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QUOTE OF THE DAY

The Pioneer

I express deep anguish over the tragic Air India plane crash that occurred in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. I called on the Union government to deploy all necessary resources to assist the affected families and ensure swift medical attention for the injured. I also convey my heartfelt concern to those awaiting news about their loved ones

-A. Revanth Reddy, Chief Minister

Scene of the accident

From take off to crash

AI plane explodes with 242 on board

Deadly crash soon after take off near Ahmedabad Airport

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

An Ahmedabad-London Air India plane carrying 242 passengers and crew crashed into a medical college complex here minutes after takeoff on Thursday, possibly killing all on board in one of the country's worst air tragedies.

There was no official count of those killed even hours after the Boeing 787 Dreamliner (AI171) crashed in the city civil hospital and BJ Medical College near the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport and burst into a ball of fire.

Rescue teams searching for survivers at the spot

58,000 liters of fuel was onboard AI Boeing 787

As rescuers struggled to find survivors in the charred wreckage and pull out the injured, many of them with grievous burns, officials tried to assess the human magnitude of the disaster. Unofficial reports said chances of survival of those on board were remote and up to 25 people in the medical complex could also have died.

According to Air India, of the 230 passengers, 169 were Indians, 53 British, seven Portuguese and one Canadian. The other 12 were two pilots and 10 crew members.

The pilot of the twin-engine wide bodied aircraft issued a 'Mayday' distress call, denoting a full emergency, soon after takeoff at 1.39 pm, the Air Traffic Control at Ahmedabad said.

The search was also on for the aircraft's black box -- the flight data recorder and cockpit voice recorder -- for clues to understand what happened in the last crucial moments.

Continued on >> P2

Ex-Gujarat CM Rupani dies

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Former Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani died on Thursday after an Air India aircraft carrying him and 241 others crashed near Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport airport in Ahmedabad in the afternoon, Union minister C R Patil said.

Rupani, 68, was the chief minister from 2016 till 2021, after winning the Gujarat Legislative Assembly elections from Rajkot West seat. The London-bound flight AI 171, which Rupani took on Monday, was carrying 169 Indians, 53 British nationals, seven Portuguese, and one Canadian national, apart from two pilots and 10 cabin crew members.

Man on seat 11A survives

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

A passenger on board the London-bound Air India flight that crashed near the Ahmedabad airport on Thursday afternoon survived the horrific incident, a doctor at the city civil hospital said.

Vishwaskumar Ramesh was in `A11' seat of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner which was carrying 242 passengers and crew. He was travelling to London with his brother. Dr Shriq M who works in the trauma ward of the Ahmedabad civil hospital told PTI that Ramesh has been admitted to the hospital. The aircraft crashed in a residential area here minutes after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport.

No chance to save anyone: Shah

Says temperature due to burning fuel was so high

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Union minister Amit Shah said on Thursday that the temperature in the Air India plane which crashed in Ahmedabad was so high due to burning fuel that there was no chance to save anyone. "There was 1.25 lakh litre of fuel inside the plane and it caught heat so it was impossible to save anyone," Shah told reporters.

The entire nation is in deep shock following the tragedy, he said.

Shah also expressed condolences to relatives of those killed in the accident.

"The number of those killed will be officially released by the authorities after DNA test and identification of the victims," Shah said.

"The good news is that one person survived the crash and I am coming here after meeting him," he said.

"The process of collecting DNA samples from bodies of those killed in the plane crash is over. Forensic Science Laboratory and National Forensic Sciences University in Gujarat will conduct DNA tests of the victims," he said. The London-bound Air India plane carrying 242 passengers and crew crashed in a residential area in Ahmedabad minutes after taking off from the city airport on Thursday afternoon.

'E- gi- e failure, bird-hit could be amo- g reaso- s'

PNS ■ AHMEDABAD

Failure of both engines or a bird hit soon after take-off could be among the probable causes that led to the fatal crash of a London-bound Air India aircraft with 242 people onboard, according to experts.

Three senior wide-body pilots, who are also instructors, said that looking at the videos of the crash available publicly, it seems that the engines could not gain the required thrust needed for the take-off, resulting in a fatal crash into the residential area seconds after it took off.

The specific reasons for the crash of the Boeing 787-8 aircraft flying from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick will be known only after the completion of the detailed probe by the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB). The experts mentioned the possible causes based on the available visuals of the aircraft as it went down.

One of the commanders said it does not seem to be the case of one engine failure because in such a scenario, the aircraft would have been swinging but here, the aircraft was steady.

"So, there is the possibility of both the engines failing... there could have been a loss of thrust in both engines. But these are only possibilities," a commander said, adding that from the images, it appears that either the flaps were up or landing gear was down at the time of take off.

The second commander mentioned that the way, the aircraft went down, indicated that there was a lack of thrust in both the engines.

"This could happen if both engines had flameout due to a bird hit," he said.

The third commander said the aircraft's both engines might have lost power. One engine might have failed and possibly due to the landing gear being not retracted after take-off, the second engine might not have had adequate power.

While there are suggestions that the aircraft's weight could have been higher than the permissible limit, the commander said if that was the case, then the take-off itself would not have been possible.

Failure of both engines or a bird hit soon after take-off could be among the probable causes that led to the fatal crash of a London-bound Air India aircraft with 242 people onboard, according to experts

Tata Group to give Rs 1 cr to families of each person

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Group will provide Rs 1 crore to the family of each person who died in the Air India plane crash in Ahmedabad on Thursday. The aircraft, carrying 242 people, from Ahmedabad to London Gatwick crashed immediately after takeoff on Thursday afternoon.

"We are deeply anguished by the tragic event involving Air India Flight 171.

Continued on >> P2

5 medical students killed as plane rams into hostel

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJ Medical college after devastation

Nearly 40 doctors have been wounded and at least one is in a critical situation

Five medical students died and many suffered injuries after Air India flight crashed into the hostel of the BJ Medical College in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. This includes, four undergraduate students and a postgraduate resident. An Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner with 242 people on board -- 230 passengers, 10 crew members and 2 pilots -- crashed immediately after take-off from Ahmedabad airport.

The flight, headed to London, departed at 13:38 pm from the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. The failure to achieve lift happened at a very low altitude of 825 feet.

Nearly 40 doctors have been wounded and at least one is in a critical situation. Speaking to NDTV, Dr Shyam Govind, an eye witness from the BJ Medical College said, "I and my junior doctor have been injured. 30-40 undergraduate doctors also suffered injuries and one to two students are serious."

Ramila, the mother of one of the medical students who was present at the hostel at the time of the crash, said her son was on a lunch break. He jumped from the second floor of the building to save himself. "My son had gone to the hostel during lunch break, and the plane crashed there. My son is safe, and I have spoken to him. He jumped from the second floor, so he suffered some injuries," Ramila, who reached the civil hospital in Ahmedabad, Gujarat said.

PIONEER IN SHORT

Dists told to make Hyd-style flood plans

With the India Meteorological Department predicting above-normal rainfall in Telangana this monsoon, Revenue and Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy directed all district collectors, especially those in the Godavari and Krishna basin areas, to be on high alert ...

FULL REPORT ON P2

'We are exploring path to reset ties'

Describing Indian and Canada as "vibrant democracies", the external affairs ministry on Thursday said New Delhi believes the forthcoming meeting between the prime ministers of the two countries on the sidelines of the G7 Summit will offer an important opportunity to exchange ...

FULL REPORT ON P5

China hints at holding talks with India

China on Thursday hinted at holding talks with India over its restrictions on export of rare earth materials, saying it is willing to enhance dialogue and cooperation with relevant countries to keep industrial supply chains stable ...

FULL REPORT ON P8

Make England tour memorable: Gambhir

India head coach Gautam Gambhir has called on his team to move out of its "comfort zone" and make the upcoming Test series against England a "memorable" one, especially in the absence of retired stars Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and R Ashwin. India will search for their ...

