit hub.



**NEW OKHLA INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**  
Administrative Building, Sector-6, Noida G.B. Nagar,(U.P)  
Website : [www.noidaauthorityonline.com](http://www.noidaauthorityonline.com)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

This is to be informed to the general public that the building (W Mall) constructed on the land of Khasra number 412 of village Hajipur is illegal and the file is in moment for the sealing/demolition process of the said building, which is to be demolished soon. Some people/land mafias have constructed /running shops for commercial activities on the notified land of Noida Authority and are selling it to the general public. This is completely against the rules of the Authority.

Therefore, the general public is conscious not to purchase illegal shops constructed in the name of (W Mall) on the land of Khasra number 412 of village Hajipur, so that the general public does not suffer any financial loss.

**Senior Manager**  
**Work Circle-8, Noida**

**CLEAN, GREEN, SAFE & SECURE NOIDA**



**DELHI TRANSCO LIMITED**

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

DTI intends to invite online tender for Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220/66/33KV G1S Sub-Station with complete civil works & automation at existng 220KV GIS Maharani Bagh Substation, New Delhi (India) on Turnkey Basis against Tender No. T25R220466.

For complete details of the tender please visit websites :-  
<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>  
(Tender ID No. 2025\_DTL\_274356\_1)  
and [www.dtl.gov.in](http://www.dtl.gov.in)  
(Tender Reference No. -DTL-9650-250625)

Last date for bid submission: 25.07.2025 at 1.30 P.M.

All corrigendum ,addendum, amendments, time extensions, clarifications etc. to this e-tender will be hosted on the above website only. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updatd.



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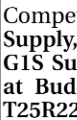
NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

DTI intends to invite online tender for Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220/33KV G1S Sub-Station with complete civil works & Automation at Sarojini Nagar, Delhi on Turnkey Basis against Tender No. T25R220465.

For complete details of the tender please visit websites :-  
<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>  
(Tender ID No. 2025\_DTL\_273856\_1)  
and [www.dtl.gov.in](http://www.dtl.gov.in)  
(Tender Reference No. -DTL\_9654-260625)

Last date for bid submission: 25.07.2025 at 1.30 P.M.

All corrigendum ,addendum, amendments, time extensions, clarifications etc. to this e-tender will be hosted on the above website only. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updatd.



**DELHI TRANSCO LIMITED**

NOTICE INVITING e-TENDERS

DTI intends to invite online Two Part Domestic Competitive Bidding (DCB) tender for Design, Engineering, Supply, Erection, Testing & Commissioning of 220/66KV G1S Sub-Station with complete civil works & automation at Budella, Delhi on Turnkey Basis against Tender No. T25R220464.

For complete details of the tender please visit websites :-  
<https://govtprocurement.delhi.gov.in>  
(Tender ID No. 2025\_DTL\_274404\_1)  
and [www.dtl.gov.in](http://www.dtl.gov.in)  
(Tender Reference No. -DTL-9651-250625)

Last date for bid submission: 25.07.2025 at 1.30 P.M.

All corrigendum ,naddendum, amendments, time extensions, clarifications etc. to this e-tender will be hosted on the above website only. Bidders should regularly visit website to keep themselves updatd.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Known to all that my client Smt. Laxmi Devi owner of the THIRD FLOOR, PLOT NO. 10, AREA 114.33 SQ. YDS., KHASRA NO.-36/25 RAJINDRA PARK, NANGLOI, NEW DELHI and Smt. Laxmi Devi, owner of the property situated at Smt. Ratan Kaur vide Notarized GPA, ATS and executed 04.05.1987, Now Smt. Laxmi Devi wants to sell above said property. And it is informed that any deal with said documents by any person except my said client and said institution regarding said property, shall be deemed as null and void. If any person having any claim, right in said property then he may contact and hanover the same and apprise his claim to undersigned within 15 days of this publication.

**AD REM LEGAL SOLUTION**  
Ch. No. 760 -Dwarka Court Sector-10, Dwarka, New Delhi-75  
**Mobile :- 9899013918**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

To be known to all that, P Sikand w/o Smt. Lalpat Rai Sikand resident of Flat No.3397, Second Floor,Pocket-3, Sector-D, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi is owner/mutatee and in physical possession of Flat No.3397, on Second Floor, Cat 3F5-II,Pocket-3 Sector-D, Situated at Vasant Kunj, New Delhi, which has been allotted by DDA vide File No.F125(4289)1983 /JK/II and approved for conversion from lease hold into free hold of said flat in D.D.A. The original allocation Letter, and other related documents of said flat have been lost. An F.I.R. to this effect has been lodged. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest, having any objection or found in possession of original documents may write/contact with above named person at above address/ Phone No. 956064477 within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice. If any person claiming any right, interest, objections with respect to this flat can personally inform or write to Dy. Director(LAB) H/D Block 3rd Floor,Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi.

**PUBLIC Notice**

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Devisender Kumar Maurya is the owner of Land measuring 34 sq. yards, i.e., 50.16 sq. meters, out of Khasra no. 882 situated at village Mohra Jhabhabad, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. through Sale Deed dated 23.11.2019 as doc. No. 7150 executed by Mr. Bir Singh in favour of Mr. Devisender Kumar Maurya in respect of said property.

Mr. Devisender Kumar Maurya intends to transfer the ownership of above-mentioned property by way of Sale Deed to Ms. Sapna Kumari. Subsequently, Ms. Sapna Kumari is in the process of mortgaging the said Plot with Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited. Any objections or concerns regarding this transaction should be raised within a period of 15 days from the date of this public notice. Any objections submitted after the completion of this 15-day period will not be considered binding with respect to the said property or the interests of our client.

If anyone wishes to raise an objection, please do so within the stipulated 15-days period by contacting Legal Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) at Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-4/A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301. Landline No. +9102-04499711, e-mail: [accounts@vynorth.in](mailto:accounts@vynorth.in)

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

NOTICE is hereby given to the General Public that Mr. Dilip Singh ("seller") s/o Shri Prem Kishore, is selling a Portion admeasuring 25 square yards of his Freehold property, admeasuring 133 square yards in total, bearing address Property No. N-176 Out of Ract No. 21, Killa No. 242 situated at Village Khyala, Vidma Garden, New Delhi ("said property"), to Mohd. Uvais Khan and Mrs. Nshat Parveen ("intending buyers").

The seller acquired the right over the said property by virtue of General Power of Attorney executed/dated on 03.01.2008 by Mr. Krishan Lal in favour of the seller, in respect of the said property, along with Notarized WILL and Agreement to Sell. The property is now being sold to the Intending Borrowers and the purchase is being financed by SMCG India Home Finance Co. Ltd. General Public hereby informed that if anybody has any charge/Interest/Title in the said property or any kind of dispute kindly inform the undersigned in writing on the below mentioned address within 07 days of publication of this advertisement.

TAPAN RAGHAV (Advocate)  
Ch. No. G-220, Karkardooma Courts, Delhi-32,  
[raghavtkgal@gmail.com](mailto:raghavtkgal@gmail.com) (M- 88000396522)

**SBFC**

**SBFC FINANCE LIMITED**  
Registered Office : Unit No. 103, C&S Square, Sangam Complex, Andheri Kurla Road, Chakala, Andheri East, Mumbai - 400059  
Telephone: +91 22 67875300 | [www.sbfc.com](http://www.sbfc.com) | CIN : L67190MH2008PLC178270

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
This is to inform the public regarding shifting of SBFC Finance Ltd to Faridabad, (Haryana Branch), which will be effective from 27<sup>th</sup> June, 2025 to 12<sup>th</sup> October, 2025.  
Old address: Plot No 731, Mohna Road, Yadav Prem Nagar, Ballabgarh, Faridabad, Haryana-121004  
New address: SBFC Finance LTD Shop No- 125 First floor , Sec- 3 , Huda Market Ballabgarh Haryana 121004.  
You can reach out to our nearby branch for servicing related requests.

For SBFC Finance Limited

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

**TO WHOMSOEVER IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to inform general public that the following 718 Equity Shares of **Escorts Kubota Ltd** having its Registered Office at 15/5 Mathura Road, Faridabad, Haryana 121003. registered in the name of **(Late) Kantilal Manilal Mehta** under **L. F. No ESC0006858** bearing Certificates Nos 90019085 - 90019095, 90019097-90019098 and 90019102-90019106 and Distinctive Nos 1317059-1317068, 1563356-1563367, 1913307-1913320, 2284225-2284241, 2813245-2813269, 3177990-3178014, 3890773-3890823, 5916935-5917026, 9388663-9388809, 14472275-14472509, 25923819-25923863, and 32173819-32173863 have been lost by me.

