



Manipur on the boil again



A man removing a burning tyre after violent protests erupted in Manipur over the arrest of a leader of Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol in Imphal

PTI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Imphal

A day after protests erupted in Manipur over the arrest of a leader of Meitei outfit Arambai Tenggol, situation remained tense on Sunday with the administration imposing prohibitory orders in five Imphal valley districts and suspending internet services in parts of the northeastern state, police said.

As a preventive measure, prohibitory orders have been clamped in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Bishnupur and Kakching districts, while internet and mobile data services, including VSAT and VPN facilities, have been suspended in these valley areas.

Manipur Governor Ajay Kumar Bhalla on Sunday held a security review meeting with senior officials in the wake of violent protests. A Raj Bhavan statement said the governor also met a delegation of MLAs who apprised Bhalla of the current law and order situation in the state.

“The governor held a security review meeting with senior administrative and security officials. During the meeting, a comprehensive discussion and review of various matters relating to the current law

and order situation in the state were deliberated,” it said.

The security advisor, the director general of police, the commissioner (home), the secretary to the governor, the additional director general of police (law and order), IGAR (S), the inspector general, CRPF and other senior officials were present during the meeting.

“Today, a group of MLAs called on Governor of Manipur, Ajay Kumar Bhalla, at Raj Bhavan during which the MLAs apprised the governor of the current law and order situation in the state and requested his intervention to help find an amicable solution,” the Raj Bhavan statement said. The Governor told the delegation that all “necessary steps are being taken to address the concerns and to restore normalcy”, it said.

Protesters torched tyres and old furniture in the middle of roads in Kwakeithel and Uripok, demanding the release of the leader. They clashed with security forces at different places in the State capital on Saturday night.

A mob also set a bus on fire at Khurai Lamlong in Imphal East District.

Security has been enhanced along the roads leading to the Raj Bhavan here with

additional deployment of central forces. In view of the protests in the restive north-eastern State, an order issued by the district magistrate of Imphal West stated that the “superintendent of police in Imphal West... Has reported serious breach to peace, disturbance to public tranquillity, riot or affray in the area, and grave danger to human lives and properties due to unlawful activities of anti-social elements.”

The district administration banned the assembly of five or more people and the carrying of sticks, stones, firearms, or sharp weapons under sub-section 2 of Section 163 of Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS). In Imphal East district, people have been prohibited from stepping outside their residences from 10 pm on Saturday, until further orders under sub-section 1 of section 163 of BNSS.

“Violent protests broke out after the arrest of a leader of Arambai Tenggol. All preventive measures are in place,” a police officer said. In Kwakeithel, several gunshots were heard, but it could not be ascertained who fired the shots.

Protesters also gheraoed the Imphal airport gate at Tulihal after the arrest of the Arambai Tenggol leader.

Nine-year-old’s murder sparks protests in Capital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a chilling case that has sent shockwaves through the national Capital, a nine-year-old girl was allegedly raped and murdered in the Nehru Vihar area of North-East Delhi. Her body was discovered stuffed inside a suitcase in a locked house, sparking public outrage with locals gathering in large numbers on Sunday to demand swift action and the arrest of the culprit. Police and paramilitary personnel have been deployed in the area on Sunday to maintain law and order. A massive police manhunt for the absconding accused.

Suspensions grew around a locked house in the vicinity. When residents broke open the lock, they made a horrifying discovery - the girl's body inside a suitcase, partially undressed, with no clothes on her lower half, pointing to a possible sexual assault and took her to the nearby nursing home.

The girl, a resident of Nehru Vihar, had gone to give ice to a relative living nearby around 7 pm on Saturday. Police sources said the perpetrator of the heinous crime seems to have fled after stuffing the body in the suitcase. Senior police officers said all angles are being probed, including sexual assault.

“We are awaiting the autopsy report to confirm the cause of death. Teams have been formed to nab the absconding accused. We are taking this matter with utmost seriousness,” a police officer said.

According to her father the 9-year-old girl who went out to deliver ice was found raped and murdered in Nehru Vihar. When she did not return home for a long time, her parents began searching for her. According to the victim's father, they approached several relatives and neighbours, but no one had seen her after her brief visit to the relative's house. The girl's body was found on Saturday evening.

Senior officials of the Delhi Police said all angles are being probed, including sexual assault. “We are awaiting the autopsy report to confirm the cause of death. Teams have been formed to nab the

absconding accused. We are taking this matter with utmost seriousness,” a police officer said. The child, a resident of Nehru Vihar, had gone to give ice to a relative living nearby around 7 pm, her family said.

When she did not return home for a long time, her parents began searching for her. According to the victim's father, they approached several relatives and neighbours, but no one had seen her after her brief visit to one relative's house.

The girl’s father alleged that when he reached the house, it was locked. Suspecting something was wrong, he broke the lock and entered the room

“She had only gone to deliver some ice to our relatives. They said she stayed for five minutes and left. But she never came back. We looked everywhere. Finally, someone told us she was seen entering a house nearby. That's where we found her in a suitcase,” he said.

The girl's father alleged that when he reached the house, it was locked. Suspecting something was wrong, he broke the lock and entered the room.

Inside, he found his daughter stuffed in a bloodstained suitcase. They rushed her to a local clinic, but the doctor asked them to take her to a hospital immediately. At Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital in Shastri Park, doctors declared her brought dead, the father said. A PCR call reporting the incident was received at Dayalpur police station around 8.41 pm, police said.

A police team was immediately dispatched to Gali No. 2, Nehru Vihar, where they learned that the girl had already been taken to Jag Pravesh Chandra (JPC) Hospital by her father, a senior police officer said.

Hospital authorities informed the police that the girl was declared dead.

Delhi to sizzle this week



RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Get ready to face extreme heat as the temperature is likely to hit 44 degrees Celsius in the next few days. The national Capital region (NCR) is in for a stretch of oppressive weather, with hot and humid conditions expected to continue till Thursday. This is the first time the maximum temperature in the Capital crossed the 40 degrees Celsius mark in the month of June this season.

The maximum temperature in Delhi rose to 42.1 degrees Celsius, 2.1 degrees above the seasonal average, while the minimum temperature was recorded at 27.7 degrees Celsius. Ayanagar was the hottest area in Delhi where the maximum temperature was recorded 44.1 degree Celsius, followed by Palam 43.6 degree Celsius. Ridge was recorded 42.9 degree Celsius while Lodhi Road 42. 3 degree Celsius.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has issued a yellow alert for the next four days, in several parts of North and Central India, including Delhi, over the next few days, warning residents to take precautions against heat-related discomfort. This will also likely be one of the last intense heat spells, before the monsoon resumes progress in other parts of India.

As the monsoon's advance stalls, dry westerlies and relentless sun have turned the Capital into a furnace, with no immediate relief in sight. On June 8, residents woke to stifling heat and humidity, foreshadowing one of the season's most intense stretches yet.

The ByStander



Reliance Infra ventures into aircraft upgrade business

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Reliance Infrastructure is looking to turbocharge its defence vertical with a focus on aircraft upgrade programmes, eyeing an opportunity of ₹5,000 crore over the next 7-10 years. This strategic foray positions Reliance Infrastructure as India's first private sector company to independently execute a comprehensive aircraft upgrade programme without being the original manufacturer — a domain traditionally dominated by public sector units and OEMs.

According to a company source, the company has already marked a significant milestone by successfully upgrading 55 Dornier-228 aircraft under a contract with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL), in collaboration with US-based avionics firm Genesys. Initially awarded a contract for 37 aircraft, Reliance secured a repeat order for an additional 18 units following the successful execution of an earlier contract. The total value of the Dornier upgrade contract was ₹350 crore, sources said. The upgraded Dornier fleet is operational with the Indian Air Force, Indian Navy, and Indian Coast Guard.

Globally, the market for military aircraft and helicopter upgrades stands at over ₹5,00,000 crore annually, and is projected to rise to ₹7,00,000 crore in the next seven years.

Congress questions BJP defence of EC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A day after senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi sought the Election Commission's response on his article alleging rigging in Maharashtra polls, sources in the poll watchdog said on Sunday the constitutional body would respond only if the Leader of the Opposition writes to it directly. They also pointed out that as part of its outreach, the EC had invited all six national parties for separate interactions. While the other five met the EC brass, Congress cancelled the May 15 meeting.

Rahul had on Saturday hit back at the Election Commission after sources in the poll panel rejected allegation of rigging in the 2024 Maharashtra Assembly polls, saying evasion would not protect its credibility but telling the truth would. The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha polls had alleged “match-fixing” in the Maharashtra polls and claimed that it would next happen in the Bihar elections and “anywhere the BJP is losing”.

Responding to a question on Rahul Gandhi's demand for CCTV footage of polling stations of Maharashtra of the evening hours, the sources said as per instructions of the EC, the CCTV footage of polling stations can always be scrutinised by the competent high court when an election petition is filed.

“This is done by the EC to protect the integrity of elections as well as protect the



LoP in the Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressing a press conference

privacy of voters. Why does Rahul Gandhi want to invade the privacy of voters which is to be protected by EC as per electoral laws?” a functionary responded.

They also said that by alleging fudging in voters list, Gandhi has actually questioned booth level agents appointed by his own party and polling and counting agents appointed by his own party's candidates in Maharashtra.

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said Rahul Gandhi, instead of introspecting on the defeat in the 2024 State Assembly polls, has been repudiat-

ing the mandate given by the people because they rejected him. The leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha is preparing his excuses for future defeats in the upcoming assembly elections, including Bihar, Fadnavis said.

“The people have rejected Rahul Gandhi, and in retaliation, he is rejecting the people and their mandate. It would be more prudent to accept defeat for once and introspect on where you are going wrong, where your connection with the people is lacking, and what you should do about it,” he said.

Flying ovation to Chenab Bridge



An aerial view of the Chenab rail bridge in Reasi district of J and K

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MOHIT KANDHARI ■ New Delhi

The world's highest rail bridge on the Chenab river in Jammu and Kashmir, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on June 6, has become a craze among air travellers flying to Srinagar.

According to a press statement issued by the railway ministry, flight pilots are making special announcements and passengers are showing eagerness to capture photographs of the Chenab Bridge, the world's highest railway-arch bridge.

“The Chenab Bridge draws admiration from every altitude, where pride rises

from the earth and echoes through the clouds,” Dilip Kumar, Executive Director, Information and Publicity, Railway Board, said on Sunday.

“These days, every flight that passes over the majestic valleys of Jammu and Kashmir witnesses a truly special moment. As the aircraft approaches the Chenab valley, the pilot's voice echoes through the cabin: ‘Below you is the world's tallest railway-arch bridge, the Chenab Bridge,’ he added. The moment the announcement is made, passengers rush to the windows and start recording videos and clicking pictures of this historic marvel on their mobile phones.

“A wave of pride sweeps through the cabin — passengers clap, smile and share words of admiration for the brilliance of Indian engineering,” the press note said.

Days after its formal inauguration, even down below, the enthusiasm is equally contagious, it added. Railway officials stated that locals from nearby villages and mountainous regions are seen taking photographs and recording videos of the bridge from different vantage points.

“Some are live-streaming the moment, while others are sharing it instantly across Instagram and Facebook,” an official said.

Tunnel to ease Capital airport, Gurugram traffic

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

In a move to ease traffic, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) will build a tunnel worth ₹3500 crore connecting Nelson Mandela Marg in Vasant Kunj to Shiv Murti interchange, Mahipalpur. The 4.9 km tunnel will be part of the National Highway 148AE and is intended to provide a direct, bypass route for traffic heading towards or from Gurugram and the Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGIA).

Announcing this, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has approved six major infrastructure projects in Delhi.

One of the key projects is a 5-kilometre-long tunnel that will not only balance the traffic between South Delhi and NCR but will also help curb pollution and transform the overall look of the area. The tunnel, stretching from Shiv Murti-Mahipalpur (Dwarka Expressway) to Nelson Mandela Road (Vasant Kunj), will reduce congestion on multiple routes and create a signal-free corridor.

The NHAI will construct the tunnel, comprise two underground tubes — one each for up and down traffic. Each tube will have three lanes, making a total of six lanes available for smooth traffic movement. The tunnel will also be equipped with modern facilities such as electro-mechanical systems, ventilation, fire safety, CCTV surveillance, control rooms, emergency exits, and cross-passages.

The CM said that after a recent meeting with Union Minister Shri Nitin Gadkari, several projects worth ₹24,000 crore aimed at streamlining traffic and reducing pollution in Delhi and adjoining areas have been approved.

She further explained that the construction of this tunnel will significantly ease traffic congestion on Nelson

Mandela Road (Vasant Kunj), Mahipalpur, and Rangpuri. It will also reduce the traffic load on Dhaula Kuan, Rao Tula Ram Marg, and National Highway 48 (NH-48) in the Mahipalpur area. The tunnel will offer a direct, signal-free alternate route between South Delhi and Dwarka/Gurugram, which is expected to help eliminate traffic jams on NH-48, especially during peak hours.

The CM also noted that in the future, this tunnel will serve as a key connector between Central/East Delhi and multiple major expressways and highways including

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the Delhi Expressway (NE-5), NH-44, NH-10, Delhi-Jaipur Highway (NH-48), and Delhi-Dehradun Expressway (NH-709B) via the Urban Extension Road (UER) and Dwarka Expressway. This will lead to smoother traffic across these routes and a significant reduction in pollution levels.

The CM informed that all technical and formal requirements for the project are in their final stages, and work is expected to commence early next year.

Calling this project, the “foundation for the Delhi of the future,” CM Rekha Gupta said that the tunnel will give a new direction to Delhi's infrastructure and bring relief to millions of citizens. She further added, “We are committed to making Delhi congestion-free and clean. The construction of this tunnel will reduce the burden on roads, eliminate traffic signals, and save fuel.”



Chief of Army Staff General Uppendra Dwivedi during a visit to the Kedarnath temple

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GUEST COLUMN

Char Dham Yatra – a spiritual journey turning into an environmental crisis?



Rakesh Kapoor

The Char Dham Yatra, one of India's most sacred pilgrimages encompassing Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath in Uttarakhand, has long been a spiritual magnet attracting millions of devotees each year. However, what once was a solemn religious journey is now increasingly viewed as an environmental and tourism management crisis. While the pilgrimage plays a significant role in the

region's economy, its unchecked expansion is beginning to "kill" real tourism and pose threats to the fragile Himalayan ecosystem.

