

FATF highlights Pakistan’s missile smuggling via sea

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

In a striking revelation, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) in its report Complex Proliferation Financing and Sanctions Evasion Schemes, has cited a 2020 case where Indian authorities intercepted a shipment of missile-related equipment headed for Karachi, exposing Pakistan’s use of mis-declared dual-use goods linked to its ballistic missile programme.

The report highlights how the consignment, traced to Islamabad’s National Development Complex, was disguised in shipping documents - a move seen as part of Pakistan’s ongoing efforts to bypass international controls and fuel proliferation. The report outlines how dual-use goods, including equipment critical for ballistic missile technology, were mis-declared in export documents and linked directly to Pakistan’s National Development Complex, which is known to be involved in the development of long-range ballistic missiles.

“In 2020, Indian custom authorities seized an Asian-flagged ship bound for Pakistan. During an investigation, Indian authorities confirmed that documents mis-declared the shipment’s dual-use items. Indian investigators certified the items for shipment

The report underscores that unless public and private sectors bolster technical compliance, those seeking WMD proliferation will continue

to be ‘Autoclaves’, which are used for sensitive high energy materials and for insulation and chemical coating of missile motors. The sensitive items are included in dual-use export control lists of the Missile Technology Control Regime, India, and other jurisdictions. The Bill of Lading of the seized cargo provided evidence of the link between the importer and the National Development Complex, which is involved in the development of long-range ballistic missiles,”the report noted.

This came amid the India’s diplomatic efforts to highlight the resurgence of cross-border terrorism and expose the financial networks behind it. This latest disclosure comes as FATF increases its scrutiny of state-sponsored terrorism, particularly following the April 22 terror attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, which left 26 dead.

FATF noted that such dual-use goods can support missile and weapons development programmes when exported with-

out proper declarations. The watchdog cited the Pakistan-linked case as a key example of how weak export controls and mis-declarations can lead to violations of international norms. FATF said this incident illustrates how state-linked entities may attempt to bypass regulations by disguising the nature and end use of sensitive materials.

India’s National Risk Assessment has identified terrorism financing from state actors - with Pakistan prominently named - as a significant national security threat. The FATF currently monitors 24 countries on its “grey list” for strategic gaps in anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism finance systems. Countries under grey-listing face increased scrutiny from international financial institutions and risk reduced investor confidence. In this context, Indian authorities are preparing a formal dossier highlighting Pakistan’s compliance failures. The document is expected to be presented during the Asia Pacific Group meeting on August 25 and the FATF plenary session on October 20.

The report further reveals that significant vulnerabilities remain across the global financial system in countering the financing of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Despite

the grave threat posed by proliferation financing (PF), only 16 per cent of countries assessed by the FATF and its Global Network have demonstrated high or substantial effectiveness in Immediate Outcome 11 which evaluates countries’ effectiveness in implementing targeted financial sanctions under the United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCRs) on proliferation.

The report underscores that unless both the public and private sectors urgently bolster technical compliance and effectiveness, those seeking to finance WMD proliferation will continue to exploit weaknesses in existing controls. The report provides a detailed analysis of the evolving methods and techniques used to evade PF-related sanctions, including those imposed under Recommendation 7 of the FATF Standards, as well as other national and supranational regimes beyond the FATF Standards, to inform the reader on how those seeking to evade PF-related sanctions could be doing so. It outlines how proliferation networks are sourcing dual-use goods, technologies, and knowledge-often through procurement networks and front companies-and using various financial channels to access the global financial system.

Israel-Iran war enters second week

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

The second week of the Israel-Iran war started with a renewed round of strikes targeting an Iranian nuclear research facility near Isfahan. Talks in Geneva on Friday between European foreign ministers and Iran’s top diplomat failed to produce a breakthrough.

US President Donald Trump continued to weigh his country’s military involvement as concerns spiked over potential strikes on Iranian nuclear reactors.

Still, European officials expressed hope for future negotiations. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said he was open to further dialogue but stressed Tehran wasn’t interested in negotiating while Israel continued attacking. The French president said Saturday this happened during a call with his Iranian counterpart Masoud Pezeshkian, who initiated the call.

“Here again, my position is clear: Iran must never acquire nuclear weapons, and it is up to Iran to provide full guarantees that its intentions are peaceful,” Macron posted on social media, adding that diplomatic efforts should continue to resolve the current crisis.

“To achieve this, we will accelerate the negotiations led by France and its European partners with Iran,” Macron said he also asked for the release of two French citizens being held in Iran on espionage charges since 2022.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi takes part in a yoga session during 11th International Day of Yoga celebrations in Visakhapatnam. Also seen in the picture is Chandrababu Naidu, Andhra Pradesh CM

PTI

DGCA grounds AI officials

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has pulled up Air India for serious and repeated violations related to flight crew scheduling, ordering the removal of three senior officials including a divisional vice president, head of crew rostering, from all roles and responsibilities related to crew scheduling and rostering over serious lapses. The DGCA also warned Air India that future violations in crew scheduling will invite “strict action”, including licence suspension and operational restrictions.

In its order, the DGCA has asked the airline to initiate internal disciplinary proceedings against these officials.

DGCA SEEKS AUDIT DETAILS OF AI

New Delhi: The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has reportedly asked flight operations inspectors to provide details of all inspections and audits conducted for Air India since 2024.

According to sources, the details on the findings of the inspections and audits will have to be submitted by Sunday.

In an e-mailed communication, which came a day after the regulator issued a show-cause notice to the airline for flight duty

time limitations (FDTL) violation, and also ordered removal of the airline’s three senior officials from their respective roles for certain lapses, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has sought these details for 2024 and 2025 (to date), the sources said. The data has been sought on planned and unplanned inspections, audit, cockpit/enroute, station facility, ramp and cabin inspection among others, as per the communication.

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The DGCA has identified Choorah Singh, Divisional Vice President, Pinky Mittal, Chief Manager - DOPS, Crew Scheduling, and Payal Arora, Crew Scheduling - Planning directly, responsible for the continued non-compliance.

The action comes after Air India voluntarily disclosed that flight crew were being scheduled and operated in violation of licensing, flight duty time, and rest period regulations, key requirements for flight safety.

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Direct tax collection drops: Government data

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Net direct tax collection so far this fiscal year dropped 1.39 per cent to ₹4.59 lakh crore, on slowdown in advance tax mop-up and higher refunds, government data released on Saturday showed.


Advance tax, which is an indicator of corporate profitability and income of individuals, grew a meagre 3.87 per cent to ₹1.56 lakh crore between April 1 and June 19, 2025. In the comparable period in 2024, advance tax collections had recorded an annual growth of 27 per cent.

Advance tax paid by corporates saw a growth of 5.86 per cent to ₹1.22 lakh crore, while those by non-corporates, including individuals, HUFs and firms, dropped 2.68 per cent to ₹33,928 crore.

Advance tax is paid in four instalments — in June, September, December, and March. Experts said attributed the slowdown in direct tax mop-up in the first quarter to the personal I-T rate revisions, which took effect from April 1. Higher capex by corporate also lowered tax profit, they said.

BETWEEN THE LINES

- Advance tax, an indicator of corporate profitability and income of individuals, collections grew by only 3.87 per cent
- Non-corporate tax, which include mainly personal income tax, recorded a slight increase of 0.7 per cent to ₹2.73 lakh crore



Between April 1 and June 19, 2025, refund issuances increased 58 per cent to ₹86,385 crore.

Gross direct tax collection stood at ₹5.45 lakh crore so far this fiscal year, logging a growth of 4.86 per cent in the year-ago period.

Overall, the net direct tax collection kitty stood about ₹4.59 lakh crore in the fiscal year till June 19, 2025, registering a 1.39 per cent dip from ₹4.65 lakh crore collected in the corresponding period a year ago. During April 1-June 19, 2025, net corporate tax collection witnessed a slowdown at ₹1.73 lakh crore, a decline of over 5 per cent year-on-year.

Non-corporate tax collections, which include mainly personal income tax, however, recorded a slight increase of 0.7 per cent to ₹2.73 lakh crore.

Securities Transaction Tax (STT) grew 12 per cent to ₹13,013 crore during the period.

In the current fiscal year (2025-26), the government has projected its direct tax collections at ₹25.20 lakh crore, up 12.7 per cent year-on-year. The government has collected 18.21 per cent of its direct tax target till June 19. The government aims to collect ₹78,000 crore from STT in FY26.

EY India Tax Partner Samir Kanabar said the marginal dip in net tax collections during the first quarter appears to be the result of a few expected and transitional factors.

“The revised tax slabs and reduced personal tax rates that came into effect from April 1, 2025, have provided relief to salaried individuals, and this is naturally reflected in lower TDS

collections,” he said.

On the corporate front, as companies invest in expansion and infrastructure, they benefit from higher depreciation claims, which temporarily lower taxable profits. This is a healthy sign of forward-looking investment behaviour, Kanabar said.

“Overall, these trends indicate a period of adjustment in line with policy changes and business cycles, and we expect a more balanced picture to emerge in the coming quarters,” he added.

Deloitte India Partner Sumit Singhania said tax collections for the recent quarter, while subdued, puts spotlight on the emerging macro trends posing challenges to earning growth for corporates and non-corporates taxpayers for the financial year. “Also, as several elements of current geo-political scenario plays out over next few months, impact of those developments would come to bear on the forecast for rest of the year too. That said, for a number of reasons, India finds itself in the position of strength amidst the ongoing global supply chain reset and therefore, a turnaround in tax collections in next quarters could be quite likely,” Singhania added.



Neeraj Chopra wins Diamond League title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

Olympic medal-winning Indian javelin throw superstar Neeraj Chopra clinched his first Diamond League title in two years, upstaging German rival Julian Weber without having to hit the 90m mark.

The 27-year-old Chopra won the title late on Friday night with his first round throw of 88.16m in a star-studded field, which featured five from the coveted 90m club.

His second throw measured 85.10m and he then fouled his next three attempts before recording 82.89m in his sixth and final effort.

Weber was second with his opening throw of 87.88m, while Luiz Mauricio Da Silva of Brazil was third with his third round attempt of 86.62m.

“I am happy with my throw....My run-up was really fast today. I can’t control my speed, but I’m happy with the result and with the first position,” Chopra said.

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England fights back on day two

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Leeds

Jasprit Bumrah produced a moment of pure magic after Rishabh Pant unfurled a remarkable hundred, but England showed spunk to reach 107 for one at tea against India on the second day of the first Test here on Saturday.

Ben Duckett (53) and Ollie Pope (48) were at crease at the break after adding 103 runs for the second wicket as the home side now trail India’s first innings total of 471 by 364 runs.

England needed a strong start but Bumrah made it impossible with a zippy first spell under grey skies in which he consumed opener Zak Crawley (4).

It was a wonderful exhibition of fast bowling and Crawley never looked settled, producing edges in his first three balls, and the fourth one proved lethal. The delivery took the outside



Rishabh Pant does a cartwheel to celebrate after scoring a century on day two of the first cricket test match between England and India

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Delhi Secretariat is now open for all, unlike in the past: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday said that the Delhi Secretariat is open for everyone today. Unlike earlier times when people couldn't even enter these premises. "We have brought the public, the government, and society together," said the Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during the release of two books at an event held at the Delhi Secretariat. The Chief Minister launched 'He Call Me Mama' by Jeena Chahal Dhanakhar

and 'Karm Vigyan' by Chandragupt Kailash in the presence of several dignitaries, including Member of Parliament Bansuri Swaraj, Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, cabinet ministers and senior officials of the Delhi government. Speaking on the occasion, CM Gupta said that her only goal is to help Delhi regain its true identity and historic pride. "We are fully committed to developing Delhi into a modern and dignified capital. We are going among the people, listening to their pain, and working to solve their problems. Our aim is singu-

The Chief Minister launched 'He Call Me Mama' by Jeena Chahal Dhanakhar and 'Karm Vigyan' by Chandragupt Kailash in the presence of several dignitaries

lar — to give Delhi the recognition and respect it truly deserves," she said. The Chief Minister spoke candidly about her personal dedication to public service, stating that every moment of her life and every bit of her energy is being devoted to the service and progress of Delhi. "If I am giving my time to

the state and not my own children and family, then this time must be truly worthwhile. I want to see every bit of my life contributing to the development of this state and the well-being of its people," she said. CM Gupta emphasised the importance of karma (action) over the desire for success. "Victory or defeat doesn't matter. It is action that holds the fruit. "Even if success doesn't always come, the power of commitment is greater. We must continue doing our duty with sincerity — what is destined will come our way," she added.

Sharing webcasting footage of polling station breaches voters' privacy: EC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Amid demands to make public webcasting footage of polling stations, Election Commission officials on Saturday said such a move is violative of privacy and security concerns of voters. They said while such demand suits their narrative in making it sound quite genuine and in the interest of voters and safeguarding the democratic process, it is, in fact, aimed at achieving exactly the "opposite objective". Officials claimed that what is veiled as a very logical demand is actually "entirely contrary" to the privacy and security concerns of voters, the legal position laid down in the

Representation of the People Act, 1950 and 1951 and the directions of the Supreme Court. Sharing the footage, which would enable easy identification of the electors by any group or an individual, would leave both the elector who has voted as well the elector who has not voted vulnerable to pressure, discrimination and intimidation by anti-social elements, they asserted. Creating an instance, they said if a particular political party gets the lesser number of votes in a particular booth, it would easily be able to identify, through the CCTV footage, which elector has voted and which elector has not, and, thereafter, may harass or intimidate them. To be sure, the Election Commission retains

the CCTV footage, which is purely an internal management tool and not a mandatory requirement, for a period of 45 days which aligns with the period laid down for filing an election petition. Since no election can be challenged beyond 45 days of the declaration of the result, retaining the footage beyond this period makes it susceptible to misuse of the content by non-contestants for spreading misinformation and malicious narratives, the officials underlined. They noted that in case an election petition is filed within 45 days, the CCTV footage is not destroyed and also made available to the competent court when asked for. Maintaining privacy and secrecy of the elector is non-

negotiable for the EC and it has never compromised on this essential tenet laid down in the law as well upheld by the Supreme Court, the functionaries said. Fearing the use of its electronic data to create "malicious narratives", the Election Commission has instructed its state poll officers to destroy CCTV cameras, webcasting and video footage of the election process after 45 days, if the verdict is not challenged in courts within that period. The remarks come in the backdrop of a demand by the Congress and other opposition parties to release post-5 pm CCTV footage from polling booths in the 2024 Maharashtra assembly elections.

Cab driver-turned-drug courier arrested with drugs worth ₹56 lakh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A 32-year-old man who led a double life as a cab driver by day and drug courier by night was arrested by the police from Delhi's Uttam Nagar area, police said on Saturday. The accused, Sanjeev Kumar Shah, was wanted in a major drug trafficking case in Rajasthan involving the seizure of cannabis worth over Rs. 56 lakh and had been on the run for nearly a year. Shah was arrested on June 18 near Uttam Nagar Metro Station after the police received a tip-off about his movement in the area. Acting on the information, a team laid a trap and managed to apprehend him without any resistance. A reward of Rs. 10,000 had been announced for information leading to his arrest by the Rajasthan Police. According to officials, Shah was named as an accused in a narcotics case registered under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act in the Sawai Madhopur district

of Rajasthan. The case dates back to July 2024, when Rajasthan Police seized 567 kilograms of cannabis from a mini-truck during a highway checkpoint operation in Rawanjana Dungar. Along with the truck, an escort vehicle was also intercepted. While five people involved in transporting the drugs were arrested on the spot, Shah, who was allegedly piloting the truck using a separate vehicle to guide and monitor the route, managed to escape. After his escape, Shah went underground, frequently changing his locations to avoid being tracked. He started working as a cab driver in Delhi-NCR to maintain a low profile and keep his movements unnoticed by law enforcement agencies. According to a senior police officer, he successfully blended into the city's daily life while continuing to operate in the illegal drug network during the night. During interrogation, Shah revealed that he was originally from Begusarai, Bihar. He had moved to Delhi with his father, who was employed at

a gas agency. Shah studied until Class 11 in Janakpuri and later worked at a jeans design factory. Eventually, he started driving Gramin Sewa vehicles and cabs, which he used as a front for his illegal drug-related activities. Further investigation also revealed that this was not Shah's first involvement in a drug trafficking case. He was previously booked under the NDPS Act in Haryana's Nuh district, where 313 kilograms of cannabis were recovered in May 2022. Despite that case, Shah managed to remain active in the drug trade. His arrest is considered a significant breakthrough in the ongoing crackdown against interstate narcotics networks. Authorities believe that Shah was part of a larger syndicate and are currently probing his connections to uncover more individuals involved in similar operations. Police officials have stated that Shah will be handed over to the Rajasthan Police for further investigation and legal proceedings.

Around 800 Indians back from Iran

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

More than 800 Indian nationals have so far returned home from Iran under Operation Sindhu, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Saturday. The MEA shared the update on the status of the evacuation operation in a series of posts on X. More Indian nationals, including students, arrived in Delhi late on Friday evening and in the

early hours of Saturday after being evacuated from Iran as its military confrontation with Israel intensified. India announced the launch of Operation Sindhu on Wednesday to evacuate its nationals from Iran. "#OperationSindhu flight brings citizens home. India evacuated 290 Indian nationals from Iran, including students and religious pilgrims by a charter flight. "The flight arrived in New Delhi at 2330 hrs on 20 June and was received by Secretary (CPV&

OIA) Arun Chatterjee," MEA Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on X. "Government of India is grateful to the Government of Iran for the facilitation of the evacuation process," he added. In another post, Jaiswal shared the details of an evacuation flight that arrived from Turkmenistan. "#OperationSindhu continues. A special evacuation flight from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan landed in New Delhi at 0300 hrs on 21st June, bringing Indians from Iran home.

Rahul Gandhi accuses EC of deleting evidence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Saturday accused the Election Commission (EC) of India of "deleting evidence" when it was required to "provide answers" after the poll body instructed its officers to destroy CCTV, webcasting and video footage of the elections after 45 days. "Voter list? Will not give machine-readable format. CCTV footage? Hidden by changing the law. Election photos and videos? Now they will be deleted in 45 days, not 1 year. The one who was supposed to provide answers — is the one deleting the evidence," Gandhi alleged in a post on X. "It is clear that the match is fixed. And a fixed election is poison for democracy," said the Congress leader in a Hindi post. Gandhi has been demanding voter lists, poll data and video footage from the election commission, alleging irregularities in Maharashtra Assembly elections. The Congress leader's reaction came after the poll body instructed its state poll officers to destroy CCTV, webcasting and video footage of the election process after 45 days if the verdict is not challenged in courts within that period, saying it feared the use of its electronic data to create "malicious narratives". In a letter to state chief electoral officers on May 30, the Election Commission said it has issued instructions for recording various stages of the election process through multiple recording devices photography, videography, CCTV and webcasting during the election process.