The Public are hereby cautioned against purchasing or dealing with the above mentioned shares

Any person who has any claim in respect of the above shares certificates should lodge such claim with the company at its abovementioned address within 15 days of the publication of this notice after which no claim shall be entertained and the Company shall proceed to issue of Duplicate Share Certificates,

Place : **Mumbai** | Date : **27 - 06 - 2025.**  
**(KAUSHAL KANTILAL MEHTA)**

**RLF LIMITED**

Reg. Office:-14 KMS, Gurgaon Pataudi Road, Village Jhund Sarai Veeran, Distt. Gurgaon Haryana-122001  
Corporate Office:- 14, South Extension-II, New Delhi-110049.  
CIN No. L74999HR1979PLC032747, Phone:-011-26258237,  
Email: [teamunited83@gmail.com](mailto:teamunited83@gmail.com), [compliance@rlftd.com](mailto:compliance@rlftd.com)

**NOTICE TO PARTLY PAID UP PHYSICAL SHAREHOLDERS OF RLF LIMITED**

Notice is hereby given to the shareholders of RLF Limited bearing CIN: L74999HR1979PLC032747, that pursuant to provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 and rules made thereunder along with the compliance of the provisions of Articles of Association of the company, SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015 ("SEBI LODR Regulations") and other applicable regulations, this is to inform you that the Board of Directors of the Company in its meeting held on 22nd January, 2025 by passing a resolution, made call on partly paid equity share amount payable on or before 24th February, 2025 the appointed date and the said notice was issued to partly paid shareholders dated 02th February, 2025. Further, the Board of Directors of the Company in its meeting held on 29th May, 2025 by passing a resolution have decided to ask the holders of partly paid equity shares to pay the amount as per call notice previously sent along with an interest of 12% (Twelve percent) per annum on or before 14th July, 2025 the appointed date and the said notice was issued to partly paid shareholders dated 29th May, 2025.

The members holding partly paid equity shares are now requested to remit on or before the appointed date i.e. 14th July, 2025, the necessary amount of call money in respect of the shares held by you should be made via Cheque/Demand Draft drawn in favour of "RLF Limited" along with Payment Slip enclosed herewith as Annexure A and details of same to be sent to the Corporate Office of the Company situated at D-41, South Extension, Part II, New Delhi-110049 additionally you are requested to email the same at [compliance@rlftd.com](mailto:compliance@rlftd.com). Notices are sent to physical shareholders of partly paid shares at their registered addresses as on record date Tuesday February 04, 2025 (date of determining eligible shareholders for sending last call notice to partly paid shareholders). In case any member of the company has not received the above said notices may contact the company or download the notice from website of the company.

By order of the Board of Directors  
For RLF LIMITED  
Aditya Yashwanth

Date: 26th June, 2025  
Place: Gurgaon

**सार्वजनिक सूचना**

सुचित किया जाता है कोरिमण्डल फटीलाजरस एंड केमिकलस प्राइवेट लिमिटेड गॉव-मसपुर, डाकखाना-चौद मसपुर-134007, अम्बाला, हरियाणा का नाम बदलकर नोवामंडल फटीलाइजर्स एंड केमिकलस प्राइवेट लिमिटेड गॉव-मसपुर, डाकखाना-चौद मसपुर-134007, अम्बाला, हरियाणा कर दिया है।

**इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank**

**अहमदाबाद AHMEDABAD**  
AB-20, Safdarjung Enclave, DDA Shopping Complex, Delhi-110 029.

**FOR PUBLIC NOTICE - LOST DOCUMENTS**  
I Himanshu, s/o Raja Ram Dwivedi, working as a Branch Manager, Indian Bank having its branch at S.D Enclave, AB-20 DDA Shopping Complex Safdarjung Enclave New Delhi, Pin code 110029, hereby informs that Flat buyers Agreement between Pal Infrastructure & Developer Pvt. Ltd and Mr. Amit Kumar bearing property Flat no. 301 Tower B, 3rd Floor, Pal Greens, Sector 78, Faridabad, Haryana, on which Bank has created E.M is not traceable in the bank and, therefore, declared lost. Finder may please inform the bank at the above said address and mobile no. 9369444608.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Reg: Built-up Property Bearing No. C-136 (Old No. C-78), area measuring 75 sqyds (said portion), out of total area measuring 100 sq.yds., falling in Khasra No. 592, Situated in the area of Village Bindpur colony known as New Janki Puri, Block-C, Uttam Nagar, New Delhi (hereinafter referred to as the "said Property").

Be it known to all that our clients, Mr. Kalam Khan & Mrs. Revena Khan (hereinafter called the "Purchasers") intends to purchase the said portion of the said property at below mentioned address: After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not landing on our client.

**Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H.No. 26/11, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar-4, New Delhi-110024**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Re: Industrial Plot No. 110, area measuring 114 sq.mtr., Block-B, Sector-10, Noida, U.P. hereinafter referred to as "said property".

NOTICE is hereby given to the general public that our client, Mr. Rajesh Sikka (hereinafter called the "owner") is the sole and absolute owner of the said property vide Mutation Letter dated 18.06.2024 issued by NOIDA. The said owner has further informed that the said property owned by Mr. Birj Sikka vide allotment letter dated 28.08.1980 and lease deed dated 18.07.1986 executed by NOIDA. And after the unfortunate death of Mr. Birj Sikka this property has been devolved upon Mr. Rajesh Sikka and the said property has been mutated in his favour and he became the owner of the said property. The said owner has, in writing, with documentary evidence, Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 07 days of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received to the notice, the title of the attorney-holder in respect of the said portion shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our clients/Purchasers, in any manner whatsoever.

Any person including Banks, Financial Institution/s, relatives having any claim, right, title or any interest of any nature whatsoever into or upon the said property is hereby called upon to make the same known, in writing, with documentary evidence, Registered AD Post, to the undersigned at the address mentioned herein below within 07 days of publication of this notice and in the event of no response having been received to the notice, the title of the owner in respect of the said property shall be deemed to be clear of any charge or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever and any subsequent claim shall not bind our client/owner, in any manner whatsoever.

**Shivkant Arora, Advocate**  
**For M/s Intelective Law Offices**  
**A-74, Lower Ground Floor,**  
**Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024**

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

**I, Nathu Ram Bhardwaj S/o Late Sh. Sonu Ram Bhardwaj R/o Flat No. B-42, Farihills, Sector 21-D, Faridabad, Haryana-121001 is also known as N. R. Bhardwaj. Both names refer to one and the same person.**

PD(2341)C  
**I, Mamta W/o No.3180147Y Ex-Nk Sudesh Kumar, R/O- 498/1 Garhi Ward No. 7 Garhi Cantt, Dakra, Dehradun Uttarakhand-248003, have changed my name from Mamta to Mamta Thapa, vide affidavit dated 26/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.**

PD(2342)C  
**I, Parmela Devi W/o-16011949H Ex Nk Yashdeep, R/o- Krishan Vatika, Najafgarh, South West Delhi, Delhi-110043, have changed my name from Parmela Devi to Parmila Devi, vide affidavit dated 26/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.**

PD(2343)C  
**I, Nirmla W/o No.4195036P Hav Vinod Chander, R/o- Vill- Chanehata, Post- Sadar, Teh & Dist- Bareilly, U.P.- 243001, have changed my name from Nirmla to Nirmala Devi, vide affidavit dated 26/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.**

PD(2344)C  
**I, Abdul Salaam S/o sh. Alihasan R/o, D-83, New Ashok Nagar, Delhi-110096, have changed my name to Abdul Salam S/o Sh.Alihasan for all future purposes.**

PD(2345)C

**AXIS BANK LTD**

(CIN: L65110GJ1999PLC020769)  
Structured Assets Group – Axis House Plot No. 114, Tower 4, 4th Floor, Sector 128, NOIDA - 201304

**PUBLIC NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR SALE OF SECURITIES**  
Axis Bank Limited ("Axis Bank", "The Bank") hereby invites expression of interest ("EOI") from eligible entities ("Parties") for acquisition of debt of below mentioned company through competitive bidding process. The sale of debt is on "AS IS WHERE IS" and "AS IS WHAT IS" and "WHATEVER THERE IS" and "NO RECOURSE" condition subject to certain terms and conditions.

Name of Borrower	Principal O/s as on 31.03.2025	Reserve Price*
<b>Adel Landmarks Limited</b>	Rs. 49.40 Cr	Rs. 13.75 Cr

\*EOIs shall be entertained only from eligible entities offering 100% upfront payment.