Environmental degradation: The registration (offline and online) reveal the number of pilgrims which was three lakh in 2020, stood at five lakh in 2021, became 45 lakh (205 days) in 2023 and jumped to 48 lakh (153 days) in 2024. According to same sources the number of vehicles which was 3.27 lakh in 2022 almost doubled to 5.20 lakh operators in 2024. This is not the only means of transport, as there are also 4,300 registered operators, more than 8,000 mules and around 2,400 Dandi-Kandi carriers en route. All these factors are affecting road infrastructure and aggravating waste disposal, which is already in need of improvement. The massive influx of pilgrims, especially during the peak months from May to July, leads to over-crowding, deforestation and waste mismanagement. Lack of proper toilets, the open defecation along riversides, in the nullahs and forest area is entering trib-

utaries of the sacred Ganga, causing health and environmental issues. Narrow mountain roads are widened to accommodate vehicles, often by blasting hillsides, cutting the toe of slopes making the terrain more vulnerable to landslides and soil erosion. According to some environmental experts, the Char Dham highway project has led to the felling of thousands of trees and disturbed natural water channels, accelerating glacier melt affecting various major glaciers like Gangotri, Gaumukh, Satopant, Alkapuri, Khatslag, Dunagiri and Bandarpooch which are receding at faster than expected rate, bearing brunt of lopsided development and the destabilising region's geography, the study by ICIMOD and WIHG has confirmed. Moreover, the smaller towns on the Char Dham Yatra route including Badkot, Hanumanchatti, Jankichatti, Peepalkoti, Jyotirmath and Karnprayag, among others, all have the civic amenities barely enough for local population if not inadequate, but they are certainly unable to meet the demands of lakhs of

pilgrims thronging every summer. The hotels, Dharmshalas and eateries often lack proper waste disposal systems, circumventing various rules and regulations, building bye laws and urban planning norms. The result is evident: piles of plastic, human waste and non-biodegradable trash lining riverbanks and trekking routes. This pollution seeps into the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, threatening biodiversity and the water security of millions downstream. **Impact on real tourism:** While pilgrimage tourism grows exponentially, it overshadows the region's potential for sustainable and experiential tourism. Uttarakhand is home to pristine valleys, rich biodiversity, culture-rich villages and adventure trails. These attractions — which promote slower, environmentally responsible tourism — are often ignored or even degraded due to the focus on catering to the mass pilgrimage market. Real tourism, which values nature, local culture and sustainability, is losing ground to overcrowded, chaotic Yatra rushes. Tourists seeking peace, adven-

ture, or cultural immersion are increasingly deterred by the over-commercialisation, traffic congestion and environmental deterioration of these once-pristine areas.

Infrastructure versus ecology: The Char Dham Mahamarg Vikas Pariyojna (Char Dham Road Project), aimed at improving connectivity to the pilgrimage sites, has been under scrutiny for allegedly bypassing environmental safeguards. Experts argue that the ecological cost of such development far outweighs the benefits, especially when alternative eco-sensitive approaches could have been employed. Additionally, the growing number of helicopter services to Kedarnath, once a challenging trek, has drastically altered the pilgrimage experience and added noise and air pollution to an already stressed environment, biodiversity, fragile geomorphologic profile and geographic setting. If we just go by numbers provided by the government, from nine sites 250 daily sorties of helicopters take about 1,500 pilgrims to the shrines-

mainly Kedarnath.

A call for balance: The solution to the challenge is in rethinking the Char Dham Yatra. The pilgrimage should be aligned with principles of environmental stewardship and sustainable tourism. Controlled visitor numbers, better waste management, eco-friendly infrastructure and promotion of offbeat, responsible tourism can help restore balance. The views of the author were echoed in a recently held online discussion involving priests and other stakeholders of Char Dham which concluded that the Char Dham Yatra, if left unchecked, risks turning the spiritual Himalayas into a zone of irreversible ecological damage and shallow mass tourism. Protecting the environment must become a spiritual responsibility, not a bureaucratic afterthought. Only then can real tourism take place— one that celebrates nature, culture and sustainable tourism. *(The author is an environmental activist; views are personal)*

More than 5 lakh Char Dham pilgrims undergo health screening

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

More than five lakh pilgrims have undergone health screening on the Char Dham Yatra routes since the pilgrimage began this year. Stating this, the Health secretary Rajesh Kumar said that on the directions of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and Health minister Dhan Singh Rawat, the Health department has made proper health service arrangements on the Yatra routes. Of the lakhs of pilgrims who undertake the Yatra every year, many are aged, suffer from cardiac or respiratory issues while many are visiting a mountainous region for the first time. Such persons can face serious health risks due to the altitude, cold and lack of oxygen. Considering this, the health services have been strengthened at three levels this time, he said.

Kumar said that the priority of the government this year was not only the number of pilgrims but also to look after their safety and health. "For this purpose, we are working on technology, specialisation and human resources. In the Chamoli, Uttarkashi and Rudrapur districts where the Char Dham are situated, 49 health centres and 20 medical relief posts have been activated. Proper medical services have also been ensured in the transit districts of Haridwar, Dehradun, Tehri and Pauri. We have put up 57 screening posts at the starting points of the Yatra. Two new screening centres each have been added in Haridwar and Rishikesh, two in Vikasnagar and one at



Kaliyasaud in Pauri," Kumar said.

The secretary informed that this year, a new 17-bed hospital has also been brought into service for pilgrims at Kedarnath Dham. The government has posted 31 specialist doctors, 200 medical officers and 381 paramedical staff on the Yatra routes. In addition to this, 24 additional medical officers, 35 paramedical staff are also included on roster basis. Among the specialist doctors, 47 are from the State Health Service, 13

from the Government of India and five from private medical colleges. Kumar further said that in the screening of pilgrims done so far, many have been found afflicted by high blood pressure, respiratory issues and other health conditions. About 29 pilgrims were advised to not proceed with the pilgrimage and sent back for their own safety. Further, 369 pilgrims were taken by ambulance and 33 by helicopter ambulance service for necessary treatment, he added.

Vehicular overload stalls traffic flow in Haridwar for four days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Haridwar

Sunday saw the fourth day of traffic congestion in Haridwar city due to factors including the Char Dham Yatra, summer vacations and the weekend. The pilgrimage, summer vacations and the weekend brought good business for many in various trades but also resulted in major traffic congestion causing inconvenience to both the visitors and the local residents. People found it difficult to traverse the main roads and even the bylanes in Haridwar and Kankhal due to the rush of visitors.

The Ganga Dussehra was observed on June 5 and a large number of people arrived here to bathe in the Ganga and offer prayers. The occasion of Nirjala Ekadashi on the next day also attracted a large number of people. This was followed by Saturday-Sunday which also saw a large number of people either arriving or departing to their destinations. Along with those arriving here for religious purposes or passing through towards the Char Dham shrine, a large number of tourists are also either visiting Haridwar or passing through with the summer vacations currently underway. The thousands of visitors in as many vehicles led to the near collapse of the traffic system in the city. Locals point out that there is traffic congestion on the highway and in the city too. However, the authorities have not been able to put a concrete plan in action to resolve the problem of traffic congestion. Such is the crowd of vehicles that vacant parking spaces are difficult to find. As a re-



sult, some people end up parking improperly wherever they find a spot, which in turn affects the flow of traffic. The police issued challans to people who had parked wrongly in various locations. Despite such efforts, areas including Bhimgauda, railway station and Shivmurti Chowk suffered from considerable congestion.

The traffic congestion witnessed in the city during this four-day period also disrupted the routine life of the local residents. The authorities appeared ineffective in managing the large number of arrivals.

Locals point out that large crowds are expected every year during the summer but the traffic management still remains questionable. The Haridwar superintendent of police (Traffic) SP Baluni said that the traffic entering Haridwar is about 10 times more than the city's capacity and what was expected. "When the traffic gets packed in Rishikesh and Tehri, we follow instructions and divert the traffic accordingly so that it reaches Haridwar an hour late. Despite such a considerable load of traffic, we have managed to slowly clear it," he said.

DM bans protests within 200 metres of UPCL headquarters amid strike concerns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Dehradun district magistrate Savin Bansal has prohibited any kind of protest within a 200-metre radius of the Uttarakhand Power Corporation Limited (UPCL) headquarters, citing concerns over potential disruption to essential services and public inconvenience. The directive follows ongoing reports of a strike by junior engineers of the corporation and incidents of unrest at the corporation's head office. Bansal said that according to a letter from the deputy chief personnel officer of the corporation, members of the association gathered in large numbers at the headquarters earlier this month, raising slogans and creating tension by engaging in verbal abuse, physical scuffles and obstructive behaviour. These actions led to disruptions in departmental work and prevented staff and officers from entering the premises freely. Taking cognisance of the situation, the DM summoned the superintendent engineer of the UPCL and instructed that electricity supply to the general public must remain unaffected. He ordered close monitoring of the attendance of engineers and emphasised on the enforcement of discipline under service rules. In case of deliberate disruption of

electricity supply, the DM directed authorities to take action under the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA).

The administration has informed the Power department of its responsibilities toward the public and reminded it of the government's legal powers. The police and city magistrate have been instructed to enforce the ban on protests within the designated zone and to file FIRs against violators. The DM also directed the deployment of police personnel at the headquarters to prevent further disturbance. He reiterated that essential services cannot be withheld from the public and that any attempt to create a power problem will be addressed through immediate administrative measures. The district control room will remain active round the clock and officers have been asked to respond promptly to any complaints related to electricity supply. Bansal further stated that the administration will ensure continued power supply and will not allow



women, children or senior citizens in the district to face a power crisis. No employee group has the strength to deprive the public of essential services and that the administration is fully aware of both its responsibilities and powers, he added.

Multitudes turn up to mark Madathon 2025

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Dehradun mayor Saurabh Thapliyal flagged off Madathon 2025, the run organised by Making a Difference by Being the Difference' (MAD) on Sunday to mark the group's 14th anniversary. The main aim of this race was to initiate a large-scale public campaign for the rejuvenation of Dehradun's shrinking and diminishing water bodies, and to urge the government to formulate appropriate policies on this critical issue.



themselves at the homes of their members the previous night, ensuring no plastic packaging or wrappers were used. The Parade Ground was decorated for the event

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COAS stresses on maintaining high standards of operational preparedness & constant vigilance

General Dwivedi reviews operational and administrative readiness at forward areas in Garhwal, interacts with troops

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jyotirmath

The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi visited forward posts in the Garhwal region to review the operational and administrative

readiness of forces deployed in forward areas of Garhwal in the State. During his visit, the COAS interacted with troops regarding the frontiers and commended

them for their unwavering dedication, resilience and professionalism. He emphasised the importance of maintaining high standards of operational preparedness and constant vigilance.

Later in the day, the COAS inaugurated Ibex Tarana 88.4 FM, the first-of-its-kind community radio station based at Jyotirmath in Chamoli district. The station is envisioned as a vital platform for local expression, knowledge sharing and the preservation of cultural heritage. Its broadcasts will include programmes on education, environment, weather, entertainment, employment, disaster preparedness, tourism, health and traditional arts.

In his inaugural podcast, the COAS remarked, "Ibex Tarana is not just a radio station—it is a powerful medium to amplify the voice of the youths. It will bring the community together, promote local talent, and reconnect people with their cultural roots."

On this occasion, the COAS also felicitated distinguished veterans with the Veterans Achievement Award in recognition of their outstanding contributions to nation-building and social development.

COAS offers prayers in Kedarnath Dham

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

The Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra



Dwivedi paid obeisance to the lord at Kedarnath Dham on Sunday. According to the Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) the COAS took part in a Rudrabhishek Puja and prayed for happiness and prosperity in the nation. After the prayers, the BKTC chief officer in-charge Anil Dhyani presented the Prasad of lord Kedarnath to the COAS.

Youth killed by Poclain machine operator after dispute near Kotdwar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

A Poclain machine operator allegedly hit a young man to death using the bucket of the machine late on Saturday on the Gumkhal-Satpuli road near Kotdwar after a dispute. According to the official sources, the incident occurred during road widening work late at night. They informed that as per some people's claims, the operator intentionally hit the local youth with the machine's bucket, killing him on the spot. The accused operator of the machine fled the scene immediately after the incident. Locals alerted the police, who arrived and took possession of the

body. Authorities sent the body for post mortem examination and registered a case. The officials said that the preliminary investigation suggests that the act was intentional. Police have identified the accused and are conducting search operations to arrest him. They said that the police are gathering statements from witnesses and collecting available evidence to support the case. Police have also appealed to the public to share any relevant information that could help locate the absconding operator.



COAS General Upendra Dwivedi interacts with troops posted in the forward areas in Garhwal region on Sunday
Pioneer photo

Woman arrested for scamming grooms and planning to flee the country

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Dehradun

Police arrested a woman in Rudrapur, Udham Singh Nagar district for allegedly posing as a bride to scam men out of large sums of money in Uttarakhand and the neighbouring State. At least 15 FIRs are reportedly registered against her in several districts of Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. Identified as Heena Rawat, the accused used false identities to trap grooms in fake relationships, extract money through emotional manipulation and threaten them with legal consequences, the senior superintendent of police of Udham Singh Nagar, Manikant Mishra said. He informed that as per the woman's statement, she was planning to flee the country after collecting Rs 30 lakh from her latest target when police apprehended her. The arrest took place in the wee hours of Saturday near Uday Hotel in Rudrapur, following a complaint by Rudrapur resident Deepak Kakkar on June 6. Kakkar alleged that the woman introduced herself as Ankita Sharma who claimed to be a High Court advocate and established contact through WhatsApp. Over time, she reportedly convinced him of her intent to marry, took Rs five lakh and began living in his home under the pretense of marriage. Mishra said that once inside his home, she allegedly began pressurising Kakkar for an additional Rs 30 lakh and threatened either to murder him or commit suicide and falsely implicate him and his family in criminal cases. Kakkar told the police that suspecting her intentions, he investigated and discovered her real identity as Heena Rawat, daughter of Balwant Singh from Kharmasa, Kundeshwari, under

the jurisdiction of Kashipur police station in Udham Singh Nagar district. Mishra said that the police registered an FIR against the woman. A police team then arrested Rawat and recovered Rs 50,000 in cash and a fake Aadhaar card from her possession. The SSP said that the police interrogation revealed that the woman has a criminal history with over 15 FIRs filed against her in Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. She used various aliases such as Ankita and Nikita and utilised multiple mobile numbers to avoid detection. She admitted to posing as a businesswoman, brand ambassador, contractor and advocate in order to win trust and collect money from her targets. He said that Rawat targeted men through matrimonial sites and social media, posed as a single woman and later blackmailed them with threats of false rape or dowry cases. Many victims reportedly stayed silent due to fear of social stigma. Mishra said that the investigation is ongoing and the police are working to identify other potential victims and individuals involved. Mishra also urged the public to stay cautious of such scams

and report any suspicious activity immediately to the police.