DGCA seeks audit details of AI

Continued from >> P1 The airline has been facing intense scrutiny since one of its Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crashed shortly after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport on June 12, killing over 270 people on board and on the ground.

The audits are aligned with international benchmarks, including ICAO's Annex 19, Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), and the ICAO

Asia Pacific Regional Aviation Safety Plan (AP-RASP). This move is also a reflection of India's commitment to international aviation obligations under the Chicago Convention.

The audits are aligned with international benchmarks, including ICAO's Annex 19, Universal Safety Oversight Audit Programme (USOAP), the Global Aviation Safety Plan (GASP), and the ICAO

England fights back on day two

Continued from >> P1 Ben Duckett had immense fortune too as he was dropped by Ravindra Jadeja at backward point off Bumrah when the batter was on 15.

Earlier, Pant (134) made a brilliant hundred while skipper Shubman Gill (147) carved his highest Test score but spirited England bowlers managed to grab seven Indian wickets for 112 runs across two sessions to limit them to 471. India resumed the day from 359 for three. Pant, who started the day on 65, took over the mantle from Gill, who was happy to cede the majority of the strike to his partner. The left-hander, who milked 209 runs for the fourth wicket with Gill, was at his entertaining best, starting his cavalier ways with a stunning falling paddle off spinner Bashir behind stumper Jamie Smith, a la West

Indian legend Rohan Kanhai. Smith was in action a little later when he missed a simple stumping chance off Bashir, to get rid of Pant when the batter was at 124. But by that time, Pant had stamped his authority on the game in his inimitable way and Bashir bore the full force of his innovative fury. A six over mid-wicket carried him to 94, and the 90s is a rather troubled territory for Pant as he was dismissed seven times in Tests on that score in his career. So, it was not really surprising to see him taking singles until he reached 99. Pant then decided not to waste too much time, and summoned that one-handed six off Bashir to go past the

100-run mark for the seventh time in his career. In doing so, he also overtook former captain MS Dhoni (6 centuries) in scoring the most number of hundreds by any Indian wicketkeeper in Tests. It was also a moment of redemption for Pant as Gavaskar had slammed his shot selection during the tour to Australia with the stinging remark "stupid, stupid, stupid." But on this day, the legendary batter atoned for it with the exclamation of "superb, superb, superb!" on air. However, the dismissals of Pant and Gill gave England the opening they were looking for and they crashed through the door.

Neeraj Chopra wins Diamond League...

Continued from >> P1 Chopra had won his last DL title in Lausanne in June 2023 with a throw of 87.66m. After that, he finished second in six DL meetings.

Chopra had breached the 90m mark in the Doha leg of the Diamond League on May 16 with a throw of 90.23m for a second place finish. Weber had won the title in Doha with his last round throw of 91.06m. "I'm hoping for some 90 metre throws because I broke that barrier in Doha. So now I believe I can do it some more...But let's see, it depends

on weather and good conditions, how the body feels, but maybe I will throw far in this season," he said. The 31-year-old Weber had also beaten Chopra at the Janusz Kusocinski Memorial meet on May 23 in Poland where both performed below their best under chilly and overcast conditions. Weber had produced 86.12m while Chopra could only come up 84.14m to finish second. The Indian began the 2025 season with a title in an invitational meet at Potchefstroom,

South Africa, which was a minor (category F) event with a throw of 84.52m. In Paris, the three others, apart from Chopra and Weber, who had previously hit the 90m mark were Kenya's 2015 world champion Julius Yego, Trinidad and Tobago's 2012 Olympics gold-winner Keshorn Walcott and Grenada's Anderson Peters. While Walcott (81.66m) finished fourth, Peters (80.29m) and Yego (80.26m) took the fifth and sixth spot respectively on Friday.

Israel-Iran war enters second week

Continued from >> P1

Minister Hakan Fidan says the Middle East is faced with an "Israeli problem" and called on Islamic countries to take a collective stand and show solidarity with Iran. "Israel's ongoing aggression and occupation policies clearly show that there is an Israeli problem in our region that needs to be addressed," Fidan said in an opening speech at a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul on Saturday. He also warned that Israel's actions could trigger broader regional instability. The Italian foreign ministry said the 24 Italians are the second group to evacuate via Azerbaijan's Baku. "After about nine hours of travel and a very long wait at the border, the group was welcomed by representatives of the Italian Embassy in Baku, and then moved to the airport of the Azerbaijani capital to wait to return to Italy with the first available flights," the ministry said. The group included an Italian doctor and his partner, an Iranian woman, and their 18-month-old child, the ministry said. Another convoy from Iran could depart from Tehran as early as Monday. The first group that arrived in Italy via Baku in recent days had 34 Italian nationals. Italy's foreign ministry also said it chartered a flight to help evacuate its citizens from Israel via Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, on Sunday. Noah Page says it's one thing to watch missiles crisscrossing the sky on the news and another to experience it firsthand. "You see it on the news, you see everything, but you never really expect it to actually hit

you when you're there," the Ohio-native told the Associated Press. "As someone who grew up in Canada, it's so foreign to me to even think about missiles or a war and you hear about it on the news and it's just so separate from you," said Pe'er, a 23-year-old who didn't want to give her last name. "It sort of felt like fireworks at first until the reality of the situation set in. I need to run or I might end up hurt." Page and Pe'er were among an estimated 1,500 other young people from around the world visiting Israel who were evacuated by cruise ship on Saturday to Cyprus, the closest European country to Israel, at around 270 kilometers. It was the second such trip by the cruise ship bringing people out while ferrying stranded Israelis back to their homeland. Florida native Alex Rosenblum had been in Israel before in times of war, when the sounds of sirens urging citizens to rush to shelters had become almost routine. But he says this time it was different. "This situation with Iran has been a lot scarier because there's a big difference between a rocket and a missile," he said. The three young people found safety in underground shelters when digital alerts were sent out. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said it would be "very, very dangerous for everyone" if the United States becomes actively involved in the war with Israel. He spoke to reporters in Istanbul on his way home from talks in Geneva. Araghchi said American

military involvement "would be very unfortunate". The UNHCR said Saturday that the intensity of the attacks is already triggering population movements in Israel and Iran: Some from Tehran and other parts of Iran have crossed into neighbouring countries while shelling has caused people in Israel to seek shelter elsewhere in the country and, in some cases, abroad. The agency urged states in the region to respect the right of people to seek safety where needed and to facilitate humanitarian access. "This region has already endured more than its share of war, loss, and displacement - we cannot allow another refugee crisis to take root," the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, said. "The time to de-escalate is right now. Once people are forced to flee, there's no quick way back - and all too often, the consequences last for generations." A senior adviser for Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei, vowed in a social media post Saturday to make the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency "pay" once the war with Israel is over. Ali Larjani's threat comes as IAEA Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi has become a major target for many Iranian officials who say his conflicting statements about the status of Iran's nuclear program incited the Israeli surprise attack last week. Grossi told the United Nations' Security Council Friday that while Iran has the material to build a nuclear bomb, it appears they have no plans to do so.

DGCA grounds AI officials

Continued from >> P1

"while noted, point to systemic failures in crew scheduling, compliance monitoring, and internal accountability," the DGCA order said and flagged that "particular concern is the absence of strict disciplinary measures against key officials directly responsible for these operational lapses". The DGCA noted that these officials have been involved in "serious and repeated lapses including "unauthorised and non-compliant crew pairings, violation of mandatory licensing and recency norms and systemic failures in scheduling protocol and oversight". The latest direction from DGCA has come at a time when the airline has been under strict scrutiny in the aftermath of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crash last week. A London-bound Air India flight, AI-171 carrying 242 passengers and crew members crashed in Ahmedabad on June 12. All but one on board the plane died along with nearly 29 on the ground when the aircraft smashed into a medical complex shortly after take-off. In a separate show cause notice to Air Inida, DGCA also

issued a show cause notice to the Accountable Manager of the airline for violating flight duty time limitations (FDTL) norms for the crew."The DGCA explained the reason for issuing the notice and said that during a spot check, "it has been observed that the Accountable Manager of Air India operated two flights from Bangalore to London (AI-133) on 16 May 2025 and 17 May 2025, both of which exceeded the stipulated flight time limit of 10 hours. The DGCA has asked Air India to explain within seven days why "action should not be taken for these violations, as per the notice. "...During a spot check, it has been observed that the Accountable Manager of Air India operated two flights from Bangalore to London (AI133) on 16 May 2025 and 17 May 2025, both of which exceeded the stipulated flight time limit of 10 hours," the DGCA said in the notice, citing violation of Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR Section 7, Series J Part III). "It is further noted that the Accountable Manager of Air India Ltd has failed to ensure adherence to the provi-

sions and compliance requirements..." the regulator said in the notice. As per DGCA norms, pilots operating in a cockpit must meet specific qualification criteria to be paired with each other. These criteria include factors such as the number of flying hours each pilot has logged, so that the combined total of experience in the cockpit meets a prescribed minimum threshold. Both pilots must also be qualified for specific operational requirements, for example, low-visibility operations, "Atlantic qualifications", or clearances for operating in high-altitude or critical airfields such as Leh or Ladakh. It is mandatory for the airline to ensure that both pilots at the controls meet all licensing requirements. Their licenses must be current, and all mandated refresher courses and proficiency checks must be up to date. There are indications of repeated violations of Flight Duty Time Limitation (FDTL) norms. These include requirements to provide pilots with adequate rest before a flight and compliance with similar guidelines.

Delhi comes together for International Yoga Day



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta with Cabinet minister Kapil Mishra taking part in a yoga session, organised to mark the International Day of Yoga at Yamuna Vihar Water Sports Club on bank of the Yamuna River in New Delhi on Saturday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

On the occasion of the 11th International Day of Yoga, Delhi witnessed widespread participation on Saturday as Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, her Cabinet ministers, Members of Parliament, Member of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) and senior BJP leaders performed yoga at various iconic locations across the city.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday performed yoga on the banks of the Yamuna River in northeast Delhi's Sonia Vihar on the occasion of International Day of Yoga (IDY). Across 11 locations in the national Capital, ministers, MLAs and BJP MPs joined the

celebrations. Gupta was joined by BJP MP Manoj Tiwari and her Cabinet minister Kapil Mishra in Sonia Vihar.

On the choice of the venue, the CM said they wanted to show people that the cleaning work of the river is underway. "Yamuna River is the symbol of our faith but the previous Governments have ignored it. They did not work to clean it. But in the four months that we have been in power, we have worked to clean it," she said.

"People ask me, where will the cruise run? I want to tell them, the cruise will run on this river where students performed yoga today on boats," she added. Hitting out at the AAP dispensation, she said they associated yoga with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and did not celebrate the occasion.

who took part in the Brahm Kumaris Sansthan Yoga Day event at the Red Fort ground. MP Yogendra Chandolia, who performed yoga at the Prahlapur Sports Complex.

West Delhi MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat, currently on a visit to Mangalore with the Government Standing Committee team, also participated in Yoga Day celebrations along with fellow MPs and listened to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address on the occasion.

Delhi Assembly speaker Vijender Gupta participated in a special yoga session held at Lodhi Garden. The session was organised by the Ministry of Ayush to promote wellness, mindfulness, and the spirit of unity through yoga. The Speaker extended warm wishes

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta. "The 11th International Yoga Day was marked simultaneously at 11 locations, with more than 20,000 yoga practitioners taking part in the events. Yoga Day was also observed on a large scale in colleges, and nearly 10,000 yoga enthusiasts gathered at Chhatrasal Stadium today," he added.

Public Works Department and Water Minister Parvash Verma performed yoga at Thyagaraja Stadium. In a post on X he said, "Heartiest greetings to all the countrymen on International Day of Yoga. Today I got the opportunity to do yoga with practitioners at Thyagaraja Stadium."

"This is not just a yoga session, but is a living proof of India's cultural heritage and the spirit of 'Vasudhaiva

RANJAN DIMRI AND PANKAJ KUMAR

Citizens flock to DDA, NDMC venues for Yoga Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Marking the 11th International Day of Yoga, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) brought together thousands of yoga enthusiasts across the city on Saturday. From lush parks to iconic public spaces, Delhi turned into a large yoga ground, reflecting this year's theme — "Yoga for One Earth, One Health".

The DDA organised yoga sessions at 39 locations across Delhi, witnessing participation from over 35,000 people at its parks and sports complexes. The main event was held at Baansera, a 37-acre bamboo-



themed park developed under the supervision of Lieutenant Governor and DDA Chairman Vinai Kumar Saxena. Over 2,000 people performed yoga at the site, joining the live telecast of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's address from Visakhapatnam as part of the 'Yoga Sangam' program.

Saxena was joined by DDA Vice Chairman N Saravana Kumar, personnel from paramilitary forces like CRPF, BSF, CISE, Delhi Police, Malaysian delegates under the Yoga Bandhan program and senior DDA officials. The sessions included various asanas, guided meditation and breathing

exercises conducted by trained instructors, aimed at promoting physical and mental well-being.

Yoga sessions were simultaneously held at major DDA sports facilities including Siri Fort, Saket, Vasant Kunj, Hari Nagar and Yamuna Sports Complex. A special inclusive session for differently-abled children was also held at Yamuna Sports Complex. Additionally, public parks like Swarn Jayanti Park, Hauz Khas Park, and Smriti Park, among others, also saw large turnout of residents of all ages.

NDMC, in collaboration with the Ministry of AYUSH, Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, and seven yoga institutions, organised yoga sessions at eight key locations.

Delhi Police celebrates Yoga with flair

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

The Delhi Police marked the 11th International Day of Yoga with a series of coordinated events across its units on Saturday, highlighting the force's commitment to physical and mental well-being, officials said.

At the Delhi Police Headquarters on Jai Singh Road, a large-scale yoga session was organised by the Welfare Unit under the supervision of Special Commissioner of Police (Welfare), Atul Katiyar. Commissioner of Police, Sanjay Arora, also participated in the event as chief guest, inspiring 432 officers and personnel who participated.

The Delhi Police Academy



Commissioner of Police, Sanjay Arora

also celebrated the day across its four campuses. At the Dwarka campus, Joint Director Asif Mohammad Ali led a yoga session with 600 participants. At the Wazirabad campus, Deputy Director

Mohammad Ali joined 900 trainees and trainers. At the Jharoda Kalan campus, Assistant Directors Anil Kumar and Richpal took part in a session with around 1,000 participants. The Abhanpura

Commando Campus also held a yoga session with active staff involvement. These sessions reflected the academy's focus on wellness, guided by the leadership of Special CP (Training), Sanjay Kumar.

Additionally, several district units of Delhi Police have also organised Yoga sessions in their zones which were led by their respective DCPs.

In Rohini district, 570 police personnel, including women staff, participated in International Yoga Day events held across all sub-divisions. Officers emphasised the benefits of yoga in managing stress, improving resilience, and supporting daily police duties. Deputy Commissioner of Police, Rohini, Rajeev Ranjan, led the initiative.

Delhi Police bust fake GST firm racket, two arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

The Delhi Police have busted a fake Goods and Services Tax (GST) firm racket and arrested two individuals, including a practicing lawyer, for creating bogus firms and issuing fake invoices to facilitate fraudulent GST settlements, police said on Saturday.

The police also obtained records from the GST Department, which confirmed that two firms were indeed fraudulently registered using Sumit's PAN details. A physical verification of the addresses provided for these firms showed that they were fictitious, police said.

The accused, identified as Sandeep (27) from Panipat, Haryana and Inderpal (45), an advocate from Burari, Delhi, were using genuine documents to float fake companies and carry out illegal billing operations worth crores of rupees.

The operation was conducted by Delhi Police Cyber Cell in South West District when the case came to light and a complaint was lodged by Sumit, a resident of Sagarpur. Sumit had applied for GST registration for his business using his PAN card but was shocked to discover that two GST numbers had already been issued in his name without his knowledge or consent. He further stated that these companies, registered

with his PAN, were operational and had been conducting business under different names. He also alleged that a SIM card had been fraudulently issued using his Aadhaar details. These fraudulent activities not only caused him reputational harm but also posed serious financial risks.

Based on the complaint, a case was registered at PS Cyber, South West Delhi under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code including cheating, forgery, and criminal conspiracy. The case was investigated by a dedicated team under the supervision of Inspector Praveesh Kaushik, SHO of Cyber police station and the overall guidance of ACP Vijay Kumar.

With the help of technical surveillance, the team tracked down the movements of the suspects, who were operating between Delhi and Haryana.

The first arrest was made in Panipat, where Sandeep was nabbed. During questioning, he confessed that he had been working with Advocate Inderpal for the last seven years. Their operation involved procuring GST firms from associates in Delhi for amounts ranging from ₹25,000 to ₹30,000 each. These associates also provided login credentials and SIM cards linked to the firms.

Once in possession of the login details, Sandeep and Inderpal would access the GST

accounts, change the registration email IDs and mobile numbers to gain full control and then use Tally software to create and upload fake invoices on the GST portal. These invoices were issued to clients looking to fraudulently adjust their GST liabilities.

After Sandeep's arrest, police traced Inderpal to Kairana in Shamli district of Uttar Pradesh, where he had gone into hiding. He was apprehended there and brought to Delhi on police custody remand. Inderpal admitted to purchasing the GST firms and handling the coordination with clients, while Sandeep managed the digital aspects of the operation.

The police recovered three smart phones, one laptop and a pen drive from the accused. These devices are believed to contain data related to the fake firms and bogus invoices.

The arrests have revealed the existence of a broader syndicate that supplies fake GST firm setups, documents, and SIM cards to fraudsters. Police officials have indicated that further investigation is ongoing and more arrests are likely in connection with the racket.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (South West) Amit Goel said the case highlights how easily government systems can be misused with genuine documents and how fraudsters are exploiting GST mechanisms for illegal gains.