The Schedule of the procedure and timelines for the bid are as under:

Bid Process	Timelines
Authorized Entities to submit Express of Interest	03rd July 2025
Timelines for Due Diligence	04th July 2025 to 11th July 2025
Last date for submission of Bid Documents and Binding Offer	15th July 2025 by 5 PM IST
Declaration of Successful Bidder	16th July 2025
Issuance of Letter of Acceptance by Axis Bank Ltd (Subject to approval of competent Authority of Bank)	18th July 2025
Receipt of Assignment Consideration and execution of Assignment Agreement	30th July 2025

The broad terms of the offer are as follows:-

1. Parties should submit an unconditional Expression of Interest ("EOI") expressing their interest in purchasing the above Securities, by sending e-mail to [subhodh mukherjee@gaxisbank.com](mailto:subhodh mukherjee@gaxisbank.com) or by visiting the website [www.axisbank.com](http://www.axisbank.com) and submission of original hard copy of the EOI at the address mentioned herein below on or before 27th July, 2025 by 05:00 p.m. Local: Subhodh Mukherjee/ N. Bajiraju, Structured Assets Group – Axis House Plot No: 114, Tower 4, 4th Floor, Sector 128, NOIDA - 201304, Mob. No. :- +918130891183.2.Minimum Mark-up Offer above the Reserve Price amount is 5% i.e. the Entities participating in the bidding process has to submit minimum binding offer of Rs. 14.4375 Cr (Rupees Fourteen Crore Forty Three Lacs Seventy Five Thousand Only).3. The Bank reserves the right to accept or reject any ineligible EOI without assigning any reason therefor i.e. it is the discretion of the Bank to accept or reject the EOI. 4. Interested parties after due diligence shall submit their bid application/format of offer (as mentioned below) along with EMD of minimum 5% of the amount specified in Point 2 above from offer of quoting bid price along with the detail of bidder (KYC documents, i.e. Photo ID proof, PAN card & Address proof & E-mail ID). The format of offer will only be provided to the participating Parties whose EOI has been accepted by Bank's EMD is to be deposited in form of Demand Draft drawn in favour of, Axis Bank Ltd, payable at par. Last date for Bid application/Format of offer along with EMD amount is to be deposited by 5:00 PM of 15.07.2025. Full name of the bidder, Address, Contact No. & E-mail should be mentioned at the back of the demand draft (EMD). 6. The EMD amount shall be liable for forfeiture without prior notice, if the successful bidder fails to adhere to the terms and conditions. 7. Nothing in this notice constitutes or will be deemed to constitute any commitment or representation on the part of the Bank to sell the above Securities. Axis Bank reserves the right to cancel the sale for any reason it may deem fit or even without assigning any reason and such cancellation shall not be called in question by the bidders.8. Bank shall have no liability or indemnity obligations (whether express or implied) to any bidder. 9. The successful bidder shall be solely and absolutely responsible for completion of all statutory, regulatory and other compliance.10. This process shall be governed in accordance with the laws of India and the courts of Delhi shall have the exclusive jurisdiction over any dispute arising under this process.11. Cut-off date denotes the date of assignment the Stressed Loan Exposure (s) i.e., all realization/ recoveries made up to the cut-off date shall be retained by the Bank. 12. The transfer of loan exposure will be, on "as is where is basis", "as is what is basis", "whatever there is basis" and "without recourse basis" i.e., with the risk of credit risk, operational risk, legal or any other type of risks associated with the Stressed Loan Exposure(s) transferred to the acquirer and shall not be liable to be revoked for any breach including antecedent breach of any representation and warranty. In the event of non-realization of amount out of assets/securities, the Bank is not liable to pay the interest on or full Bank reserves right to execute the assignment deed as per Bank's format 13. In case any un-devalued LCG BCs yet to be invoked/ transfers of DPGs, which are not yet due, in respect of the specified loan exposure being offered for transfer by the Bank, Bank shall retain charge on the securities related to non-crystallized non-funded facilities. In case of crystallization of non-funded facilities after the transfer of loan exposure, the acquirer of the fund-based loan exposure of the said loan account shall be bound to purchase that converted portion of non-funded based loan exposure (net of cash margin converted into fund-based exposure) from Bank on predefined terms and conditions of notice and Assignment Deed. 14. Taxes, stamp duty and registration charges that may be arising out of the transaction shall be payable by the successful bidder. 15. Bank shall reserve the exclusive right to deal with the claims pertaining to ECGCGTMSSE (both present & future) (cash margin/insurance claims)residue fund/margin etc. of the Stressed Loan Exposure(s) and the successful acquirer/bidder has no right or authority or claim thereon. 16. AXIS BANK reserve the right to add or delete accounts or modify the composition of the Stressed Loan Exposure (Individual/Portfolio) offered for transfer and transfer structure at any stage without assigning any reason. 17. Further, AXIS BANK does not represent and warrant realizations in terms of the valuations of the security reported in the Preliminary Information Memorandum. Further, AXIS BANK also does not warrant and represent that the security is enforceable beyond the extent asserted by its advocates. The bidder(s) are therefore advised to have complete due diligence of the account put for transfer. Bank will not entertain, any claim whatsoever, for any deficiency pointed out in future and will not indemnify/make losses good to the successful buyer

18. Notwithstanding anything contained herein above, Bank reserve the right to examine the EOI and accept or reject any or all or some of the EOIs at its sole discretion, and neither this notification nor delivery of an EOI nor the consideration thereof by Bank shall be construed as creating any kind of right or interest of any interested party to be considered any further in the process or entitle them to any recourse against the lenders. 19. Notwithstanding anything contained in this notice, neither AXIS BANK, nor its employees or its advisors accept any responsibility or liability, whatsoever, in respect of any statements or omissions herein, or the accuracy, completeness or reliability of information, and shall incur no liability, under any law, statute, rules or regulations as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of this PUBLICATION, even if any loss or damage is caused by any act or omission on the part of Axis Bank or its employees or its advisors, whether negligent or otherwise. 20. AXIS BANK, may, at its sole discretion, add, amend, vary, modify, delete, any of the conditions, date etc. of this notice as may be deemed necessary in the light of the facts and circumstances and also issue one or more Agendas. Corrigendum as required without giving any reasons thereto. 21. AXIS BANK reserve the right not to go ahead with the proposed transfer at any stage, without assigning any reason. Axis Bank has absolute and unpeachable right with respect to all the matters starting from receiving, considering, accepting the bid, or transferring the specific loan exposure and such right without limitation encompasses right to not to receive, not to consider, not to accept the bid and decide not to transfer the specific loan exposure. AXIS BANK would not entertain any claim from any acquirer in this regard. The decision of the AXIS BANK in this regard shall be final and binding. 22. The Assignment will be done on prescribed format. Any changes in the prescribed format will be accepted only if approved by the Bank considering the specific facts of the transaction and any changes in the basic premise of the draft agreement will not be accepted. 23. The Bids submitted by bidder(s) shall be unconditional, irrevocable & binding in all respect. Bidder(s) cannot withdraw the bid once submitted & successful bidder has to complete the transaction related to transfer of the loan exposure where they are declared successful bidder in the time bound program as notified in the notice. Conditional and contingent bids are liable to be disqualified by the Bank. 24. Under no circumstances successful bidder can refuse to complete the transaction citing any reason or defects/ objection in any loan exposure. If they do so, the matter will be reported to RBI/regulator & their association concerned for taking necessary action. The Bank may also consider in this notice, neither AXIS BANK, nor its employees or its advisors accept any responsibility or liability, whatsoever, in respect of any statements or omissions herein, or the accuracy, completeness or reliability of information, and shall incur no liability, under any law, statute, rules or regulations as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of this PUBLICATION, even if any loss or damage is caused by any act or omission on the part of Axis Bank or its employees or its advisors, whether negligent or otherwise. 20. AXIS BANK, may, at its sole discretion, add, amend, vary, modify, delete, any of the conditions, date etc. of this notice as may be deemed necessary in the light of the facts and circumstances and also issue one or more Agendas. Corrigendum as required without giving any reasons thereto. 21. AXIS BANK reserve the right not to go ahead with the proposed transfer at any stage, without assigning any reason. 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The Bank may also consider in this notice, neither AXIS BANK, nor its employees or its advisors accept any responsibility or liability, whatsoever, in respect of any statements or omissions herein, or the accuracy, completeness or reliability of information, and shall incur no liability, under any law, statute, rules or regulations as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of this PUBLICATION, even if any loss or damage is caused by any act or omission on the part of Axis Bank or its employees or its advisors, whether negligent or otherwise. 20. AXIS BANK, may, at its sole discretion, add, amend, vary, modify, delete, any of the conditions, date etc. of this notice as may be deemed necessary in the light of the facts and circumstances and also issue one or more Agendas. Corrigendum as required without giving any reasons thereto. 21. AXIS BANK reserve the right not to go ahead with the proposed transfer at any stage, without assigning any reason. Axis Bank has absolute and unpeachable right with respect to all the matters starting from receiving, considering, accepting the bid, or transferring the specific loan exposure and such right without limitation encompasses right to not to receive, not to consider, not to accept the bid and decide not to transfer the specific loan exposure. AXIS BANK would not entertain any claim from any acquirer in this regard. The decision of the AXIS BANK in this regard shall be final and binding. 22. The Assignment will be done on prescribed format. Any changes in the prescribed format will be accepted only if approved by the Bank considering the specific facts of the transaction and any changes in the basic premise of the draft agreement will not be accepted. 23. The Bids submitted by bidder(s) shall be unconditional, irrevocable & binding in all respect. Bidder(s) cannot withdraw the bid once submitted & successful bidder has to complete the transaction related to transfer of the loan exposure where they are declared successful bidder in the time bound program as notified in the notice. Conditional and contingent bids are liable to be disqualified by the Bank. 24. Under no circumstances successful bidder can refuse to complete the transaction citing any reason or defects/ objection in any loan exposure. If they do so, the matter will be reported to RBI/regulator & their association concerned for taking necessary action. The Bank may also consider in this notice, neither AXIS BANK, nor its employees or its advisors accept any responsibility or liability, whatsoever, in respect of any statements or omissions herein, or the accuracy, completeness or reliability of information, and shall incur no liability, under any law, statute, rules or regulations as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of this PUBLICATION, even if any loss or damage is caused by any act or omission on the part of Axis Bank or its employees or its advisors, whether negligent or otherwise. 20. AXIS BANK, may, at its sole discretion, add, amend, vary, modify, delete, any of the conditions, date etc. of this notice as may be deemed necessary in the light of the facts and circumstances and also issue one or more Agendas. Corrigendum as required without giving any reasons thereto. 21. AXIS BANK reserve the right not to go ahead with the proposed transfer at any stage, without assigning any reason. Axis Bank has absolute and unpeachable right with respect to all the matters starting from receiving, considering, accepting the bid, or transferring the specific loan exposure and such right without limitation encompasses right to not to receive, not to consider, not to accept the bid and decide not to transfer the specific loan exposure. AXIS BANK would not entertain any claim from any acquirer in this regard. The decision of the AXIS BANK in this regard shall be final and binding. 22. The Assignment will be done on prescribed format. Any changes in the prescribed format will be accepted only if approved by the Bank considering the specific facts of the transaction and any changes in the basic premise of the draft agreement will not be accepted. 23. The Bids submitted by bidder(s) shall be unconditional, irrevocable & binding in all respect. 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# Swiftly pass on rate cut to customers: RBI to banks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