FULL REPORT ON P12

For first time, Boeing 787 plane suffers fatal accident

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Boeing's 787 Dreamliners took to the skies 14 years ago and the Ahmedabad plane crash on Thursday afternoon is the first incident of the best-selling wide-body aircraft suffering a fatal accident.

The Boeing 787-8 aircraft -- VT-ANB -- was 11.5 years old and had flown for more than 41,000 hours, according to aviation analytics firm Cirium.

And the Boeing 787-8 that crashed on Thursday was among the 27 such legacy planes operated by Air India, which is also set to start the retrofit of these aircraft in the coming months.

Air India and IndiGo are the two Indian airlines operating the B787 planes.

Out of the 34 B787 in Air India's fleet, 27 B787-8 are legacy aircraft. The first of the legacy B787-8 is slated to go for retrofit in July. The remaining seven B 787-9 joined the Air India fleet after the merger of Vistara with it last year.

Globally, the Ahmedabad crash is the first time that hull loss has happened for a Boeing 787 (B787) aircraft, according to an official.

Cirium said the aircraft operated its first flight on December 14, 2013.

The plane was delivered to Air India on January 28, 2014, and it was 11.5 years old.

"The aircraft had 18 business class seats and 238 economy class seats.

Nation stunned, saddened

Prez Murmu, Modi lead nation in expressing shock and grief

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders of different political parties expressed shock and grief over the crash of an Air India plane carrying 242 people in Ahmedabad.

"The tragedy in Ahmedabad has stunned and saddened us. It is heartbreaking beyond words," Modi said.

"In this sad hour, my thoughts are with everyone affected by it. Have been in touch with Ministers and authorities who are working to assist those affected," he said in a post on X.

The Ahmedabad-London Air India plane carrying 242 passengers and crew crashed into a medical college complex in Ahmedabad minutes after takeoff on Thursday, killing almost everyone.

Continued on >> P2

Revanth, KCR call for swift relief measures

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy expressed deep anguish over the tragic Air India plane crash that occurred in Ahmedabad on Wednesday. With initial reports suggesting over 200 passengers and crew members on board at the time of the accident, the Chief Minister offered prayers for everyone's safety and urged the Centre to ensure that efficient and immediate rescue and relief operations are carried out.

Revanth Reddy called on the Union government to deploy all necessary resources to assist the affected families and ensure swift medical attention for the injured.

Continued on >> P2

Major Rejig: 33 IAS officers transferred

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The Telangana government has issued a major administrative reshuffle, transferring several IAS officers across departments to enhance governance efficiency. As per G.O.Rt.No.779 dated June 12, 2025, the 33IAS officers have been reassigned

Chekka Priyanka, IAS (2018) has been transferred and posted as Special Commissioner, I&PR and EO Special Secretary, GA(I&PR) Department, relieving S. Harish, IAS (2015).

Shashank Goel, IAS (1990) has been appointed as Special Chief Secretary to Government and Resident Commissioner, Telangana Bhavan, New Delhi, relieving Gaurav Uppal, IAS (2005).

Continued on >> P2

The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | JUNE 13 2025

The journey of communicative language teaching

In a country where English is often viewed as the passport to professional and academic advancement, the State of Andhra Pradesh has carved a remarkable path in transforming how English is taught and learned. A new sound fills English classrooms in Andhra Pradesh. It is not the monotone of grammar rules or passive note-taking. It is conversation. It is collaboration. It is confidence.

At the heart of this transformation is the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach—a learner-centric pedagogy that emphasises real-life communication, interaction, and fluency over rote memorisation.

From quiet classrooms and chalkboard lectures to animated group discussions and student-led presentations, the journey of English language teaching in Andhra Pradesh has been nothing short of revolutionary. Across hundreds of government degree and polytechnic colleges in Andhra Pradesh, English classes are no longer quiet corners of the timetable. They are lively spaces where students speak, listen, think, and share — in English.

It equips learners with communicative competence—helping them speak, listen, read, and write in authentic situations. Rather than drilling grammar and translating sentences, students engage in activities like role plays, debates, storytelling, and peer interviews—making language both purposeful and engaging.

A simple, powerful CLT tool

Among the many strategies embraced under CLT, Think-Pair-Share (TPS) stands out for its simplicity and impact. Students are first given time to think about a question, then discuss it with a partner, and finally share their thoughts with the class. This method encourages individual reflection, collaborative learning, and confident public speaking—particularly effective in classrooms with students from rural or Telugu-medium backgrounds.

Thanks to targeted retraining, TPS has become a routine classroom practice in many government colleges and polytechnics in Andhra Pradesh, with encouraging results in student participation and spoken fluency.

Seeding Systemic Change

The turning point in this educational transformation came in 2007–08, with the launch of the Andhra Pradesh English Lecturers Retraining Programme, also known as the AP-ELF Programme. Spearheaded by the Department of Collegiate Education in collaboration with the U.S. State Department's English Language Fellow (ELF) Program, the initiative trained English lecturers from degree colleges across all districts of the State. This retraining followed a cascading model:

- One lecturer per district was selected and trained at a central venue.
- These lecturers then trained 20 peers in zonal workshops.
- Follow-up training was conducted in the home zones, reinforcing concepts and practices.
- Lecturers eventually graduated into roles as Master Trainers, conducting further workshops and mentoring.

Practical elements were at the core of the training—demonstration lessons, peer feedback, student-centered planning, and an emphasis on low-resource techniques like TPS and group tasks. The programme also produced custom handbooks and activity kits to help lecturers integrate CLT practices in large, diverse classrooms.

After the success in degree colleges, the Department extended

CLT training to the technical education sector. Polytechnic lecturers received similar retraining. Consequently, the faculty thus trained developed workbooks following CLT method for diploma students. These workbooks focused on 21st century skills such as creativity, critical thinking and problem solving in addition to communication skills, workplace communication, and task-based learning, preparing students for job interviews, presentations, and collaborative tasks—critical components of employability.

At the heart of Andhra Pradesh's transformation in English language education stands Dr K Lakshminarayana, IAS (Retd.), the then Commissioner of Collegiate and Technical Education. Widely regarded as the architect of the CLT movement in the State, his leadership gave direction, scale, and sustainability to what began as a bold experiment in teacher training. Dr Lakshminarayana believed that true student success depends not only on academic degrees but on the ability to communicate effectively in real-world contexts. With this conviction, he reimagined the role of English lecturers—not as grammar enforcers, but as facilitators and mentors of communication. He emphasized that students should not remain passive recipients of language, but become active, confident users of English. Under his stewardship, Andhra Pradesh launched the pioneering English Lecturers Retraining Programme, which laid the foundation for CLT integration in higher and technical education. His strategic initiatives—ranging from curriculum innovation, partnerships with international ELT bodies, use of educational media like MANA TV, and creation of a state-wide cadre of Master Trainers—brought a systemic and scalable shift to classroom practices.

The results were tangible. Student engagement in English classrooms improved dramatically, and campus placement rates soared from a modest 5–6% to nearly 30% in several government colleges and polytechnics. These gains directly reflected the practical, communicative focus brought in through CLT.

In 2008, his trailblazing efforts received global recognition when he was awarded the TESOL Global Advocacy Leadership Award at the TESOL International Convention in New York. This rare honour not only celebrated his contribution but also placed Andhra Pradesh on the international map of English language education reform. Dr Lakshminarayana's legacy endures in the classrooms he transformed, the teachers he empowered, and the students who today speak with confidence—because he believed English should be taught not as a subject, but as a lifelong skill for opportunity and inclusion.

The AP-ELF initiative and its extensions have left a lasting mark on Andhra Pradesh's educational ecosystem:

- English is no longer seen as an elite subject but as a practical skill for all students.
- Lecturers have evolved from textbook-based instruction to interactive, student-driven classrooms.
- Thousands of students, especially in rural institutions, now speak English with greater ease and confidence.