Rail, SBI awards ₹One crore insurance to family of deceased loco pilot



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

In a heartfelt gesture of support, Northern Railways and the State Bank of India (SBI) jointly disbursed a sum of ₹1 crore to the family of a deceased loco pilot from the Moradabad Division. The amount was released as part of a Personal Accident Insurance (PAI) claim under SBI's Railway Salary Package.

The loco pilot, who was an account holder under the SBI Railway Salary Package-Diamond variant, was eligible for insurance coverage provided through this special salary scheme for railway employees. After his unfortunate passing, SBI and Northern Railways coordinated closely to ensure the insurance claim process was completed smoothly and quickly.

The cheque was handed

over to the bereaved family in an official ceremony.

The cheque was formally presented by the General Manager of Northern Railways, along with the General Manager of SBI Delhi Circle. Senior officers from both Northern Railways and SBI, including the Senior Divisional Personnel Officer of the Moradabad Division and the SBI Branch Manager from Railway Station Road Moradabad, were present at the event. Their timely coordination and support were praised for ensuring that the family received the financial assistance without delay.

This disbursement follows the Railway Salary Package Agreement signed between Northern Railways and SBI Delhi Circle on January 2, 2025, which aims to provide added financial security to railway employees.

Government to add 30 dialysis machines under PPP model

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

The Delhi Government will soon add more than 30 dialysis machines in its hospitals, outsource MRI, CT scan and ultrasound services under the PPP model and construct *VishramGrih* (rest houses) for patients and their attendants.

These developments were reviewed during a Health Department meeting chaired by Health Minister Pankaj Kumar Singh on June 18, aimed at strengthening public healthcare infrastructure in the national Capital.

According to the agenda, the Government is also working to ramp up manpower across healthcare institutions and constitute new health councils and committees, with timelines set for implementation.

Singh said that 150 dialysis machines have already been installed across 16 hospitals under the Pradhan Mantri National Dialysis Programme — Public Partnership (PMNDP-PPP) model and an additional 32 to 40 machines will be added soon.

Officials reviewed the status of Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, critical care blocks under the PM-Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM), rollout of Jan Aushadhi Kendras and the centralised procurement system. The meeting also discussed Outsourcing Outpatient Departments (OPD) and Inpatient Department (IPD) registration services, gaps in staffing at hospitals and Mohalla clinics, the hospital information management system and procurement of essential medicines.

study other State models where such a policy exists," a DJB officer said.

Delhi, which is a landlocked city, heavily depends on the Yamuna and groundwater extraction to meet its water requirements.

"If the water used for construction work is not up to standard then problems in the iron rods and concrete appear. If poor quality water is used then cracks appear on the building, bringing down the life of the structure. Hence, all these technical aspects are being studied," said an official source.

However, according to the Central Ground Water Board's 2024 report, Delhi extracted more water than it recharged. According to the report, out of 34 assessment units (tehsils) of Delhi, 14 units have been categorised as 'over-exploited', 13 units as 'critical', two units as 'semi-critical' and five units as 'safe'.

"Usually the norm in Delhi is that most of the construction companies extract water from the ground and then make it fit for construction after installing RO units on site to improve the quality of water," said Water Expert Ankit Srivastav.

Government explores policy to use treated water for construction works

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Aiming to reduce dependence on groundwater extraction, the Delhi Government is planning to bring in a proper policy of only using treated water for construction works. The idea was communicated to top officials of the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) in a meeting held here earlier this week, said official sources.

"We are working on a policy to use treated water for construction works, starting with the DJB projects. We will

Indian armed forces observe International Day of Yoga

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

From the icy heights of Siachen Glacier to naval ships anchored in Visakhapatnam, the Indian armed forces on Saturday observed the International Day of Yoga across the country, reaffirming their commitment to discipline and inner strength.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh led the celebrations in Jammu and Kashmir's Udhampur, accompanied by Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi. "There was a time when yoga was considered limited to saints and seers. But today, people are performing *Surya Namaskar* on mats from New York's Times Square to lawns near the Eiffel Tower. Is it less than a miracle?" Singh said. This is the "rising soft power" of India and yoga has become its "strongest ambassador," he added. The Indian Air Force also joined in the celebrations.

At an event held at Delhi-based Western Air Command of the IAF, a large of number of its personnel and their family members gathered at Subroto Park to engage in yoga routines and in the middle of the field a symbolic formation of 'OP SINDOOR' was made with people



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi and others takes part in a yoga session in Udhampur J and K on Saturday

standing on mats and doing various *asanas*. The famous Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) also shared a video clip in a post on X, showing some air warriors performing yoga routines with a Surya Kiran aircraft parked behind them on a tarmac. A senior Army official said Yoga Day was celebrated with great fervour and spirit across the country. From the edges of Pangong Tso lake to Port Blair, and from Kibithu in Arunachal Pradesh to the Rann of Kachchh, soldiers performed

yoga, embracing the ancient Indian practice as a tool for physical, mental and emotional resilience, the official said. The Army Chief's presence at the Udhampur event underscored the importance of yoga in "enhancing combat readiness and stress management among troops," he said. In Delhi, Vice Chief of the Army Staff Lieutenant General NS Raja Subramani performed yoga with troops and families at Cariappa Parade Ground, joined by more than 3,400 partici-

pants, including defence attachés from 25 countries, NCC cadets and school students. In Visakhapatnam, Indian Navy personnel participated in the main yoga day celebrations led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sessions were held along the RK Beach and onboard Navy ships anchored nearby. "As the sun rose over the RK Beach, personnel and families of the Sunrise Command, along with the citizens of Andhra Pradesh, came together in breath and spirit with the Hon'ble

PM... Embracing the energy of the sea and sky," Eastern Naval Command posted on X. A Navy spokesperson said nearly 10,000 people, naval personnel and family members, from the Eastern Naval Command participated in the event. Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi, and Shashi Tripathi, president, NWWA (Navy Wives Welfare Association) led the naval participation at Visakhapatnam, the official said.

The maritime line-up included frontline Eastern Fleet ships and Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessels — Veera and Vighraha — stationed at the Visakhapatnam anchorage off the RK Beach.

The Navy also shared a video of crew members of aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, and others performing yoga onboard it. A common yoga protocol session was conducted at all naval bases and ships at sea and in harbour including at foreign ports. Trainees of friendly foreign navies also participated in the activities with zeal.

Indian naval warships mission deployed across Indian Ocean Region, conducted yoga session at sea and in foreign ports in Mauritius, Oman, Malaysia and Indonesia, the spokesperson said. The theme for this year's International Day of Yoga is 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health'.



Resonance of Operation Sindoor felt during yoga session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The resonance of Operation Sindoor was felt during a yoga session held here by the Indian Air Force as part of International Day of Yoga celebrations on Saturday.

As a large of number of IAF personnel and their family members gathered at Subroto Park to engage in yoga routines, a symbolic formation of 'OP SINDOOR' was made in the middle of the field with people standing on mats and doing various *asanas*.

On a blue background laid on the ground, light-colour mats were arranged to form 'OP' and below it the letters of the word 'SINDOOR'. A group of people wearing red-colour T-shirt stood in a circle forming the second 'O' in the word, and symbolically represented

the colour of vermilion married Hindu women use. 'Operation Sindoor' was launched in the early hours of May 7 against several terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir in retaliation for the Pahalgalam attack in which 26 people, mostly tourists were killed.

In a post on X, Defence PRO, Palam, shared some photos of the yoga day celebrations at Subroto Park that also hosts the headquarters of the Western Air Command (WAC). The aerial shots showed the 'OP SINDOOR' formation in full view.

"Air warriors across HQ WAC IAF enthusiastically celebrated #YogaDay2025. The event, led by the AOC-in-C, underscored the IAF's unwavering commitment to holistic well-being, showcasing our belief in nurturing Air Warriors for enhanced

resilience. #MinistryofAyush #IDY2025," the Defence PRO, Palam posted. The IAF on its X handle also shared update on the Yoga Day celebrations. "The 11th International Day of Yoga was celebrated at Air Force Station New Delhi, #IAF under the theme 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health,'" it said.

"The gathering was inspired by the live address of Hon'ble Prime Minister, with a visionary tone for global wellness and unity. Unified in breath and balance, Air Warriors performed yoga asana in unison, fostering wellness, resonating with the IAF motto of People First Mission Always," it added.

The famous Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team also shared a video clip in a post on X, showing some air warriors performing yoga routines with a Surya Kiran aircraft parked behind them on a tarmac.

Union ministers, bureaucrats join Yoga movement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Union ministers, bureaucrats and India Inc leaders on Saturday joined calls to make yoga a part of lifestyle, asserting that the 'precious gift from India' provides path of pure discipline, resilience and endless self-discovery. On the International Day of Yoga, they took part in yoga sessions held in different parts of the country.

Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said the ancient Indian practice of well-being and fitness, yoga has been a part of India's civilisational values and traditions for centuries.

"Due to the untiring efforts of PM @narendramodi Ji during the last many years, yoga has transcended cultures and boundaries to gain wider global acceptance and continues to bring the world together," he said. Mining conglomerate Vedanta chairman Anil Agarwal in a post on X said, one can find stillness, even in a world designed to distract. "All you need is 10 minutes without your phone."

"Today, I see people spending hours on social media, distracted and tired, which is the complete opposite of yoga, forcing you to be present," he said. "You don't need fancy memberships or the perfect mat to start yoga. You can start from your bed or your floor... Mat, or no mat — just start. And it's okay if you don't know all the asanas, because the first step is being honest with yourself."

Posting a picture of him doing *Dhanurasana*, he said,



External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with members of the Diplomatic Corps taking part in a yoga session at Nehru Park in New Delhi on Saturday

"So next time you have 10 free minutes, skip the scroll and sit still. Breathe in and out. 10 minutes of some simple *asanas* or *suryanamaskar*..."

Similarly, in a post on social media platform X, Apollo Hospitals Group, Joint Managing Director Sangita Reddy said she has been practising yoga for decades and "I'm still uncovering new truths!"

She further wrote, "The most profound? How deeply our breath is tied to our emotions. It's a game-changer: learn to control your breath, and you'll find you can navigate your emotional world. This path is pure discipline, resilience, and endless self-discovery. Happy Yoga Day!" Jindal Steel and Power

Chairman Naveen Jindal said, "Yoga is a precious gift from India — it is a discipline, a practice, and a way of life. Let's make yoga our lifestyle."

Jindal, who is also a BJP Member of Parliament, said he did yoga in an event with yoga guru Ramdev, Haryana Governor Bandaru Dattatreya, Chief Minister Nayab Saini, Health Minister Arti Singh Rao and former minister Subhash Sudha along "with thousands of people on the sacred land of Brahmasarovar in the holy city of Kurukshetra and gave the message of spiritual peace and health."

Top bureaucrats, officials, employees and staff at the IT ministry gathered at MeitY headquarters to actively take

part in a yoga session to mark the international yoga day.

"Yoga is not just a form of exercise; it is a powerful tool for inner balance, clarity of thought, and holistic well-being. As we embrace technology in every aspect of our lives, it is equally vital to ground ourselves through the discipline and mindfulness that yoga offers," Abhishek Singh, Additional Secretary, IT Ministry and CEO, IndiaAI Mission, said. He urged everyone to incorporate yoga in their daily routine for a healthier, more centred and resilient self.

Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan also joined the chorus to make yoga a part of daily routine in

the lives of the citizens.

Recounting a life-changing experience from 1998, when he suffered serious injuries in a severe accident that impacted eight parts of his body, Chouhan said, "At that time, I could not even imagine walking again but it was yoga that played a pivotal role in my recovery. Today, I am able to lead a healthy, normal life free from the lasting effects of those injuries, thanks to the transformative power of yoga."

Ministry of Coal in a statement reiterated its pledge to promote wellness-centric workplaces and support the larger vision of a healthier, happier society as yoga is an essential component of healthy lifestyle as the world continues to embrace yoga as a universal practice for health and harmony.

Union Minister for Communications and Development of North Eastern Region Jyotiraditya M Scindia said yoga is India's precious gift to humanity, which emphasises on individual well-being as well as unity among humanity, environmental harmony and global well-being.

Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) Chairman & Managing Director Pradip Kumar Das along with IREDA Director (Finance) Bijay Kumar Mohanty took part in the celebration of the 11th International Day of Yoga at Sunder Nursery here in the Capital. Over 1,500 participants, including employees, villagers, and stakeholders, gathered for a collective yoga session at Piparwar area of Jharkhand.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla with MPs and other staff performing yoga during a 'Yoga Shivr' organised on the International Day of Yoga at the Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Saturday

SC full court decides to remove glass glazing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court administration said on Saturday that a decision has been taken by the full court to remove the glass glazing installed in front of courtroom numbers one to five, after taking note of a representation received from bar bodies concerning it.

In a statement, the court administration said the full court took note of the representation received from the

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association (SCAORA) concerning the glass glazing.

"After careful consideration of the issues raised, including concerns regarding original grandeur, visibility, aesthetics and courtroom accessibility, a decision was taken by the full court to remove the glass glazing," the statement said.

In December last year, the SCBA had requested then

Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna to remove the air-conditioning glass partitions and restore the original layout of the court corridors to preserve its historical significance.

In a letter to the then CJ, the SCBA had said the space in the corridors was drastically reduced due to the air-conditioning glass panels, making it difficult for the members of the bar, registered clerks, interns and litigants to move around, particularly during peak hours.

Congress leader cannot see transformation under PM: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Saturday hit out at Rahul Gandhi, saying the Congress leader cannot see the transformation happening in the country under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership because he is too busy "undermining India's progress".

This came after Gandhi launched a fresh salvo at Prime Minister and said he has mastered the "art of slogans" but offered no solutions, claiming that India's manufacturing was at a record low despite the 'Make in India' initiative.

Hitting back, BJP national spokesperson Pradeep Bhandari wrote in a post on X, "Rahul ji, everyone in India can see the transformation, except you. Maybe because you're too busy undermining India's progress to notice it." Operation Sindoor is the lat-

est and "landmark example" of India's manufacturing prowess where India's indigenous developed drones destroyed Chinese drones, he added. Citing various data indicating progress made under the 'Make in India' initiative of the Modi Government, BJP IT department head Amit Malviya said Rahul Gandhi's narratives are "outdated, misinformed and disconnected from reality."

"India is building. India is growing. India is leading," he said in a post on X. Under Modi, India has transformed from an importer to a global manufacturing powerhouse, Malviya added. Bhandari said since 2014 under PM Modi's leadership, engineering exports have surged by 60 per cent while defence exports "skyrocketed from just ₹686 crore to over ₹23,000 crore."

"From importing 70 per cent of our defence equipment, India now manufactures 65

per cent of its needs domestically. PMI is at a 10-month high, signalling industrial strength," he said. Bhandari said India under Modi's leadership supplied 60 per cent of the world's COVID-19 vaccines, becoming the "pharmacy of the world."

India is now the second largest mobile phone manufacturer globally, he added. "While Indian startups and entrepreneurs were burning the midnight oil to build a world-class drone industry, you (Rahul Gandhi) were busy endorsing Chinese drones and promoting Chinese brands on Indian soil," the BJP spokesperson charged.

Bhandari said Gandhi never believed in 'Make in India' because 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' doesn't align with his 'import-edeology'.

"What was there in that secret MoU which you signed with the Communist Party of China," Bhandari asked.

Pulses production growing fast

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Government has told a parliamentary committee that domestic production of pulses and edible oils has risen at a greater pace in the last 10 years than the decade before, amid concerns raised by MPs over India's dependence on imports to meet demand.

A presentation to the Standing Committee on Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Food Processing said imports at 15.66 million metric tonnes (MMT) accounted for 56 per cent of the domestic demand for edible oils in 2023-24.

Sources said the Agriculture Ministry, however, in the meeting on June 20 emphasised the work being undertaken for self-sufficiency in the sector and noted that oilseeds production had risen by 55 per cent

between 2014-15 and 2024-25, with third advance estimate pegging its production at 426.09 lakh tonnes in the last fiscal. The corresponding increase was 13 per cent between 2004-05 and 2014-15. With the country almost entirely dependent on imports to meet the palm oil demand, some MPs flagged health hazards associated with the relatively cheap edible oil, sources said.

The Ministry said India's heavy dependence on edible oil imports is costing more ₹80,000 crore annually.

Based on the 2023-24 figure shared by the ministry in its presentation, India's domestic production was sufficient to meet the requirement of mustard and groundnut oils but had to import 3.49 MMT of sunflower oil against the consumption of 3.55 MMT. It also imported more than 60 per cent of its soyabean oil consumption.

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IMPORTANT PUBLIC NOTICE
EXTENSION OF CONDUCT OF NATA 2025

The Council has decided to extend the last date for conduct of NATA 2025 till **August 9, 2025** on all Fridays and Saturdays in order to provide opportunities to eligible aspirants for admission against the vacant/unfilled seats in 5-year B.Arch. Degree program. Centralized Admission counselling process in the states shall continue as per their respective schedules.

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Yoga connects physical, mental, spiritual aspects: CM Himanta

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Asserting that the world has rediscovered the power of yoga, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said it connects one's physical, mental and spiritual aspects.

Participating in the State Government's central International Yoga Day event at Salbari in Baska district, he also said it has emerged as an indispensable part of modern life across the globe.

Greeting everyone on the occasion, the chief Minister said, "Yoga connects physical, mental and spiritual aspects of a person and helps in living a fulfilling life."

He said yoga not only advocates a healthy lifestyle but also has an influence towards building a harmonious society. "Yoga is our glorious cultural heritage and the whole world has accepted it," Sarma said, adding that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made efforts for the global recognition of yoga.

"The declaration of 'International Yoga Day' by the United Nations a decade ago has led the world to rediscover its potential," he added.

The chief minister said conducting the State's central yoga



On the occasion of Bishnu Rabha Divas, CM Himanta Biswa Sarma along with his cabinet colleagues pays tribute to Kalaguru Bishnu Rabha during a program organised by the Department of Cultural Affairs, Government of Assam

function at Salbari also holds special importance as it shows how an area, once troubled with conflict, is now a testament to peace and development.

Sarma, in a post on X earlier, said, "Choose yoga, choose a healthy life!" "The ancient practice of yoga, with its roots in Sanatan Dharma, is the

answer to all your health issues and is a tradition flowing from our sages and ancestors. On #YogaDay2025, let's commit to practising it regularly and lead a fit lifestyle," he added.

Several programmes to mark the occasion were held across the State in Government and private offices, educational institutions and other organi-

sations. In Silchar, the international yoga day event witnessed participation from students, yoga enthusiasts, officials and people.