**A**RBI report has suggested that all banks should bring down their lending rates for speedy transmission of the policy rate, which was lowered by 50 basis points earlier this month. An article published in the Reserve Bank's June Bulletin stressed that the financial conditions remained conducive to facilitating an efficient transmission of rate cuts.

Most of the banks have already passed on the rate cuts.

It may be mentioned here that several large banks, including SBI, Bank of Baroda, and HDFC Bank, have already passed on the benchmark lending rate-linked interest rate to borrowers by the same margin within days of the RBI cutting repo rate by a jumbo 50 bps on June 6. Besides reducing the repo rate by 50 bps earlier this month, the RBI had announced a reduction in the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by



100 bps to 3 per cent of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) in a staggered manner during the latter half of the year. "Financial conditions remained conducive to facilitate an efficient transmission of rate cuts to the credit market," said an article on 'State of the Economy' in the Reserve Bank's June 2025 Bulletin.

The reduction in CRR would

release primary liquidity of about ₹ 2.5 lakh crore into the banking system by December 2025. "Besides providing durable liquidity, it will reduce the cost of funds for banks, thereby facilitating monetary policy transmission to the credit market," the article added.

The central bank, however, said that the views expressed in the Bulletin article are those of

the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India. The article noted that the 50-bps cut in the policy repo rate during February-April 2025 reflected in banks' repo-linked external benchmark-based lending rates (EBLRs) and marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR).

Consequently, the weighted average lending rate (WALR) on fresh and outstanding rupee loans of banks declined by 6 bps and 17 bps, respectively, during the period February-April 2025.

On the deposit side, the weighted average domestic term deposit rates (WADTDRs) on fresh and outstanding deposits moderated by 27 bps and 1 bp, respectively, during the same period.

According to the article, during the current easing cycle (February-April 2025), the decline in the WALR on fresh rupee loans was marginally higher for public sector banks (PSBs) as compared to private sector banks (PVBs).

# Build trust into governance: Rapido co-founder

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

**R**ide-hailing unicorn Rapido's co-founder Pavan Guntupalli believes 'trust' is a critical currency in building lasting businesses, and said founders must embed it into every aspect of their company from governance to product design and daily operations.

Guntupalli said in an interview that the founders of Rapido have middle-class roots, something that has deeply shaped their understanding of value and customer pain-points.

"Not just in the corporate governance aspect, but also in the aspect of your product, of the way we are running business, the key important ingredient for long-term foundation and growth is trust, earning the trust of your captains (drivers), users, and stakeholders," Guntupalli said in a recent interview. Trust, he said, cannot be 'binary' and must be upheld with consistent efforts to ensure total, and not partial, success. His advice to founders: Take every step after consider-



ing if it is going to hurt the trust of stakeholders.

"That's the kind of a filter question that I would like all of us to ask. And that is something we ask ourselves every single time we do something," he said. Guntupalli was responding to a question on the advice he would give startup founders in the backdrop of corporate governance issues that have confronted the space in the recent past, with instances of weak oversight, unchecked founder dominance, and lack of transparency.

In the latest of the high-decibel cases, Gensol Engineering, its promoters and ride-hailing

services BluSmart Mobility (promoted by Anmol Singh Jaggi) faced regulatory heat over alleged fund diversions and corporate governance lapses. On the practices that he believes startups must embrace for upholding high standards of governance, Guntupalli said as a large gig economy job creator in the country, Rapido has always been of the view that it must act with a sense of responsibility.

"So one of the things we at Rapido always believed is when you are the largest gig economy job creator in the country, when you are doing the doing almost 40 lakh rides every sin-

gle day we already feel a responsibility both towards our users, towards our captains (drivers), and towards our stakeholders who have been a part of this journey," he said.

Guntupalli further noted that "... In our governance, whether or not we are fundraising, we make sure our audits are done by external and verified third parties. And our boardroom discussions are definitely a lot more deeper, wherein we discuss not just growth numbers, but also profitability, which is also one of the reasons why as a company, we have been able to maintain both growth as well as profitability."

On innovation, another major touchpoint for the startup space, Guntupalli said for him innovation is not merely the final product but rather "the entire journey". Founded in 2015 by founders Guntupalli, Aravind Sanka, and Rishikesh SR, Rapido has been expanding its integrated mobility portfolio over the years, and now provides bike taxis, auto-rickshaws, and cab services across more than 250 cities, offering over 4 million rides daily.

# Graduates face toughest job market in decades

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Washington

**W**hile completing a master's degree in data analysis, Palwasha Zahid moved from Dallas to a town near Silicon Valley. The location made it easy to visit the campuses of tech stalwarts such as Google, Apple and Nvidia.

Zahid, 25, completed her studies in December, but so far she hasn't found a job in the industry that surrounds her.

"It stings a little bit," she said. "I never imagined it would be this difficult just to get a foot in the door."

Young people graduating from college this spring and summer are facing one of the toughest job markets in more than a decade. The unemployment rate for degree holders ages 22 to 27 has reached its highest level in a dozen years, excluding the coronavirus pandemic. Joblessness among that group is now higher than the overall unemployment rate, and the gap is larger than it has been in more than three decades. The rise in unemployment has worried many economists as well as officials at the



Federal Reserve because it could be an early sign of trouble for the economy. It suggests businesses are holding off on hiring new workers because of rampant uncertainty stemming from the Trump administration's tariff increases, which could slow growth.

"Young people are bearing the brunt of a lot of economic uncertainty," Brad Hersheine, senior economist at the Upjohn Institute, a labour-focused think tank, said. "The people that you often are most hesitant in hiring when economic conditions are uncertain are entry-level positions."

The growth of artificial intelligence may be playing an additional role by eating away

at positions for beginners in white-collar professions such as information technology, finance, and law.

Higher unemployment for younger graduates has also renewed concerns about the value of a college degree. More workers than ever have a four-year degree, which makes it less of a distinguishing factor in job applications. Murat Tasci, an economist at JPMorgan, calculates that 45 per cent of workers have a four-year degree, up from 26 per cent in 1992.

While the difficulty of finding work has demoralised young people like Zahid, most economists argue that holding a college degree still offers clear lifetime benefits.

Graduates earn higher pay and experience much less unemployment over their lifetimes.

The overall US unemployment rate is a still-low 4.2 per cent, and the Government's monthly jobs reports show the economy is generating modest job gains. But the additional jobs are concentrated in health care, Government, and restaurants and hotels. Job gains in professions with more college grads, such as information technology, legal services, and accounting have languished in the past 12 months.

The unemployment rate has stayed low mostly because layoffs are still relatively rare. The actual hiring rate — new hires as a percentage of all jobs — has fallen to 2014 levels, when the unemployment rate was much higher, at 6.2 per cent. Economists call it a no-hire, no-fire economy. For college graduates 22 to 27 years old, the unemployment rate was 5.8 per cent in March — the highest, excluding the pandemic, since 2012, and far above the nationwide rate.

Lexie Lindo, 23, said how reluctant companies were to hire while applying for more than 100 jobs last summer and

fall after graduating from Clark Atlanta University with a business degree and 3.8 GPA. She had several summer internships in fields such as logistics and real estate while getting her degree, but no offer came.

"Nobody was taking interviews or responding back to any applications that I filled out," Lindo, who is from Auburn, Georgia, said. "My resume is full, there's no gaps or anything. Every summer I'm doing something. It's just, OK, so what else are you looking for?"