The success of Andhra Pradesh serves as a model for other states aiming to overhaul English teaching. It demonstrates that with the right training, tools, and vision, meaningful educational reform is not only possible—it is sustainable.

The journey of Communicative Language Teaching in Andhra Pradesh is a testament to visionary leadership, empowered educators, and student-centered innovation. By integrating global best practices with local needs, the state has laid a strong foundation for inclusive, effective, and future-ready English education. Andhra Pradesh's success in implementing Communicative Language Teaching proves one thing clearly: with the right leadership, teacher training, and belief in students' potential, language education can change lives. As India continues to prepare its youth for a globalized world, Andhra Pradesh stands tall—a pioneer showing the way forward, one communicative classroom at a time.

(Dr T Sreenivasa Reddy, Lecturer in English tseena@gmail.com)

Dists told to make Hyd-style flood plans

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

With the India Meteorological Department predicting above-normal rainfall in Telangana this monsoon, Revenue and Housing Minister Ponguleti Srinivasa Reddy directed all district collectors, especially those in the Godavari and Krishna basin areas, to be on high alert and initiate pre-emptive flood mitigation measures. "We must respond before the damage occurs—not after," the minister told officials during a high-level review meeting held at the Secretariat on Thursday.

Citing last year's experience of flash floods causing extensive damage in riverine districts, Ponguleti emphasized that Hyderabad's disaster preparedness model should now be replicated in districts. To strengthen coordination and institutional response, a high-powered committee has been constituted with the HYDRAA Commissioner, Fire Services DGP, Disaster Management Commissioner, Command Control Centre Director, and Commissioners from Irrigation, Roads & Buildings, and Health departments. The committee is expected to submit its action plan within a week.

Ponguleti underlined the need for a complete shift from outdated methods. "Revenue and disaster management departments must now adopt advanced technologies and real-time coordination," he said. Every district must formulate its flood response plan by June 30, detailing evacuation routes, relief camp sites, emergency contact numbers, and safety protocols. The Telangana Integrated Command and Control Centre in Hyderabad will extend user IDs for live coordination and alerts.

The minister instructed collectors to immediately begin surveying vulnerable areas along the Godavari and Krishna rivers and plan for permanent rehabilitation of high-risk settlements. "All families in flood-prone zones should be relocated and provided Indiramma housing for long-term safety," he said.

Control rooms must be activated in high-risk zones, he said, with rescue teams pre-identified and trained in evacuation drills. Social awareness campaigns will be rolled out with the help of local volunteers, SDRF, NDRF, and the fire services to prepare communities for emergencies.

He called for immediate inspection and repair of flood banks, canals, and stormwater drains. Emergency kits with boats, life jackets, dry ration packets, medical supplies, and water purification tablets should be pre-positioned in vulnerable mandals. Mobile medical units must be ready with adequate personnel and medicine stock.

Public engagement will also be a key strategy, he added. "Hold direct community meetings and use public address systems to spread awareness on flood safety. The public must be made part of our disaster response."

Harish slams Cong for ignoring Yadav representation in Cabinet

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Former minister and Siddipet MLA Harish Rao came down heavily on the Congress government for neglecting the Yadav community, stating that despite promises, the current regime has failed to deliver meaningful representation or development initiatives for backward communities.

Addressing a felicitation ceremony for meritorious Yadav students at the Sri Krishna Yadav Function Hall in Siddipet, Harish said that it was disappointing that the Congress government did not induct even a single member from the Yadav community into the cabinet. In contrast, he recalled, under KCR's leadership, Yadavs were given due recognition, including the construction of self-respect buildings at Kokapet in Hyderabad.

Harish ridiculed Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for taking back DDs issued to the Yadav community and questioned the sincerity of the government's commitment to backward classes. "You couldn't even distribute sheep units to Yadavs, but you managed to cancel allocations already made," he said, accusing the Congress of tokenism.

The former minister also raised concerns about governance gaps, pointing out that despite schools reopening, the education department still does not have a minister. He said veterinary hospitals lacked basic medicines and alleged that key welfare schemes had been quietly shelved. "They scrapped the 'Mana Ooru Mana Badi' programme, and not a single classroom has been built under the Congress rule so far," he said.

Harish expressed concern that PG students had been left in the lurch due to non-clearance of reimbursement dues, forcing many to halt their education. "This government was voted to power on hope and big promises, but it has failed to honour its word. People trusted Revanth's guarantees, but none have been fulfilled even after 600 days," he remarked.

Malsur appointed as CM's CPRO

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

G Malsur has been appointed as the Chief Public Relations Officer to the Chief Minister of Telangana. His appointment is on a contract basis, with the detailed terms and conditions to be issued separately. The decision is part of a broader administrative reshuffle notified by the General Administration (SPL-A) Department under G.O.Rt.No.780 on Thursday.

Malsur was incharge industrial commissioner, TGMDC MD and retired from government service on May31.

Alongside this key appointment, the government has also issued fresh orders for transfers and FAC (Full Additional Charge) arrangements in the interest of administrative efficiency.

J Shankaraiah, presently serving as Additional Director in the Office of the Commissioner and Director of Municipal Administration (CDMA), has been transferred and posted as Managing Director of Telangana Oil Federation (TG OILFED). This posting relieves IAS officer Sk Yasmeen Basha, who was holding the MD position as FAC.

In another change, Prof. P Srikanth Babu has been placed in FAC of the post of Director, AYUSH, thus relieving K. Hymavathi, from the additional charge she was holding in the department responsible for traditional and alternative medicine systems.

Additionally, Pavan Kumar from the Telangana General Industries Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIC) has been given the FAC of Executive Director, TGIIC, in place of Nikhil Chakravarthy, who has been transferred.

These appointments were approved by Chief Secretary K Ramakrishna Rao in the name of the Governor and are aimed at streamlining administration across key sectors.

Cong only party that empowers Minorities: TPCC Muslim leaders

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Senior Muslim leaders of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee on Thursday declared that only the Congress party has both the political will and proven track record to ensure justice and lasting empowerment for minority communities in the State.

At a media interaction held at Gandhi Bhavan, the newly appointed TPCC Vice Presidents and General Secretaries said the Congress government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has delivered a clear shift from token gestures to substantive welfare and representation for minorities. The meet was facilitated by TPCC official spokesperson Syed Nizamuddin and featured leaders including Nawab Mujahed Alam Khan, Afser Yousuf Zai, Mohammed Abdul Faheem, Mohammed Asaduddin, Rahmath Hussain, and Mohammed Sabir Ali.

"Congress is the only party that doesn't just speak of minority welfare during elections but actually implements it through policy, funding, and inclusion," Nizamuddin said. He highlighted the grassroots experience of the new TPCC Muslim office bearers and said their elevation is a testament to the party's commitment to inclusive leadership. He also pointed to the Rs. 840 crore earmarked for minority youth self-employment through the Rajiv Yuva Vikasam scheme as a milestone step.

AI plane explodes with ...

Continued from >> P1

The 11-year-old aircraft could be seen from miles away, losing altitude rapidly and combusting in a fiery blaze that sent plumes of thick black smoke spiralling up in the air. The aircraft climbed just about 600-800 feet before plummeting to the ground almost immediately, aviation sources said. Former Gujarat chief minister and BJP leader Vijay Rupani was among the passengers on the doomed flight to London's Gatwick airport.

"The aircraft departed from Ahmedabad at 1339 IST (0809 UTC) from Runway 23. It gave a MAYDAY Call to ATC, but thereafter no response was given by the aircraft to the calls made by ATC," according to a statement from the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA). Visuals from the wreckage area showed bodies being pulled out and the injured, many with burns, wheeled into the city civil hospital close by.