Multitudes thank Dhama for implementation of UCC in Uttarakhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Haridwar

A large number of people greeted chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama and thanked the government for implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the State during a rally held in Libberhedi area of the district on Sunday. Dhama drove a tractor to reach the programme venue.

Addressing the gathering, the chief minister said that implementation of the UCC in Uttarakhand had fulfilled the dream of BR Ambedkar, the maker of the constitution as the same law now applies to people from different sections and religions. Stating that Uttarakhand is the first State to implement the UCC in India, he thanked the people of Manglaur Assembly constituency for organising the rally, adding that this amounts to honouring all the people of Uttarakhand.

The CM pointed out that the nation is progressing consistently under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Various important and historic decisions have been taken in the interests of farmers including the introduction of Kisan Samman Nidhi, fair price for farmers and crop insurance, and increasing the Kisan credit card amount from Rs three lakh to Rs five lakh. He said that work on seven new projects worth Rs 14,000 crore is being started in the interests of farmers while farmers are also being provided 80 per cent subsidy in horticulture. Dhama further stressed that the State government



will not spare any person found indulging in corruption. Strict action will be taken against officers and personnel found involved in corruption. In the Haridwar land scam, strict action had been taken against IAS and PCS officers, the CM added.

On the occasion, the CM also announced various work in the Manglaur Vidhan Sabha constituency. These include the construction of a sports stadium named after Maharaja Surajmal in the Libberhedi Gram Sabha and asphalting of the Cirk Rajwahe ki Patri route from Manglaur to Gurukul, Landaura bypass (Harchandpur) bridge, MLA Pradeep Batra, former MLA Swami Yatishwaranand, vice chairman (Disaster Management) Vinay Rohila, Roorkee mayor Anita Agrawal and other public representatives were also present on the occasion.

Hydropower and Beyond...



टीएचडीसी इंडिया लिमिटेड
THDC INDIA LIMITED
(अनुसूची 'ए', मिनी रत्न, पीएसयू)
(Schedule 'A', Mini Ratna PSU)

Embracing the energy Transition through diversification

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

If 'Ujjwala Yojana' brought smoke-free kitchens running on gas cylinders to the poor households, 'MUDRA' loans enabled lakhs of women entrepreneurs to pursue



PTI

In the run up to the anniversary, Modi has been highlighting his government's work for different sections of society, including the poor, farmers and youths.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

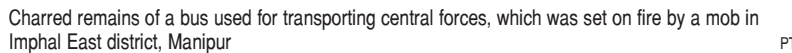
Justice Khanna's report was based on the findings of a three-judge in house panel

"As per the rule, a committee has to be

Justice Varma's removal proceedings will be taken up in the upcoming Monsoon session of Parliament. This will be the first ever impeachment proceeding to be taken up in the new Parliament building.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

On June 4, 2023, the Congress leaders said the Union Government set up a three-member Commission of Inquiry. That Commission has been given repeated extensions to submit its report and the latest deadline given to it is November 20,



PT

"President's Rule, however, has made no

The violence started after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe status.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Bilateral relations between the two countries have hit a new low in recent times, largely due to Ottawa's perceived inaction on the issue and its accusations against New Delhi of targeting pro-Khalistani elements in Canada.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

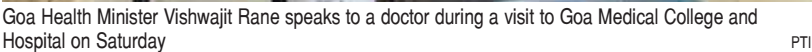
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Strategically located just 10 nautical miles from key international shipping lanes and adjacent to the Vizhinjam International Transshipment Deepwater Port, the jetty is expected to play a critical role in securing India's southwestern coastline. Sivamani highlighted the strategic importance of the new facility, calling it a major step forward in strengthening the coastal security architecture and ensuring faster response capabilities in the region.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Panaji

The GMCH at Bambolim is a state-run



“Over the last few hours, a lot has been said and written about an incident at the Goa Medical College today and the sus-

"And I will continue to speak up, act and fight for the rights of every patient who walks into our hospital," he asserted.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

“Firdaus Hakim is the same TMC leader who claimed himself to be the resident of ‘mini Pakistan’ and now he has the audacity of insulting Prime Minister Narendra Modi, my question is whether Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too thinks the same way, if not whether she will take action against him,” State BJP leader Sajal Ghosh said adding, “no one denies the bravery and valour of the Indian Army, but no one also denies the fact that during earlier occasions the hands of the Army was always tied up, it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji who

The BJP hit back quickly writing on a post “Firhad Hakim — Mamata’s loudest mouthpiece and the same man who once called parts of Kolkata “mini

Hakim promptly reacting to Modi's speech wondered how the Prime Minister could take credit of the success that the Indian Army brought for India

State BJP president Sukanto Majumdar too attacked the Hakim saying, he “has never taken a stance against Pakistan. During the UPA time, when his boss the Chief Minister was one of its constituents no such steps were taken against Pakistan. That is why Hakim and people like him now finding the actions taken by Prime Minister Modi tough to digest.”

PARVESH SHARMA ■ Gurugram

According to officials, the new AI-powered system will detect fire incidents occurring over areas as small as ten meters within the Aravalli forests. Once smoke or fire is detected, an alert — including a photo and the exact location — will be instantly sent to both the forest and fire departments, enabling a rapid response. This initiative comes in the wake of six fire incidents reported in the Aravalli range during April and

However, by the time such reports reached the authorities, fires often grew uncontrollable, causing considerable damage to vegetation and endangering wildlife. The FSI, which has already implemented similar technology in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, is now expanding its monitoring to the Aravalli belt. The integration of AI is expected to significantly improve response times, reduce forest damage and help protect animal habitats. Forest officials have confirmed that staff has already been deployed for ground-level monitoring.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ Kolkata

Back at Kakdwip — which is also regarded as the gateway to Ganga Sagar — Pakhira was quick to respond dismissing reports of Das' hobnobbing with him.

Leader of Opposition of Karnataka Legislative Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

The BJP leader, who reiterating the demand for resignation of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, also announced that all his

The stampede occurred on June 4 evening in front of the Chinnaswamy stadium here, where a large number of people thronged to participate in the RCB team's IPL victory celebrations. Eleven people died and 56 were injured in the incident. "People of the state are raising questions, who was at fault? So call a special session of the legislature, let there be

GIRISH SHARMA ■ Bhopal

This followed his absence from the special cabinet meeting held in Indore on May 20, 2025, which commemorated the 300th birth anniversary of Queen

BJP state president VD Sharma attributed Shah's absence to "personal reasons" and emphasized that the matter regarding his controversial comment is currently under investigation, with a Supreme Court-mandated Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe in progress.

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

in the border areas of Samba, Kathua, RS Pura, Arnia, Akhnoor, Sunderbani, Rajouri and a few other border tehsils, focusing on equipping VDGs with skills in weapon handling, situational awareness, and security threat response.

According to a senior BSF official, the

On May 29, 2025, a three-day training program commenced in Samba's border villages, including Galar, Chak Faqira, communities.

The VDG initiative, revived in 2022 after a two-decade hiatus due to a resur-

However, challenges remain, including the need for sustained coordination between VDGs and security forces and ensuring the safety of civilian volunteers in high-risk operations.

Editor's TAKE

A political bromance turned bitter feud

Once a formidable force reshaping US, Donald Trump and Elon Musk are now locked in a fierce war of words

In a turn of events as dramatic as their rise to influence, US President Donald Trump and billionaire entrepreneur Elon Musk have severed ties, transforming from strategic allies to fierce public adversaries. What began as a mutually beneficial relationship built on shared interests in deregulation, Government efficiency, and anti-establishment rhetoric has now devolved into a bitter feud, rife with personal attacks, policy clashes, and political threats that may shape the course of the 2026 midterm elections.

The alliance once seemed improbable — Trump, a brash political force with a loyal base, and Musk, the visionary tech magnate behind Tesla, SpaceX, and social media platform X (formerly Twitter), came from different worlds but found common ground. Trump admired Musk's entrepreneurial genius and boldness; Musk appreciated the former president's deregulatory stance and willingness to upend bureaucratic norms. The collaboration reached its peak when Musk was handed leadership of the Department of Government Efficiency, where he led aggressive cost-cutting reforms and reshaped federal spending frameworks.

Under Trump, Musk's ventures thrived with major Government contracts and minimal interference. But the fragile bond began to crack when Musk publicly denounced a major new fiscal bill championed by Trump and Republican lawmakers. Dubbed the "big beautiful bill," it promised sweeping tax cuts and spending reductions but also carried the risk of ballooning the national deficit and stripping health insurance from millions. Musk slammed it as a "disgusting abomination," warning it would increase fiscal instability. His criticism struck a nerve in the White House.

Musk escalated tensions by suggesting Trump should be impeached. Trump responded with threats, hinting at cutting Musk's federal contracts and warning of undefined "consequences" should Musk choose to support Democratic candidates in the upcoming elections. The President's warnings carried weight — Musk's companies rely heavily on federal partnerships, particularly in aerospace and defense.

For Musk, the breakup comes with significant consequences. Musk's criticism of the Trump administration could jeopardise future Government contracts and expose his businesses to political retaliation. On the other hand, his apparent openness to backing Democrats marks a significant departure from recent years, where his alignment with conservative causes and voices had grown stronger. For Trump, the loss of Musk's endorsement may alienate segments of the tech-savvy rightwingers. Yet it also gives him ammunition to portray himself as a populist leader unafraid to challenge. This breakup is more than a personal spat; it is a reflection of deeper tensions between Government power and private influence. As their relationship crumbles, the political and economic reverberations are likely to be felt far beyond Washington DC, shaping alliances, elections, and policy for years to come.

Maithili cuisine: A one of its kind

Spread across parts of Bihar, Jharkhand, and southern Nepal, Maithili culinary tradition is not merely about food — it is a living chronicle of Mithila's history, devotion, Ayurveda and deep ecological harmony

An inalienable part of the robust culinary offerings from Bihar is the Maithili or Mithila cuisine. It spans across parts of Bihar, Jharkhand (Part of Bihar till 2000) and the Koshi, Bagmati and Madhesh provinces of Nepal. Mithila first gained prominence after being settled by Indo-Aryan people who established the Videha kingdom. During the Later Vedic period (c. 1100-500 BCE), Videha became one of the major political and cultural centres of Ancient India, along with Kuru and Panchala. The kings of the Videha Kingdom were called Janakas and the Videha Kingdom was incorporated into the Vajjika League, which had its capital in the city of Vaishali and is also in Mithila. Mithila is one of the most significant pilgrimage sites in Jainism and is associated with Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara. Lord Buddha also visited this region and during his visit, he is recorded to have preached the Makhadeva and Brahmayu suttas, which are part of the Pali canon.

The region's legacy therefore is unparalleled, and it extends to the culinary sphere as well. In the 14th century, the Maithili book titled Varnaratnakara discussed Maithili cuisine and mentioned the importance of yoghurt (dahi), fish (machha), and various other elements. This historical reference suggests that Maithili cuisine has remained relatively unchanged for many centuries. Maithili cuisine isn't just about tradition, it also follows Ayurvedic principles and adapts to seasonal food cycles. Special dishes are prepared during Maithili festivals like Juddhashtami, Dashahara, Tila Sankranti, and the Chhath Puja.

Local produce is the fundamental and star element of the cuisine, there is also the incorporation of meticulous techniques, leading to dishes known for their simplicity as well as sophistication which resonate with the rich cultural history of the area. Did I mention the simplicity of dishes? There is also an element of grandeur that is associated with the food of this region — the 'Chhappan Bhog'! a feast in honour of people, usually, revered guests, friends, and family. This has its beginnings in being offered to Lord Krishna in gratitude, a total of 56 dishes offered to him by the Brijwasis, representing eight meals for each of the seven days he shielded the people of Vrindavan from Lord Indra's wrath. Chhappan Bhog represents a harmonious blend of six tastes: bitter (karwa), spicy (teekha), astringent (kasaila), sour (khatta), salty (namkeen), and sweet (meetha). By skillfully combining these tastes in various ways, 56 distinct and delectable dishes are made and include Parwal Tarua — Parwal, also known as pointed gourd is sliced into two halves lengthwise, coated in a thick batter, and deep-fried, Kadima Tarua



— Kadima refers to the fresh leaves of the pumpkin in Maithili, after washing the fresh leaves of Kadima, it needs to be folded like a triangle, the leaves are then heated on a low flame and coated in a batter giving it a crunchiness exterior and a soft interior. The list goes on to include dishes made from potato, cauliflower, sesame, flaxseeds, Colocasia leaves (Kachu ke Patte), Chana Daal (Ninwa/Ghewre ki Sabzi), Drumsticks (Sahjan ki Sabzi), and Biriya — a special recipe from the Mithila region of Bihar made by drying chickpea greens and coating them in flour and used in a spicy potato and mustard gravy. It is known for its aroma, texture and slight bitterness, all of which are standout features of the dish.

In Maithili society, there is a saying, "Maach, paan aa makhaan swarne seho nahin bhatet", which translates to "Fish, betel leaves, and makhana (fox nuts) are not found even in heaven." This saying implies that these items are so highly regarded in Maithili culture that they are considered even more precious than heavenly delights. In Maithili culture, fish is typically not brought in from outside, it is sourced from

local ponds and lakes. Even vegetables and ingredients for making pickles and papads are usually grown in the region itself, often in home gardens. The emphasis on using locally sourced ingredients adds to the uniqueness of Maithili cuisine.