She has returned to Clark for a master's program in supply chain studies and has an internship this summer at a Fortune 500 company in Austin, Texas. She's hopeful it will lead to a job next year.

Artificial intelligence could be a culprit, particularly in IT. Matthew Martin, senior US economist at Oxford Economics, has calculated that employment for college graduates 28 and above in computer science and mathematical occupations has increased a slight 0.8 per cent since 2022. For those ages 22 to 27, it has fallen 8 per cent, according to Martin.

# Pre-poll sops to women to hit ₹1 lakh crore in FY26: Report



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chandigarh

**T**op 18 States will spend ₹1 lakh crore on pre-poll sops to women this fiscal, Crisil Ratings said on Thursday. States' spending on social sector schemes will be at an elevated 2 per cent of GDP (Gross State Domestic Product) in FY26 and is likely to impact capital expenditure, it added.

The social sector spends used to be in the range of 1.4-1.6 per cent of GDP between fiscals 2019 and 2024, and

climbed up to 2 per cent last fiscal, the rating agency said.

"This fiscal (FY26), the elevated spending will result in high revenue deficit, thereby limiting the flexibility of the States to undertake higher capital outlays," the agency said. The analysis includes 18 top States accounting for over 90 per cent of aggregate GDP of all States, and added that social sector spends includes revenue expenditure for welfare of backward classes, women, children and labour, as well as assistance to certain demographics in the

form of social security pensions.

Its senior director Anuj Sethi said the overall expenditure across States will come at ₹2.3 lakh crore, and of this, ₹1 lakh crore is towards direct benefit transfers (DBT) to women primarily as "election commitments".

It may be recalled that concerns were raised about the impact of the pre-poll sops to women, and with the electoral success of such schemes, a larger number of Governments were feared to announce similar measures.

# Imported coal, scrap shortage among challenges for steel sector: Report

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

**T**he country's steel sector, which is aiming for an ambitious production capacity target faces challenges like high dependency on imported coking coal and limited availability of steel scrap, a financial consultancy firm said on Thursday.

India's steel industry — considered the backbone of the nation's infrastructure and manufacturing ecosystem — is moving toward the Government's target of achiev-



ing 300 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) of crude steel capacity by 2030-31.

"As of 2024-25, India has

achieved an installed capacity of 205 MTPA, followed by proposed capacity expansion plans of 167 MTPA till 2031

by major steel players. However, the sector faces several challenges, including the need for iron ore beneficiation, an 85 per cent dependency on imported coking coal, limited availability of steel scrap, and high CO2 emission intensity in the steelmaking process," MP Financial Advisory Services LLP (MPFASL) said in a statement.

Additionally, external headwinds such as low-cost imports from China, EU safeguard duties, and impending carbon tariffs pose further

risks to the industry's growth trajectory. High logistics costs accompanied by the time-consuming process for obtaining approvals for green field projects and a higher cost of financing when compared to China, the largest steel producer, further pose challenges towards the desired steel capacities, it said.

It further said while there are challenges, the steel capacity target would be achieved through a multi-pronged strategy, dependent on five critical levers — accelerated investments in green and

value-added steel, infrastructure and raw material linkage improvements, clean technology adoption, policy reform for financing and approvals and a strong public-private execution model. "Overcoming resource, policy, and trade challenges through innovation and sustainability will be key to positioning India as a global hub for green and specialty steel, supporting its 5 trillion dollar economy vision," Mahendra Patil, Founder and Managing Partner at MP Financial Advisory Services LLP, said.

# NSE to launch electricity futures



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

**T**he National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Thursday said it will launch electricity futures contract — a product which will allow power buyers, sellers, traders, industrial and retailers to manage price risks — in the next 2-3 weeks.

"We have all approvals in place...We are talking to all stakeholders. Our internal team is fully prepared...Within 2-3 weeks we will announce the launch date," NSE head of sustainability, power, carbon markets and listing Harish K Ahuja said. The electricity futures contract will become functional on the NSE within a few days of the announcement of the launch date.

The monthly contract will be available throughout the year, he said, adding, it will commence on the first business day of every month and expire a day before the contract ends.

To promote the product, NSE Chief Business Development Officer Sriram Krishnan said the exchange plans to waive off transaction charges on trading of electricity futures contracts for the first six months after launch.

The lot size of the one-month electricity futures con-

tract will be 50 MWh, which is equivalent to 50,000 units of electricity in one contract.

The price will be decided by taking the 30-day weighted average spot price of the three energy exchanges — Indian Energy Exchange Ltd, Hindustan Power Exchange Ltd and HPL Electric and Power Ltd.

The monthly electricity contracts will have 50MWh as the trading unit, ₹1 per MWh as tick size and the maximum order size of 2,500 MWh.

Besides, the NSE is exploring a contract for difference (CfD) that enables renewable projects to achieve stable revenue.

Last month, NSE received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to launch monthly electricity futures contracts.

India's journey toward achieving its net-zero emissions target demands substantial investment, estimated at over \$250 billion year-on-year till 2047 as per the Niti Aayog report. By 2030, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are expected to contribute over 50 per cent of the nation's installed power capacity. A robust and dynamic electricity derivatives market is essential to attract this scale of climate finance from both domestic and global investors.

# ICRA cuts domestic PV growth forecast

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

**R**atings agency ICRA on Thursday lowered domestic passenger vehicles wholesale volume growth forecast to 1-4 per cent for FY26, citing concerns over high inventory levels and shortage of critical components such as rare earth magnets for especially for electric vehicles. ICRA had earlier pegged the passenger vehicles (PV) wholesale volume growth for FY26 at 4-7 per cent over FY25.

The downward revision is "led by concerns regarding high inventory levels and supply shortage of critical components such as rare earth magnets, induced production constraints, especially for electric vehicles," ICRA said in a statement. "However, steady model launches from Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are expected to partially support the overall

**In May, domestic PV retail sales witnessed a 13.6 per cent month-on-month contraction**

industry volumes in the current fiscal year," it added.

In May this year, domestic PV retail sales witnessed a 13.6 per cent month-on-month contraction at 3,02,214 units as against 3,49,939 units in April 2025, primarily due to subdued consumer sentiment amid heightened geopolitical tensions in northern India following the India-Pakistan conflict, ICRA noted.

Despite continued discounting by automakers, demand for PV softened, it said. On the other hand, the two-wheeler segment demonstrated stronger performance, with retail volumes growing 7 per cent year-on-year supported by robust rural demand and a healthy harvest season.

# Markets rally on easing geopolitical tensions; Sensex surges 1,000 points

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

**R**allying for the third consecutive session, equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Thursday, powered by intense buying in market heavyweights HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and ICICI Bank as geopolitical tension in the Middle East eased off.

Stable crude oil prices in international markets and a strengthening trend in the rupee following a weak US dollar against major currencies also bolstered sentiment, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,000.36 points or 1.21 per cent to settle at 83,755.87. During the day, it surged 1,056.58 points or 1.27 per cent to 83,812.09.

As many as 2,097 stocks advanced while 1,900 declined and 156 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ral-



lied 304.25 points or 1.21 per cent to 25,549.

"The benchmark index reflected strong investor confidence, underpinned by the apparent stability of the Middle East ceasefire, which has eased concerns over potential supply chain disruptions."

"FIIs continued to pare holdings due to the narrowing yield spread between US and Indian 10-year bonds; DIIs emerged as net buyers, buoyed by improving liquidity conditions and a rebound in domestic consumption," Vinod Nair,

Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

From the Sensex constituents, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel, Adani Ports, Eternal, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and Axis Bank were among the major gainers.

Shares of Reliance Industries climbed nearly 2 per cent on Thursday, with its market valuation again breaching the coveted ₹20 lakh crore mark.

In contrast, Trent, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra,

Maruti and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards.

The BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.56 per cent, and smallcap index went up by 0.12 per cent.


Among BSE sectoral indices, metal jumped 2.28 per cent, oil and gas (1.88 per cent), energy (1.68 per cent), commodities (1.39 per cent), financial services (1.25 per cent), utilities (1.24 per cent) and power (1.13 per cent).

On the other hand, IT, realty and BSE-focused IT were the laggards.

"Markets witnessed a decisive session on the monthly expiry day, gaining over a per cent. The tone was positive from the start, supported by stable global cues, followed by a range-bound move in the first half."

"However, momentum picked up as the session progressed, driven by strong buying in select heavyweights across sectors."