Minister for Barak Valley Development Kaushik Rai, attending the event, highlighted the transformative impact of yoga. "Yoga is not just a physical exercise — it is a holistic

celebration of our body, mind and soul," he said.

Silchar MP Parimal Suklabaidya stressed the relevance of yoga in today's world and said, "As the modern age confronts us with stress, anxiety and lifestyle-related challenges, yoga remains an ancient yet timeless solution. It is our responsibility to encourage the youth to embrace this path for a healthier and more focused life."

Local administrations organised special yoga sessions and programmes to mark the occasion across the state, including in Guwahati, Tamulpur and Chirang.

Elected representatives, including ministers, MPs and MLAs, along with top officials, yoga practitioners and people from different walks of life, participated in the events.

Similar programmes were conducted in various other organisations and agencies, including at Sashastra Seema Bal Guwahati frontier headquarters, NTPC Bongaigaon, NCC group headquarters at battalion Guwahati, different schools and colleges, to mark International Day of Yoga.

The International Day of Yoga is celebrated every year on June 21. This year's theme is 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health'.

CM Yogi, ministers join 11th International Day of Yoga events

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY) was observed across Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, with many events organised on the occasion and political leaders along with dignitaries joining them. Governor Anandiben Patel participated in the programme at Raj Bhavan, while Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath led the celebrations in Gorakhpur. Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya attended yoga day events in Ghaziabad and Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak joined events in Lucknow.

In Varanasi, Union Minister of State Anupriya Patel joined a yoga session at Assi Ghat. "Today, the whole world is adopting yoga. We 140 crore Indians should not lag behind. We should make it a daily routine, not just observe it on yoga day," she said.

She stressed that in the current time due to stress, poor diet and irregular lifestyle, yoga plays a key role in maintaining both physical and mental health. In Mathura, local MP Hema Malini underscored the importance of yoga for overall well-being and credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi for giving yoga international recognition. She also planted a sapling as part of the celebrations. "Yoga is not just about physical fitness but also mental wellness. It helps relieve stress, and its relevance has increased in today's context," she said.

Rajya Sabha MP Tejveer Singh Chaudhary said, "India is a land of sages and saints who used to practice yoga and lived a long life. Therefore, to have a healthy and long life and to save humanity, yoga is very important."

"This is a very good initiation by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and now the entire world is following his advice. It should become part of our lifestyle and we should try to start our day with yoga to stay healthy physically and mentally," he added. IDY was also observed in



UP CM Yogi Adityanath takes part in 'Mass Yoga Practice Program' organised on International Day of Yoga in Gorakhpur on Saturday

madrassas of Sambhal district with students actively participating in yoga sessions. The initiative was praised for promoting good health along with traditional education.

At Madrassa Ziaul Uloom Saraitareen, Madrassa Sirajul Uloom Hilali Sarai, and Madrassa Hamidiyah Ashrafiya Tiwari Sarai, students performed yoga asanas. Maulana Zahirul Islam, Imam-e-Ilgah and chief guest at one event, said, "Yoga is called 'warzish' in Urdu. There is no objection to yoga in Islam."

In Deoria district, a grand yoga event was held at the Ravindra Kishore Shahi Sports Stadium. MP Shashank Mani Tripathi, MLA Shalabh Mani Tripathi, Urban Development Department Secretary Ajay Kumar Shukla, District Magistrate Divya Mittal and other senior officials participated.

Nagaland Governor Ganesan urges people to make yoga sustainable part of life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Koshima

Along with the rest of the globe, Nagaland marked the International Day of Yoga across the State with a grand public event at the Indira Gandhi Stadium, Kohima, on Friday, drawing hundreds of participants from various

departments, educational institutions and the general public.

The Department of Health and Family Welfare under the National Ayush Mission Nagaland in collaboration with the Department of Youth Resources and Sports organised an event on the theme "Yoga for One Earth, One Health – Yoga Sangam".

Minister for Health and Family Welfare, P Paiwang Konyak and the advisor for Youth Resources and Sports, S Keoshu Yimkhiung, along with senior government officers and students performed yoga under the guidance of trained instructors.

Speaking at the event, State Programme Officer (AYUSH)

Dr Seyiekhrietuo John emphasised the significance of yoga in promoting preventive healthcare and mental well-being.

"Yoga is not tied to any religion, it is universal in nature. It is a practice that everyone can embrace for the well-being of humanity," Dr John said.

Urging people to adopt yoga without misconceptions, he

said that Ayush Mission in Nagaland is working to integrate traditional wellness systems into the mainstream healthcare system, particularly at the grassroots level.

Meanwhile, on the occasion, Nagaland Governor La Ganesan extended warm greetings and best wishes to the people of the state highlighting

yoga's timeless relevance and its power to bring balance to modern life.

In his message, the governor emphasised that yoga, originating from ancient India, transcends boundaries and cultures, offering a universal path to holistic well-being, inner peace, and resilience.

Observed annually on June

21, the International Day of Yoga serves as a global reminder of the mind-body harmony that yoga promotes, he said.

"In our fast-paced modern lives, yoga is more relevant than ever. It is an important tool to combat stress, enhance physical vitality, and cultivate mental clarity," Ganesan said.

"By integrating yoga into our lives, we not only invest in our health but also contribute to the vitality and harmony of our beautiful state," the governor said.

He also highlighted yoga's potential to foster unity, tolerance, and collective well-being, values that resonate strongly with Naga society.

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Gill will score more runs if maintains feet movement, says Sourav Ganguly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kolkata

Mighty impressed with Shubman Gill's footwork in difficult English conditions, former India skipper Sourav Ganguly is expecting the young skipper to score truckloads of runs in away conditions if his feet movement remains as impeccable as it was on the opening day of the Test-series opener at Leeds.

Playing his first Test as skipper, Gill conjured up a sublime unbeaten 127 that was packed with glorious drives. India ended the day at a solid 359 for three, making the English attack look pedestrian.

The home bowlers largely bowled full on the 'middle and off' line and Gill negotiated the challenge with remarkable ease, transferring his weight on the shots for some sublime drives in the 'V' region. I am so happy to see his feet (movement) away from home, there's a massive improvement in that away from home. Shubman's feet were fantastic, didn't make a mistake, Ganguly said in an exclusive interview. I think England shouldn't have



Former Indian cricketer Sourav Ganguly during an interview at his residence in Kolkata on Saturday

PTI

bowled on that wicket and they also didn't bowl well enough. His (Gill's) feet movement was fantastic, I hope it is a permanent thing with him because if he keeps batting like this in England and away conditions, he is going to score a lot of runs, added Ganguly.

If he keeps on playing like this, his average will also increase up to 40-45, this innings will give him a lot of confidence since your confi-

dence builds on the basis of your performance, the way he was tackling swing yesterday, the technique was really good.

The series is the beginning of a new era in Indian cricket with the Gill-led side travelling with-out the legendary Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and spinner Ravichandran Ashwin.

It is supposed to be a tough transition phase but the start has been magnificent. Ganguly said he was never worried

about the smooth transition since India has a lot of talent, thanks to a robust domestic structure. I was never worried about Indian cricket. There will be someone taking Indian cricket forward. I am not surprised with Yashasvi (Jaiswal) because I rate him as a fantastic batter, he is someone who should play all formats. Jaiswal has been on song since the beginning of his Test career. The left-hander continued

his sparkling form with a 101-run knock that set India on the path to a big first-innings total. He added 91 runs with fellow opener KL Rahul (42) for the first wicket. I am not surprised by Yashasvi's performance because I have seen him play in Australia, the West Indies, and India, hope he keeps on performing like this but Shubman Gill's improvement is commendable.

Shubman and his batting away from home, I am telling you India has a lot of talent, there are 4-5 players waiting now who, when given a chance, will score runs, Ganguly said. Ganguly felt that to replace someone like Kohli would be a task, but he is not surprised to see the class shown by Gill, who batted at number four, a slot which Kohli made his own.

Virat is a class player, finding his replacement will take time. But the rest, I wasn't, I was not surprised by what I saw with Shubman. There is too much quality in Indian cricket because of the system, the quality of domestic cricket, leagues, because of the kind of time and money associations put in developing a player, said Ganguly, who had also helmed the BCCI as its chief.

Leeds Test: Indian troika matches 22-year feat of Golden Generation

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Leeds

The hundreds of Shubman Gill, Rishabh Pant and Yashasvi Jaiswal in the opening Test offered a warm walk back to a windy August 22 years back when India's batting pillars of yore Sachin Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Sourav Ganguly tormented England at the very same Headingley with centuries of their own.

The stalwarts' hundreds then paved the way for a massive Indian win, and the 'Next Gen' Indian stars' stellar effort has given their side a potential shot at a famous victory, especially in the post Virat Kohli-Rohit Sharma era. If anything, it was a statement about India's never-drying batting fountain.

Back in 2002, the hundreds by the troika and India drawing the Test series heralded a new chapter in the country's cricketing landscape as it gradually began to wash away the tag of 'Tigers at Home, Lambs Abroad'.

But the task that awaits the likes of Jaiswal and Gill is quite different. India is now a team adept in touring but they need to step into the Size 16



shoes of some giants who made the team a force to reckon with away from home.

Here's a quick look back to the day when India erased a good chunk of that stigma on them. India had pummelled England by an innings and 46 runs after burying the home side under a mountain of runs in the first innings.

The commanding win, undoubtedly, was set up by first-innings tons from Dravid (148), Tendulkar (193) and captain Ganguly (128) as India posted a mammoth 628 for eight declared.

It also was the first strong impression that Sanjay Bangar, who later went on to become

a successful batting coach, made on Test cricket with a resolute 236-ball 68 while opening the innings.

A look at the scorecard would tell batting heavy-weights Virender Sehwag (8) and VVS Laxman (6) missed out, but India were not complaining as the bowlers completed the demolition job, making the most of the efforts that the batters produced.

Spinners Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh claimed three wickets apiece while fast bowlers Zaheer Khan and, now the chairman of India selectors, Ajit Agarkar, grabbed a couple of sticks each.

Scottie Scheffler part of tie for lead at Travelers Championship

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Cromwell (USA)

Scottie Scheffler provided hope with a late double bogey. Tommy Fleetwood charged through with two eagles in three holes and so did Justin Thomas with five straight birdies. They wound up tied for the lead on a blustery Friday at the Travelers Championship.

All it took was the fate of the wind, good or bad, to shape the leaderboard going into the weekend at the TPC River Highlands, with 12 players separated by four shots.

Scheffler was comfortably in front when the left-to-right wind his tee shot had been riding laid down, sending his ball into the fairway bunker on the par-4 17th. He put the next one in the water, barely reached the green with his fourth shot and made double bogey. He wound up with a 1-under 69. Fleetwood felt the wind going right-to-left, then slightly hurting, then slightly helping on the par-5 13th. He had 240 yards to at least cover the water, 264 yards to the hole, and he felt his 9-wood would at least reach the green.

So much depended on the fickle wind that fooled so many players. I just sort of caught the



right moment, said Fleetwood, who also chipped in for eagle on the reachable 15th and shot 65. Came off perfect and then beautiful putt. Thomas wished he could have hit the ball a little better off the tee, but he stayed out of trouble, stayed patient and cashed in on the back nine with his five straight birdies, two of them from the 25-foot range, that led to a 64.

They were at 9-under 131, one shot ahead of Jason Day (66). Rory McIlroy was 3 over through four holes in gusts that topped 30 mph, at one point falling eight shots behind Scheffler, a daunting prospect.

But he kept in the game, found hope when Scheffler dropped back to 9 under, and got a little luck on his own.

His second shot from a bunker on the 17th was so think that he took one hand off the club and waited for the worse, mainly a splash. It founded the water at such a low trajectory that it skipped out onto the fairway.

He failed to get up-and-down, taking bogey, but felt it could have been worse — the shot, and his position going into the weekend He batted for a 71, leaving him only four back. The conditions today

definitely bunched the entire field together and should make for an exciting weekend, McIlroy said. The conditions — mainly the wind strong that was blowing hats off of heads and sending unoccupied chairs tumbling away — was everything in the second round.

The average score was 70.7, nearly two shots harder than the opening round. It was the highest scoring average for a single round at the Travelers since the second round in 2017. The toughest part for players was figuring out which way it was blowing. Scheffler experienced that on the 17th.

Bangladesh plays it safe, settles for draw with Sri Lanka in rain-affected 1st test

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Galle (Sri Lanka)

Bangladesh missed out on a rare victory away from home when its series-opening cricket test against Sri Lanka ended in a draw on the rain-affected final day on Saturday.

After a prolonged rain break that saw the morning session curtailed to just 80 minutes, there was a window — 50 overs — still wide enough to force the issue. The visitors led by 251 runs. The stage was set. But they opted for the conservative route. Najmul Hossain Shanto pressed on to complete his second century of the match — a personal milestone for the captain, but a potentially costly one for the team.

By the time the declaration came at 285-6, Bangladesh had consumed nearly an hour more of precious time — and momentum.

Shanto's feat was historic. Only 14 other men in the long annals of test cricket have scored hundreds in each innings on two separate occasions. Shanto previously achieved the double-ton trick against Afghanistan in 2023.

Bangladesh, chasing only its second test win over Sri Lanka in 27 attempts, may rue



Sri Lanka's Angelo Mathews who played his career last test cricket match waves to supporters at the end of the first cricket test match between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Galle, Sri Lanka on Saturday

PTI

this as the one that got away. The hosts had their backs to the wall for just over a session and while they lost wickets and had to negotiate some sharp turn and bounce, they were never truly cornered.

Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan removed first-innings centurion Pathum Nissanka with a peach that dipped and turned. Taijul Islam chimed in with a tidy burst, accounting for Lahiru Udara, Angelo Mathews

and Dinesh Chandimal. Bangladesh has won only seven away tests.

FAREWELL FOR MATHEWS

The day also marked a poignant farewell. Mathews bowed out of the test arena. He fell for 8, caught off bat-pad, and each Bangladeshi fielder made a beeline to salute a fine career. A man for all seasons, Mathews had captained Sri Lanka to its maiden series win in England in 2014 and wore the whites 119 times for his country.

As Sri Lanka looks ahead to the second test in Colombo, it must now confront two pressing questions. Who fills the Mathews-sized void in the middle order — a space occupied by experience and resilience for over 15 years? And is it time to reconsider Prabath Jayasuriya's role? The left-arm spinner, once a revelation, has struggled of late, and his solitary wicket in this match did little to silence the murmurs.

For Bangladesh, reinforcements arrive in the form of Mehidy Hasan Miraz, who missed the Galle test because of illness. His return adds depth especially on tracks where finger spinners often dictate proceedings.

Indian women lose 1-5 against Belgium in FIH Pro League



India's Sunelita Toppo (centre) and Belgium's Alix Gerniers (left), fight for the ball during the FIH Hockey Pro League game between Belgium and India at the Wilrijkse Plein in Antwerp in Belgium on Saturday

PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Antwerp (Belgium)

The Indian women's hockey team's nightmarish run in the FIH Pro League extended with a 1-5 defeat against Belgium here on Saturday. It was team's fifth consecutive defeat in a row at the the European leg of the tournament having lost two matches each to Australia and Argentina in London.

On Saturday, India took the

lead through Deepika (6th minute) before Belgium turned things around after half time, pumping in five goals through Hélène Brasseur (37th, 55th), Lucie Breyné (41st), Ambre Ballenghien (54th) and Charlotte Englebert (58th).

Belgium started on the offensive and dominated the early share of exchanges with repeated raids into the Indian circle but the visitors defended well. The hosts had the first scoring chance of the match in

the form of a penalty corner but India goalkeeper Savita made a fine save.

After the early onslaught, the Indians got their acts together and made a comeback in the form of a penalty corner and Deepika made no mistake, scoring with a powerful low flick through the legs of Belgian goalkeeper Elena Sotgiu in the sixth minute. India controlled the ball in the midfield thereafter but could not create any more chances.

Jeeno Thitikul extends Women's PGA lead

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Frisco (USA)

Semi-retired Lexi Thompson is going into the weekend contending for her first major title in more than a decade, and in a dwindling group of players under par at the KMPG Women's PGA Championship while Jeeno Thitikul extended her lead.

Thitikul, the Number 2-ranked player in the world, finished a six-hour round Friday not long before sunset with consecutive birdies for a 2-under 70 to get to 6-under 138. She had a three-stroke lead over Rio Takeda (71) and Minjee Lee (72), and was four ahead of Thompson (70) after another steamy day on the Fields Ranch East course at PGA Frisco.

To be honest, didn't (think) it's going to be that good result out there, said Thitikul, the 22-year-old seeking her first major win. Especially today just said to my coach, 'Like if anybody can shoot under par today, that player will be really, really great.' I'm shooting two-under par and I was like, 'Wow!'

With the feel-like temperatures going over 100 degrees and the ever-present Texas wind, only seven of the 156 players who started the season's third major were under par through two rounds. There have been no bogey-free rounds this week. There were



15 players under par after the first round, when Thitikul's opening 68 put her a stroke ahead of fellow North Texas resident Lee.

Thitikul, a five-time winner from Thailand, was in the same group the first two rounds with top-ranked Nelly Korda, whose only two birdies Friday came over the final three holes. Korda had a 74 and is 2 over for the week. Even though Thompson is no longer playing a full schedule, she still practices and works on her game pretty much all the time when at home.

Any time I tee it up I want to come out here and compete and win. I just want to make sure that I'm fully ready every time I tee it up, Thompson said. Yeah, I mean, it put my mind more at ease coming out here knowing that I'm not playing a full schedule, grinding week in, week out, and looking forward to the weeks off.

After an even-par round Thursday, Thompson was bogey-free in the second round until hitting her approach at the 18th into the bunker and being unable come up with yet another par-saver.

The 30-year-old Thompson, who has said last year was her final one playing a full schedule, is in her seventh tournament this season, including all three majors so far, and indicated that she will play again next week at the Dow Championship in Michigan before a long time off.