The seasonal focus of the cuisine is reflected through dishes like Bagiya, which celebrates the new rice harvest. Typically enjoyed around November or December, it is made from freshly harvested rice flour stuffed with lentils or vegetables, jaggery and steamed. It is filled with sweet or savoury ingredients making it a powerhouse of flavour. Tilauri, a kind of cracker made from a batter of rice flour, sesame seeds and jaggery or salt, post this it is made in round shapes and dried in the sun — the dried Tilauri is then deep-fried in oil and eaten — this can be both sweet or savoury depending on the ingredients used. Bidhiya is made by drying green leaves like mustard greens (tori), lamb's quarters (beta), or pea leaves (mattar), these leaves are mixed with black lentil batter before being dried — this dish showcases Mithila's resourcefulness in preserving seasonal produce. Kumhrauri is made by drying Ash Gourd and later used in different curries and dishes, and is made to preserve the excess production in the harvest season for other dry seasons. Tarua dish uses different vegetables, dipped in a batter of blended soaked rice and various spices are added to the batter. It is one of the major dishes in Mithila culture which is mandatorily pre-

pared for every festival and occasion.

The variety of the Maithili cuisine is augmented through its sweet dishes like Thakua which holds huge cultural and religious significance. It is also known as Thekuwa or Thokni and is a traditional Indo-Nepali cookie. It is an important item especially during the Chhath festival season — offered as a sacred gift to Lord Surya and Chhathi Maya on the third day of the festival. Another famous recipe is Anarsa — made from rice flour, soaked in sugar syrup, and deep-fried to perfection. The region's culinary story is incomplete without mentioning the Makhana kheer — a sweet rice pudding made with lotus seeds (makhana), milk, and dried nuts, and Kasar, a traditional dish, particularly associated with the Chhath Puja festival — it's dry and prepared with rice flour, jaggery, ghee, and sometimes fennel seeds and dry fruits.

The Maithili cuisine is without doubt a celebration on a plate, it's a burst of flavour that is unmatched and unique. It is reflective of the top-class culinary prowess of the region, and an ode to an unaltered culinary journey through the ages. I firmly believe that the youth and future generation need to discover its full range of variety, nutrition and an environmentally harmonious approach — only then will they understand its true value and grand stature!

(The writer is the Secretary of the Cuisine India Society. Views expressed are personal)

PICTALK



Carpenter gives final shape to the wheel for the chariot of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra ahead of the Rath Yatra festival, in Puri. PTI

Understanding Karma, and divine control through Gita

Opinion

We are aware of what autopilot is. It is a system that automatically controls a vehicle's path, allowing it to operate with minimal or no human intervention. Why am I using it for us human beings? Believed or not, our material bodies are vehicles, as described in the Bhagavad-Geeta by Lord Krishna in verse # 18.61. He states, "God, present as a part, in the vehicle (our body), resides in the hearts of all beings." Before I go any further, let me give you the Big Picture. There is God on top, as we can imagine. Then, there is the Divine Authority, which works under the superintendence of God. They oversee the working of the material nature, which gives birth to the world along with moving and stationary things. And on account of this, the world cycle goes on. (9.10) Then, there are all living beings with souls, which are parts of God. (15.7) And, of course, there are trees, plants, etc. This entire setup is under the control of God, who is the Controller.

Now returning to the topic, how are we on autopilot? For us to understand this, we must know the 'Karmaphala Principle' and the personal nature. The first one is simple. "What you sow is what you reap." For example, one thinks of starting a business. If the thought is a serious one, he will one day get started on it. Similarly, someone is working as a menial labourer. He gets paid for it. The third

example is of words. Teachers are the best examples of it. They get salaries for the effort made. Personal nature is a little more complex matter. For this, an understanding of the three 'gunas' (modes) is important. Whatever we see is made up of the three gunas, which are goodness, passion and darkness.

These are the basic ingredients of the Creation. Surely, our natures also consist of goodness, passion and darkness in various proportions. A good person will have a higher percentage of the 'sattvaguna' (the mode of goodness) and a small percentage of the 'tamoguna' (the mode of darkness). Similarly, a bad person will have just the opposite proportions, i.e. more tamoguna and less sattvaguna. 'Rajoguna' (the mode of passion) constitutes the majority percentage in nature of a common man. Then, how are our natures formed? Life after life, we associate with the three gunas, and that gets embedded in our natures. And when a person dies, the impression is carried to the next body. For example, a good man associates with objects in goodness. He eats foods, which are wholesome and nutritious. He sees programmes, which have natural scenes and even spiritual content. He hears mostly what is instructive. Contrarily, people, who are greedy, lusty, angry or hateful, engage in acts related to these hellish emotions. Lord Krishna warns, "Lust, anger and

greed are the three different doors to hell, which cause ruination of the soul. Therefore, one should give up these three. (16.21) Lord Krishna is very stern about hate. The Lord states, "I send those envious, harmful, cruel and low-grade people

to the world again and again, and that too in demonic species." (16.19)

Now I come to how we are on autopilot. It should be clear to us that karmaphalas generated by pious and impious acts will manifest in our present lives or future ones. There is no escape from it. Even God does not interfere in it.

What God does do in the case of a person in God's consciousness? Lord Krishna states, "Having My consciousness, you will cross all impediments by My grace." (18.58) The rest of us will have to face and tolerate the consequences. There is no escape, which is what autopilot is. We are programmed that way. The other feature of autopilot in our lives is much more serious. Our natures are continuously evolving as a result of what we do or associate with. For example, a person is naturally lusty. He will get attracted to objects of lust automatically. He can stop himself using the free will given to him, but few can do so. One needs God's help to undo what the present nature ordains. So what have we learnt? That we are on autopilot helplessly. Our karmaphalas will determine what happens to us. What we do today will largely determine what we will get in our future and subsequent lives. Our present efforts will have some effect, but not of any great significance. Are we stuck? Not really. God is the Controller. As explained earlier, God can change things. He can help tackle our bad karmaphalas, as well as help us in changing our faulty natures. You will be surprised by the outcome. We would no longer be on autopilot but in good control over our lives.

(The author is a spiritual coach. Views expressed are personal)

Letters to the Editor

Indian workers face harrassment

Labour laws are being violated in Kuwait and many other countries of the world and Indian workers are facing harassment from their employees. Many people migrate in the hope of a better life, but are asked to surrender in front of the powerful authorities there. Companies manipulate labour laws in their favour.

They file fake 'absconding' cases against those who raise their voice against violations of labour laws. They ask the employees to vacate their company flats without giving him/her his/her 'end of service' letter and passport.

The Indian Embassy must intervene and investigate the matter to safeguard the workers' rights. They must also ensure that labour laws are not violated and no person has to go to jail over false allegations. In light of growing reports of Indian workers facing exploitation and false charges abroad, particularly in Kuwait, urgent action is needed.

Many migrate seeking dignity and opportunity but are instead subjected to abuse, illegal evictions, and denial of rightful documents. Companies misuse labour laws to silence dissent.

The Indian Embassy must step in decisively, investigate such cases, and ensure that no worker is left helpless or wrongfully criminalised in a foreign land. Justice and dignity must prevail.

JUBEL D'CRUZ | MUMBAI

Donald Trump Elon Musk part ways

Donald Trump and Elon Musk's friendship is well-known. One is a powerful politician and the other is the richest person. However, differences have started between the two. It is turning into a war of words. US President Donald Trump has announced a reduction in contracts with Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk's companies. Musk has threatened to stop the service of the "Dragon Capsule", which is used to transport astronauts and other materials to the International Space Station, on social media. After the failure of the US Government's Boeing Company's Starliner spacecraft, Indian-origin astronaut Sunita Williams was safely returned to Earth by the Dragon Capsule. Also, NASA has taken help from SpaceX in many military missions.

Elon Musk's Government Efficiency Account (DOSE) was created primarily to reduce Government spending. Musk believes that Trump's policy undermines the original purpose of this account. He described Trump's bill as "disgusting." Trump initially took a tough stance on imposing import tariffs on China. Musk's Tesla company was to directly benefit from it. Because Chinese electric cars have eroded Tesla's position in other major markets. After all, Elon Musk helped Trump in the election with a business perspective or goal in mind. But Trump's new bill will be a problem for Musk's Tesla company.

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

Water ATM's in Delhi

The report "Government to install water ATMs across schools and public spaces" (June 7) reveals the Delhi Government's keen interest in safeguarding the interest of the students and increasing the facilities in the schools. The proposal to provide pure cold water along with language laboratories and digital libraries is indeed a welcome step. It will be a great encouragement for the children who struggle a lot in reaching the school, carrying a heavy load of books, study materials and water-bottles. Free Laptops to meritorious students will definitely motivate the students to fare better in studies.

Since most schools have no adequate space and facility for boarding and debarking of students and are located on the edge of the main roads, it often creates problems and chaos, apart from persistent traffic — snarls and even accidents in the vicinity. Though it is mandatory for the management of every school to arrange necessary space and convenience in the compound itself, this rule is not adhered to rigidly. Moreover, the to and fro travel of students between schools and homes, mostly in hired vehicles, packed like sardines, in highly precarious condition, often causes mishaps. Hence remedial steps have to be taken on priority basis to ensure adequate space and convenience within the school precincts.

TT SAKARIA | DELHI

INCREASING WORKING HOURS IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE

The news that the Andhra Pradesh Government increasing the daily working hours to 10 hours (7-6-25) shocks one and all. The ruling dispensation takes pride in implementing drastic changes in the name of Reforms, however anti people they are. Even the previous tenures of the present Chief Minister are marked by pro management and anti workers decisions. Now increasing the cap on daily working hours to 10 hours, increasing the overtime in a quarter from 75 to 144 hours and allowing women to take up night shifts are being justified by the concerned minister as acts to allure investors and empower women by enabling them to earn more. Both the claims are absurd.

No doubt, labour is the most flexible and vulnerable component that could be exploited more easily to maximise profit. But experts say any amount of work done for more than 8 hours a day will have

diminishing marginal productivity, besides its serious negative impacts on physical and mental health and social behavior. Investors have never claimed working hours as a disturbing factor for not investing in the State. The minister says ensuring safety in the workplace as a condition to allow women in the night shift. It may remain only in the statutory books as the Government that allures the investors cannot be expected to be strict in enforcing rules.

The Government's apathy towards the wealth creating toiling section could be easily understood from the fact that even the Wage Board is not formed and the Minimum wage of the scheduled employees are not upwardly revised since more than a decade. It would be a wise act on the part of the Government to consult the workers' Unions before taking up such measures which are likely to have far reaching impact on workers.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTPUR

How climate change is pushing agriculture to the brink

The rainfall has grown erratic, endangering the livelihoods of millions. From delayed rains and failed crops to groundwater depletion and glacial melt, a cascading crisis is unfolding — one that not only threatens food securitybut also fuels rural distress, mass migration and growing unrest

FIRST
Column

Agriculture in India remains deeply intertwined with the monsoon, which accounts for nearly 70 per cent of the country's annual rainfall and supports over half of its cultivated land. However, rising global temperatures have made the monsoon increasingly unpredictable. Early or delayed onsets are now common, while rainfall patterns have grown more volatile, with some regions experiencing intense downpours while others endure prolonged dry spells.

In states such as Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and eastern Uttar Pradesh — where agriculture heavily depends on the monsoon rains — farmers are struggling to cope with these shifting climatic patterns. Smallholder farmers, who typically cultivate less than two hectares and constitute the majority of the agricultural workforce, often lack access to adequate irrigation, storage facilities, and financial support. Consequently, even slight disruptions in rainfall timing or unexpected droughts during critical crop phases can lead to significant yield losses, pushing already vulnerable households deeper into debt.

With monsoon rains becoming less reliable, farmers are increasingly turning to groundwater to keep their crops alive. Borewells and tube wells have become essential lifelines during prolonged dry spells. However, this fallback is fast becoming a crisis of its own. Unregulated and widespread extraction of groundwater is rapidly depleting aquifers, especially in regions already under significant water stress. According to the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), over 1,000 of the 6,607 assessed groundwater blocks across the country have been classified as "overexploited." The situation is particularly severe in the northwestern, western, and southern peninsular regions of the country. In states like Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, decades of intensive agriculture — especially the cultivation of water-intensive crops such as wheat and paddy — have severely strained groundwater reserves. According to CGWB 2023 data, 87 per cent of Punjab's 153 assessed blocks are classified as overexploited, critical, or semi-critical, leaving only 13 per cent in the 'safe' category. Haryana fares no better, with more than 75.5 per cent of its groundwater blocks deemed unsafe for continued extraction. This unsustainable pattern of groundwater use is driven by a mix of poorly designed policy incentives, unreliable surface water availability, and weak regulatory oversight. Subsidies for electricity used in groundwater pumping and procurement policies that favour water-guzzling crops have inadvertently encouraged overuse.

The growing water crisis in India is made even



worse by changes taking place at higher altitudes, particularly in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region. The region has seen average temperatures rise by +0.28°C per decade since 1951, with some river basins warming at an even faster rate. As a result, glacial melt has accelerated significantly. Scientific assessments indicate that the rate of glacier mass loss has increased by 65 per cent in the past decade, with average losses rising from — 0.17 metres of water equivalent per year between 2000 and 2009 to — 0.28 metres per year between 2010 and 2019.

The rapid retreat of glaciers poses serious risks to downstream water availability, especially for key glacier-fed rivers such as the Ganges, Brahmaputra, and Indus. These rivers are vital lifelines, supporting millions across northern India by providing water for irrigation, drinking, and hydroelectric power. Historically, meltwater from these glaciers played a crucial role in sustaining river flows and replenishing groundwater supplies. However, the accelerated glacial melt and resulting drop in river discharge, especially during dry seasons, are slowing groundwater recharge. This poses a severe challenge to farmers who depend heavily on both groundwater and river water to sustain their crops. Reduced river flows are also undermining canal irrigation systems and hydropower generation, both of which are essential for India's agricultural productivity and ener-



BKP
SINHA



ARVIND
KUMAR JHA

THE INCREASING SOIL SALINITY IS DRIVING DOWN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND ESCALATING RECLAMATION COSTS — OFTEN TOO EXPENSIVE FOR SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS. MANY ARE FORCED TO ABANDON FARMING OR SHIFT TO ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS LIKE SHRIMP AQUACULTURE, WHICH CAN FURTHER EXACERBATE SALINITY PROBLEMS

gy security.