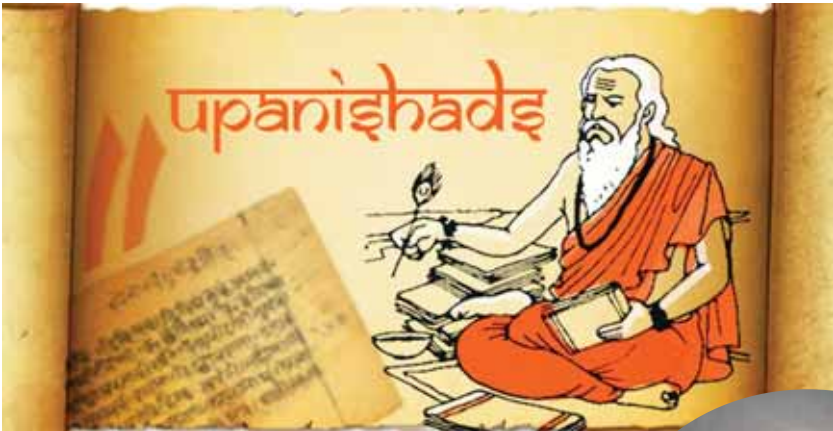
# A Modern Lens on Timeless Wisdom

Ishavasya Upanishad by Swami Mukundananda delves into the philosophy and premise of the first Upanishads and simplifies it for the reader without diluting its essence, writers **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

The **Ishavasya Upanishad** is the first and one of the shortest yet most profound Upanishads, forming a cornerstone of Vedantic philosophy. It has just 18 mantras, which hold the essence of Indian spiritual philosophy.

It says that the entire universe is pervaded by the divine (Isha), and that one should enjoy life through renunciation rather than attachment. It explores the tension and harmony between action and renunciation, the path of knowledge (jnana) and the path of work (karma), and culminates in a call for self-realisation through surrender to the divine truth within all beings. At its core, the Ishavasya Upanishad asks a simple question: How can we live in the world, act in it, and yet not be bound by it? Its answer lies in a vision of oneness, detachment, and duty, which has influenced thinkers from Adi Shankaracharya to Mahatma Gandhi.

The book by well-known writer Swami Mukundananda's explores this aspect in depth and in simple yet profound way describes the rather complex and difficult postulates of Ishavasya Upanishad. Of course, the book is not meant for everyone only those who have interest in philosophy and are keen to understand the Indian approach to



life and beyond would be able to relish it more. In his book Swami Mukundananda, the renowned spiritual teacher brings clarity, accessibility, and philosophical depth to this ancient scripture.

His commentary does not merely explain the verses; it is an attempt to interpret Upanishads and their timeless wisdom in the modern context so it becomes more relatable and understandable.

Swami Mukundananda begins each mantra with a Sanskrit verse, a transliteration, and a translation, before offering a detailed exposition. He weaves together traditional interpretations, philosophical context from the broader

Vedic canon, and practical relevance. His style is lucid, yet rooted in rigorous scriptural knowledge, which makes the book suitable for both casual as well as seasoned seekers.

One of the strengths of Swami's interpretation of Upanishad is its balance: it neither dilutes the text for easy consumption, nor does it alienate the reader with abstruse scholarship. For instance, when elaborating on the concept of Isha vasyam idam sarvam ("Everything in this universe is pervaded by God"), Author explores the implications of divine immanence in a world driven by materialism. He emphasises inner renunciation while fulfilling outer duties-an ideal that resonates powerfully in today's fast-

paced, success-oriented societies.

Upanishads or for that matter all of Indian philosophical approach is paradoxical it is not digest the concepts without opening up your mind to new ideas. It is therefore very important for any book on such subjects to rather thread bear such concepts for the understanding of the seeker. This is where the book scores high. The way the book addresses the paradoxes of the Upanishad-such as the co-existence of knowledge and ignorance, or action and renunciation-by drawing on the Bhagavad Gita and other Vedantic texts. This integrative approach enriches the reader's understanding and reflects Swami Mukundananda's broad spiritual vision.

Swami Mukundananda's Ishavasya Upanishad is not just a commentary on Ishavasya Upanishad; it is a spiritual guidebook. By unpacking dense metaphysical ideas with clarity and heart, he transforms a terse and ancient text into a luminous manual for modern spiritual living. The book speaks to today's thinking individual navigating chaos and craving clarity. Whether you are a student of Vedanta, a spiritual seeker, or simply someone yearning for inner peace and purpose, this book offers timeless insights with immediate relevance. This 183-page book is both a gateway and a journey into the heart of Vedic wisdom for all those who are drawn to Vedic literature but are daunted by its complexity. This book would be must read for them.



**FOR THE MODERN SEEKER**

Swami Mukundananda's Ishavasya Upanishad reads like a quiet, thoughtful conversation with a teacher who understands the pulse of both the seeker and the sceptic. This is a book that brings the spirit of the ancient text into focus without overwhelming the reader. The explanations flow with clarity, offering space for reflection rather than preaching. His thoughts on living with detachment, while staying true to duty, feel especially relevant in a world that rarely slows down. The writing feels anchored, honest, and deeply rooted in the Indian spiritual tradition. For readers curious about Vedanta or looking to engage with the Upanishads in a meaningful way, this book provides a steady path. The author doesn't rush through the verses, he pauses, interprets and draws from a wider spiritual canvas including the Bhagavad Gita and Vedic thought. This is a reflective, gentle guide that encourages the reader to look inward. The approach stays respectful to the text while making space for modern understanding.

## Simplified Life Teachings



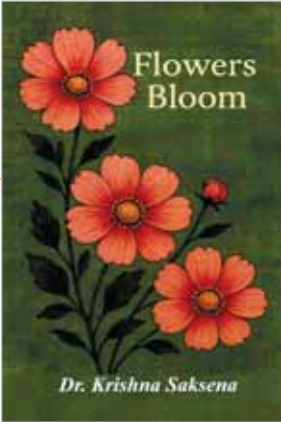
BY ABHI SINGHAL

**Flowers Bloom** is a collection of thought-provoking and spiritually enriching stories that illuminate timeless human values through simple, poignant narratives. It has short stories that give you valuable lessons and teach you a lot about life and teachings that will help take life in a smoother way. Written by Dr Krishna Saksena, the book draws lesson from Indian culture, moral philosophy, and lived experience, each tale offers a gentle yet profound lesson on life, character and conscience.

Through themes such as humility, devotion, compassion, integrity and the importance of inner strength, the book encourages readers to reflect, grow, and live with greater awareness. Written in an accessible and engaging style, Flowers Bloom is both a moral guide and a tribute to the enduring beauty of virtuous living.

With chapters such as The Baggage, The Silence, The Devotee, The Diamond, The Map, The Mother, The Squirrel the book gives many useful insights. The stories gives lessons like:

- \* The world, our



**ABOUT THE BOOK**

**Book:** Flowers Bloom  
**Author:** Dr Krishna Saksena  
**Price:** ₹395/-

friends and family may communicate with us in harsh ways.

- \* We cannot control how others will behave with us
- \* If we accept or respond to their communication and react to it, we can lose our peace of mind, thinking about the communication to us and feeling hurt
- \* Hence do not react to what seems instigating and hurtful.
- \* Silence speaks louder than words.
- \* Prioritise your peace of mind.
- \* Our Past is our memory. Every present becomes a past the following day.
- \* Memories should remain in the past.
- \* Clinging on to memories increases our mental baggage.

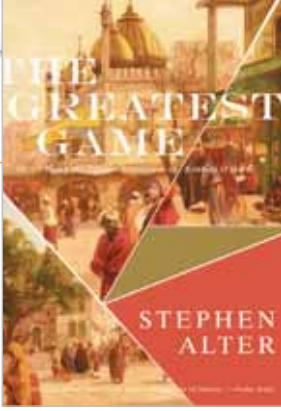
"The flower does not hurry, nor does it strive, it simply unfolds, fully alive. Bathed in the light of the boundless One, It blooms in silence, needing none. No trumpet declares its gentle rise, yet all who see it feel the skies. For in each petal, God does gleam, a fragrant trace of the eternal dream. My thoughts, my wisdom of a life lived long I hope to blossom in the pages that come O gentle reader, please read with care For hidden in simplicity are thoughts divine," says Dr Krishna Saksena.

## The Road to Freedom Is Never Quite Straight

Amidst 1947 India's chaos, an intelligence officer races against time in a riveting espionage thriller, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Imagine standing on a precipice, one foot in the dying embers of colonial rule, the other trembling on the brink of an unknown, independent future. What if India's independence had begun with a devastating explosion instead of a midnight speech? What if one man, living between two worlds, stood as the last defence against chaos? This is the question that drives **The Greatest Game** by Stephen Alter, a historical espionage novel set in the charged and volatile weeks of March 1947, when the subcontinent teetered on the edge of freedom and division. Kimball O'Hara, the protagonist first introduced to the world in Rudyard Kipling's Kim, returns here as a seasoned intelligence officer in the Imperial Secret Service. No longer a playful street urchin, he is now older, weathered and deeply embedded in the dangerous world of espionage. In a country burning with communal riots and growing distrust, Kim finds himself racing against time to prevent an assassination that could shatter India before it takes its first steps as an independent nation.