Eyewitnesses in Ahmedabad said the blaze was so intense that it led to several multi-storey buildings being burnt, trees singed and cars damaged. One image showed the snout of the plane crashing through the top floor of a building that appeared to be a dining area of the hostel of nurses and doctors. Elsewhere too, there were scenes of complete devastation with mangled metal of the wreckage, snarls of tangled wire and smoke rising from burning embers.

This is the first crash involving the Boeing Dreamliner, feted for its advanced features. It is also India's second biggest air disaster since 2020 when an Air India Express flight skidded off a wet runway while landing at Kozhikode in Kerala and split into two. Of the 190 people on board, 21, including two pilots, lost their lives. Airport operations in Ahmedabad were temporarily suspended and resumed towards the evening. The shock of the disaster echoed through political corridors in India and abroad with heads of states and others offering their condolences.

"The tragedy in Ahmedabad has stunned and saddened us. It is heartbreaking beyond words," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on X. "In this sad hour, my thoughts are with everyone affected by it. Have been in touch with Ministers and authorities who are working to assist those affected," he added.

President Droupadi Murmu said her thoughts and prayers are with the affected people. "The nation stands with them in this hour of indescribable grief," she said.

TODAY

ALMANAC

Month & Paksham:	Krishna Paksha
Tithi:	
Dwitiya:	Jun 12 02:28 PM to Jun 13 03:19 PM
Tritiya:	Jun 13 03:19 PM to Jun 14 03:47 PM
Nakshatram:	
Purva Ashadha:	Jun 12 09:57 PM to Jun 13 11:20 PM
Uttara Ashadha:	Jun 13 11:20 PM to Jun 15 12:21 AM
Rahukalam:	10:38 AM to 12:16 PM
Yamagandam:	3:31 PM to 5:09 PM
Varjyam:	07:41 AM to 09:21 AM
Gulika:	7:23 AM to 9:00 AM
Amritakalam:	06:16 PM to 07:57 PM
Abhijit Muhurtham:	11:50 AM to 12:42 PM

HYDERABAD WEATHER

Forecast: Heavy Thunderstorm
Temp: 31°c
Humidity: 75%
Sunrise: 5:41 AM
Sunset: 6:51 PM

Updated: June 12, 2025 5:00 PM

Tata Group to ...

Continued from >> P1

"No words can adequately express the grief we feel at this moment. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families who have lost their loved ones, and with those who have been injured," Tata Group and Air India Chairman N Chandrasekaran said.

Tata Group will provide Rs 1 crore to the families of each person who has lost their life in this tragedy, he added. In the message posted by Tata Group on X, he also said the group will cover the medical expenses of those injured and ensure that they receive all necessary care and support. "Additionally, we will provide support in the building up of the BJ Medical's hostel. "We remain steadfast in standing with the affected families and communities during this unimaginable time," he said.

Major Rejig: 33 IAS ...

Continued from >> P1

Navin Mittal, IAS (1996) has been transferred from the Revenue Department to serve as Principal Secretary to Government, Energy Department, relieving Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS (1998) from FAC of the post.

N. Sridhar, IAS (1997) has been posted as Principal Secretary to Government, PR & RD, RWS & RSAD Department, relieving Lokesh Kumar D.S., IAS (2003) from FAC of the post. He will continue to hold FAC of Principal Secretary to Government (Mines & Geology), I&C Department. Jyoti Buddha Prakash, IAS (2002) has been transferred to serve as Secretary to Government, SCD Department, replacing N. Sridhar, IAS (1997). He has also been placed in FAC of Secretary to Government, Planning Department and EO DG, Telangana Remote Sensing Applications Centre (TGRAC), relieving Sandeep Kumar Sultania, IAS (1998) from FAC of the post.

Lokesh Kumar D.S., IAS (2003) has been placed in FAC of Secretary to Government, Revenue Department, replacing Navin Mittal, IAS (1996). He has also been placed in FAC of Chief Commissioner of Land Administration (CCLA), relieving Navin Mittal, IAS (1996) from FAC of the post. Gaurav Uppal, IAS (2005) has been posted as Secretary to Government, Coordination (GoI Projects & CSS) in Telangana Bhavan, New Delhi.

B. Bharathi Lakpathi Naik, IAS (2006) has been transferred and posted as Secretary, TG Information Commission. Harichandana Dasari, IAS (2010) has been appointed as Collector & District Magistrate, Hyderabad, replacing Anudeep Durishetty, IAS (2018).

Nation stunned ...

Continued from >> P1

Former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani was among the dead.

President Murmu termed the crash a heart-rending disaster, saying the nation stands with the affected people in this hour of indescribable grief.

Dhankhar said the crash has left the nation dealing with a devastating human tragedy, as he mourned the death of people.

In this moment of grief, the nation stands united in solidarity with them, he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah reached Ahmedabad to take stock of the situation.

"Pained beyond words by the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad. Disaster response forces have been quickly rushed to the crash site. Spoke with the Gujarat Chief Minister Shri Bhupendra Patel, Home Minister Shri Harsh Sanghavi, and Commissioner of Police Ahmedabad to assess the situation," Shah said in a post on X before embarking from Delhi.

BJP president and Union minister J P Nadda said the news of many people being killed in the plane crash is extremely sad.

He said he spoke to Gujarat BJP president and Union minister C R Paatil and the state Health Minister Rushikesh Patel and took information about health facilities and relief work.

"I appeal to all BJP workers to engage in relief and rescue operations and provide all possible help to the affected families," Nadda said.

Expressing shock and grief, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said it is heart-wrenching to see the horrific visuals of the crash.

He also expressed condolences to families of those who died in the crash and urged party workers to provide all support to the victims and their loved ones.

Congress Parliamentary Party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, in a statement, said, "I am deeply shocked and saddened by the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad. My thoughts are with the families of the passengers and the crew. The visuals are most heart-wrenching."

"The entire country is overtaken by grief and is praying," she added.

Former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi said the crash is heartbreaking.

Revanth, KCR call ...

Continued from >> P1

He also conveyed his heartfelt concern to those awaiting news about their loved ones.

BRS President and former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao also issued a condolence statement, expressing profound shock over the crash. He said it was heartbreaking that among the victims were not only passengers but also residents and medical students on the ground, as the aircraft reportedly crashed into a residential area.

KCR appealed to both the Central and Gujarat governments to announce adequate ex gratia for the bereaved families and provide quality medical treatment to those injured in the crash. Offering his deep sympathies to the grieving families, he prayed for peace to the departed souls and strength to their loved ones during this tragedy.

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HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | JUNE 13 2025 03

Govt schools must regain past glory, says Minister Ponnam

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Marking the reopening of schools after the summer vacation, Minister for BC Welfare and Housing Ponnam Prabhakar visited the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) at Mittapalli in Siddipet Urban mandal and interacted with students and teachers on Thursday.

Sharing breakfast with the students, the Minister encouraged them to aim high and acquire the knowledge needed to succeed in a competitive world. He said, "The government is committed to strengthening public education, and every school is being provided with basic infrastructure, free textbooks, uniforms, and nutritious meals."

Ponnam inspected classrooms, spoke to students about their learning experience and enquired about their extracurricular activities. He also reviewed the quality of mid-day meals and collected feedback on infrastructural needs from staff and students alike.

"The government has increased the cosmetic charges under the DIET scheme and is investing in improving not just academics, but also sports and allied areas," he said. He added that new teacher recruitments, transfers, and promotions were underway to ensure smoother functioning of schools.

Minister Ponnam Prabhakar interacting with students of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya at Mittapalli in Siddipet Urban mandal on Thursday

He emphasised the importance of developing communication skills, drafting abilities, and critical thinking among students. "Beyond textbooks, students must also be equipped to face challenges with presence of mind," he said.

Addressing the gathering, Ponnam recalled the efforts between 2009 and 2014 to establish Kasturba schools and one model school per mandal to transform rural education.

"Today, nearly 25,000 schools have reopened across Telangana. This is a proud moment for all of us who studied in government schools and now serve in public life," he said.