As both surface and groundwater sources come under increasing stress, the consequences are becoming visible in the form of rising soil salinity — especially in heavily irrigated regions. This problem is particularly acute in coastal areas such as the Sundarbans in West Bengal and parts of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, where rising sea levels have led to salt-water intrusion into freshwater aquifers and paddy fields. In the Sundarbans alone, nearly 30 per cent of arable land is affected by salinity. Across the country, approximately 6.74 million hectares of land are classified as salt-affected, and this area is expanding by nearly 10 per cent annually. Experts warn that if this trend continues unchecked, nearly half of India's cultivable land could be compromised by 2050.

The increasing soil salinity is driving down agricultural productivity and escalating reclamation costs — often too expensive for small and marginal farmers. Many are forced to abandon farming or shift to alternative livelihoods like shrimp aquaculture, which can further exacerbate salinity problems. With more than half of India's workforce dependent on agriculture, the loss of fertile land presents a dire threat not only to rural livelihoods but also to the country's overall food security. According to the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, over 30 per cent of the country's total geographical area is undergoing desertification/ degradation, much of it driven by water and wind erosion, and loss of soil fertility. States like Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Telangana are among the worst affected. Experts warn that rising temperatures are compounding the crisis by depleting soil moisture and

increasing water stress during critical crop stages such as flowering and grain filling. The Indo-Gangetic plains, India's wheat basket, are already experiencing significant yield declines of 1 per cent to 8 per cent (depending on the region) due to these climate pressures. However, when indirect impacts — particularly reduced water availability and declining irrigation levels — are taken into account, wheat yields are plummeting even more sharply, with losses ranging from 4 per cent to as much as 36 per cent.

Climate change is also intensifying the threat of agricultural pests and diseases by creating favourable conditions for their proliferation. Rising temperatures, altered rainfall patterns, and changing humidity levels have expanded the range and severity of pest outbreaks. For instance, the locust swarms that ravaged crops across Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and parts of Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra in 2020 were partly triggered by unusually wet weather conditions in the Arabian Peninsula, linked to climate variability. These swarms ravaged nearly 48,669 square kilometres of cropland, with Maharashtra being the hardest hit, losing over 10 per cent of its farmland. Similarly, the incidence of pests such as the fall armyworm, whiteflies, and mealybugs has increased significantly. Climate change is also altering the life cycles of pests and their natural predators, reducing the effectiveness of traditional pest control methods. This has forced farmers to increase pesticide usage, leading to higher production costs, health hazards, and environmental degradation.

These interconnected challenges are deepening agricultural distress, severely impacting farmers' livelihoods and mental health. Financial pressures and uncertainty have contributed to a tragic rise in farmer suicides. In 2022 alone, more than 11,000 suicides were reported, with Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Karnataka bearing the greatest burden. As farming becomes increasingly unsustainable, many young people are abandoning agriculture in pursuit of more secure livelihoods, driving a surge in rural-to-urban migration. This demographic shift is putting enormous strain on urban infrastructure, public services, and labour markets. In already overstretched cities, even minor disruptions can trigger social unrest, presenting significant challenges for local governance and law enforcement. Economic desperation in rural India has also been linked to rising protests and growing susceptibility to radical ideologies. Groups like the Naxalites in central and eastern India have historically exploited economic marginalisation and agrarian grievances to fuel anti-state sentiment and recruit disaffected populations.

If climate — induced despair continues unchecked, it risks deepening disillusionment and weakening the bond between vulnerable communities and the state — posing a serious threat to internal stability and national cohesion.

(The writers are former PCCFs, UP and Maharashtra. Views are personal)

From sidelines to centre stage: Women athletes redefine the future of sports

The next Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, in 2028, will have many firsts! The number of women athletes exceeds their male counterparts. There will be a full gender parity in all team events, while the number of women's football teams surpasses men's. There is another first! Kirsty Coventry, a Zimbabwean athlete, elected this year, takes up the mantle of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), becoming the first-ever woman to lead the Olympics in its 131-year history. In the Olympics, in terms of the number, women athletes scaled new heights from 2.2 per cent representation in 1900 in Paris to achieving gender parity in Paris again in 2024, a quarter and a century later. But, the journey remained fraught with multiple challenges. Lack of financial resources impacted the quality of training, facilities, and overall support available to female athletes (Blinde et al., 1993), and hampered the growth and sustainability of women's sports leagues and teams (Sartore & Cunningham, 2014). Potential brands often undervalued women's sports, considering it to be an arena of 'unproven returns'. There was, however, a significant shift in recent times when angel investors and venture capitalists came forward to explore the over-looked market and made use of the best available data, and content on digital/ social media. The emergence of Angel City FC in 2020 in the US National Women's Soccer League (NWSL), set a new precedent, when its all-female founding team 'inverted the accepted business model of sports franchise, moved their brand beyond the local base, to digital brand building'. Within the first three years, it could raise a market valuation of \$250 million in 2024. Such experimental ventures remain not confined to Europe and the USA, but, in areas like the Middle East, where governments are increasingly directing resources towards grassroots initiatives designed to foster greater girls' participation in sports.

In India, around 1200 companies invested a combined ₹526.14 crore in 2022-23 on CSR investments, nearly double compared to the previous financial year (₹291.75 crore), for promoting sports, including women's. However, many sports analysts believe that 'not many companies consider women's sports while choosing their CSR goals' (Goodera). Nevertheless, a 2024 survey (Service Monkey & Parity), found that 'women athletes are trusted influencers', the majority of sports fans (88 per cent) regard them as 'impactful role models' and almost 73 per cent said that they watch women's sports at least a few times a year, which is 81 per cent in case of men's sports, and an overwhelming majority think (92 per cent) that it is 'important' for girls to play while growing up. A 2023 report (Deloitte) highlighted that 85 per cent of women who played sports as children, and are now Fortune 500 CEOs, believed that the 'top skills they developed by playing sports



helped them to succeed in their professional careers'. In 2024, global revenues for women's sports moved up \$1.3 billion, with an impressive 300 per cent growth in just three years (Deloitte). Moreover, sponsorship deals for women's sports have also seen a 20 per cent year-over-year increase since 2020 (Sports United). 'In recent years, attendance, viewership and social engagement for women's sports have spiked, leading to long-overdue financial backing through investments and sponsorships...' said, the CEO and founder of SponsorUnited. Across all countries, 32 per cent of fans of women's sports say they are more likely to purchase products when a brand supports women's sports. While in 2022, there was a 30 per cent surge in the number of advertisements featuring women sports celebrities in India (TAM AdEx). The owner of the UP Warriors in the Women's Premier League (WPL) and the head of Capri Sports, were categorical that 'perception about women athletes as brand endorsers has transformed significantly because of changing consumer mindsets, and growing data-backed proof'. Now, this momentum requires a strategic roadmap that balances innovation with a focus on core business fundamentals for sustained growth and commercial success as well. Industries must move from a short-term return on investment (ROI) to a venture capital mindset driven by values, long-term vision, and a commitment to societal impact for the long-term health of women's sports.

Undeniably, digital space could boost the visibility of women in sports to about 18.5 per cent in 2022, marking a 2.53 per cent average annual increase. But, women sportspersons face a 'different scrutiny on digital space as audiences expectations are still deeply embedded in societal norms' and brand marketing strategies continue to focus more on 'traditional femininity'. A social media analysis during the 2018 Commonwealth Games, found that words like 'strong' and 'talented' were frequently used in the case of male athletes, while women athletes were

labelled with terms like 'pretty' or 'girls'. A similar analysis of the online sports stories and images posted during the Rio Olympic Games found that men athletes were portrayed in 'active or competitive roles', while women athletes were frequently depicted in 'passive or aesthetically appealing ways'. Women athletes' Instagram posts on non-sport-related images receive significantly higher engagement. As a result, many high-profile women athletes adopt branding strategies that promote polished, heteronormative femininity, avoiding controversial political stances and thus limiting their abilities to challenge gendered perceptions in sports', argued a study on feminist neo-liberal marketing strategies. Women sportspersons also continue to face 'widespread, overlapping and grave forms of violence at all levels' (UN). Nearly 21 per cent of professional women athletes experienced sexual abuse as a child in sports, almost double the rate of male athletes (11 per cent). A 2021 study (World Athletics) found that 85 per cent of online abuse in the lead-up to and during the Tokyo Olympics was directed at women. But, sports bodies tend to focus more on curbing doping and match-fixing as sports integrity measures. In India, the prolonged protests by Olympic medal-winning women wrestlers exposed the ineptitude of such bodies.

In 2023, the UN Women and UNESCO outlined a 10-point 'Call to Action' for gender equality in and through sports, addressing issues like fair pay, media representation, and safeguarding standards. Countries must adopt it, and standardise procedures to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanisms of sports bodies with a strong legal framework, ensure survivor support and accountability, and also take technology companies and social media platforms on board to tackle online abuses. Governments, Corporations and media houses should all come together to create a level playing field with resources, exposure and voice to herald an era of equitable, safe and inclusive sports.

(The writer is former Director-General of Doordarshan and AIR. She is also the former Press Secretary to the President. Views expressed are personal)

From discipline to display: The silent erosion of traditional Yoga

Growing up, I always learnt and practised yoga in a quiet, disciplined, and almost sacred way. In India, yoga was never just an exercise; it was a deeply spiritual and scientific system, honed over thousands of years to align the body, mind, and spirit. Whether it was traditional forms like Hatha Yoga and Ashtanga Yoga, or guru-shishya lineages such as Sivananda Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, or Satyananda Yoga, the core practices remained largely consistent, with only minor variations, and were intentionally grounded in both physical discipline and profound philosophical wisdom.

Hatha Yoga, which I practice at Sivananda School of Yoga practice, for instance, is not merely about bending the body into various shapes. It is about balancing the masculine and feminine energies within oneself ('Ha' in 'Hatha' means Sun and 'tha' means Moon). The slow, purposeful asanas are designed to prepare the body for deeper spiritual practices like meditation and so on. Ashtanga Yoga, demands discipline and synchronisation of breath with a progressive series of postures, promoting physical endurance and mental clarity.

Iyengar Yoga, developed by BKS Iyengar, emphasises precision and alignment. Props like belts and blocks are used not as gimmicks but as intelligent aids to help practitioners achieve the correct posture safely. Satyananda Yoga, from the Bihar School of Yoga, also a disciple of Swami Sivananda, offers a holistic system combining asanas, pranayama (breath control), and meditation, deeply grounded in ancient scriptures yet highly accessible to modern practitioners. These traditional forms of yoga were complete systems — designed not just to build strong bodies but to cultivate resilience, compassion, inner peace, and eventually, spiritual awakening. But today, the variations presented, especially to attract younger audiences are at times of concern. In the quest to make yoga more "appealing," a whole new breed of hybrid practices have emerged at times sans focus on posture or mind breath and body coordination.

While innovation can often bring new energy to old traditions, in the case of yoga, I worry that something fundamental is being lost. Power Yoga, for example, was developed to suit the Western craving for calorie — burning workouts. It emphasises speed, strength, and sweat — but often sacrifices breath awareness, alignment, and the contemplative aspects that are central to yoga. Aerial Yoga uses silk hammocks to suspend practitioners per cent in mid-air. While it might look beautiful on social media, it introduces new risks to the musculoskeletal system, especially if taught without a proper understanding of traditional postures and body mechanics. HIIT Yoga and CrossFit Yoga attempt to fuse high-intensity interval training and weightlifting

principles with yogic postures.

The fact is that yoga was never intended to be a high-stress activity on the body. Then there's Paddleboard Yoga and Spin and Yoga, both interesting combinations, but ones that often seem to dilute the inward focus that traditional yoga demands. Balancing on a paddleboard or spinning on a cycle while trying to breathe deeply and remain mindful often becomes more of a challenge to one's physical endurance rather than an invitation to stillness and self-inquiry.

What concerns me is not merely the creation of these hybrids, but the way they are marketed: Yoga is increasingly sold as a product — a lifestyle choice that promises flat abs, glowing skin, and mental sharpness in 30 days or less. The ancient aim of yoga — union with the higher self — is often barely mentioned. The sacredness of the practice, its depth, and its inherent science seem at risk of being trivialised into a trendy hashtag or a flashy gym class. Experimenting with traditional practices without a deep understanding of their purpose and structure can be risky. Traditional yoga evolved slowly, through painstaking observation of the human body and mind. Every asana was designed with attention to anatomical, energetic, and psychological effects.

Disrupting this carefully developed sequence — speeding it up, loading it with weights, suspending it mid-air — can lead to injuries ranging from minor sprains to serious spinal issues. Traditional yoga balances the nervous system, calming the fight-or-flight response and cultivating parasympathetic dominance (rest and digest mode).

High-intensity fusions may instead overstimulate the nervous system, leaving practitioners wired and anxious rather than grounded and serene. Having said that, I believe there is always room for creativity. Yoga should be alive, growing, and meeting the needs of new generations. But this growth must be rooted in respect for the science behind traditional systems. Without that grounding, we risk turning yoga into just another fitness fad — here today, gone tomorrow — when in fact it is one of humanity's most precious treasures for holistic health and self-realisation. As someone who has felt the profound benefits of traditional yoga, I urge others — especially younger audiences drawn to 'new-age' yoga, to explore the traditional systems first. Understand the depth before seeking novelty. Build a strong foundation before experimenting. After all, yoga isn't just something we do, it's something we become, and it's a way of life. And that transformation is far too sacred to be rushed, repackaged, or compromised.

(The writer is a certified Sivananda Yoga teacher. Views expressed are personal)



ARCHANA
DATTA



SHARMILA
DAS

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA **Paramount (US)**

The White House announced that

where a car was set on fire. Protests continued into the evening in Paramount, with several hundred demonstrators gathered near a doughnut shop, and authorities holding up barbed wire to keep the crowd back. Crowds also gathered again outside federal buildings in downtown Los Angeles, including a detention centre, where local police declared an unlawful



Earlier in Paramount, immigration officers faced off with demonstrators at the entrance to a business park, across from the back of a Home Depot. They set off fireworks and pulled shopping carts into the street, broke up cinder blocks and pelt-

The Department of Homeland Security

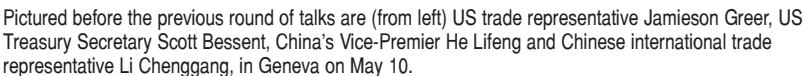
More than a dozen people were arrested and accused of impeding immigration agents, Essayli posted on X, including the names and mug shots of some of those arrested. He didn't say where they were protesting. Trump federalised part of California's National Guard under what is known as Title 10 authority, which places him, not the governor, atop the chain of

Trump signed the order shortly before he went to attend a UFC fight in New Jersey, where he sat ringside with boxer Mike Tyson. Newsom said in his statement that local authorities "are able to access law enforcement assistance at a moment's notice," and "there is currently no unmet need". The California Highway Patrol said Newsom directed it to deploy additional officers to "maintain public safety".