The story opens in Lahore, where Kim is nearly killed in an attempted assassination. Riding his Norton motorbike through the curfew-bound city, he is ambushed near the Victoria Memorial. The air is thick with the fear and tension that defined those final months before Partition. The attack sets in motion a larger mission, uncovering a plot by Sir Denys Bromley-Pugh, a British officer and Nazi sympathiser, to bomb a Congress rally where Jawaharlal Nehru is expected to speak. If the plan succeeds, the dream of a united India may die before it is realised. From the very first chapter, Alter captures the sights, sounds and smells of pre-independence India with stunning clarity. Lahore's empty roads, its shadowy bazaars, and the threat of violence lurking around every corner are portrayed with quiet precision. The book draws readers deep into a world



**ABOUT THE BOOK**

**Book:** The Greatest Game  
**Author:** Stephen Alter  
**Publisher:** Aleph  
**Price:** ₹799/-

### ALLEGIANCE AND BURDEN

Through Kim's Journey, the story explores the burden of allegiance and the cost of belief. There is no illusion of clear good and evil. The enemy wears a British uniform, but so does Kim. The people he must save include both the hopeful and the corrupt.

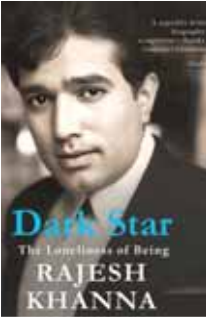


### AT ITS CORE

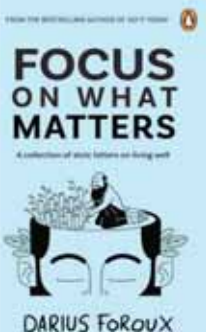
The novel does not move with haste, but with purpose. The reader is offered a portrait of India that is both personal and political, filled with moments of silence and sudden violence. The pacing mirrors the tension of the time, controlled but always alert to the next spark. A story that brings the past alive without dilution.



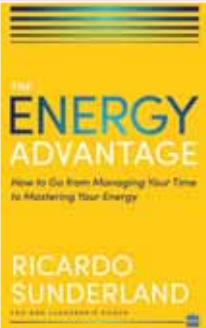
### JUNE READS



**Book:** Dark Star  
**Author:** Rajesh Khanna  
**Publisher:** Rupa  
**Price:** ₹395



**Book:** Focus on what matters  
**Author:** Darius Foroux  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Price:** ₹350



**Book:** The Energy Advantage  
**Author:** Ricardo Sunderlan  
**Publisher:** HarperCollins  
**Price:** ₹499



**Book:** Made of rivers  
**Author:** Emory Hills  
**Publisher:** Penguin  
**Price:** ₹499



# PLEASE SCORE DOUBLE HUNDREDS: RAVICHANDRAN ASHWIN TO PANT

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■  
New Delhi

India should focus on extending their batting time and Rishabh pant must convert his hundreds into double centuries against an “average” England attack in the ongoing Test series, said senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin in his detailed post-mortem of the team’s five-wicket loss in the lung-opener at Leeds.

Despite five centuries from their batters across both innings, India allowed England to chase their second highest target of 371 to concede a 0-1 lead in the five-match series.

“One thing that the Indian team’s batting can focus on is in every innings, can you extend your batting with time — not by runs. Increase the amount of time England is fielding and increase the amount of time you keep them on the field,”Ashwin said on his YouTube channel *Ash Ki Baat*.

“...I will say one thing — don’t panic and change drastically. India could and might level the series in the next Test. But if we don’t understand the tactics England are using, this series could very well go away from us quickly.”

Ashwin stressed that the game slipped out of India’s hands the moment they were bowled out early on the fourth day. “When you didn’t extend your batting into Day 5, the game was over. This England team has openly advertised that they will go for the target

whatever may be the target. So as a batting lineup, we’ve to keep in mind that we have to give them less time but give a bigger target,” he explained.

“If you want to set a target, you will have to keep a minimum of 400-450. I would say 450 with as little time as possible is the best way to win a Test match in England at this point of time. If the wicket is such.”

## COMPARE PANT WITH KOHLI NOT DHONI

Lauding the twin centuries by Pant, Ashwin said comparing him to Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not appropriate, as the latter never batted at the reasonably high Number 5 position.

“Rishabh Pant should be compared with the likes of Virat Kohli...He is a mainstream batter. Because he has got so much time,” he said.

Ashwin compared Pant’s ability to pick a delivery with Pakistani great Inzamam-ul-Haq.

“Some of these special batters have that knack of picking the ball early. They pick the line quickly, pick the length quickly and they get into lovely positions. Rishabh Pant is one of those rare players who has got that special skill,” he said.

Hailing Pant’s twin centuries as a rare feat, Ashwin suggested that the wicketkeeper-batter should look to stretch those efforts further.

“Rishabh has had a fabulous game as a batter. But I would like



to repeat that Rishabh has got a great defence. There is not one shot in the book that he cannot play. “Can I request you to make a double 100 next time when you’re batting at 130? Because, you know that lower

order doesn’t mean more contribution. So, in your situation, I request you to please take the team to the last day.” He also requested Pant to avoid his now famous front flips especially in Tests.

“I’ve only one request, please don’t do that front flip. In Tests, your body gets tired unlike in IPL where you will not play more than 50-60 balls. He is a bona fide top batter in the Indian lineup. So he has nothing

to prove.”

## KULDEEP MUST PLAY

Calling Kuldeep Yadav an “artist”, Ashwin strongly advocated his inclusion for the second Test beginning July 2 in Birmingham.

“I want to see how England go about when they face him. If Kuldeep can get you a 3/100 and reduce the first-inning score to 350, then you have a lead of 125,” he said.

“I 100 per cent believed that Kuldeep had a role and he would be a decisive factor. If Kuldeep had played, it might have been a different game.”

Ashwin also defended Yashasvi Jaiswal, who dropped multiple chances at slip, calling for perspective.

“Jaiswal has been one of the most improved fielders in the slip cordon. The Dukes ball feels a little bigger and harder. So, that feel is very important. You know how much sledging is done by the crowd. So, I do feel for Yashasvi.”

## CREATE ROUGHS FOR SPINNERS

Ashwin also pointed to a subtle yet crucial aspect of Test match strategy that he felt India missed in Leeds -- the creation of rough patches on the pitch to aid the spinners.

“We should try and create more rough patches. If you had England bowling fourth, you would have seen a lot more scuff marks on the pitch,” he pointed out.

# Shikhar debuts as author, pens memoir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■  
New Delhi

Swashbuckling former opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan has come out with his memoir in which he bares it all — from his relationships to friendships, to all the controversies surrounding him, be it off or on the field.

“Cricket gave me purpose, but it was the journey with the highs, the falls and the quiet moments, that truly shaped me as a man I am today. This is me sharing that journey from the heart — raw, honest and unfiltered,” Dhawan said about his book “The One: Cricket, My Life and More”.

“Written with candour and sincerity, ‘The One’ offers an unprecedented glimpse into Shikhar Dhawan’s inner monologue and all the vulnerabilities that have shaped him into the champion cricketer and sensitive human being he is today,” publishers HarperCollins India said.

According to Sachin Sharma, publisher at HarperCollins India, “Shikhar Dhawan has lived an incredible life both on and off the field. In this unput-downable memoir, Shikhar has opened up about his life, cricket, relationships, and every curveball that he faced and emerged stronger.”

Growing up in the intensely competitive cricketing scene of Delhi, Dhawan started out as a wicketkeeper but later transi-



tioned to an opening batsman. He played 34 Tests for India scoring 2315 runs, 167 ODIs (6793 runs) and 68 T20 matches (1759 runs).

“When I was trying to break into the Indian side, social media was still nascent and cricketers were under a lot less scrutiny. But other media platforms — print and broadcast — were thriving,” he writes in the book. “Team selections and individual cricket performances were discussed threadbare and had gained sufficient audience in the country. However, unlike the current times in which social media can transform cricketers from ‘hero’ to ‘zero’ almost overnight, narratives took a lot longer to change back

in those days,” he says.

Talking about his entry into the Indian dressing room, he said when Australia came to India for a short tour in October 2010, “that’s when I received my long-awaited call to join the big boys.”

Dhawan also writes that when he first saw Mahendra Singh Dhoni, “I wanted to cast him in a Bollywood movie; he looked like a film star with that long hair and easy smile”.

He added: “We were having a chat about my motivation when I suddenly blurted out, ‘I want to play for India and I want to make you a Bollywood hero!’ He threw back his head and laughed.”

Though he was chosen for

the three ODIs, the first and third matches in Kochi and Margao were washed out.

“Before the first match in Kochi, there was so much nervous energy bubbling inside me that I could not sleep the whole night. But when I got up in the morning, it was raining heavily, and all my hopes turned to nought. No action was possible that day,” Dhawan writes.

“Then, just ahead of the second ODI at Vizag, I took a sleeping pill to soothe my nerves. I thought it was important to sleep well, and I was worried that my performance would suffer if I went through another round of insomnia as I had done on the eve of the first match,” he recalls.

# India’s white-ball tour of Australia sold out: CA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■  
Melbourne

India’s white-ball tour of Australia is still four months away but Cricket Australia (CA) has already sold more than 90,000 tickets for eight matches with third ODI in Sydney and first Twenty20 in Canberra completely sold out. India will travel Down Under in October-November to compete in three ODIs — starting October 19 in Perth — and five T20 Internationals — the last one in Brisbane on November 8.