He appealed to teachers to honour the trust that parents place in them.

"The government will provide all the infrastructure, but education is your responsibility," he said.

He called on educators to embody the values of Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava and help shape a generation that excels in academics, articulation, and civic responsibility.

District Collector Manu Chowdhary, Additional Collector Garima Agarwal, and DEO Srinivas Reddy were present during the visit.

COSMETIC CHARGES TO BE CREDITED TO STUDENTS' BANK ACCOUNTS

With the new academic year beginning, BC Welfare Minister Ponnam Prabhakar urged officials to shift their focus from mere administration to holistic student development in all BC Welfare Gurukulam institutions across Telangana.

He held a video conference on Wednesday with senior officials, stressing the need for quality education, healthy food, proper accommodation, and individual care for every student.

In a notable move, the Minister announced that cosmetic charges for students would now be directly credited into their bank accounts.

He said bank accounts have already been opened for all students to facilitate this system. Ponnam emphasised that students must not be burdened or made to face any inconvenience in accessing their entitlements.

He also informed that pending hostel rent dues for four months have now been cleared and directed field officials to coordinate with building owners to ensure uninterrupted facilities. Schools and hostels must be kept clean and hygienic, mosquito nets must be installed, and immediate steps must be taken to resolve any infrastructure issues, including kitchens, water tanks, toilets, bathrooms, weeds, and waste within school premises.

Highlighting academic goals, he directed institutions to prepare subject-wise academic profiles for each student, especially those in Class 10. Marks from Classes 8 and 9 should be analysed, and any lag in subjects should trigger special support.

Ponnam also insisted on uniform quality in teaching standards across all institutions. Textbooks, uniforms, and hostel kits must be distributed without delay.

Special Chief Secretary Jayesh Ranjan breaking an egg-shaped chocolate and welcoming the Barry Callebaut's GCC in Hyderabad on Thursday

Barry Callebaut selects Hyd for its first GCC

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

The world's largest cocoa processor for chocolates and cakes, Swiss-Belgian company Barry Callebaut, has chosen Hyderabad for its first Global Capability Centre (GCC) in India.

On Thursday, Special Chief Secretary for Tourism and Culture, Jayesh Ranjan, inaugurated the event. Staying true to chocolate traditions, the launch began by breaking an egg-shaped chocolate with a wooden hammer. Barry Callebaut is a high-quality chocolate and cocoa products firm. Their ingredients are used by big brands and bakers around the world for making chocolates, cakes, biscuits and ice creams. The Hyderabad GCC will support the company's digital, IT, finance and supply chain operations. This move also shows Hyderabad's growing reputation as a hub for global companies setting up technology and support centres in India.

Sridhar Babu, UPSC Chair inaugurate National Workshop on Legal Issues

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Aiming to address the mounting legal challenges faced by Public Service Commissions (PSCs) across India, the Telangana Public Service Commission (TGPSC), in collaboration with NALSAR University of Law, inaugurated a two-day national workshop on Thursday at the NALSAR campus in Shamirpet, Hyderabad.

The workshop was formally inaugurated by IT and Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu in the presence of Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) Chairperson Dr. Ajay Kumar, Telangana PSC Chairman Burra Venkatesham, and NALSAR Vice Chancellor Prof. Srikrishna Deva Rao. Over 60 dignitaries from 18 state PSCs—including eight Chairpersons, 13 Members, five Secretaries, and several senior officials—participated in the landmark gathering. "The Telangana PSC has taken a much-needed initiative. Litigation around recruitments is draining time and resources. This platform will help us evolve common strategies and build synergy among PSCs," said Sridhar Babu, praising the collaboration between TGPSC and NALSAR.

UPSC Chairperson Ajay Kumar, delivering the keynote address, highlighted the scope for incorporating Artificial Intelligence and Large Language Models to digitize operations, ensure transparency, and pre-empt litigation. "Technology is not just a support function—it can be a preventive tool," he said.

Chairman Burra Venkatesham underscored the need for a centralised database of legal resources, which he announced is in the works. "While each PSC operates independently and tackles unique legal challenges, we must think collectively. This workshop is a start," he said, noting that the database will help avoid duplication and strengthen institutional legal capacity.

HYDRAA solves Upparapally's 7-year flood woes in 12 hours

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad Disaster Response and Assets Protection Agency (HYDRAA) Commissioner AV Ranganath conducted an extensive field inspection of several flood-prone areas in Serilingampally constituency and surrounding localities following heavy rainfall that lashed the city early Thursday morning.

During the visit, the Commissioner surveyed Doyens Colony and Lingampally Railway Underpass, where floodwaters from upper catchments inundated roads and colonies due to the lack of a proper outflow channel into Gopi Cheruvu.

Locals explained that stagnant water at the underpass resulted from both rainwater and overflow from nearby lakes.

The Commissioner suggested lowering water levels in Gopi Cheruvu and Chakali Cheruvu to prevent further flooding. Earlier in the day, he also inspected apartments in Kondapur, urging officials to fully restore the stormwater and sewage drainage systems.

HYDRAA Commissioner Ranganath inspecting flood-prone ares in Serilingampally constituency on Thursday

Later, in Bachupally, the Commissioner reviewed multiple flood channels and instructed officials to expedite the works being carried out under the Strategic Nala Development Programme (SNDP).

He highlighted that floodwater from Chennam Cheruvu should be swiftly directed into Bachupally Cheruvu to avoid stagnation in Ramachandrapuram Colony.

Acting on public grievances received via the Prajavani platform, the Commissioner visited Upparapally, Shastripuram and Palle Cheruvu in Rajendranagar mandal on Thursday. In Ashok Vihar Colony, Upparapally, residents complained about the absence of proper flood and sewage drains, which has plagued nearly 400 families across five apartment buildings for the past seven years. They pointed out that just 150 meters away, there is a main drain connected to the Musi River.

Connecting their colony to this drain could resolve the waterlogging and sewage issues, but landowners in the area were reportedly obstructing municipal works despite sanctioned funds.

GHMC cracks whip on top 10 sweet shops operating without FSSAI

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC)'s Food Safety Department closed top-10 sweet and food establishments operating without valid FSSAI-Food Licence until they possess the licence.

In an inspection drive, Food Safety Officers had visited about (69) sweet shops in the GHMC limits. During the inspections, on finding violation of Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and Rules and Regulations, 2011, notices are being issued for rectification of defects.

The food business operators are being informed to maintain hygiene standards in preparation of the food items and also the kitchen premises to be maintained neatly.

Proper labeling of the food items kept in the display counters shall be done (i.e. date of preparation and life shelf of the food item).

Further, the following 10 food establishments which are operating the food business activities without obtaining a valid (FSSAI)Food Licence / Registration, as required under Section (31) (1) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 have been directed to suspend all the food business operations immediately until they possess the valid FSSAI Licence.

They include Laxmi Mithai Bhandar, LB Nagar Circle, Raghavendra Sweet House and Bakery, LB Nagar Circle, Sai Ram hot chips and Sweets, LB Nagar Circle.

New Balaji Mithai bhandar and Hot chips, Kothapet, Super Sweets, Alija Kotla, Charminar, Hyderabad, Balaji Ramswaroop Mithai Bhandar, Ramanthapur, Prem Sweets and Savouries, Serilingampally Circle, Balaji Chaganlal Mithai Bandar, Mallikarjuna Nagar, RC Puram Circle, Raghavendra Hot Chips, Beeramguda, RC Puram Circle, Jodhpur Mithai Wala situated at Akalavya Nagar, Macha Bollarum.

IIT-H, CSU sign MoU to promote joint research

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

In a major step to boost interdisciplinary research, the Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad (IITH) and Central Sanskrit University (CSU), New Delhi, have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The agreement aims to promote collaboration in Sanskrit, Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) and technology-based research.