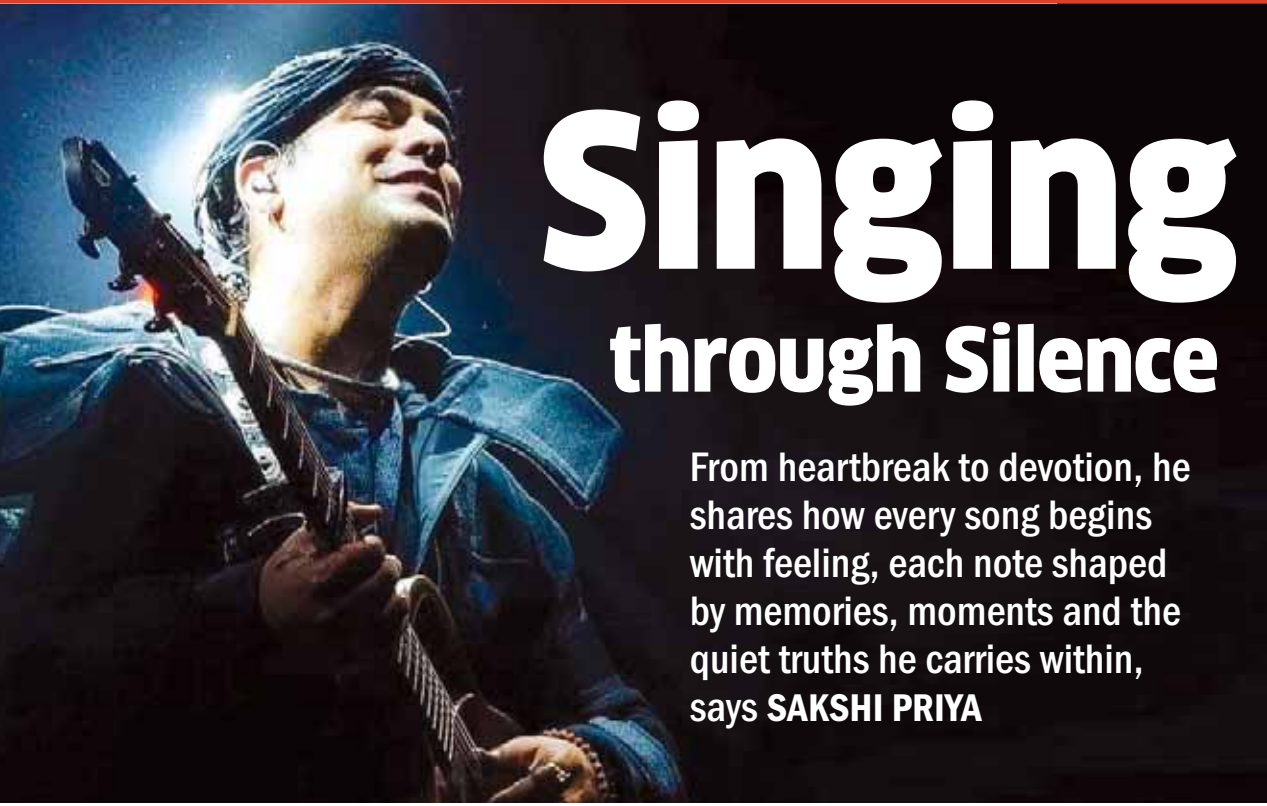
Her only major victory was at the Kraft Nabisco Championship in 2014, though her 13 top-five finishes in majors since 2013 are the most by any player and among her 20 top-10 finishes in those events. Thompson, whose last win

in any tournament was in 2019, said she is not yet allowing herself to think about what it would mean to win another major. She missed the cut at the US Women's Open three weeks ago, but last week was in contention in the final round before tying for fourth at the Meijer LPGA Classic.

It's just something that I'm going to take one shot at a time. When you get to thinking too far ahead of time it just gets to you, so I'm just really going to embrace the moment, she said. Come out on the weekend and just hope for the best, that's all I can do. Her shots to save par Friday were really better the three birdies — the longest an 11-footer, with a 6 1/2-footer and nearly 4-footer as well.

Thompson was only 70 yards from the pin after her tee shot at the 10th, but hit her approach into the bunker and was still 43 feet away after knocking it out of there before a curling right-to-left putt. At the par-5 14th, her 5-foot putt did a 360-degree roll around the lip before falling into the cup.

Made Number 10 a lot more difficult from my drive. Hit a great drive and I got it pretty close to the green, but they tucked the pin back right over there, so got a little greedy instead of just hitting it out to the left and ended up plugging it in the bunker, Thompson said.



Singing through Silence

From heartbreak to devotion, he shares how every song begins with feeling, each note shaped by memories, moments and the quiet truths he carries within, says SAKSHI PRIYA

As an artist, you have to fall in love every day. And you have to have your heart broken every day.” That one line from Jubin Nautiyal quietly sets the tone. He says it simply, without trying to sound poetic. Yet those words explain his music, his voice and the emotions he carries into every song. He does not separate life from music. For him, the feeling comes first. The melody follows. When he sings *Tujhe Kitna Chahein Aur Hum*, *Lut Gaye*, *Tum Hi Aana*, *Lo Safar* or *Hum Nawa*, the voice carries something familiar. Not polished pain or rehearsed sorrow but something real. In his new song *Barbaad*, that same feeling returns tired, quiet, but deeply alive. He says he goes back to a place in his past when he sings, not to suffer again but to remember what it felt like.

One heartbreak, he says, stays with him. It shaped him and in many ways, still does. The way he talks about music feels honest. His voice is calm, measured. He shares memories, not as stories to impress, but as simple truths that shaped who he became. He speaks about being alone in a studio, standing before a mic, closing his eyes and allowing the words to take him where they need to. That space still, personal, untouched by noise, is where many of his most loved songs were born. *Barbaad*, his song for Mohit Suri’s film *Saiyaara*, brings together many elements he values, emotion, story, melody, and trust. Mohit always knew Jubin would sing this one. He calls him the voice of a generation when it comes to romance.

There is weight in that compliment and the song proves why. Jubin’s journey is not made of big statements. It moves quietly, like his music, through heartbreak, memory, and the kind of honesty that leaves a mark. With *Barbaad*, he adds another chapter to that journey. One filled with love, loss and the silence in between.

A CONVERSATION WITH JUBIN NAUTIYAL

Does “Barbaad” reflect a personal experience of being consumed by love or longing?

I think that is the lifeline. Actually, that is the true reason to be an artist, to be lost in that space, to be able to do that. Of course, it has happened. I’ve been there. I’ve done that. And today also, if I have to croon songs like *Barbaad*, I have to mentally go back there and kind of relive that to be able to reach closer to the emotions of the song and get it right on record. So, yeah, I think breaking your heart all over again is also another way to create art.

Is there a personal chapter behind each song, like you mentioned with *Barbaad*?

I don’t have so much love in my life. I don’t have so many stories also in life. But yeah, most of them come from a very similar place. It’s like that. Definitely. It is. It all comes eventually when

we are recording the song, there is no visual, there is just a brief. Aur apni picture ke, apni life ki picture ke hero toh hum khud hi hote hain. So, I have to kind of imagine that situation and I have to live it through the song. And, you know, there is a lot of acting happening off camera on mic when you’re recording a song where you are literally going back and reliving something.

Mohit Suri mentioned that he always knew you were the one to sing *Barbaad*. How does it feel to become the emotional voice of a story before the actors can even portray it on screen?

I always wanted to work with Mohit. His music, from *Zeher* and *Kalyug* in 2005, created a national wave with an unexpected and captivating sound. He consistently delivers massive hits, where his films and music beautifully intertwine. As a musician, it’s a privilege to collaborate with him because he presents the music so well. I’m thrilled we got to work on “*Barbaad*” from *Saiyaara*, especially with such a great team: a strong lead couple, ace director, production house, and music label. I’m very happy I got to sing the romantic song for his film.

What’s more difficult—getting over a heartbreak in real life or reliving it through your music?

Reliving it is easier, because you record the song and then move on. Real-life heartbreak? One is enough. I’m still in that phase where I don’t want to go through more heartbreaks. I’d rather just sing about it and be done with it. Do you believe that the most beautiful songs come from the deepest wounds? Not just songs, art comes from wounds. Time and again, it’s been proven that behind every artist’s journey, there’s some kind of pain that shaped the art. Your love songs often feel like they’re written personally for each listener. How do you make your voice feel so intimate, even on a public platform? To experience heartbreak, you must first fall in love. When you sing the lyrics, you connect them to your own

best until the release; after that, the outcome is out of my hands. This approach keeps my mind sane.

What do you fear more, not being understood through your music or being understood too much?

I’ve never worried about people reading too much or too little into my music. My journey with a song ends at its release. After that, it’s about celebrating the work being out there, which is the biggest feeling for a musician. Whether people like it or not is their opinion, and I don’t dwell on being understood more or less. This mindset keeps me moving forward, focusing on the next song. My job is to give my

WHEN SOMETHING MOVES ME, I SING IT: JUBIN’S MUSIC MANTRA



When I asked Jubin what musical space truly felt like home—Bollywood, indie, devotional or recreations, he paused, then gave me an answer that said more about his belief system than any label ever could.

“So, you know, I never thought myself of one space. When something good comes in front of me, I go for it. If it’s a good Bollywood song, I go for it. If it’s a good non-film, I go for it. If it’s a good recreation, I go for it. Even if it’s a good devotional song, bhajan, I go for it... I don’t have these stereotypes in my mind that I can do this and I can’t do that. I’m a human being. Human being is made in the image of God and God can do everything...”

He went on to speak about *Mere Ghar Ram*, *Loot Gaye* and *Barbaad* with the same passion, reminding me that for some artists, the feeling matters more than the format. I asked him what advice he’d give to his younger self, the boy who once dreamt of singing to the world. “Don’t get stuck in personal ideologies. Just be true to your art. Your job is to sing. You should sing it in your way, your style. And you should sing it legendary. That’s my advice.” Jubin sings what he feels, without drawing lines between genres or expectations. His journey is a reminder that music, when honest, finds its own way to reach the heart.

past, finding yourself emotionally in that space again. Playback singing is like acting off-camera, in front of the mic. For a romantic song, I recall what romance meant to me as a younger boy, when love first hit me. I tap into that memory, think about it, and then deliver the written words. It’s a process that just seems to work out.

Stage vs Studio: Which Taught You More?

On stage, I’m a different person; I’m still figuring out who that is. The stage is about the mind, performance, and giving the audience what they came for. It’s a show, and while I try to steal moments for myself, it’s mainly about the people who’ve paid to be there. The studio, however, is a profoundly internal process.

When I’m singing into the mic, often to someone who isn’t physically present, it’s about feel, expression and emotion. This solitary work, focusing purely on the music, is what truly helps me grow as an artist. The stage has its own story, but the studio is where my musical self develops most.



PANKAJ KUMAR

Artistry Resonance

BY SAKSHI PRIYA

At first glance, *Falsa* appears to be a fashion label. But spend a few minutes inside their store and it begins to feel like something else entirely, a personal gallery, a quiet sanctuary or perhaps a living sketchbook. Founded by Pavneet Kaur and Pooja Modi, *Falsa* is rooted in a deep connection with art, emotion, and memory. The visual philosophy of *Falsa* is deeply intimate.

The founders are painters themselves and their creative instincts begin not with fashion boards, but with brushstrokes. The walls of the store are painted by hand, resounding a kind of personal ritual. The ceiling takes cues from traditional design, anchoring the space in culture while the rest of the interior invites curiosity. Every element is placed with intention, blending the structure of heritage with the freedom of contemporary art. The collections are born from memory and movement. The most recent line is inspired by objects gathered during travel, delicate souvenirs from Italy, France, Australia and the blue alleys of Jodhpur. These objects, once tucked into a home wardrobe, sparked the beginning of a design journey. A porcelain vase became a print. A candle in an old painting became an embroidered motif. The result is clothing that carries emotion, garments that remember, that preserve, that gently speak. The design process is long, but never rushed. It begins with sketches, followed by hand-drawn artwork, and then numerous rounds of trials. It takes over six months to conceptualise a full collection. Even a single bridal piece may require forty days to complete, with intricate embroidery, thoughtful layering of fabrics and close attention to detail. Fabrics like Chantelle, Silk Tissue and Cotton Tissue become the surface for original artwork, translated into wearable form using traditional techniques.



VISION BEHIND

“It’s not about scaling up or bigger spaces. What matters is that people connect with what we make. That they feel the story, see it as a staple in their wardrobe, something they’ll cherish even after 12 or 50 years.” says the founders. In a world often defined by speed and noise, *Falsa* offers something quieter. A garment that carries memory. A print that holds a story. A store that feels like a moment of stillness. At *Falsa*, art does not remain on the wall, it becomes part of you.

Kesari Chapter 2 reopens the wounds of history

Kesari Chapter 2 delivers a chilling account of justice and sacrifice bringing light to the Jallianwala Bagh tragedy, writes ABHI SINGHAL

There are many films that take you back to the history of India’s independence, but there are some films that stay with you as a truth of life. These films serve as constant reminders of the wrath that we, as Indians, faced before independence and how Indians were not even treated as human beings.

In the same vein comes the newly released *Kesari Chapter 2: The Untold Story of Jallianwala Bagh* on JioHotstar, starring Akshay Kumar, R. Madhavan, and Ananya Panday in the lead roles.

The film’s story is a completely different story from the first chapter and has no link to it. The chapter 2 of the film sheds light on the day of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, a mass killing ordered by General Dyer, who commanded his troops to open fire on the crowd.

The first few minutes of the movie portray the horror of the Jallianwala

Bagh incident, and the scenes give you chills, especially since we have only read about it in books. Seeing the same depicted visually gives you drastic goosebumps.

The narrative then follows a child shown as a survivor of the incident, who later leads Akshay Kumar’s character, Justice Chetkar Sankaran Nair, to fight the case for the deceased against General Dyer. As the story progresses,



WATCH CARD

(Show Information)

Screen Title: Kesari Chapter 2 (Film)

Platform Available: JioHotstar

Running Time: 2 hours 13 minutes

Genre: Historical Drama

Ananya Panday also joins Akshay Kumar in fighting the case, marking it as her first in her career.

If I go on with the roles portrayed by all, I feel that Akshay Kumar

should be called a patriotic hero, as the actor excels in every film he does for the country. As Sankaran Nair, he delivers a powerful performance, portraying a man furious over the way Indians were treated — a performance that will give you goosebumps. Ananya Panday, as Dilreet Gill, plays a deeply emotional and layered character, complementing Akshay Kumar in all their courtroom scenes. R. Madhavan, as Advocate Neville McKinley, delivers a fiery performance, standing as a formidable rival to Sankaran Nair in the courtroom. His expressions as a clever and calculating advocate add tremendous value to the screen.

Directed by Karan Singh Tyagi, with a running time of 133 minutes, *Kesari Chapter 2* has powerful emotional moments, with songs like “*Teri Mitti*” placed perfectly in this historical drama. American actor Mark Bennington impresses in the role of General Dyer, portraying an impatient and angry Britisher who dominates Indians and treats them worse than slaves.

The cinematography is spot-on — violent enough to show the brutality and courtroom drama, and detailed enough to reflect what truly transpired. Some scenes like the one where General Dyer accepts his killing in the influence of his anger will not let you break free from the screen.



RATING
★★★★

SUGGESTED BINGES



Detective Sherdil
OTT – Zee5
Cast – Diljit Dosanjh, Chunky Pandey, Boman Irani, Diana Penty



Kerala Crime Files Season 2
OTT – JioHotstar
Cast – Aju Varghese, Lal, Navas Vallikkunn, Sanju Sanichten, Zhinz Shan



The Buccaneers Season 2
OTT – Apple TV +
Cast – Leighton Meester, Greg Wise, Jacob Ifan, Grace Ambrose



The Great Indian Kapil Show Season 3
OTT – Netflix
Cast – Kapil Sharma, Archana Puran Singh, Sunil Grover



Ground Zero
OTT – Amazon Prime Video
Cast – Emraan Hashmi, Sai Tamhankar, Zoya Hussain, Mukesh Tiwari

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Emergency 50 years on...

‘Samvidhan Hatya Divas’ or the Constitution Murder Day is a stark reminder that democracy is powerful yet fragile political system and needs to be protected

A common adage “Democracy Dies in Darkness” can best describe the imposition of ‘Emergency’ 50 years ago. It was on June 25, 1975 when the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided to slap ‘Emergency’ in the country thereby suspending civil right and liberties. It was the darkest hour for the democracy, challenged Constitutional supremacy and scarred the very political fabric of the nation.

Indeed, ‘Emergency’ was a short but very traumatic period of 21 months. It is etched in the memory of the nation as the period where the Government of the day went against its own people and with brute force muzzled the press, jailed the Opposition leaders

and trampled the basic rights of the people guaranteed by the Constitution. It is the lesson for the civil society and all those who cherish democracy to be always on the vigil and ensure that the power be kept in check.

It all started with Raj Narayan challenging Indira Gandhi election on grounds of inconsistencies in her campaigning and misuse of power. Justice Jagmohan Sinha, of the Allahabad High Court decreed against Indira Gandhi, and declared her election null and void. It practically meant that she had to step down as Prime Minister. But instead of complying with the order she retaliated by imposing Emergency and suspending civil liberties.

Now, to commemorate the 50 years of infamous Emergency the Modi Government has decided to remember it as “Constitution Murder Day” so that the young generations are made aware of the importance of democracy and why it needs to be protected. The idea is to honour the people who stood against it and the credit must go to them for the restoration of democracy, after a brief pause. We at *The Pioneer*, stand for strengthening of democratic institutions and making it robust by asking questions from the Government, becoming the voice of the people. On this occasion we have for you write-ups that give a 360 degree view of the event that should not have happened in the first place. These article

deep dive into the murder of Constitution which led to the democracy was gagged and the Constitution faced existential threats thanks to the emergency powers being invoked by the state. The most prominent draconian laws during this period was the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA), which allowed for indefinite detention without trial.

The Government censored the press, arrested political opponents, and suspended elections, effectively consolidating power under the Prime Minister. This in fact was a brief period where autocracy reigned supreme and was akin to dictatorship, though unpronounced.



EMERGENCY WAS
DECLARED ON JUNE
25, 1975 BY THE THEN
PRIME MINISTER
INDIRA GANDHI



Emergency and After: How India Rewrote the Rules of Its Democracy

Part XVIII of the Constitution of India allows for proclaimed by the President of India for a state of Emergency when grave threats to the nation from internal and or external sources or from a financial situations crisis.