“The Australia vs India white ball series in October/November has generated immense excitement among cricket fans, particularly from the Indian diaspora,” the CA said in a statement.

“The public ticket allocation for the SCG ODI and Manuka Oval (Canberra) T20I were exhausted four months prior to the match highlighting the huge demand for these matches, while the MCG T20I and Gabba T20I are also proving popular.”

Following record ticket sales for the Ashes, the white ball matches are also in high demand, with over 90,000 tickets sold to the eight matches after just two

weeks of public sales.”

According to CA, more than 16 per cent of the tickets sold so far have been purchased by Indian fan clubs.

“Bharat Army has been one of the most active fan clubs, purchasing over 2,400 tickets. Fans India has also shown significant enthusiasm, buying more than 1,400 tickets,” it said.

“Additionally, Amit Goyal from Brisby Baniyas, an Aggarwal community has acquired 880 tickets for the Gabba T20I, becoming the highest individual buyer for a single match, while Indian Community of Gold Coast and Pakka Local has purchased over 500 tickets for the Gold Coast and MCG T20Is each.”

Joel Morrison, Executive General Manager Events & Operations Cricket Australia, said there has been “extreme interest” among the fans “in what promises to be the biggest ever summer of cricket”.

“We are thrilled to see continued strong engagement amongst Indian diaspora off the back of a record-breaking Border-Gavaskar series last summer. The forecast strong turnout of Australian and Indian fans means we’ll again have a fantastic atmosphere at each match.”

# The silver lining of Leeds loss: Batting transition on track

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■  
New Delhi

A sample size of one game is not enough to make a sweeping judgement but India certainly did not miss their recently retired superstars Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma in the opening Test against England with the new top-four giving a very settled look to the batting line-up.

How long would it take fill the void left by Rohit and Kohli? This question dominated the discussions leading up to the first Test at Headingley.

New captain Shubman Gill, whose record in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia) countries was questioned, had to make a significant contribution to earn the respect of the dressing room.

Not only did he make a statement hundred as India’s new number four, the visitors tallied as many as five centuries across two innings yet somehow managed to lose the



game, thanks to a bowling attack which is heavily reliant on Jasprit Bumrah. KL Rahul was all class at the top of the order, shutting the debate on his batting slot for the foreseeable future. He put a master-class on how to bat in English conditions. His opening partner Yashasvi Jaiswal, who had smashed a memorable hun-

dred to start his maiden tour of Australia, replicated that in his first innings in England.

There were questions on Gill’s defence and his technique against the moving ball but he reinvented his game ahead of an important tour.

The way he used his feet was duly noted by the greats of the game, including former cap-

tain Sourav Ganguly, who was pleasantly surprised by the improvement.

“I am so happy to see his feet (movement) away from home, there’s a massive improvement in that away from home. Shubman’s feet were fantastic, didn’t make a mistake,” Ganguly said in an interview recently. And there was

been around for long. I want to talk more about KL, when he plays like that, Test cricket looks at its best,” he said.

Prasad said he won’t be making any changes to the playing eleven at Edgbaston despite clamour for Kuldeep Yadav’s inclusion. “Shardul was picked because of what he has done in England on previous tours. I would give him another opportunity,” the former India wicket-keeper added.

To add to that, the lower-order needs to a show a lot more application with the bat.

Former India captain Dilip Vengsarkar, who has played a few memorable knocks in England, too was left impressed by the batters.

“Most of the batters performed. I would say that is a very good sign going forward. Apart from this you have got three quality batters who are not even part of the squad —Shreyas, Sarfaraza and Padikkal.

जिला परियोजना सयोजक समग्र शिक्षा — कैथल  
आउट ऑफ स्कूल बच्चों को 6 मास के विशेष प्रशिक्षण हेतु 8  
शैक्षिक स्वयंसेवकों की अनुबंध आधार पर आवश्यकता है।  
मासिक मानदेय:- 10000/-  
समयावधि:- 6 मास  
शैक्षिक योग्यता:- 10+2, डी.एड./बी.एड./स्पेशल बी.एड. (न्यूनतम  
अंक 50% अनिवार्य), HTET/CTET और उच्च शैक्षिक योग्यता  
प्राप्त व शैक्षिक स्वयंसेवकों के अनुभवी अभ्यार्थियों को नियमानुसार  
वरियता दी जाएगी। दसवीं स्तर तक हिन्दी/संस्कृत अनिवार्य है।  
आवेदक आना बायो डाटा व सभी सत्यापित दस्तावेज दिनांक 26.  
06.2025 से 09.07.2025 तक किसी भी कार्यदिवस को नीचे दिये  
पते पर जमा करवाएँ। दस्तावेजों की जांच 15.07.2025 को सुबह  
10.00 से दोपहर 2.00 बजे तक की जायगी।  
जिला परियोजना संयोजक समग्र शिक्षा-कैथल  
पंचायत भवन जींद रोड कैथल  
फोन नं 01746-226156  
RO 1054/11/71/2026/35985/C/27/4



## Trident Group Reinforces Commitment to Healthy, Safe Workplaces with Anti-Drug Awareness Drive

**Punjab / Chandigarh:** Trident Group observed the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on June 26, 2025, aligning its initiatives with the global theme “Break the Cycle. #StopOrganisedCrime.” The company conducted awareness workshops across its plant locations in Punjab at Barnala, Sanghera and Madhya Pradesh at Budhni plant locations, aiming to promote healthier lifestyles and raise awareness of the harmful effects of drug abuse. The Special session at the Sanghera plant was conducted by Dr. Gagandeep Singh Sekhon from Civil Hospital, Barnala. Dr. Sekhon highlighted that addiction often begins with small doses, gradually turning into serious dependency. He elaborated on the devastating impact drug abuse can have on families, including financial instability and long-term emotional distress. Employees were educated on the early signs and symptoms of addiction — such as behavioral and emotional changes — and encouraged to make healthier lifestyle choices through regular physical activity, sports, and community engagement.

## Elections of Kullu People's Association Shimla, held

**Shimla:** In the elections of Kullu People’s Association Shimla, held under the chairmanship of Dr M P Sood, President Kullu People Association, Anurag Prashar has been elected as new President and OP Kaistha as General Secretary. MP Sood was appointed as Chief Patron and Sanjeev Sharma as Patron. Kavinder Lal will be the advisor of the association. Murari Lal Sharma was elected as senior vice president, Gulpal Verma as Vice President, Jiwan as Financial Secretary, Upmanyu Verma as Joint Secretary and Neraj as Press Secretary.

The newly elected President was also given the right to choose executive members of the association. On this occasion, the newly elected President of Kullu People’s Association Shimla, Anurag Prashar praised the tenure of the old executive, especially President Dr. M.P. Sood and General Secretary Sanjeev Sharma. He said that the previous executive tried its best to do other works related to the people of Kullu living in Shimla. He expressed hope that the present office bearers will continue to get guidance from the old executive in future as well. He also expressed hope that with the cooperation of office bearers and members, every effort will be made to implement the remaining works as decided including construction of Kullu Bhavan at Shimla to facilitate visiting students and patients from inner and outer Seraj areas of Kullu District.

## Airtel’s Strong Initiative Against Online Fraud in Himachal: 7 Lakh Users Protected in Real-Time

**Shimla:** As online scams grow increasingly common, Airtel has taken a strong stand in Himachal Pradesh, using AI-powered technology to protect over 7 lakh users in just 35 days. The cutting-edge system scans and blocks suspicious links—whether sent through SMS, WhatsApp, email, Telegram, social media, or browsers—within 100 milliseconds. No app installation is required, and users are redirected to a secure warning page if a link is deemed harmful. Importantly, this service is completely free for Airtel users, according to a statement. For instance, if someone in Shimla receives a message like “Your parcel is delayed, track here: <http://trackyourparcel.com>” and clicks the link, Airtel’s AI instantly assesses and blocks the site if it is identified as a phishing or fraud attempt. According to Anupam Arora, CEO - Upper North, Bharti Airtel, “We are the first telecom network in India to launch an AI-driven anti-fraud solution. In forward-moving states like Himachal, this step ensures a much safer digital experience.”

## 3 Month Special Campaign Of Financial Inclusion Schemes At Gram Panchayat Level

The Ministry of Finance, Government of India has launched a 3-month special campaign at the Gram Panchayat level from 01.07.2025 to 30.09.2025 to include all the deprived in the financial inclusion schemes. Deputy General Manager, State Level Bankers Committee, Punjab, Mr. Ram Kishore Meena informed that under this special campaign, special camps will be organized in every Gram Panchayat. During the camp, special work will be done mainly on the following points. Obtaining KYC documents in inactive accounts to activate Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan accounts.

1) Opening accounts in Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana for adults who do not have bank accounts yet. 2) Registration in Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana. 3) Registration of eligible persons in Atal Pension Yojana. 4) Re-KYC in accounts including digital fraud, non-claim amount, how to get deposits older than ten years. For the smooth implementation of this special campaign, a special review will be done by the District Collector and Lead District Manager.