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino said the agency is seeking information regarding the identity of those throwing rocks at vehicles conducting critical law enforcement operations.

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beijing



US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick wasn't in Geneva but will join the

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ MOSCOW

Vladimir Medinsky, a Putin aide who led the Russian delegation, said that Kyiv called a last-minute halt to an imminent swap. In a Telegram post on Saturday, Medinsky said that refrigerated trucks carrying more than 1,200 bodies of Ukrainian troops from Russia had already

Meanwhile, Russia's defence ministry said that its forces shot down 61 Ukrainian drones overnight, including near the capital.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Houston

Kaur, the first Sikh woman elected to the San Antonio City Council, focused her campaign on affordable housing, public transit expansion, and inclusive urban development. "I think we really talked to the community and shared that we want

Her priorities include improving crime response, supporting law enforcement, and ensuring quality of life for residents.

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Rome

The measures were proposed by Italy's main union and left-wing opposition parties. Premier Giorgia Meloni has said she would show up at the polls but not cast a ballot — an action widely criticised by the left as antidemocratic, since it will not help



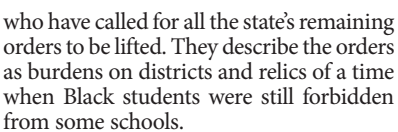
reach the necessary threshold to make the vote valid. "While some members of her ruling coalition have openly called for abstention, Meloni has opted for a more subtle approach," said analyst Wolfango Piccoli of the Teneo consultancy based in London. "It's yet another example of her trademark fence-sitting." Supporters say this reform would bring Italy's citizenship law in line with many other European countries, promoting greater social integration for long-term residents. It would also allow faster access to civil and political rights, such as the right to vote, eligibility for public employment

"Foreigners are also victims of blackmail, as they can't speak up against poor working conditions, exploitation and discrimination, due to the precariousness of the permit of stay," she added.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ferriday (US)

The schools are part of Concordia Parish, which was ordered to desegregate 60 years ago and remains under a court-ordered plan to this day. Yet there's growing momentum to release the district — and dozens of others — from decades-old orders that some call obsolete.

In a remarkable reversal, the Justice Department said it plans to start unwinding court-ordered desegregation plans dating to the Civil Rights Movement. Officials



Last year, before President Donald Trump took office, Concordia Parish rejected a Justice Department plan that would have ended its case if the district combined several majority white and majority Black elementary and middle schools. At a town hall meeting, Vidalia residents vigorously opposed the plan, saying it would disrupt students' lives and expose their children to drugs and violence.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

"This is an enormous popular response to say enough to the massacre of Palestinians and the crimes of (Israeli leader Benjamin) Netanyahu's govern-

Earlier this week, the Italian premier urged Israel to immediately halt its military campaign in Gaza, saying its attacks had grown disproportionately and should be brought to an end to protect civilians. Israel faces mounting international criticism for its offensive and pressure to let aid into Gaza during a humanitarian crisis.

India will protect farmers' interest in US trade talks: Shivraj Singh Chouhan

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India will prioritise protecting its farmers' interests while assessing potential gains and losses in the ongoing trade negotiations with the United States over agricultural market access, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan said.

"Our priority is to protect the interest of our farmers. India will not work closing its eyes. We will assess our gains and losses. Keeping that in mind, an agreement will be finalised," Chouhan said in an interview.

He was responding to a query on how India would safeguard farmers amid US pressure for greater market access for American agricultural and horticultural products.

The negotiators are expected to agree on the framework for the broad contours of the first phase of the bilateral deal, expected to be signed by fall (September-October) 2025.

"The discussions are ongoing between India and the US. One thing is clear, we



will protect the interest of our farmers. When we talk about two nations, we need to see the overall trade," the minister

added. According to a NITI Aayog report, "Promoting India-US Agricultural Trade under the new US Trade Regime",

the value for US agriculture and allied product exports to India was about \$ 2.22 billion in the triennium ending 2024.

In the same period, India exported \$ 5.75 billion worth of agricultural products to the US.

India's main agricultural exports to the US include frozen shrimp, basmati rice, spices, processed cereals, and other value-added products.

The US wants to export more agricultural products such as corn, soybeans, and animal feed, but faces high Indian tariffs — especially in agriculture, where average tariffs can reach up to 39-50 per cent.

The minister's comments come as India and the US continue negotiations on expanding agricultural trade, with Washington seeking reduced tariffs and improved market access for its farm products in the Indian market.

India is cautious about fully opening its agriculture and dairy markets due to concerns about potential backlash from rural communities and the need to protect domestic producers from global price volatility.

5 apply for DCRA empanelment as TRAI preps for digital connectivity rating

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has received applications from five entities expressing interest in being empanelled as digital connectivity rating agencies (DCRAs) who will evaluate properties according to the regulator's prescribed rules and norms, according to Chairman Anil Kumar Lahoti. TRAI is hoping for an early launch of the entire system, with Lahoti noting that the first round of empanelment could take place as soon as this month.

Some projects and properties have already started making enquiries about the rating system, he said. The proposed 'star rating' system will evaluate properties on digital connectivity, similar to green building or energy efficiency rating systems. New as well as existing buildings can be rated under the proposed system and TRAI hopes that framework may even nudge builders to "retrofit" existing buildings with good digital connectivity infrastructure to get a favourable rating.

To support this, TRAI is developing a digital platform and final property assessments will also be published on the regulator's website. Over time, TRAI expects the digital connectivity rating system to become a standard and key selling point for developers, builders on the one hand, and buyers or tenants on the other, given connectivity demands at workplace and homes. At present, dense construction in urban areas also makes connectivity a challenge in many locations. "We have already issued the regulation for the rating framework. We have also initiated the process of empanelling agencies who can do the rating and the call for application is on. We have received applications from five agencies who have shown interest in getting empanelled as DCRAs.

"We have also issued a draft manual on the rating system so that there is a uniform, standard, transparent process for the rating, which is known across all the rating agencies and property managers who are seeking the rating. After that, it is for any property manager to approach a rating agencies and get the rating," Lahoti

said.

Last month, TRAI released the draft manual for assessment of rating of properties for digital connectivity under the Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations, 2024.

According to TRAI, the rating manual will enable adoption of uniform assess-

The proposed star rating system will evaluate properties on digital connectivity, similar to green building or energy efficiency rating systems

ment methodology by the Digital Connectivity Rating Agencies for rating of properties.

It will also provide a standard reference for the property managers for creation of digital connectivity infrastructure (DCI) in their properties. Buildings shall be evaluated based on defined parameters in the regulation — fiber readiness, mobile network availability, in-building solutions, and wi-fi infrastructure, service perfor-

mance among others. The regulator had also submitted its recommendations to the government on 'Rating of Buildings or Areas for Digital Connectivity' in February 2023, with an aim to create an ecosystem for building of DCI as a part of any development activity. TRAI has also released the regulation Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations, 2024 in October last year to bring a framework for rating of properties for digital connectivity. The idea is to promote creation of good digital connectivity through a collaborative and self-sustainable approach.

"The two things — regulations and policy framework are not contingent upon each other, they are complementary. The regulation is already in force, and the rating of properties can start. The policy framework enabling provisions in the national building code and in the model building bylaws, can process concurrently," he said. Industry estimates show that more than 80 per cent of the data consumption takes place inside building premises, Lahoti said.

Auto sector seeks Government help for rare earth imports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The automobile industry has sought government support in expediting approvals from the Chinese government for importing rare earth magnets used in various applications, including passenger cars.

As per the industry sources, various domestic suppliers have already sought approval from the Chinese government through their local vendors in China.

However, no approvals have been granted so far, sources said. China controls over 90 per cent of global processing capacity for the magnets, used across multiple sectors including automobiles, home appliances and clean energy. The Chinese government has put restrictions, with effect from April 4, mandating special export licences for seven rare earth elements and related magnets.

In Japan, Suzuki Motor has already suspended production of its Swift car because of China's curbs. Last week, Maruti Suzuki India Senior Executive Officer (Corporate Affairs) Rahul Bharti said China has asked for an end-user certificate, endorsed by the Indian government and approved by the Chinese government. "So that process is on and industry is in discussion with the government," he stated. Deloitte India Partner and Automotive Sector Leader Rajat Mahajan noted that the shortage is a major supply chain disruption especially for EVs as rare earth metals are used extensively in the electric motor which is a core component. Rare earth magnets

have high magnetic energy storage capacity with low coercivity at high operating temperatures. "This has been an R&D topic for the automotive industry for a long time but till now other magnetic materials have not seen large scale commercial usage in applications like EV," he noted.

Also, there are not enough rare earth magnets to recycle at this point in time to satisfy the EV volumes, Mahajan said. It will not be easy for OEMs to suddenly change course on powertrain as well as on alternate material.

The Chinese government has put restrictions, with effect from April 4, mandating special export licences for seven rare earth elements and related magnets

"This situation will hopefully get resolved via diplomatic channels, but if it continues then we may see a shift towards powertrains for large OEMs," he said. Icara Senior Vice President & Co-Group Head Corporate Ratings Srikumar Krishnamurthy noted that rare earth magnets are used for multiple applications in EVs — electric motors, regenerative braking systems, power steering etc.

Given that China accounts for around 90 per cent of the overall supply for rare earth magnets, the curb on export of the same by China can have material implications for the EV industry, he added.

Odisha now an industrial powerhouse: CM Mohan Charan Majhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bhubaneswar

Odisha is no longer the minerals hub of India, it is becoming a diversified industrial powerhouse, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi said on Sunday. Majhi made the statement while interacting with industrialists at the Lok Seva Bhavan, ahead of the first anniversary of his government.

"Odisha is no longer just a minerals and metals hub. We are becoming a diversified industrial powerhouse, where opportunity flows from port to plant and from cities to every aspirational district," he said.

The state is growing across 20 sectors — from mining, metallurgy and metal downstream to emerging opportunities in chemicals, food processing, apparel and textiles, he said.

Majhi spoke about the measures his government has taken to help industries. "One year ago, the people of Odisha placed their faith in us to build a future that is inclusive, aspirational, and transformative. Today, as we reflect on this first year, we do so with pride, in our progress and renewed commitment to the journey ahead," he said.

Maintaining that his government was focused on job creation, he urged the industrialists to join the journey of making the state an industrial powerhouse.

"Over the last year alone, 206 large projects were approved -- nearly double the average of the previous five years. These represent a total investment value of over Rs 4.5 lakh crore and an employment potential of nearly 2.9 lakh jobs," he said. "Since the Utkarsha Odisha summit, 56 projects have already been taken up for ground-

breaking and inauguration, with a combined investment of over Rs 1.78 lakh crore, and employment potential for 1.1 lakh people. These numbers reflect not only our speed, but scale and substance," he added.

Attacking the previous Naveen Patnaik-led regime, Majhi said that, in many ways, his government has achieved more in this one year than the past five years combined through quiet, focused, and committed action.

In the coming year, he said the government will focus on four key priorities. "First, the government will bring new policies that unlock emerging sectors and offer global competitiveness. Secondly, the government will expand the state's land bank and industrial infrastructure to meet future demand. Third, we will revamp our single window system and develop a modern, integrated project tracking platform.

India poised to benefit from FTAs, says RAI CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

India has emerged as a "great place" to use the advantages accruing from Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), a senior retail industry official said as he highlighted the success of Make in India programme. "We are among the most attractive markets, with a growing young population that makes us one of the world's largest consumer markets with insatiable demand for the best in the world," said Retailers Association of India (RAI) CEO Kumar Rajagopalan at an event here.

FTAs will also give Indians access to items that get manufactured abroad at a more convenient pricing, he added. But he was also quick to dismiss notions of dumping cheap inferior goods into the Indian market, pointing out that the

country has created laws that can protect against such trade-damaging practices, and that can be challenged at the World Trade Organisation. According to Kumar, a trade veteran of 40 decades, a full-fledged quality control checking system is in place to ensure Indian consumers are getting the best products as imports of edibles is set to increase following the signing of more and more FTAs by the Indian government in an endeavour to reach out the global markets. India has always imported consumer products from around the world but in recent years with the economic prosperity momentum picking up, the country has become "more and more attractive as a consumer-driven market", given the young population with rising income seeking the best quality, cost-effective, long-lasting and appealing products,

Kumar pointed out. FTAs are increasing India's bilateral trade globally, covering value-added high-end and heavy-duty industrial products to edibles such as soybeans, cheeses, vines and beverages. RAI leads about 2,500 members, mostly retailers at national level, with an annual business volume of about \$ 900 billion, that is set to grow at 10 per cent annually.

After participating in the National Retailers Federation's 2025 for Asia Pacific held in Singapore during June 3-6, Kumar pointed out that the Make in India programme is producing world-class high-standard products both for the domestic market as well as export. "thanks to the FTAs opening more export opportunities", Kumar also sees competition from world-class products for Make in India. "Imports and exports will create a competitive

landscape and we will see further upgrades in manufacturing processes within India to make globally-rated products be it hardware, software and or edibles," India, he said. Produces agri and non-agri products for consumers as well as industrial plants for the world.

He said that 85 per cent of the 7,00,000 stores in India are still operating in traditional formats, ranging from the corner shop Kiraana to single store supplying everything in the range of garments and edibles, competing with mega modern-day fast-pace trading department stores, online and offline supply chain operators.

Fast and quick-commerce have reduced delivery time to 10 minutes while e-commerce and online payments have made retailing business easier and prompt, he observed.

HDFC bank denies fraud allegations against MD and CEO by Lilavati trust

PRESS TRUST POF INDIA ■ New Delhi

HDFC Bank has denied Lilavati Trust's allegation that the bank's MD and CEO Sashidhar Jagdishan was involved in a series of financial frauds.