IITH is known for its innovation and research, while CSU is dedicated to preserving and advancing Sanskrit and India's traditional knowledge. The MoU allows both institutions to work together in areas like Sanskrit, linguistics, Vedic sciences and philosophy.

Min's call to promote GreenCo rating among companies

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Telangana IT and Industries Minister D Sridhar Babu urged the Pollution Control Board and the CII Green Business Centre to work together to promote the GreenCo rating among companies. He was speaking as the chief guest at the 'GreenCo Summit 2025' held at HICC Novotel, on Thursday.

Organised by The CII GreenCo Council,the summit, themed "Beyond Commitments: Scaling Net Zero Action for 2030 and Beyond," brought together over 1,000 delegates from India and abroad. Sridhar Babu said, "Telangana is honoured to host the GreenCo Summit 2025. We are committed to building a cleaner industrial ecosystem. Our policies focus on clean-tech, resource efficiency, and sustainable growth,"

The two-day event featured 100+ speakers on topics like net-zero strategies, ESG, circular economy, and decarbonisation. Over 60 companies received GreenCo Platinum Awards for their green efforts. The summit also launched the Cleantech Innovation Programme for startups in green technologies. A parallel exhibition showcased over 50 eco-friendly products and innovations.

Students deny rumours of being assigned sanitation work

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Students of the Telangana Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (TGSWREIS) have responded to recent audio clips and rumours circulating online, which allegedly suggest that the Society's Secretary, Dr VS Alagu Varsini, instructed students to carry out sanitation work in the institutions.

In a series of videos released by students themselves, they firmly denied the claims.

"There are rumours that students are being asked to do cleaning and sanitation work in our institutions, but we want to clarify that these are false. We are not involved in any such activities - we are only focused on our education. Please don't spread misinformation that causes panic among our parents," said one group of students.

Another batch of students added that all cleaning and sanitation responsibilities are carried out by dedicated staff:

"There are workers assigned for cleaning and sanitization duties. They clean the dining hall and dormitories twice a day. We students are not asked to do such work."

Son of TG Zoo Parks director adopts 8 animal species

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Yuvaan Hiremath, son of Dr Sunil S Hiremath, Director of Zoo Parks, Telangana, adopted eight animal species for one month on his 8th birthday at Nehru Zoological Park on Thursday. To mark the occasion and support the welfare of wild animals, Yuvaan visited the zoo with his parents and handed over the adoption voucher to J Vasantha, Curator of Nehru Zoological Park, Hyderabad.

The adopted animals include Hippopotamus, Jaguar, Bear, Capuchin Monkey, Pelican, Gharial, Otter and an Owl.This is the second year in a row that Yuvaan has adopted animals on his birthday.

Curator Vasantha congratulated Yuvaan on his birthday and appreciated his kind gesture and love for animals. She also mentioned that Nehru Zoological Park is receiving a good response to its Animal Adoption Scheme, with individuals, corporates, banks and educational institutions coming forward to support the zoo.

She encouraged citizens to adopt animals of their choice, with options available from one day to one year.

Yuvaan Hiremath, son of Dr Sunil S Hiremath, Director of Zoo Parks, Telangana, handing over adoption voucher to Curator J Vasantha on Thursday

No changes to TG movement chapter in Class 10 textbooks, says SCERT

DEEPIKA PASHAM
deepikapasham2015@gmail.com
■ HYDERABAD

A controversy erupted after allegations surfaced that the Telangana Movement chapter had been reportedly removed from the Class 10 government school textbooks.

Dr Krishank, BRS Social Media Convenor, posted photos on X (formerly Twitter), comparing older and newer textbooks. He claimed:

"Revanth Government removes Chapter on Telangana Movement from 10th Standard Text Books."

However, The Pioneer spoke to officials and writers from the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) who remain responsible for preparing the textbooks and clarified that no such changes have been made so far.

Government school teachers also confirmed this, stating that the formation of the Telangana state remains the final chapter of Part 2 in the Class 10 Social Studies textbook.

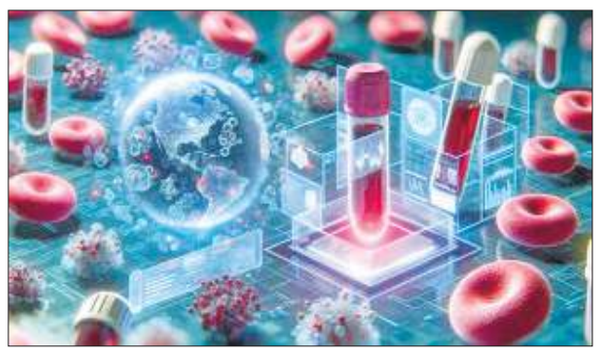
"Government schools have not yet received Part 2 textbooks, as they are usually distributed after the SA-1 exams, mostly in October. We are currently using Part 1 textbooks, and so far, we have not been informed of any change," a teacher told The Pioneer.

Officials reiterated that the curriculum remains unchanged and advised against the spread of misinformation, which could create confusion among students and parents.

Hyd gets India's first intelligent blood delivery platform

PNS ■ HYDERABAD

Hyderabad has become the first city in India to get an 'Intelligent Blood Delivery Platform' by Lytus HealthTech's BLOD (On-Demand Blood Logistics Platform), a unit of Lytus Technologies. After delivering over 5,000 life-saving blood units in Chennai and winning the Red Cross Society's Award for Excellence, BLOD now brings its smart system to the city.



The city has over 100 licenced blood banks and needs about 2.75 lakh units every year. With a 10-15% of blood getting wasted due to cold-chain failures and late deliveries, in emergencies, it takes 3 to 5 hours to deliver blood. BLOD solves this with a 24x7 cold-chain service that ensures delivery within 90 minutes using real-time tracking and AI-based routing.

Over 12 major blood banks and 35 hospitals have already joined the platform. BLOD aims to connect with over 50 hospitals in the next year. Powered by AI and Agentic AI, it offers real-time stock updates, smart forecasting and fast delivery.

COO of Lytus HealthTech, Sai Guna Ranjan Puranam said, "Every drop of blood has a purpose and we are delivering hope, life and time."

Meanwhile, Global CEO, Lytus Technologies, Dharmesh Pandya said, backed by major investments, Lytus plans to expand BLOD across India and globally. "We are building a Made-in-India platform for the world."

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04

18 injured as privates bus rams into lorry

PNS ■ NARAYANPET

A private travels bus, which was said to have exceeded speed limit, rammed into a lorry near Bondalakunta under Makthal mandal in the district, leading to serious injuries to 18 passengers, including the bus driver.

According to police sources, a Volvo bus belonging to Durgamma Travels from Shivamogga in Karnataka, was heading to Hyderabad with 29 passengers. Around 5 am on Thursday, the bus rammed into a lorry from behind on national highway 167, near the outskirts of Narsireddypalli and Jakler villages under Makthal mandal. The front portion of the bus was completely destroyed in the crash.

Upon receiving information about the incident, the police rushed to the spot and initiated rescue operations. Sub-Inspector Bhagyalakshmi Reddy stated that the 18 injured passengers were shifted to Makthal Government Hospital. For better treatment, seven of them were moved to hospitals in Raichur and Mahabubnagar districts.

Mamnoor Airport land acquisition hits a roadblock

Earlier it was thought that all hurdles for the revival of the airport were overcome, but suddenly the farmers started demanding Rs 4 crore per acre

PNS ■ WARANGAL

Contrary to expectations, the land acquisition process for the Warangal Mamnoor Airport, which seemed to be nearing completion, is now taking a step forward and four steps back. Just as officials thought the acquisition was nearing resolution, farmers are raising new objections.

As part of the airport construction, officials and political leaders have been making serious efforts to acquire land from farmers in Nakkalapalli, Gunturpalli, and Gadipalli. Numerous meetings have been held with landowners and displaced farmers. At a recent meeting, authorities announced that compensation would be set at Rs 1.20 crore per acre and Rs 4,887 per square yard for private plots.