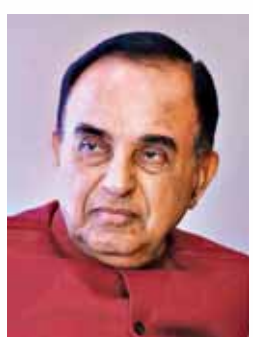
Under Article 352 of the Indian Constitution, upon the advice of the Cabinet of Ministers, the President can suspend many provisions of the Constitution, which can block fundamental Rights to the citizens of India, and Acts governing the devolution of powers to the States of India. In the history of India, since 1947, such a State of Emergency has been declared thrice.

The first instance was between October 26, 1962 to November 21, 1962 during the India-China war, when “the security of India” was declared as being “threatened by external aggression”. The second instance was between December 3 and 17 1971, which was originally proclaimed during the Indo-Pakistan war over Bangladesh dismemberment.

The third instance of proclamation was between June 25, 1975 to January 1977, under controversial circumstances when Indira Gandhi, as Prime Minister got declared the State of Emergency, declared on the claimed basis of “internal disturbances” caused by the peaceful movement led by Jayaprakash Narayan. The proclamation followed a Ruling of the Allahabad High Court that voided the Prime Minister, Mrs Indira Gandhi’s, Election held during the 1971 General Elections, in the constituency of Rae Bareilly.

She was found guilty of voter fraud and was also prohibited from contesting any election for the next 6 years. Mrs Indira Gandhi, instead, recommended to the then-willing President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed to proclaim a State of Emergency to strengthen her hands.

Mrs Gandhi, a move of complacency, two years later declared holding of a General Election in 1977 when the newly merged parties of the opposition Janata Party led by Prime Minister Morarji Desai, took office, the Forty-fourth Amendment of the Constitution of India substituted by a majority vote of Parliament the words “armed rebellion” for “internal disturbance” in Article 352, making the term more specific and less subject to interpretations. The amendment also protected Articles



SUBRAMANIAN SWAMY
Former Cabinet Minister and
former Harvard Professor

20 and 21 from being suspended during an Emergency.

Originally at the beginning, a National Emergency could be declared on the basis of “external aggression or war” and “internal disturbance” in the whole of India or a part of its territory under Article 352. Such an Emergency was declared in India in the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the 1971 Indo-

Pakistani War, and the 1975 internal disturbance. But after the 44th Amendment Act 1978 during Janata Party rule, National Emergency can now only be declared on grounds of “External aggression or war”, and on the ground of “armed rebellion”, called as ‘Internal Emergency.’ The President can declare such an Emergency only on the basis of a written request by the Cabinet headed by the Prime Minister. Such a Proclamation must be laid before both houses of Parliament and the state of Emergency expires after one month, unless approved within that time, by both Houses separately sitting and voting. However, if the Lok Sabha (the lower house) has been dissolved or dissolution takes place in the state of Emergency, and the Rajya Sabha approves of the state of Emergency, the deadline for the Lok Sabha is extended until thirty days after that house is reconstituted. According to Article 352(6), approval by either house requires a special majority: those in favour of the Motion must be at Least two-thirds of those present and voting, and amount to a majority of the entire Membership of that house.

A Parliamentary resolution extends the state of Emergency for up to six months, and it can be extended indefinitely by further resolutions in six-month increments. During a National Emergency, many Fundamental Rights of Indian citizens can be suspended. The six freedoms under the Right to Freedom are automatically suspended.

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THE GOVERNMENT
CENSORED THE PRESS,
ARRESTED POLITICAL
OPPONENTS, AND
SUSPENDED ELECTIONS,
EFFECTIVELY
CONSOLIDATING POWER
UNDER THE PRIME
MINISTER. THIS IN FACT
WAS A BRIEF PERIOD
WHERE AUTOCRACY
REIGNED SUPREME AND
WAS AKIN TO
DICTATORSHIP, THOUGH
UNPRONOUNCED



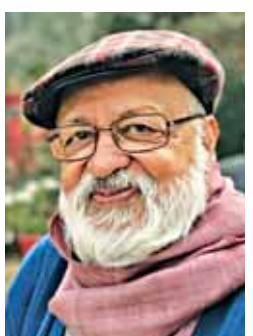
Subramanian Swamy disguised as a Sardar in Emergency days. He entered his home in Sardar attire, fooling waiting police after landing from US and went to Ahmedabad in Sardar attire again after exiting from Parliament making a brief speech. He urged the chair to add democracy in the obituary reference of MPs

Emergency Revisited: A Distant Mirror to the Present & Beyond

More than half a century after Indira Gandhi imposed the dreaded Emergency, it continues to be referred to as the ‘Darkest Chapter in the history of Indian Democracy’. Ironically, the majority of Indians that comprise more than two-thirds of the country’s total population are ‘pre-historic’ even the retired parents of Generation Z have no personal recall of forced nasbandi (vasectomies) and Nasha Bandi (prohibition). How could they they would have been ten-year-old or younger children barely registering the tyranny that had suddenly descended on the land? Those of us now at the threshold of eighty — dwindling in numbers with each passing day — have fast-fading memories of the spoilt brat Sanjay strutting the stage with his thug-like brigade systematically subverting the rule of law and endearing himself to his insecure mother.

The early days of the Emergency and the midnight arrests of all the prominent leaders of the opposition, journalists and social activists who found Sanjay obnoxious, stunned the country. Common people were petrified and those expected to bend volunteered to crawl. The greatest letdown was the judiciary with one or two honourable exceptions. In ADM Jabalpur versus the Govt the Supreme Court didn’t cover itself in glory. Judge HR Khanna dissented and chose to squander away a chance to become the CJI Justice Bhagwati greeted Mrs G with a bouquet lavishing praise on her much before CJI Chandrachud invited NaMo for an arati at his home tarnishing an image of fearless independence carefully projected for years.

Very few editors like Kuldip Nayyar and NC Chakravarti showed spine others like Sham Lal at TOI chose discretion over valour. Khushwant Singh happily supported the new dispensation. This was the season of sycophants. Deb Kant Barua the Congress president came out with the demeaning slogan-



PUSHPESH PANT
Historian and Retd. Professor
of International relations, JNU

‘Indira is India, India is Indira!’ But it was people like Banshi Lal, Buta Singh and Zail Singh who had the field day pampering Sanjay. In hindsight, it seems amazing how easily scions of other political dynasties like Shukla Parivar in MP, and the Abdullah clan in Kashmir accepted subordination to dynastic rule at the centre. The bitter taste in the

mouth was reduced a bit by the sugar coating provided by the old Gandhian Vinoba Bhave who called in Anushasan Parva. Mrs G was supported by the CPI — Mohan Kumarmanglam and Syed Nurul Hasan were in her cabinet- and not surprisingly the leftist ideologues defended this step as a masterstroke that stopped India’s slide to the precipice of anarchy.

Trains ran on time, for a very short while and policemen were afraid to collect hafta. Hoarders and black marketers displayed a generous bone in their body for a short while. But soon, the majority of the population realised that things were returning to normal. Inanities of Sanjay’s 20 20 — point program or glib slogans like Garibi Hatao failed to galvanise the masses. Mrs Gandhi alienated not only her foreign admirers like Mary Seaton and Dorothy Woodman but also long-time Indian friends and confidantes like Pupul Jaykar.

By the end of the first year Emergency had lost much of its sting. The Indian genius for juga had found loopholes to get around enforcement. Everyone had discovered a contact a distant relative, an old classmate or a wheeler-dealer who knew someone in the Youth Congress led by Sanjay who could get an arrested person released on bail or stop harassment by local authorities who were under pressure to fulfil assigned quotas for vasectomy. Bootleggers knew the ropes to carry on delivery of IMFL and hooch. Everyone who was anyone threw his weight around. The assistant to the Lt Governor of Delhi was more important than the Lat Sahib. Humiliated beyond tolerance Kishan Chand ICS jumped into the well leaving behind a note *Zillat ki Zindagi se mauit behtar hai*. There were competent officers like Jagmohan at DDA who lost no time in jumping onto the bandwagon and hitching the rising star to fulfil their ambitious agenda of ‘rebuilding’ Shahjahanabad.

Continued on >> P2

Kanishka bombing: Disaster India forgot

Hindustan Murdabad, Khalistan Zindabad “Kill Modi... politics” were the cries ringing out in my ears, as I crossed the 14th street entrance of the National Press Club, Washington DC last week, where as part of my North American speaking tour, I addressed the American media, on “Kanishka, Khalistan and terrorism”. I ran into this ISI sponsored Khalistani protest, waving Pakistani & Khalistani flags, not actually for my benefit, but for the Indian congregation of MPs who were addressing the media on Operation Sindoor, led by Dr Shashi Tharoor at the same venue, later that day.

My thoughts flashed back to 40 years ago this very month, when the Air India Kanishka was blown up enroute to London from Toronto, as it destroyed my entire world, orphaning me, then still a teenager. This is a tragedy that the world forgot, that Canada avoided, and India deliberately ignored for almost 40 long years. 331 of our loved ones passed away in the twinkle of an eye, to the dastardly explosion of terrorist’s bombs. A tragedy that could have been avoided, had the Canadian intelligence and other agencies not ignored the alarm bells and warnings, or paid heed to the Indian and American warnings, or had Pierre Trudeau and Canada acceded to the almost 29 Indian extradition requests for Talwinder Singh Parmar since 1982.

Kanishka is that terrorist bombing that became a pawn in the hands of political masters in India, who refused to recognise, acknowledge or even consider building a memorial to our dead, too afraid to hurt Akali or Khalistani sentiments, for far too long, unable to balance the pogrom with the carnage & tragedy of Kanishka 1985.

When the world speaks of air disasters, they speak of 911, Lockerbie, Tenerife, TWA, KAL, MAS, Iran Air, Air France, but few remember that sandwiched in between all of them, was Air India 182 Kanishka, it is even today, the World’s deadliest Aircraft bombing, and it was, until 911, the worst act of Aviation terror known to man. The 2001 Angus Reid survey showed that 4/5 Canadians don’t even know about the Air India bombing, I’m pretty certain that 99/100 people in India don’t even remember it.

For the families of Air India 182, Kanishka, we are a race that the world forgot, of an Indian flag carrier, who no one cared about, for which no memorial exists in India, even until today. We families, have spent 40 years fighting for justice and seeking a voice at every high table in the world. It is a journey that I undertake on our pilgrimage for justice, truth and recognition of the sacrifices made by those whom we , and the truth we hope that will be found. June 12 1985 was when I last said goodbye to my entire family, as they left for Canada on a trip that ironically, I was to take as well, but was stymied by my failure at my 12th standard, and stayed behind for reevaluation. Little did I know then, that it would be the last time, that I ever saw my beloved family. Less than 12 days later I got a call that took me to Cork to identify my beloved family, a teenager orphaned & scarred by the cruel act of a bunch of madmen, I flew off that very day. Landing in London that first night, the horrors began, with us having to evacuate the hotel at 3 am in the cold rain, because of a bomb threat from the same Khalistanis. Shaken we finally landed in Cork the next day.

The scene at the Cork hospital, was one of a war-torn battlefield, as the fog of war lifted each evening, each side counting their dead. Like all families, I waited daily at Cork Hospital, after the Naval ships brought in bodies & in some cases body parts, for the horrific Interpol identification process, by each of us. As a young 17-year-old, I underwent this ordeal, for 23 days, until the Navy gave up their search, I returned heartbroken to London. On the 24th day however, a 131st body was suddenly discovered, and I was called back to Cork, to identify Sylvia, and take her home to Mumbai for her last rites.

The tragedy that families felt at the bombing was surpassed only by the cold rebuff by Governments in Canada and India to the scale & the nature of the conspiracy. There was little attempt to reach out to families, or for the Indian or Canadian Governments to even address the issue, leave alone investigate it. To imagine the scale of the conspiracy back then, try and comprehend how a rag tag terrorist outfit, funded by the ISI, had built and placed two suitcase bombs from Vancouver BC, via CP Air, onto two Air India Jumbo jets, 10,000 miles apart, triggered to blow up at almost the same time across the earth, having tested it in the Vancouver woods. This was at a time, when mobile telephones, internet, GPS or remote-control bombs did not exist, we still booked trunk calls and used inland letters, and never had Internet. Had both the flights not been delayed, AI-182 would have exploded at Heathrow, and AI-301 at Narita, and caused untold mayhem and death at two of the biggest airports in the world, that was their goal.



A year is a long time in politics, and by the time the first anniversary arrived in 1986, the dignitaries and mantris arrived at Ahakista, Cork, to unveil the memorial & the multi faith prayer ceremony. Promises aplenty were made by Cabinet ministers from the Canadian and Indian Governments, but it was only the Irish who kept their promise of building this beautiful memorial near the Atlantic Ocean, where the aircraft went down within a year.

The struggle of the families to get answers from a silent RCMP, and the Canadian Government, or a stoic Indian Government was akin to squeezing blood from stone. It is noteworthy that for the first 6 months, the Canadians tried to even avoid the mention that AI-182 was brought down by a bomb, and said so before the committee of Justice BN Kirpal (later CJI of Supreme Court), whilst hesitating to participate fully in the Indian Government enquiry.

This was clearly a bomb by Khalistani terrorists, that blew up the AI-182 Kanishka. In fact, it was Justice Kirpal’s thesis in Sept 1985, that somehow the bombing in Narita Tokyo and Ireland were connected, but he could not confirm, as his remit was limited to the Kanishka only, and they had no access to the Tokyo investigations. Families wrote to both governments, but the tragedy of Air India 182 was like a mirage in the desert. It took more than a decade and a half for the RCMP to act in the matter, and it was not until Oct 27, 2000 that charges were finally laid in the case.

It is said, that when America sneezes, the world

catches a cold. Just as Pearl Harbour changed the face of World War-II, 911 changed the attitude to terrorism the world over. It changed our universe, and in many perverse ways, had Mohammed Atta not tried to flatten New York, the RCMP & CSIS in Canada may never have moved beyond that stage. The US & Global outrage over 911, made everybody stand-up and take note. India & Canada already had their “911 moment” years earlier, but Canada had dropped the ball on preventing it and later prosecuting it, deliberately or not, we shall never know. It had taken 15 long years

before the Criminal charges were finally laid by the RCMP. During those 15 years, most of the Khalistani conspirators had either run away to other countries or gone underground. The victims’ families had written 100s of letters and petitions to Canadian and Indian Premiers and MPs to look into the matter. I had personally raised the issue with at least 4 Indian Prime Ministers and met countless ministers to no avail, Indian politicians were too scared of upsetting the Sikh sentiments, when it was always clear that all Sikhs are not Khalistanis, in fact very far from it.

The Sikh community is perhaps the pride of India in every field and walk of life, but the Khalistani terrorists are the vilest, blood thirsty criminals one can find, this was a fact that escaped the notice of successive Indian and Canadian Governments, who in particular, literally paid obeisance to the Khalistanis. The victims’ families were lost, between a rock and a hard place, the Canadian Government

had ignored them because they were Indian, the Indian Government had pretended as though this dastardly act had not even taken place, and it was a foreign event. The India of the 80s, 90s and 2000s was a soft state and even now (Pahalgam aside) we do not always show the resolve that is needed to, had this not been so, the Khalistanis would think 100 times before attacking our temples overseas and in our land. The 1990s saw the Khalistani movement burn itself out and between Julio Ribeiro and KPS Gill they made sure of the fact that they destroyed what was left of the Khalistani movement. On one such early morning raid in the village of Kang Arayan, the Punjab police acting on a tip-off, tracked down the dreaded terrorist Talwinder Singh Parmar, crossing over from Pakistan along with his ISI handlers, a fierce gun battle ensued. Parmar, and ISI agents Intekhab Zia and Habibullah were amongst the 6 killed that day, as they snuck in to Punjab, this was October 15th 1992. Pakistan acknowledged their citizens, but called them tourists, who were armed with rocket launchers, Ak-47s and grenades.

Almost a decade later, the Canadian Crown prosecution labored to prepare its case against the conspirators, with evidence that had been collected by multiple agencies, even as the truth and reconciliation commission of the 911 had already begun its hearings. Ironically the most important evidence and leads of Kanishka, had come from the Japanese investigators who found a piece of the same Sanyo transistor embedded in the wall at Narita, that matched the transistor module, that Justice Kirpals committee had identified. Interestingly only 200 of these radios had ever been made, and all were shipped to Vancouver BC, and the buyers were tracked down, with the receipts & tapes being found in Reyats garage.

The RCMP and CSIS had interviewed and prepared scores of witnesses ranging from Tara Singh Hayer, to the ticketing agents to the airport staff even to the woman who was in a relationship with Bagri, whose car was used to ferry the bombs to the airport. Yet by the time the charges were filed and trial came along, most of the witnesses were either assassinated or disappeared or simply recanted.

Tara Singh Hayer, the Canadian Journalist-editor, who had given sworn testimony that Bagri confessed in London, that they had bombed the planes, despite being under RCMP protective detail was killed in cold blood at his home. The RCMP and the Crown did snare the small fry Reyat, who accepted the plea bargain for making the bombs, and also offered to testify in the trial against Bagri and Malik, but later recanted out of fear, for which



MAJOR AIR DISASTERS

JULY 12, 1949: A KLM Lockheed Constellation crashed near Ghatkobar while attempting to land in bad weather. All 45 onboard die.

JULY 7, 1962: An Alitalia Flight 771 crashed into a hill northeast of Mumbai while on approach. All 94 aboard die.

JULY 28, 1963: United Arab Airlines Flight 869 crashed off Bombay Airport, killing all 63 onboard.

DECEMBER 9, 1971: An Indian Airlines Avro aircraft (HS-748) crashes in the forests of Meghamalai. The flight was a round trip from Chennai to Trivandrum. The crash resulted in the deaths of 31 out of the 40 passengers on board with 9 survivors.

JUNE 14, 1972: A Japan Airlines Flight 471 crashed near Palam Airport, killing 82 of 87 onboard and three on the ground. Total 85 people were killed.

MAY 31, 1973: An Indian Airlines Flight 440 crashed on approach to Palam Airport due to pilot error. 48 of 65 onboard die.

OCTOBER 12, 1976: An Indian Airlines Flight 171 crashed at Bombay following an in-flight fire caused by an uncontained engine failure, killing all 95 onboard.

JANUARY 1, 1978: An Air India Flight 855 crashed off the coast of Bandra, Mumbai after the failure of one of the flight instruments in the cockpit. All 213 aboard die.

OCTOBER 19, 1988: An Indian Airlines Flight 113 crashed on its final approach to Ahmedabad killing 130 people.