The allegation levelled by Lilavati Kirtilal Mehta Medical Trust (LKMM Trust), its trustees and officials against the bank's MD and CEO are baseless and malicious, an HDFC Bank's spokesperson said. "The outrageous and preposterous allegations are strongly and categorically denied," the spokesperson said in a statement.

The Trust, which oversees Lilavati Hospital in Mumbai, had called upon the board of HDFC Bank, the RBI, SEBI and the Finance Ministry to suspend Jagdishan from all executive and board roles with immediate effect.

"An FIR...Was registered under orders of the Bombay Magistrate Court after a seized cash diary revealed ₹14.42 crore misappropriated by trustees, of which ₹2.05 crore was received by Jagdishan,



establishing his direct involvement," the Trust had alleged.

According to the HDFC Bank spokesperson, Jagdishan is being target-

ed by unscrupulous persons who are abusing the legal process to thwart the recovery of the long outstanding loan due to the bank from recalcitrant defaulters.

"The Trustee, Prashant Mehta and his family members owe substantial amounts to HDFC Bank which were never repaid. Recovery and enforcement actions have

India topping Japan economy, per capita GDP still lower: WEF ex-MD

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India is set to overtake Japan to become the world's fourth-largest economy, but must not become complacent, as the country remains far behind Japan in GDP per capita terms, WEF's former MD Claude Smadja said.

According to IMF data dated April 2025, India's GDP per capita of \$2,878.4 is approximately 8.5 per cent of Japan's GDP per capita of \$33,955.7, meaning Japan's per capita income is about 11.8 times higher than India's.

"Yes, it (economy size) is a good indicator because it gives a notion of the economic weight of the country on the global balance. "No, it is not a good indicator because what counts is the per capita GDP. In terms of per capita GDP, India is far below Japan. So whether India has achieved this fourth position in the global economic balance... Is a good indicator of progress being made, but it is not in any way any reason for complacency," Smadja said in an interview.

On the contrary, Smadja argued, India's new economic standing should serve as a catalyst for accelerating reforms and ensuring that growth translates into higher living standards for all citizens, not just a burgeoning middle class in urban and rural centres. Smadja, Chairman of Smadja and Smadja Strategic Advisory, said India stands at a pivotal crossroads in the global technology race, possessing a "unique superiority" in big data. "an asset that the country must protect and strategically leverage to propel it into the top-tier of global tech and innovation.

He highlighted that India, alongside China, Europe, and the US, is one of the world's largest generators of data.

India's situation is distinctive, he said, thanks to widespread internet access, the proliferation of mobile phones, and the national single identity card system (Aadhaar), data is being generated at an "exponential" rate, touching every aspect of daily life.

"In India, we need to make sure that it protects this huge strategic asset because this is the basis from which it can build, to accelerate its innovation technology process, from which it can create new developments in disruptive technologies, and from which it can, in a way, build its position as being among the top two or three big data players in the world.

Apart from China, no country except India can have this kind of asset with respect to big data, Smadja said. But with

this advantage comes vulnerability. Smadja warned that the US tech giants and policymakers are eager to gain access to data, and with China sealing off its data ecosystem and Europe already on its radar, India could be the next potential target. Smadja believes that India's data trove is the bedrock for the next wave of technological breakthroughs, including artificial intelligence and deep tech. He urged that this resource be leveraged not just for elite innovation but to benefit the entire Indian population, including rural and remote communities.

"India has a tremendously innovative and dynamic startup and innovation ecosystem. So, whatever can be added in terms of policies to support the development of this ecosystem will tremendously benefit India.

According to IMF data dated April 2025, India's GDP per capita of \$2,878.4 is approximately 8.5 per cent of Japan's GDP per capita of \$ 33,955.7, meaning Japan's per capita income is about 11.8 times higher than India's

"Until now, corporate India has been more prone to buying technologies than to create them. We need to have and see a much more intensive effort from corporate India to develop R&D technologies," Smadja noted. India's young population remains a key asset, but Smadja stressed the urgent need to accelerate skill development and reskilling across the workforce.

Looking ahead, for India to become a \$ 7-trillion economy by 2030, India must expand its industrial base, Smadja said. Currently, the share of manufacturing in India's GDP is about half of what it is in China. This share is far too low given the country's size, population, and economic potential, he said. Without a significant boost to manufacturing, Smadja said, India cannot hope to achieve the scale of economic growth required to reach the \$ 7-trillion mark. Ramping up R&D, fostering innovation, and accelerating the pace of development and productivity in the rural sector is also crucial, he said. Increased rural productivity would not only boost the overall economic output but also enhance the purchasing power of rural populations, driving broader consumer.

Maharashtra, Karnataka account for 51 per cent of FDI in FY25

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Maharashtra and Karnataka accounted for 51 per cent of the foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows into the country during the last financial year 2024-25, according to the latest data of the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT).

Maharashtra attracted maximum foreign inflows at USD 19.6 billion and accounted for 31 per cent of the country's total FDI during April-March 2024-25.

Karnataka received USD 6.62 billion overseas investments during the last fiscal year, the data showed. The two states were followed by Delhi (USD 6 billion), Gujarat (USD 5.71 billion), Tamil Nadu (USD 3.68 billion), Haryana (USD 3.14 billion) and Telangana (USD 3 billion).



Choose Happiness

As emotional exhaustion becomes widespread, it is important to cultivate happiness, says ABHI SINGHAL



CELEBRATE YOUR SMALL WINS

In a results-driven world, where we are judged on what big we achieve we often overlook minor accomplishments. Taking time to celebrate small victories, whether finishing a book or making your bed will reinforce self-worth and brings a sense of progress. This habit builds confidence and shifts your mindset from scarcity to achievement. Always remember small achievements bring happiness.



Between the relentless pressure of work deadlines, financial worries, social comparisons, and a constant stream of bad news, many people today find themselves overwhelmed and emotionally drained. Frustration, burnout, and anxiety have become all too common, especially in a world where productivity often takes priority over peace of mind.

Yet, in the midst of this chaos there is one simple yet powerful tool we can all lean on anytime is a

positive mindset.

Chronic stress, especially due to high-pressure jobs or unrealistic expectations, slowly drains our emotional energy. Over a long period of time, it affects sleep, appetite, and even memory. Due to continuous pressure on the brain, it becomes nearly impossible to stay positive or feel hopeful about things. Mental well-being is about feeling capable, calm, and connected. Chronic stress deeply disturbs that balance," says Dr

WE'RE OFTEN OUR HARSHTEST CRITICS. REPLACE NEGATIVE SELF-TALK WITH ENCOURAGING WORDS. SPEAK TO YOURSELF AS YOU WOULD TO A FRIEND IN NEED — WITH KINDNESS, PATIENCE, AND UNDERSTANDING



POINTS YOU HAVE TO REMEMBER

START WITH GRATITUDE: Keeping a gratitude journal or simply reflecting on three good things each day can shift your mindset. It's not about ignoring the negatives, but about training your brain to also recognise what's going right.

MOVE YOUR BODY: Physical activity — whether it's a brisk walk or a dance session, all these release endorphins as our brain's natural mood enhancers. Just 20 minutes a day can help boost your mood significantly.

CONNECT WITH OTHERS: Human connection is a cornerstone of happiness. Regular interactions with family, friends, or even neighbours can ease anxiety and promote a sense of belonging. Volunteering is another powerful way to foster positivity. Avoid just socially connecting on the phones, try and meet physically and soak in the happy moments.

MIND YOUR MIND: Practising mindfulness or meditation helps break the cycle of negative thinking. Even five minutes of focused breathing can help reset your emotional state. Over time, mindfulness improves emotional regulation, reduces anxiety, and enhances awareness.



Pavitra Shankar, Associate Consultant, Psychiatry at Aakash Healthcare.

Research has shown that 10 minutes of brisk walking can make a lot of difference, as during brisk walking, "feel-good" chemicals like endorphins are released. It has also been shown that expressing gratitude regularly also helps train your brain to be positive.

Connecting with friends regularly can also help you develop a more positive outlook. Regularly practicing breathing techniques, even for a few minutes daily, can help settle your mind. These small changes, done over a period of time, help maintain a positive outlook even during difficult times," says Dr Pavitra. Ultimately, choosing happiness is an act of self-care, one that not only improves your health but also uplifts those around you. In the words of one wise proverb: A happy heart makes the face cheerful, but heartache crushes the spirit. And in today's world, a cheerful face might just be the best medicine of all.

START YOUR DAY BY SETTING AN INTENTION AS SIMPLE AS "I WILL STAY CALM UNDER PRESSURE" OR "I WILL BE KIND TO MYSELF." UNLIKE GOALS, INTENTIONS FOCUS ON HOW YOU WANT TO BE

LIMIT NEGATIVITY

While staying informed is important, constant exposure to bad news or toxic social media can drain your energy. Curate your environment in both online and offline spaces to support your mental wellbeing. This includes setting screen time boundaries, unfollowing accounts that trigger stress, and choosing uplifting content that nurtures your peace of mind.



ENGAGE IN CREATIVE EXPRESSION

Hobbies like painting, journaling, gardening, or music allow emotional release and personal satisfaction. Engaging in creative pursuits can act as a form of meditation, helping you stay present and joyful. Even 15 minutes of creativity everyday can help reset your mood and inspire positivity.

Sleep Habits Impact Brain Ageing

Study says those who stay up late may face an increased risk of memory loss and cognitive slowdown, writes ABHI SINGHAL

People who identify as night owls, which means individuals who naturally prefer staying up late and waking later in the day — may face a heightened risk of cognitive decline as they age, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease*. The decade-long study, conducted by researchers at the University Medical Center Groningen in the Netherlands, tracked the cognitive performance of approximately 23,800 individuals. The findings of the study suggest that evening chronotypes, or 'night owls', decline cognitively at a faster pace than their early bird counterparts.

Chronotype Matter More

The lead author of the study — Ana Wenzler explained that one's chronotype — the natural inclination toward a particular sleep-wake cycle — plays a crucial role in brain health. "Are you an early bird or a night owl? It's hard to adjust what your biological clock — your so-called chronotype — is, but you can adjust your life to it as best you can," Ana Wenzler noted. Unhealthy behaviour like smoking, drinking and unhealthy eating happens more often in the evening.



Harmful Habits of Late Sleepers

The study observed that night owls often indulge in behaviours detrimental to long-term cognitive function. Poor dietary habits, lower physical activity and irregular or inadequate sleep routines. "Unhealthy behaviour such as smoking, drinking and unhealthy eating happens more often

in the evening," Wenzler added. "Twenty-five per cent of the risk of cognitive decline can be explained from our research by smoking and poor sleep."

Crucial Role of Sleep Quality

Sleep deprivation emerged as a key factor driving cognitive deterioration. Night owls often experience a mismatch between their internal body clock and early morning societal demands. "They are often people who have to go back to work early in the morning and are

therefore more likely to sleep too short, giving their brains too little rest," Wenzler stated. Good sleep supports: Brain detoxification and memory consolidation, hormonal balance with emotional stability.

Can You Change Your Chronotype?

Interestingly, chronotypes are not permanent. Wenzler pointed out that children typically begin as morning people, become evening-oriented during adolescence, and shift back towards being morning people by their 40s.

SOME PEOPLE CONTINUE BEING NIGHT OWLS AT LATER AGE, WHICH MAY HAVE GREATER RISK. YOU CAN TRY SLEEP EARLY, BUT IF YOUR BODY IS NOT PRODUCING MELATONIN, IT WILL NOT WORK

HOW COGNITIVE DECLINE SHOWS UP

Symptoms of cognitive decline commonly seen include:

- Memory lapses
- Reduced processing speed
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Increased mental fatigue

ADJUSTING TO YOUR BODY CLOCK

As cognitive health becomes an increasing concern with age, aligning lifestyle choices with one's natural rhythm may offer protection. Establishing a consistent sleep routine, avoiding stimulants late at night, dimming lights in the evening, and exposing oneself to natural light during the day are among the ways to support a healthy circadian rhythm.



TRIVIA



Did you know owning a dog can be good for your heart? According to the American Heart Association, pet ownership may reduce blood pressure and cholesterol, improve mental health, and lower your overall risk of heart disease.

FIT FACT



Regular meditation is linked to several health benefits, including improved metabolism, lower blood pressure and positive changes in brain activity. Just a few minutes each day can enhance mental clarity and boost overall well-being.

Swapnil Kusale, Elavenil to lead India in ISSF World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Munich

Paris Olympics bronze medallist Swapnil Kusale will lead the Indian squad along with comeback shooter Elavenil Valarivan at the season's third ISSF World Cup which will feature of a galaxy of international stars, beginning here from Tuesday. Kusale fought his way back to the men's 50m rifle 3 positions (3P) event on the back of a good show on the domestic circuit.

Two-time Olympian Elavenil will be seen in international action for the first time since Paris, although she did make the trip to Buenos Aires and Lima as an RPO (Ranking Points Only) shooter.

Reigning Asian Games champion Palak in the women's air pistol also makes it back to the team. There will be a few World Cup debuts like newly-crowned women's air rifle national champion Ananya Naidu.

There will be two new faces in the men's air pistol — Aditya Malra and Nishant Rawat — as India explore their depth in the two disciplines ahead of bigger challenges



later in the year. A total of 695 athletes, including Olympic and World champions and legends of the sport from 78 countries, will participate in the World Cup.

The season began with a double-header in South America where Indian rifle and pistol shooters picked up 15 medals including six gold, helping the team finish a creditable second and third respectively on the

standings. The Munich leg will however present a much tougher challenge given the much wider presence of the world's best shooters. Legendary Chinese marksman Li Yuehong, the reigning Olympic champion and three-time Olympic medallist in the 25m rapid-fire pistol (RFP), and 20-year-old Sheng Lihao, the reigning Olympic, world and Asian champion and world-

record holder, will compete in the tournament. China, winners of the first two legs, are bringing their men's air pistol Olympic champion Xie Yu, in what is a 22-member squad. Hosts Germany have fielded a strong 27-member contingent led by their pistol legend and former Olympic and world champion Christian Reitz.

Anna Janssen, their women's air rifle qualification world record holder, would also be starting on home soil. Another RFP legend Jean Quinquampoix, part of a 16-member French squad, will help complete the troika of legends who have completely dominated the event over the last decade or so.