Although it seemed like everything had been settled, farmers are now firmly stating that the compensation is inadequate. They argue that there is a significant gap between the government-fixed rate and the prevailing private market value, demanding a minimum of Rs 2 crores per acre. Though the Collector exercised discretionary powers to fix Rs 1.20 crore per acre under a consent award, the farmers are refusing to give up their land for even a rupee less than Rs 2 crore

The farmers insist that agriculture is their sole livelihood, and with the current compensation, they would need to spend Rs 4 crore to purchase a similar acre of land nearby.

They warn that if the government tries to forcibly acquire their land, they will protest by marching to the Secretariat.

Although the land acquisition process for Mamnoor Airport appeared to have reached its final stages, it has now regressed. Discussions between displaced farmers and officials have also advanced, with the authorities conducting multiple rounds of talks with landowners and private plot holders. Revenue officials explained the land rates to the farmers of Nakkalapalli, Gunturpalli, and Gadipalli.

Even though officials made efforts to offer compensation that was more than triple the government's market value, they could not go beyond Rs 60 lakh per acre. Taking into account the huge gap between government rates and market prices, the Collector used discretionary powers to fix Rs 1.20 crore per acre under the consent award scheme, and Rs 4,887 per square yard for private plots. Farmers said they would convey their decision within a couple of days.

The farmers said officials have conducted several surveys over the years, claiming the land would be acquired for Mamnoor Airport. They expressed willingness to give land for district development but lamented that they would lose their livelihood. They emphasised that buying similar land in nearby areas would

A farmer shared, "I have 14 acres of farmland near the village. It's our only livelihood.

Officials said the entire land will be taken for the airport and offered Rs 1.20 crore per acre. But in nearby areas, private agricultural land is valued at Rs 4 crore per acre. If we get at least Rs 2 crores per acre, we can buy some land nearby and continue farming."

Teachers during *Badi Bata* programme have unpleasant experience

PNS ■ ADILABAD

As part of the government's prestigious Badi Bata programme (enrolment campaign), teachers who went for the campaign had an unpleasant experience with parents. Teachers are going door-to-door in villages, urging parents to enrol their children in government schools for a brighter future.

In some areas, there was a good response, while in others, the teachers faced opposition and questions from the villagers.

The government launched the Badi Bata programme to increase student enrolment in government schools, and it is carried out strongly in the Adilabad district.

Since the first week of June, government teachers have been visiting villages, spreading the message to enrol children in government schools. They are promoting the facilities available in government schools, asking, "Does private school staff have as much experience as we do?" They are also highlighting the digital classrooms, claiming to teach using modern technology.

They emphasise the large playgrounds in their schools, telling parents that enrolling their children would not only provide education but also teach sports and physical activities. While there has been a positive response in some places, in some other places they have had bitter experiences.

In a village in the Adilabad district, teachers faced unexpected opposition from parents when they went for the campaign.

The parents questioned, "You are telling us to enrol our children in government schools, but where are your own children studying?" Teachers were left speechless and struggled to answer. Parents went a step further, asking, "Do you even have the right to promote this?" They firmly stated,

A parent in a village questioning teachers why they have failed to enrol their children in government schools during the Badi Bata programme on Thursday

"First, enrol your children in government schools, and then come to us."

This left the teachers in a state of confusion.

They did not know how to respond or what to say. The villagers' argument was simple: "Why teachers, headmasters, Mandal Education Officers and District Education Officers who are promoting government schools, are not enrolling their children in these schools?" Only when they admit their children to these schools, people will have trust in government schools.

The teachers were also asked why, if government schools provide excellent education and all necessary facilities, the children of those who work in these schools are not attending them. "If the children of MEOs, DEOs, and other officials aren't studying in government schools, why should we trust them for our own children?" was the underlying question.

In villages like Yapalaguda in Adilabad and many others, teachers may face similar questions. Teachers, headmasters, MEOs, and DEOs must be prepared with answers. The question is: Will they be ready?

MJPTBCWREIS student conquers Everest Base Camp

PNS ■ SIDDIPET

As part of a programme organised by the MJPTBC Welfare Society, 10 boys and 10 girls were selected and sent to the Everest Base Camp in Nepal. Among them was D Dinesh, a Class 9 student from Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Backward Classes Welfare Boys School in Narayanaraopet.

Dinesh, who hailed from Chinna Kodur mandal, successfully reached the Everest Base Camp summit on June 3. The school principal, Naga Latha, expressed immense happiness and pride in this achievement.

Despite his young age, his courage was remarkable, said the principal. She added that childhood should not be limited to just play and academics and it is a matter of great joy that Dinesh has become a role model for future generations by conquering such a great peak.

The principal mentioned that the students had started their journey to the Everest Base Camp on May 25 and reached the summit on June 3. On this occasion, MJPTBC Narayanaraopet, Principal Naga Latha, PET Venkatesh, and other teachers congratulated him and wished him continued success in climbing many more peaks in the future.

Minister for Backward Classes Welfare Ponnam Prabhakar felicitating MJPTBCWREIS student Dinesh on his scaling Everest Base Camp, on Thursday

Minister for Backward Classes Welfare Ponnam Prabhakar, Tribal Welfare Minister Seethakka, and Secretary of Mahatma Jyotiba Phule BC Welfare Residential Schools Badugu Saidulu congratulated the student.

Disaster Relief Volunteers told to help people in distress

PNS ■ HANAMKONDA

Hanamkonda Collector P Pravinya at the closing ceremony of the Disaster Relief Volunteer Training Programme in Hanamkonda on Thursay

Hanumkonda District Collector P Pravinya participated in the closing ceremony of the Disaster Relief Volunteer Training and stated that disaster relief volunteers should lead in assisting those in distress in society.

On Thursday, at the Ambedkar Bhavan in Hanamkonda, in accordance with the directives of the National Disaster Management Authority and the State Disaster Management Authority, a 12-day disaster relief volunteer training programme was conducted under the supervision of the District Fire Service Department, and its culmination was marked by a closing ceremony.

The district collector took part as the chief guest, lit the lamp, and inaugurated the event. On this occasion, District Collector Pravinny said that disaster relief volunteers should immediately inform authorities when unexpected disasters or dangers occur in their surrounding areas. She expressed her belief that many volunteers can change lives. She added that volunteers should also be at the forefront in helping victims during not only natural disasters but also in road accidents. She expressed confidence that disaster relief volunteers would provide excellent service to society. She emphasised that the training covered how to respond and assist during natural calamities and emergencies, and that these lessons should be imparted to everyone. She also urged awareness among the public regarding snakebites and dog bites.

Nagaraju, the District Fire Officer, stated that training programmes were conducted for 126 volunteers at the Durgabai Women and Infant Development Centre in Madikonda and for 131 volunteers in Peddapalli over 12 days. He explained that the training included how volunteers should respond during disasters and how to provide medical assistance.

Six killed in separate incidents of lightning strike

PNS ■ ADILABAD

In Adilabad district, six people lost their lives due to lightning strikes in different incidents.

In Gadeguda and Beel mandals, a heavy rain with thunder and lightning caused the deaths of six individuals in the afternoon.

In Gadeguda mandal, four people from Pipril Saurae village—Siddham Rambai, Penduru Madhavarao, Penduru Sanjana, and Mangu Bimbai—died, two of them belonging to the same family.

Similarly, in Beel mandal, two people—Gaddam Nandini and Kova Sunita—were struck by lightning while sowing seeds in a field in Sangidi village and died on the spot.

All six fatalities occurred on the same day. Additionally, four others have been severely injured and are receiving treatment at RIMS hospital.