FEBRUARY 14, 1990: An Indian Airlines Flight 605 crashed on its final approach to Bangalore airport killing 92 people.

AUGUST 16, 1991: An Indian Airlines Flight 257 crashed on descent into Imphal killing all 69 occupants.

APRIL 26, 1993: Indian Airlines Flight 491 crashed into a truck at the end of the runway while taking off from Aurangabad, Maharashtra. It killed 55 people.

NOVEMBER 12, 1996: In 1996, Charkhi Dadri mid-air collision, Saudi Arabian Airlines Flight 763 collided in mid-air with Kazakhstan Airlines Flight 1907. All 349 on board in both planes were killed.

JULY 17, 2000: Alliance Air Flight 7412, a Boeing 737-2AB crashed in a residential estate of Patna after the pilot lost control of the aircraft and stalled. Deaths included total 60 people.

MAY 22, 2010: An Air India Express Flight 812, a Boeing 737-800 flying the Dubai-Mangalore route overshot Runway 24 on landing at Mangalore International Airport killing 158 passengers on board.

JUNE 12, 2025: An Air India Flight 171, a Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner en route to Gatwick, London carrying 242 people, crashes in a building in a suburb of Ahmedabad minutes after takeoff from Ahmedabad Airport. The crash killed 241 people on board and 38 people on the ground.

he served almost 17 years for perjury.

As one who flew from Mumbai to Vancouver to attend the Criminal trials, it was a frustratingly painful process, watching witness by witness fall by the wayside over those few years. In the final 3 days, sitting barely 15 feet from the two killers, awaiting the verdict, I watched them smirk and giggle in the courtroom, fully secure in the knowledge that they had eliminated every witness, or piece of evidence that would tie them back to this dastardly crime.

It was also astounding to note the judge rewarding the accused, for every witness they had threatened. Some of Justice Josephson’s comments and mistakes in the order, would make a grown man blush. As veteran journalist & Khalistan expert, Terry Milewski writes in the foreword to “On Angels Wings – beyond the bombing of Air India 182” “Justice was denied. Witnesses were intimidated or murdered. Wiretaps were inexplicably erased. Crucial evidence was discarded or ruled inadmissible on grounds that often seemed bizarre. A stinging sense of betrayal left some of the family members barely able to speak.”

“Canadian authorities had bungled the job a second time. First, they failed to prevent the bombing despite vivid and repeated warnings. Then, they failed to deliver justice” Had this been an Indian Court & judge, many would have quickly rushed to say that it was a prejudiced judgment, or alleged “favours” or even heard the crude insult “bik gaya”, however this was Canada, the law was flawed, but it was supposed to be majestic. The judgement was full of mistakes & legal and factual errors.

For the complete story please see our website www.dailypioneer.com

(The writer is the author of ‘On Angels Wings-beyond the bombing of Air India 182’. Views are personal)

Emergency and After...

Continued from >> P1

By contrast, the Right to Life and Personal Liberty cannot be suspended according to the original Constitution. In January 1977, Indira Gandhi’s Government decided to suspend even the Right to Life and Personal Liberty by dispensing with Habeas corpus. Justice Hans Raj Khanna, now nationally adored Judge of the Supreme Court, defended the Right to Life and asked: “Life is also mentioned in Article 21 and would the Government argument extend to it also?”. The Attorney General observed: “Even if life was taken away illegally, courts are helpless”. Today, nearly five decades after the Emergency of 1975, the collective consciousness and democratic maturity of the Indian public

have evolved significantly. The people of India, shaped by hard-earned democratic values, are far more aware, vigilant, and resilient against any attempt to replicate the authoritarian overreach of that era. India remains a robust democracy, rooted deeply in its national-ist spirit. No matter how ambitious or misguided a politician may be including those in power today, it is virtually impossible to impose a dictatorship in this country.

While democracy in India still requires constant nurturing and citizen vigilance, the foundational strength of its people ensures that any slide towards authoritarianism will be met with strong resistance. India will endure as a democracy, not just in structure, but increasingly in spirit.

Emergency Revisited: A Distant Mirror to the Present...

Continued from >> P1

Months passed and all kinds of rumours circulated. Nauseating tales of debauchery in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting with VC Shukla at its helm. Soft-spoken and suave, Nehru family loyalist IK Gujral was ousted and despatched to the USSR (virtually in exile) as the ambassador to make room for Shukla who had an unenviable reputation as a play-boy. Strange ‘comings and goings’ in the PM’s house were whispered. Rasputin-like figure of Mrs G’s Yoga Teacher Dhirendra Brahachari who flew his plane and had set up an arms factory at his Ashram in Jammu, was one of them. Muhammad Yunus a nephew of Badshah Khan and a senior diplomat emerged as a trusted advisor. Both had the intriguing talent to manage Sanjay.

There was a distressing increase in police excesses and extra-judicial killings as days passed. The teenage student Rajan was allegedly kidnapped by the police in Kerala

and never seen again. In Delhi, the dreaded dacoit Sunder was eliminated by DIG Bhinder under very suspicious circumstances.

Like in 1942, with all the popular leaders behind bars, and avenues of peaceful protest blocked some daring resisters justified taking up arms. It was the Baroda Dynamite Case that caught the nations’ imagination and seemed to offer a glimmer of hope in the night. Those associated with George were ruthlessly tortured — his brother Lawrence and associate Kannada actress Sneha Reddy suffered the most. Third Degree wasn’t the only method to emasculate opponents. Income Tax raids targeted didn’t spare celebrities and actors like Kishore Kumar to silence them. Even old allies and mentors weren’t spared. PN Haksar had fallen from grace after criticising Sanjay’s extra-constitutional antics and his relatives the Pandit Brothers paid the price. The censors exerted overtime to persecute and bankrupt film

producer Amrit Nahata who had dared to make a dark satirical film Kissa Kursi ka after the Allahabad High Court set aside Indira Gandhi’s election.

There were rare moments of relief from tyrannical oppression like when Dr Subrahmanyam Swami made a dramatic appearance in the Parliament to register his attendance and then slipped away before he could be apprehended by the marshals stationed in the House. Incidents like this exposed the chinks in the iron lady’s armour and her vulnerabilities.

Finally, for reasons best known to herself Mrs Gandhi lifted Emergency and called for elections. The voters turned out in large numbers and the silent suffering majority spoke through ballots. Indira Gandhi suffered a devastating defeat. The Congress was all but annihilated in its north Indian bastions. It seemed that Indian Democracy had survived the assault on it. Indira once hailed as Durga rid-

ing a Tiger vanquishing India’s enemies was being consigned to the dustbin of history.

Her rise like the Phoenix in less than two years and resumption of power couldn’t be foreseen at that moment. But that is another story. Critics of Prime Minister Modi and BJP-NDA think that raking up the Emergency and reviving painful memories serve no other purpose but to distract us from present problems and malign a comatose Congress Party.

In our view, this is playing partisan petty politics. In the past decade, many Indians have been queasy to raise questions about the ‘undeclared’ Emergency we are alleged to be living in, the steady erosion of fundamental rights, particularly Freedom of Expression and subversion of institutions mandated to protect the constitution. Surely, revisiting the Emergency of 1975 puts a distant mirror in our hands to look at the reflection of the present. We should be grateful for this opportunity.



Bengali Cuisine: A Flavour Dynamite with Variety that Spoils-Literally!

The region of Bengal is immersed in rich history and its contribution to various aspects of national importance is second to none. The name is derived from the ancient kingdom of Vanga or Banga, with the earliest evidence of settlement in the region provided by prehistoric stone tools discovered in areas of Midnapore, Bankura and Burdwan. Aryan influence in ancient India came to be felt in the north-western parts in the middle of the second millennium BC, and it took a long time for the Aryans to reach the eastern limits of the subcontinent. Thus, the people of Bengal felt the tide of Aryanisation quite late, and it was around the 5th century BC, that it pushed into Bengal from the west, and it took many centuries to Aryanise large parts of Bengal.

According to sources, the original settlers of this geographical sphere were the non-Aryan ethnic groups-Nisadas or Austric or Austro-Asiatics—who are now represented by the primitive peoples known as Kola, Bhil, Santal, Shabara, Pulinda, etc. At a subsequent age, peoples of two other ethnic stocks settled in Bengal, whose languages were Dravidian and Tibeto-Burman. The Mahasthan Brahmi Inscription, found in an excavated site of the old Pundranagar, now represented by the ruins at Mahasthan in Bogra district, bear testimony to Maurya rule (3rd century BC) in parts of Bengal, and archaeological excavations prove the existence of this urban administrative and cultural centre throughout the ancient period, up to the 12th century AD. Under Gupta rule, Bengal was an important province in the all-Indian Gupta Empire. The break-up of the Gupta Empire, the invasions of the Hunas and the sudden entry and exit of Yashodharman on the political stage of northern India dealt great shocks to eastern India. And finally, the Muslim influence on Bengal's history is significant and multifaceted, stemming from the arrival of Islam in the 13th century and lasting through various Muslim-ruled periods, including the Bengal Sultanate and Mughal rule.

It is therefore quite natural that, through the above-mentioned periods of history, the culinary journey of the region is also diverse, steeped in traditions and unparalleled in heritage. Around 5,000 years ago, rice emerged as a staple calorie resource as paddy cultivation came to Bengal from Southeast Asia-prior to this, most people in this

region consumed millets, just like in many other parts of the country. The rivers of the region brought seafood, especially fish, into the evolution of the cuisine. Rice and fish remain as the most popular and common meal, hence the phrase “Maache-Bhaate-Bangali” which translates to “fish and rice make a Bangali”. The Jews were the ones who brought bakeries to Bengal, while the Marwaris contributed a significant portion to the Bengali's sweet-making skills, the Mughal's brought various flavours of Mughlai cuisine to the state, and Wajid Ali Shah, the last Nawab of Awadh contributed with a large variety of Awadhi cuisine and traditions, such as Khansamas (stewards) and Masalchis (spice mixers) and a taste for non-vegetarian dishes that included chicken and mutton. The first Bengali texts of the 11th century, the Charyapadas, describe fishing and hunting, and mention many kinds of food crop including rice and sugarcane, but there is no reference to any kind of dal, and it is only in 15th-century texts, such as the Mangal Kavyas, that different kinds of dal, varieties of meat, and the process of cooking are mentioned. Lentil dishes, for many centuries now, are an important part of the cuisine and include Cholar dal (Bengal gram), Masoor dal (red lentils), Bhaja Muger dal (fried moong dal) and many more—all of which reflect the incorporation of local produce, nourishment and unique taste by this regional gastronomical powerhouse.

Conventionally, Bengali dishes are divided into four types — Charbya (food which is to be chewed, like rice, fish, etc.), Chosya (food which is to be sucked, liquids like ambal, tak, etc.), Lehya (food which is to be licked, like chatni) and Peya (drinks, like milk). This classification highlights the variety of textures and methods of eating within the cuisine. The state also has its own garam masala with a definite identity — Panch Phoran (five spice mix) which means literally ‘the spice that crackles five times’, and its cuisine gives equal importance to the ‘Shadrasa’, the six basic flavours in Ayurveda, with a particular focus on ‘tikta’ (the bitter taste) which is believed to cleanse the palate and aid the digestive system. The local mustard called ‘Kashundi’, which has a strong and delicious flavour-is an inseparable and unique

component of Bengal's cuisine.

I cannot but be fascinated by the state's culinary line-up. Illich Mass Annanas (Hilsa fish with pineapple) is a treat of flavours. Pabda (Indian Butterfish) Macher Tel Jhaal or Pabda Macher Jhol is a staple Bengali Fish Curry; it uses mustard paste, onion, spices, tomato and yoghurt. The choice of fish also points towards focus on nutrition-Pabda is high in potassium, magnesium, omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids, along with high protein and low fat content, all of which contribute towards general well-being. Another delicious offering is called ‘Shutki’-dried or fermented fish, which is a popular ingredient in Bengali cuisine; it is used in various dishes, from simple chutneys to Bhortas (mashed preparations) to more elaborate curries and stews, and Kosha Mangsho-an iconic Bengali mutton curry, known for its superior flavour resulting from slow-cooked gravy. A great example of modifying an outside dish according to their own flavours is seen in Potoler Dolma-a popular delicacy consisting of pointed gourd (potol) stuffed with a flavourful filling, often made with vegetables, meat or prawns, and cooked in a gravy. The dish is inspired by the Armenian dolma, but Bengalis have adapted it with their own unique ingredients and cooking style by using mustard oil and ginger-garlic paste.

At this point, the hallowed Shukto needs to be brought in; by the looks of it, Shukto seems like a simple vegetable stew, but it hides an ocean of complexity; it is a medley of vegetables cooked with panch phoren (Bengali five spices), especially korolla or ucche (meaning bitter gourd) and spices cooked deftly to bring out delicate flavours, making shukto is truly an art that only the most nuanced cooks can master. Chorchori is another delicious dish from the region;



ANIL RAJPUT

it is a vegetable dish (sometimes meat is also used) flavoured with poppy seeds and mustard seeds paste. It is characterised by the way the vegetables are cut (often into similar shapes and sizes) and cooked with minimal water. When we talk about delicious, another dish that comes to mind is Chechki or Chhechki, typically made with vegetables like radish, pumpkin, or cauliflower and potatoes, cooked with minimal spices. The term “Chechki” refers to the stir-frying technique used in Bengali cuisine. A classic regional element is found in Dalna-a preparation that is often curry or gravy-based and typically featuring vegetables or paneer (Indian cheese) simmered in a flavourful sauce. It's a common and popular category in Bengali cuisine, with various sub-types like Chhanar Dalna (cottage cheese curry) and Dhokar Dalna (lentil cake curry). Discussion on Bengali cuisine is incomplete without mentioning Pora — a cooking technique which is an integral part of the cuisine. The word “Pora” itself means “charred” or “burnt” in Bengali, and it refers to the method of cooking ingredients directly over an open flame or hot coals, resulting in a smoky flavour. Dishes using this technique include Begun Pora (roasted eggplant) and Aam Pora Sharbat (refreshing drink made from roasted raw mangoes). The humble potato is given a fantastic twist through Aloo Posto, which translates to “potatoes with poppy seeds,” it is yet another classic and very popular Bengali dish, in which potatoes are cooked with a paste of poppy seeds (posto), often with green chillies and nigella seeds (kalonji).

Bengali cuisine ensures that just like all other tastes, the sweet flavour also receives adequate focus. This is exhibited through dishes like Roshogolla-soft balls made from Chenna, having a spongy texture and soaked with sugar syrup. Shondesh — made with sweetened chenna, there are different varieties and while the base ingredients remain the same, you can find them in different flavours like Mango, Pista, and many more. The cuisine's variety is showcased through Mishti Doi — a traditional Bengali dessert adored for its creamy and sweet taste; this delicacy is made by fermenting sweetened milk, resulting in a thick and luscious yoghurt that is often presented in earthen pots. Another yoghurt-based dessert is Bhapa Doi, made by blending yoghurt and condensed milk, which is then steamed. Though it looks like a pudding and has a panna-cotta like texture, it does not contain gelatine or any other setting agent.

Then there is the Chener Jelapi-basically the omnipresent jalebi receiving a royal makeover; it is made with chenna (fresh paneer), maida (all-purpose flour), and khoya (reduced milk) and has a delightful crispy texture on

the outside and is soft on the inside, literally melting in the mouth when fresh, and Patishapta is a traditional Bengali sweet that is part of every Bengali's childhood food memory — typically made during special occasions like the Bengali New Year, using rice flour, semolina, and stuffed with coconut jaggery or khoya, and has a delicious filling of sweetened grated coconut. The use of jaggery in Bengali sweets is also found in Nolen Gurur Paayesh-it is made on all special occasions. This dish is made by boiling aromatic basmati rice in milk and is mixed with palm jaggery until the jaggery melts completely and a thick concoction is left behind — it can be served cold or hot with garnishes of nuts.

The impressive list of sweets continues its stellar run with Cham Cham — made from fresh chhena (cottage cheese); these oval-shaped dumplings are cooked in a sugar syrup infused with cardamom or saffron for added flavour — after cooking they are often rolled in grated coconut, enhancing the texture and taste; and there is the flavourful Mihidana-a minuscule relative of boondi, crafted from a blend of powdered rice, flour, and saffron mixed with water. The resulting mixture is poured through a sieve — like ladle and deep-fried, creating tiny, crispy particles. These delicate nuggets of fried delight are subsequently dipped in sugar syrup, allowing them to absorb the sweetness before being drained.

Bengali cuisine is the coming together of top-notch and unique flavours, a variety that is sure to impress the most conservative food critic, and a fantastic blend of ingredients that are used to prepare an ocean of dishes in multiple ways, and using the most interesting techniques. It is important to note that most of the dishes and ingredients that are used in Bengali cuisine, like fish, jaggery (date palm jaggery as well as gur), chenna (Indian cottage cheese), mustard, lentils, and many more, are rich in nutrition and have a significantly beneficial impact on gut health. It is critical for each and everyone to know how it ties in with our ancient Ayurvedic principles of ‘good gut is good health’ — I therefore urge my fellow citizens to share the immensely beneficial properties that are intrinsic to Bengali cuisine with our younger generation, so that they can add it to their to-do list!

(The writer is Secretary, Cuisine India Society. Views are personal)

The Magic, Legend and Romance of Olive Oil

The towering Greek philosopher and poet Homer described olive oil as “liquid gold” and the Greek tragedian extraordinaire Sophocles called olives “our sweet silvered wet nurse”. Olive oil is the oil obtained from the olive, the fruit of the “Olea europaea” or European olive. Unlike other common oils that are extracted from seeds like mustard, canola, soya and sunflower, the oil is produced by pressing whole olives. Over millennia, the cool, green oil has been one of life's enduring necessities and has been commonly used in cooking, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, soaps, detergents, lubricants, traditional oil lamps and religious and spiritual rituals. The well-known American writer and olive oil aficionado Tom Mueller in his best-selling treatise on olive oil entitled “Extra Virginity: The Sublime and Scandalous World of Olive Oil” has aptly observed, “an age-old food with space-age qualities that medical science is just beginning to understand”. The first official documentation of olive oil production can be traced to the rare archives of Ebla, one of the earliest kingdoms in Syria. It consists of 12 cuneiform tablets of 2400 BC vintage describing olive tree plantations owned by the King and Queen and chronicling 4000 jars of olive oil being reserved for the royal family and their staff and 7000 jars for the common folk. One of the earliest olive oil related archaeological finds were huge jars found in Ebla which were filled with oil meant for trade with Egypt through the port city of Ugarit.