The Koreans will also be there in full force with 19 shooters, including two of their three reigning women Olympic champions Yang Jiin (25m pistol) and Oh Yejin (10m air pistol).

Several Paris Olympic medallists like the USA's Sagen Maddalena, Italy's Paolo Monna and Danilo Sollazzo and Alexandra Le of Kazakhstan are also set to start in Munich.

IPL needs 12-16 week window to match the likes of NFL: Burman

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Indian Premier League needs a 12-16 week operating window to match the brand value of top sporting leagues in the world including the NFL, NBA and Premier League, reckons Punjab Kings co-owner Mohit Burman.

At \$16.8 million, the IPL is only behind NFL (\$36.8 million) in terms of per-match value but needs to catch up with its global rivals like NFL and leading European football leagues when it comes to the overall brand value pecking order.

According to leading investment bank Houlihan Lokey, the IPL is valued at roughly \$16 billion while one NFL franchise Dallas Cowboys alone is worth \$9 billion, followed by New York Yankees at \$7.1 billion.

NBA franchise New York Knicks is valued at \$7 billion while top football clubs Real Madrid and Manchester United have drawn a valuation of \$6 billion. Compared to the existing eight-week IPL, the much longer windows of Premier League

(August to May), NBA (seven months) and NFL (4.5 months) also push their valuations.

"We're already second in the world when it comes to per-match value, just behind the NFL. But overall brand value? That's a different game. I think we need a 12-16-week window to get there," said Burman, who is also the chairman of Dabur India.

"That gives us space to tell better stories, build rivalries, and create more value for everyone — fans, sponsors, broadcasters. But it's not just about length. It's about what we do in that time — the kind of content we push out, how we engage fans year-round, how we build the league beyond the season. IPL has the scale. Now it's about consistency and depth."

The IPL's dominance in world cricket is undisputed but to maintain that envious position, nothing can be taken for granted, said Burman. "The IPL is already the biggest cricket product in the world, but staying there means not taking anything for granted. Player availability is crucial. We need a clean window where the best

in the world can play without restrictions," said the 56-year-old businessman.

"The fan experience must keep evolving. It's not just about cricket anymore - its sport, entertainment, culture all rolled into one. We don't need to take the IPL abroad — what we do need is to build global relevance. Content, players, and stories that connect with fans across the world."

Besides Punjab Kings, Burman and other team's co-owners have also invested in the Saint Lucia franchise of the Caribbean Premier League. Their IPL rivals too have expanded their ownership in multiple leagues including SA20, IIT20, MLC, CPL and most recently The Hundred. Burman is all for taking the IPL brand to the world. "It's a smart and strategic move. A lot of teams are now building a common core — with shared vision, systems, and values — across multiple leagues. That's what makes it sustainable and scalable," he said when asked about the trend of IPL teams expanding overseas.

"For us, the goal is clear: build the Kings ecosystem across geographies and formats.

Whether it's IPL or CPL, we want to run our teams with the same purpose — high performance, strong culture, and deeper fan connection. We're not just creating teams — we're building a brand that travels. And this is just the beginning," he said.

PBKS reap rewards of success, up 25 percent year on year commercially

The IPL and its franchises are in the pink of financial health considering the phenomenal growth of the competition introduced in 2008. Considering that, is the on-field performance of a franchise heavily linked to its commercial success?

"They go hand in hand. Strong on-field performances drive commercial growth - that's the reality. Brands want to be part of winning stories. We've seen that this year — we're up 25 per cent year-on-year commercially.

"More fan engagement, stronger sponsor interest, and better value across the board. This season proves that when your on-field and off-field stories align - that's where the real magic happens," he said.

India need to avoid conceding late goals against Netherlands in FIH Pro League

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Amstelveen

The Indian men's hockey team will have to shed the habit of conceding late goals if it wishes to bounce back against the Netherlands and stay in contention for top spot in the FIH Pro League here Monday.

India have dropped to the fourth position in the Pro League standings after the 1-2 loss against Netherlands on Saturday.

Netherlands are atop the leader-board with 17 points from nine games, followed by England (16 points from eight games), Belgium (16 points from eight games) and India (15 points from nine games).

The European leg of the Pro League holds greater significance for India. A top-place finish will help India directly qualify for next year's World Cup to be co-hosted by Belgium and Netherlands.

If they fail, India will have another chance through the Asia Cup to be held in Rajgir, Bihar from September 5 to 14 this year. Against Netherlands on Saturday, India squandered a one goal lead to lose to Olympic champions Netherlands.

The Indian side showed promise in the early phases of the first half, with captain Harmanpreet Singh converting a penalty



corner to give his side the lead.

The Dutch, however, made a strong comeback and ultimately emerged victorious courtesy a brace from Thijs van Dam, which included the winning goal in the 58th minute. The Indian defence was upto the task against Netherlands' fierce attacks but some lapse in concentration and man-marking cost them dearly with two minutes remaining.

Having said that, the Indian forwards will have to be assertive and create more chance from field opportunities, an area which was found wanting on Saturday.

Also, what needs to be worked upon is more co-ordination between the midfield and forwardline, a vital area which creates goal scoring opportunities.

"We did well in the first half but the third quarter wasn't as good. In the fourth quarter we did well again and were winning the ball, but we weren't getting any shots on goal. "It was unfortunate to lose like that because I thought we could push for a draw. We want to push ourselves as hard as we can, especially against a team like the Netherlands," India head coach Craig Fulton said after Saturday's match.

Diksha stays within top 10 after third round

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tenerife (Spain)

Indian golfer Diksha Dagar carded an even par 72 to hold her position within the top 10 after the third round of the Tenerife Women's Open at Abama Golf here.

Diksha was five-under for three days and is placed sole 9th in the standings. She is three shots behind the leader Sara Kouskova (69) at eighth-under.

The other Indian to make the cut in Tenerife, Avani Prashanth played an even par third round and is now placed at 43rd on the leaderboard.

Sara Kouskova surged ahead of the field on the third day with a round of three-under 69 and now leads by one stroke. The Czech national won the Jabra Ladies Open just last week and is in prime position to follow the title with one more this week. Diksha started her day with a birdie on the first hole before dropping shots on the sixth and eighth holes by the time she was halfway through the round.

On the back nine, Diksha picked up a shot on the 10th hole before dropping one back on the 13th and picking up one more on the 16th to make sure she is still placed in the Top-10.

Avani started her round with back-to-back birdies on the 10th and 11th holes and then dropped a double bogey on the

Kane saves England in World Cup qualifying

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

England needed a second-half goal from Harry Kane to secure a 1-0 win over lowly Andorra and maintain a perfect record under Thomas Tuchel after three World Cup qualifiers.

England was held scoreless by a team ranked 173rd in the world until Kane redirected a pass from Noni Madueke into the top of the net in the 50th minute after the Bayern Munich striker's initial effort was saved by goalkeeper Iker Alvarez.

"We need to be better for sure," Kane said. "It's not one that many will remember and we had good spells, but we take the three points and move on."

It was goal number 72 in his 106th appearance for the Three Lions.

Tuchel's side remained top of Europe's Group K with nine points after wins against Albania and Latvia. They have yet to concede a goal under the German coach. Nevertheless, Tuchel said that he was "not happy" with the slim win over tiny Andorra, which has a population of around 80,000. "At the end of it, it was absolutely not OK because we lost focus and we lost the urgency that is needed," he said.

Andorra remained winless but managed to frustrate England's stars for most of the game with its five-man defensive line. Ezri Konsa had to block a late shot by Andorra's Guillaume Lopez to prevent the chance of an equaliser.

"We kept giving it away and that gave them a bit of confidence and energy," Kane said. "At 1-0 with five to 10 minutes to go you have to be careful."

England dominated possession and Eberechi Eze went close to a second goal when he forced Alvarez to tip his header of the bar as the visitors couldn't extend the lead. England had won its previous six meetings with Andorra by a combined score of 25-0.

"In terms of effort, I think I couldn't be prouder of my team and how they carried it out," Andorra coach Koldo Alvarez said.

The game was played at Espanyol's stadium in Barcelona, nearly three hours south of the Pyrenees principality due to concerns that work on Andorra's home stadium wouldn't be finished in time.

Only the group winners qualify directly for next year's tournament in North

America. The second-placed teams go into a playoffs. Europe will have 16 teams in the expanded 48-team field for the World Cup. The group stage of European qualifying runs through November.

England will next host Senegal in a friendly on Tuesday. Albania and Serbia draw under tight securityAlbania and Serbia drew 0-0 in the latest chapter of a charged rivalry rooted in deep historical and ethnic tensions between the Balkan neighbors.

England dominated possession and Eberechi Eze went close to a second goal when he forced Alvarez to tip his header of the bar as the visitors couldn't extend the lead

Serbia goalkeeper Dord Petrovic saved a penalty kick by Rey Manaj in the best chance of the game, which was played without Serbian fans as determined by UEFA for security concerns.

Albania is second in Group K behind England with four points after three games. There were few chances in the match played under tight security, with more than 2,000 police officers guarding the capital.

Albanian fans loudly whistled when the Serbian anthem was played and shouted Kosovo, which predominantly has an ethnic Albanian population and which was part of Serbia until 1999 when a NATO air campaign pushed Serb forces and authorities out. Some fans tossed beer cups at the Serbian players, despite repeated calls for them to stop.

A 2014 game between the teams in Belgrade was abandoned when a drone carrying an Albanian flag sparked a full-scale brawl. The last time they met on Albanian soil was in 2015.

Veteran Dzeko scores for BosniaA goal from 39-year-old Edin Dzeko gave Bosnia and Herzegovina a 1-0 win over San Marino.

The Balkan republic leads Group H with three wins, while San Marino is bottom with zero points.

Austria beat Romania 2-1 in the same group as Michael Gregoritsch and Marcel Sabitzer scored for the hosts before Denis Alibec halved the difference in injury time.



16th. On the front nine she dropped two more shots on the first hole with another double bogey before picking them back up on the third and sixth holes.

She would drop a shot immediately on the seventh and then birdie the eighth to close the day with a par score on a roller-coaster day. Kouskova only dropped one shot during her third round on the 12th hole. She made birdies on the sixth, 11th, 14th and 17th holes.

Shannon Tan of Singapore is in tied second place alongside Ana Pelaez Trivino

of Spain and Noora Komulainen of Finland. The Singaporean national carded 72, while Ana and Noora played rounds of six-under 66 and three-under 69 respectively to place themselves one shot behind the leader.

Order of merit leader Mimi Rhodes played carded three-under 69 to move into tied 10th with Patricia Isabel Schmidt and second day leader Lauren Walsh.

Walsh had an abysmal third round and she shot five-over 77 to stumble down the order.

Will visa delays, border fears keep international fans away from Club World Cup in US?

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

As the United States readies for the FIFA Club World Cup, concern over such things as international travel, fan safety and even economic uncertainty threaten to diminish enthusiasm for the tournament.

The United States will see the arrival of 32 professional club teams from around the globe to 11 cities for the tournament. There's a \$1 billion prize pool.

The Club World Cup is considered in many ways to be a dress rehearsal for the big event, the 2026 World Cup to be hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico. But there seems to be little buzz for the Club World Cup at home or abroad. The expansion of the field from seven to 32 teams has diminished the exclusivity of the event, and ticket sales appear slow.

At the same time, the tournament is being played amid reports of foreign tourists being detained and visa processing delays. Chaotic US Immigration and Customs Enforcement activities and President Donald Trump's travel bans aren't exactly reassuring international fans, either.

Wary travelers, visa woesTrump's policies appear to have already impacted travelers. The National Travel and Tourism Office released data showing visitors to the U.S. From foreign countries fell 9.7 per cent

in March compared to the same month last year. The travel forecasting company Tourism Economics has predicted that international arrivals would decline 9.4 per cent this year.

The US Travel Association, a nonprofit group that represents the travel industry, has urged the Trump administration to improve such things as visa processing and customs wait times ahead of a series of big sporting events on US Soil, including the Club World Cup beginning June 14, the Ryder Cup later this year, next summer's World Cup and the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.

Association President Geoff Freeman said, for example, that the wait in Colombia for a visa interview appointment is upwards of 18 months — already putting the 2026 World Cup out of reach for some travelers. He said his organisation is working with the White House's World Cup Task Force to address issues.

"They (the task force) recognise how important this event is: success is the only option. So we're eager to work with them to do whatever it is we need to do to ensure that we can welcome the millions of incremental visitors that we think are possible," Freeman said. "But these underlying issues of visa and customs, we've got to address."

Secretary of State Marco Rubio, speaking at a House Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing last month, suggested



consular staff could be put on longer shifts and that artificial intelligence could be used to process visas.

"We want it to be a success. It's a priority for the president," said Rubio.

But the Trump administration may have added to the concerns for international visitors by issuing a ban on travelers from 12 countries, with restrictions on travel from

nine more countries.

Iran, one of the countries named, has qualified for the World Cup. The proclamation included an exemption for "any athlete or member of an athletic team, including coaches, persons performing a necessary support role, and immediate relatives, traveling for the World Cup, Olympics, or other major sporting event

as determined by the secretary of state."

It did not mention fans. Fan fearsThere are signs current immigration policies were already impacting soccer fans and spurring worries over safety.

A Latin American supporters group in Nashville stayed away from a recent Major League Soccer game because of ICE activity in the city. The city's Geodis Park is set

to host three Club World Cup matches.

Danny Navarro, who offers travel advice to followers on his social media platforms under the moniker TravelFutbolFan, said the World Cup Task Force announcement did not allay fears about travel, especially when Vice President JD Vance said, "We want them to come. We want them to celebrate. We want them to watch the game. But when the time is up, they'll have to go home. Otherwise, they'll have to talk to (Homeland Security) Secretary (Kristi) Noem."

That insinuated fans visiting the United States for the World Cup could use it to stay in the country, which is nonsensical, Navarro maintained.

For many countries, fans traveling to the World Cup — an expensive travel plan with hiked flight and hotel prices — are broadly viewed as higher-spending and lower-risk for host nation security planning.

Navarro put the onus on FIFA. "They must know that there is an anxiety among international travelers wanting to come in. They must know there's an anxiety among the U.S. Fan base that is multicultural and wanting to go to all these places. Are they going to? Are they going to be harassed by ICE?" Navarro said.

"There is just a lot of uncertainty, I would say, too much uncertainty, that the fan base doesn't want to think about."