The Egyptians, who consumed copious quantities of olive oil during the time of the Pharaohs, procured it from Crete, the largest Greek island, and used it during funeral and purification rites and in the building of pyramids and embalming of mummies entombed therein. Mycenaean tablets and old mud documents tell us about the importance of olive oil in the court of King Minos for the



ANOOP BOSE

THE FIRST OLYMPIC TORCH IN ANCIENT GREECE WAS A BURNING OLIVE BRANCH AND OLYMPIC CHAMPIONS WERE CROWNED WITH THE “KOTINOS” OR “LAUREL WREATH”

economy of Crete. In ancient Egypt, perfumes and cosmetics were made out of olive oil and were stored in small bottles or vials of alabaster or glass. In the iconic tomb of Tutankhamun (colloquially referred to as “King Tut”), ornaments and wreaths fashioned from olive branches were unearthed. Olive cultivation and oil extraction were brought to the Iberian Peninsula, located in the southwest corner of Europe, around 1050 BC, by red sunburnt seafaring Phoenicians (derived from the Greek word “Phoinos” meaning “blood red”) from the Red Sea region. Between 600-700 BC, the Greeks struck deep “olive” roots in the Iberian Peninsula. They believed that Athena, the Goddess of Wisdom, bestowed the gift of olive upon mankind.

The first Olympic torch in ancient Greece was a burning olive branch and Olympic champions were crowned with the “kotinos” or “laurel wreath” fashioned from olive branches intertwined to form a circle or a horse-



shoe! But it was undoubtedly the Romans who transformed olive oil production into a veritable industry. They ground olives with stone mills and crushed them with presses.

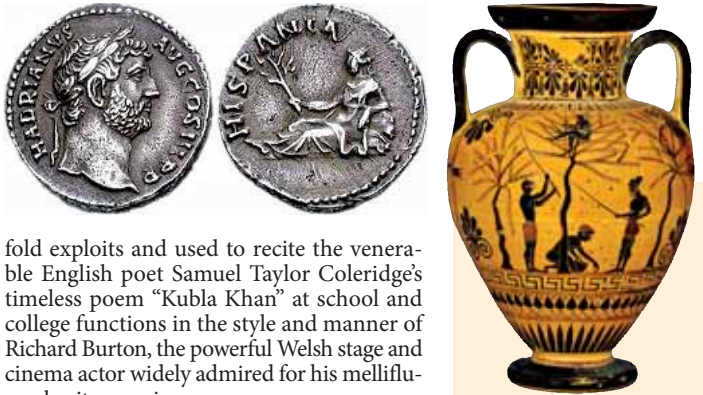
The importance of olive oil to the Roman Empire was immeasurable. Olive oil amphorae have been found in all Roman provinces and Monte Testaccio in Rome, located a short distance away from the east bank of the River Tiber, is a living testament to the enormity of the trade. This artificial



mound was created from the remains of 53 million amphorae discarded during the first 250 years of the Common Era covering an incredible area of 20,000 square metres at its base. In these amphorae, some 6 billion litres of olive oil were imported mostly from the Iberian Peninsula.

The heroic Roman Emperor Publius Aelius Hadrianus Augustus, popularly known as Hadrian (who rebuilt the Pantheon and constructed the Temple of Venus and Roma and Hadrian's Wall, which marked the northern limit of Britannia), even had a coin struck bearing the image of an olive branch and the inscription “Hispania”. Whilst the fall of the Roman Empire led to a steady decline in olive production in most of Europe, Southern Spain witnessed an upsurge in cultivation with the arrival of the Arabs, who brought with them new varieties and production techniques. In the land of the Hebrews, King Solomon and King David placed considerable importance on the cultivation of olive trees. Significantly, a dove carrying an olive branch is one of the classical symbols of the Jewish people.

Coming to India, the mythical seaport of Muziris (extolled by the Tamil Sangam poets as “Muciri”) was once a bustling Indo-Roman trading centre. The epic Roman author and philosopher Gaius Plinius Secundus, better known as Pliny the Elder, has described this port in his monumental encyclopaedia “Naturalis Historia” as “primum emporium Indiae”. It was situated in the Kodungaloor — Chettu belt in the South Indian state of Kerala. In 1983, fragments of imported Roman amphorae, which were used for transporting olive oil, were discovered in Pattanam along with Roman coins and other artefacts which verily proved the existence of Muziris. In my student days in Delhi, I was fascinated by Kubla Khan (the mighty fifth Mongol Emperor and the grandson of the fearsome Genghis Khan) and his mani-



fold exploits and used to recite the venerable English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge's timeless poem “Kubla Khan” at school and college functions in the style and manner of Richard Burton, the powerful Welsh stage and cinema actor widely admired for his mellifluous baritone voice.

During those days, I read a delightful story about Kubla Khan. The Emperor was drawn to certain inexplicable aspects of Christianity and had implored the legendary Italian merchant traveller Marco Polo, his father Niccolò and his uncle Maffeo, to bring him the sacred oil from the lamps that burnt eternally to illuminate the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem (worshipped by faithful Christians as the hallowed spot of the crucifixion, resurrection and the tomb of Lord Jesus Christ), which was reputed to have magical healing properties.

Startlingly, when William Dalrymple, the erudite Scottish historian, writer and author of “In Xanadu: A Quest”, visited the church, he found an elderly Irish Franciscan artfully filling the lamps in Lord Jesus Christ's tomb with olive oil, and was pleasantly surprised to observe that this had been the prevalent practice since time immemorial. I have in my well-stocked private library the original 1977 Penguin Books publication of “Selected Poems” of Pablo Neruda (born as Ricardo Eliecer Neftalí Reyes Baloalto), the prolific Chilean poet, writer and politician who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1971, and am highly spurred to conclude with the English translation of his enchanting poem “Oda al aceite” or “Ode to Olive Oil.”

(The writer is an internationally reputed senior lawyer practising in the Supreme Court of India, various High Courts and Tribunals in India. Views are personal)

ODE TO OLIVE OIL

Near the murmuring
In the grain fields,
of the waves
Of wind in the oat-stalks
The olive tree
With its silver-covered mass
Severe in its lines
In its twisted
Heart in the earth:
The graceful Olives
Polished
By the hands Which made
The dove
And the oceanic Snail:
Green, Innumerable,
Immaculate Nipples
Of nature And there
In the dry Olive Groves
Where Alone
The blue sky with cicadas
And the hard earth Exist
There The prodigy
The perfect Capsules
Of the olives
Filling With their
constellations,
the foliage Then later,
The bowls, The miracle,
The olive oil.
I love

How to Keep Unshakable Faith in Challenging Times

BY PRASHANT TEWARI

“The trying times bring the best out of you. The rewarding times give the best of the world to you. Life is a combination of both”
— Gurudev

Faith comes into play only at trying times. Strangely, one loses faith when it is most needed! Whenever any difficulty comes, we eternalise it, dramatise it. When you have some problem, you are like, “Oh, it is always like this.” If you get angry several times, you say, “I always get angry.” It is not really the case. If some people have not cooperated with you, you say, “Nobody is cooperating with me.” Suddenly the whole world is bad. It is not so. But the mind always does that. Is it not?

Look into your life. How many wonderful moments you have had. You have had heights of joy and of course, you had to face some problems. And it has made your life more interesting. Because you could overcome all those adventures in life. And you have the capacity to overcome. That is why those challenges are put in front of you.

Always remember one thing:
Nature will never give you a problem which you cannot solve. If a problem comes in front of you, that means you have the capacity to overcome it. You already have answers and that is why the question appears in front of you.

Challenges and uncertainty can move you in the direction of fear or anxiety. Or they also nurture your innovative spirit. Every innovation has come out of uncertainty. The time demanded that you think differently.

Look at the first half of the 20th century, mankind faced two World Wars. After World War II, Japan and Germany were in ruins. People could barely manage two meals. But both these countries bounced back in 50 years.

We have seen big calamities on this planet. But after every one of those disasters, we have come back with full force. Taking a look at these experiences should give you confidence.

Three Types of Faith

To experience growth in life, we require faith in three things — faith in yourself, faith in the world and faith in the Divine. All these faiths are connected; you must have all three for each to be strong. If you start doubting in one, you will begin to doubt everything. Lack of faith in God, the world, or yourself brings fear. Faith makes you full — faithful. Having faith in the world without faith in God does not bring complete peace.

A couple came to me once. They lived just 10 minutes away from the venue, but they said that it took them 5 hours to come and meet me because the moment the man got out of the house and walked a few steps, he felt that the door was not



I TELL YOU, DEEP INSIDE YOU IS A FOUNTAIN OF BLISS, A FOUNTAIN OF JOY. DEEP INSIDE YOUR CENTER CORE IS TRUTH, LIGHT, LOVE, THERE IS NO GUILT THERE, THERE IS NO FEAR THERE. PSYCHOLOGISTS HAVE NEVER LOOKED DEEP ENOUGH — GURUDEV

locked. So, he went back and checked the door. He pulled the door front and back several times to ensure it was locked. Again, he walked some steps and the same doubt came over him and he went back to check if the door was locked. He was paranoid; he didn't trust himself.

In society, you will find many people who do not have faith in themselves, and they walk around without being diagnosed. Lack of self-faith leads to lack of faith in others — you will always feel that everybody is after you, or everybody is angry at you, or everyone is out to get you. Can you survive like that? Impossible.

You must have faith in the world or you can't

move an inch. You deposit money in the bank with faith that it will be returned. If you doubt everything, nothing will happen for you.

We are here only for 60-70 years, and we think we are in control of the whole world. I tell you, this is such an illusion. This Earth has been in existence since millenniums. This Earth has sustained itself for nineteen billion years, and we think we are managing this whole world.

There can't be a bigger illusion than this. There is a force that is taking care of this planet and that will continue to take care of this planet Earth. And there is not just one planet but there are many such planets, and many lives.

We think that we provide food and we are providing everything. But if we go underwater and see — there is a whole world there and they are being provided for. Every creature is being provided something to eat.

I am reminded of a philosophical quote by a 12th-century saint — “Ajar kare na chakri, panchi kare na kam, das maulak keh gaye, sabke data Ram.”

He says, a python doesn't serve any master, nor does a bird go looking for work, but food is being provided for everything by the Lord. So why do you worry!

A python is very lazy and moves very slowly; it just keeps lying around all the time. However, birds are very busy creatures, flying around all the time. Yet both are equally provided for; the divine is providing for everybody.

However, looking at several recent incidents where so many innocent lives were lost, one wonders if God exists. If He does, why would He do such things? It is on such occasions that faith becomes

fragile, and one tends to lose it. However, it is also in these situations that faith is most needed.

So, what to do when one is losing faith? For a person to say, “I don't believe in anything,” means he must believe in himself, so he believes in himself about whom he does not even know! To know yourself, you must go within, meditate.

The deeper you go, the more you realise that a field of all possibilities lies in that void. You will accept that there are many secrets you don't know. Your experience will revive your faith in the Divine.

Faith is something that we all have inside us. When you face different situations in life, the peace and stability you have depends upon the amount of faith you have.

Faith leads to prayer, and prayer is a vital tool to improve your life. When you feel the obstacle is too much to handle, deep prayer can work miracles. Prayer is the cry of the soul. It happens when you feel utterly helpless or when you feel totally grateful.....

It sustains life and leads one through difficult times. Contrary to popular thinking, faith does not contradict logic. It brings out hidden courage and potential in more ways than one. Realising this is sufficient to move ahead in life.

You forget the strength within you — the power of prayer and power of your “Sankalpa” (positive intention). Here, practices such as “pranayama”, yoga, meditation and Sudarshan Kriya will help a lot.

Faith leads to prayer, and prayer is a vital tool to improve your life. When you feel the obstacle is too much to handle, deep prayer can work miracles. Prayer is the cry of the soul. It happens when you feel utterly helpless or when you feel totally grateful. Both are authentic and always get answered.

The act of praying itself has the power to bring about transformation. Realise that you are not alone in these difficult times. There is always an unseen hand working for you.

Don't underestimate the power of prayer. Prayer makes you strong and powerful. Make the decision today, “Whatever happens, I will remain grounded. I will remain peaceful, and have faith that God's protection is here with me. Whatever happens, God will always hold my hand.”

Your Week Ahead

(By Madhu Kotiya, a tarot card reader, spiritual healer and Founder of MShezaim Institute of Tarot and Divination)

ARIES

March 21-April 19

This week brings mental clarity, encouraging you to take decisive action. Stay composed during early emotional challenges. A delay in finances may turn into an unexpected advantage, so avoid large expenses. Midweek, support a loved one while maintaining your own boundaries. Realign with your personal goals.

Number: 4, Colour: Crimson, Day: Tuesday

TAURUS

April 20-May 20

This week, pause to evaluate if your external circumstances reflect your inner beliefs. A financial choice may arise—take your time to consider it deeply. Someone might trigger past emotions, but remain focused on your personal growth. Midweek invites honest expression, leading to realignment. The weekend brings emotional clarity.

Number: 20, Colour: Forest Green, Day: Friday

GEMINI

May 21-June 20

This week, your ability to adapt will serve you well, but avoid confusing activity with real progress. Reassess agreements early on. Emotions might feel all over the place—stay grounded. Midweek brings an insightful conversation that leads to a new path. By the weekend, clarity will emerge, empowering you to move forward confidently.

Number: 11, Colour: Lemon Yellow, Day: Thursday

CANCER

June 21-July 22

This week, emotions play a significant role in your growth. Someone may open up to you early on—offer support without taking on their challenges. A midweek revelation brings closure, and a financial review is needed—avoid emotional spending. By the weekend, you'll feel more at ease, and connections deepen when you embrace your trueself.

Number: 9, Colour: Ivory, Day: Monday

LEO

July 23-Aug 22

This week invites you to step into your power and speak your truth with confidence. Early on, you may be called to take charge in both work and personal matters—do so with wisdom, not pride. A heartfelt conversation midweek will deepen your connections. By the weekend, your goals align, guiding you forward with clarity.

Number: 1, Colour: Burnt Orange, Day: Thursday

VIRGO

Aug 23-Sep 22

This week urges you to set clear boundaries. You've been giving a lot to others, but now it's time to focus on yourself. Pay attention to any physical or emotional signals early on, and honor them. At work, step back and trust the flow. Midweek, subtle changes in routine will bring insights. Embrace rest for true healing.

Number: 17, Colour: Olive Green, Day: Saturday

LIBRA

Sep 23-Oct 22

This week encourages you to regain balance, especially emotionally. Avoid getting caught in others' turmoil if they won't seek their own stability. A decision related to finances or partnerships may surface—rely on logic over emotion. A burst of creativity brings clarity. Embrace peace — it's about mindful pauses.

Number: 6, Colour: Rose Gold, Day: Sunday

SCORPIO

Oct 23-Nov 21

This week, suppressed emotions come to the forefront, encouraging you to confront them for healing and release. A meaningful conversation early on shifts your perspective. In relationships, embrace honesty, even if it feels tough—it will bring change. Financially, pause and reflect on your spending.

Number: 15, Colour: Burgundy, Day: Thursday

Exploring the the paradox of human insignificance through poetry

L-R: Home Secretary Govind Mohan, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Author Ashutosh Agnihotri at the book launch event. Mr Ashutosh Agnihotri is an IAS officer of 1999 batch and is currently Chairman and Managing Director of Food Corporation of India

BY RAJIV KAPOOR

Ashutosh Agnihotri's 'Main Boond Swayam, Khud Sagar Hoon' is not merely a collection of poems; it is a luminous voyage into the author's inner and outer worlds, delivered with rare honesty and lyrical grace.

A senior civil servant with decades of administrative experience, Agnihotri surprises with his deeply introspective and emotionally resonant verse, proving once again that poetry is not confined to ivory towers; it thrives wherever the soul seeks expression. The title itself — “I am a drop, and yet the ocean” — captures the spirit of this collection. It speaks to the universality of individual experience, the paradox of human insignificance against the vast cosmos, and yet, the profound potential that each person holds within. Agnihotri's poems traverse personal memories, relationships, identity, nationhood, faith, and self-reflection, all rooted firmly in his Indian ethos.

What stands out most in this work is its vulnerability. In his own words, the poet has “tried to wipe away as much dust from this mirror” as he can, so he may be seen clearly by the reader, and perhaps more importantly, by himself. This confession transforms the

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reading experience into a shared journey. The poems are not guarded or abstract; they are direct, accessible, and yet deeply philosophical, a balance few poets manage to achieve.

Agnihotri's verse is free-flowing but never frivolous. Whether he writes about divine presence, human contradictions, or the relentless passage of time, there is always an undercurrent of hope and humility. He writes not to impress, but to express and in doing so, invites the reader to pause, reflect and reconnect with their humanity.

The thematic core of the book also subtly highlights the richness of Indian languages and literary traditions, lending quiet strength to the cultural undercurrent

of the work. While the book launch saw political statements on language and national identity, the poetry itself remains above polemic. It speaks in the gentle, persuasive voice of introspection rather than assertion. *Main Boond Swayam, Khud Sagar Hoon* is a mirror and a map, a deeply personal narrative that becomes, ultimately, a collective one. In a world too noisy with declarations, Ashutosh Agnihotri's voice comes as a meditative whisper. It is noteworthy to mention that in a spiritual nation, we need a balance of sensitivity, compassion and empathy for the people in governance to run the country. Of course, reading a poet's work from a bureaucrat is a refreshing experience for us with a sense of assurance that our government carries some people with a poetic heart to serve the nation. Author Agnihotri has summarised the book and his experience:

“These poems contain me, my background, my values, my country, my religion, my God, my relationships, and my philosophy. In many ways, this collection is a narrative of myself, a reflection of my emotional world, and both my inner and outer universe. I have tried to wipe away as much dust from this mirror as I can because I want to be seen not just by you, but even more so by myself. This is a journey. And in this journey, you are with me, walking together, getting tired, pausing, and then moving ahead again. My only hope is that this journey continues uninterrupted, unbroken, and that along the way, sometimes deliberately, effortlessly, the beauty of life and its fragrance continues to thrill me, to embrace me.”

ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: Main Boond Swayam, Khud Sagar Hoon
Author: Ashutosh Agnihotri
Publisher: Radhakrishna Prakashan
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