Education key to eradicating poverty: Shadnagar MLA

PNS ■ RANGAREDDY

Shadnagar MLA and Chairman of Public Sector Organisations, Veerlapalli Shankar, emphasised that education is the only way to eradicate poverty and achieve success in life. Speaking at an event in Kuntabadi Government School in Shadnagar town, on the occasion of the reopening of government schools, he distributed textbooks, uniforms, and notebooks to students.

During his address, Shankar criticised the previous BRS government for completely neglecting and ruining the education system over the past decade.

He highlighted that since the Congress government came to power, it has placed special focus on education, ensuring that textbooks, notebooks, and uniforms are provided to students even before classrooms reopen—a testament to the priority given to education by the Congress government and the Chief Minister.

Shankar noted that a college is being constructed in Shadnagar with the goal of providing quality education to poor students and future generations, a project being undertaken with the cooperation of all stakeholders to benefit students.

He added that this initiative aims to ensure students do not need to travel to places like Hyderabad for quality education, making it a significant programme for Shadnagar town.

He urged students and parents not to opt for private schools, which often lead to financial burdens and debt, asserting that government schools now offer quality education with qualified teachers. Shankar debunked the notion that private schools are superior, stating that learning "ten letters" in a private school is equivalent to learning "two letters" in a government school, emphasising that government schools provide quality education along with nutritious meals and essential infrastructure, as ensured by the Telangana government.

At the event, students welcomed the MLA with flowers, and in return, Shankar showered flowers on the students, expressing his joy.

The program was attended by Farooq Nagar Mandal Education Officer Manohar, school headmaster Bhagyamma, Market Committee Vice Chairman Babar Khan, Chendi Tirupati Reddy and others.

Shadnagar MLA Veerlapalli Shankar distributing textbooks and uniforms to students at a government school in Shadnagar on Thursday

Cows with lumpy skin disease found roaming streets

PNS ■ KAMAREDDY

In Kamareddy town, cattle roaming the streets have been infected with the lumpy skin disease (LSD) virus. Cows and calves have fallen prey to the virus. The infected cattle have been spotted in areas such as the weekly market, shiva temple, and Panch Rasta, causing concern among local residents.

People are worried are worried over the spread of the disease. Upon receiving information from local people, veterinary officials have been alerted. Veterinary doctors started administering vaccines to infected animals in several areas.

On this occasion, Mandal Veterinary Officer Ravi Kiran stated that if any more animals in the town are found to be infected, they will also be vaccinated. He assured the people that there is no need to panic. He also mentioned that the vaccine provides protection to the animals for up to one year once administered

Pochampally Ikat is not just art, it's our identity: Telangana Governor

PNS ■ POCHAMPALLY

Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma at Pochamapally on Thursday

Telangana Governor Jishnu Dev Varma said that Pochampally Ikat is not merely a traditional craft but a living identity of Telangana, reflecting the region's artistic excellence and cultural pride. On Thursday, he visited Pochampally village in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district and interacted with handloom workers at the Pochampally Tourism Textile Park. He personally observed the weaving process and later held direct discussions with weavers about their lives and challenges.

Addressing weavers at the park auditorium, the Governor said that Pochampally Ikat sarees and fabrics are globally renowned, and it is heartening that sales have gone up by 30 per cent after the recent visit of international beauty pageant winners. "I had only read about Pochampally in books, but now witnessing it firsthand has been an enriching experience," he said.

He noted that Pochampally has skilled artisans who produce both silk and cotton variants.

"There is immense potential ahead for these products," he added, suggesting that weavers collaborate with institutions like IIT and NIFT in Ahmedabad to explore advanced techniques in marketing, design, and dyeing. He acknowledged that many weavers flagged issues like lack of marketing infrastructure and the rise of counterfeit Ikat products, which must be addressed urgently.

The Governor observed that since most weavers handle every stage of production—from spinning and dyeing to design and sales—scaling up has become a challenge. He stressed that improving marketing support could help protect the handloom heritage and secure the livelihoods of these traditional artisans.

Principal Secretary for Handlooms and Textiles Shailaja Ramaiyer said this was the second time a Governor visited Pochampally to examine its products. She outlined government support schemes such as the thrift scheme, insurance, loan waivers, and the 'Nethanna Bima' initiative. She also highlighted the annual Konda Laxman Bapuji award, which includes Rs. 25,000 and a shawl to honour exemplary weavers. She noted that raw material worth Rs. 6 crore is being procured from Pochampally this year.

MLA Kumbham Anil Kumar Reddy noted that after the Miss World finalists' visit, Pochampally products gained national attention, boosting sales.

District Collector Hanumantha Rao praised the Governor's engagement, adding that traditional weavers, especially women, have been earning Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000 a month, though they are now seeking additional income sources. The government is considering the Governor's suggestions to strengthen marketing and design facilities through IIT and NIFT.

Padma Shri awardee Gajam Anjaiah said the quality of Pochampally's products is excellent, but marketing remains weak. Gajam Govardhan pointed out that Ikat production involves expertise in weaving, dyeing, and coloring, and called for geo-tagging of artisans to safeguard traditional knowledge.

Tadaka Ramesh called for setting up a yarn depot and inclusion of an Ikat saree in the Kalyana Lakshmi scheme. During the visit, the Governor distributed cheques worth Rs. 5 lakh each to three weavers—Upender, Bhagyalakshmi, and Yadagiri—and a collective Rs. 2.15 crore to other beneficiaries under the thrift scheme.

SI allegedly behaves rudely with scribes

PNS ■ YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI

Overaction by local Police During Governor Jishnu Dev Varma's Visit to Bhoodan Pochampally Center

During the Governor's programme at Bhoodan Pochampally in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, local Sub-Inspector Bhaskar Reddy behaved in an indecent and threatening manner towards the local people and media representatives who were filming the event as part of their duty.

The media representatives complained to the higher officials that SI Bhaskar Reddy had used abusive language and intimidating the journalists.

Telangana State vice president of Nomadic Tribes Association, Mandula Yadagiri, stated, "An SI in Pochampally, during the Governor's visit, threatened me, saying he will frame me in a false case." He expressed his anguish over the incident.

The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | JUNE 13 2025

ACROSS THE STATES

DELHI: SPIKE IN CASES OF HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

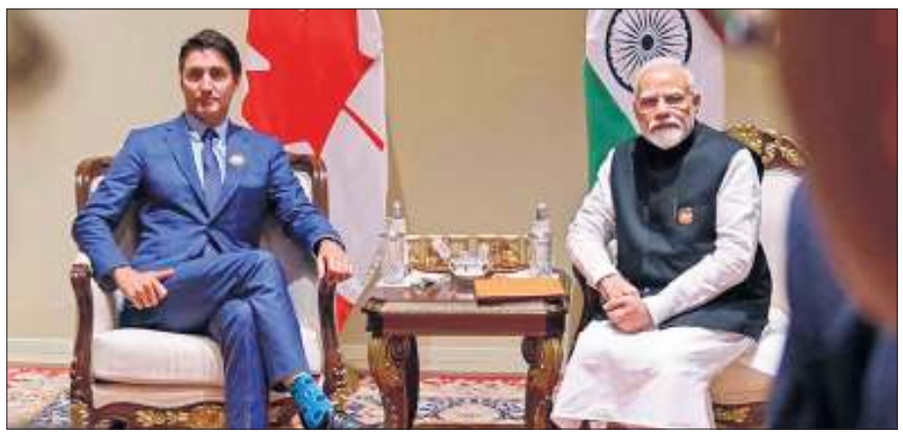
Hospitals across the national capital have been seeing a surge in patients due to the intense heatwave of the last few days, doctors said on Thursday. People who work directly under the sun are more affected by the heatwave, for which a red alert has been issued in Delhi. At Fortis Escorts Heart Institute, 7-10 per cent of the total outpatient department (OPD) patients have conditions linked to the heatwave, while 5-8 per cent have sought consultations for related symptoms, said Dr Avi Kumar, senior consultant of pulmonology at the hospital. "The cases that are coming are largely mild and not serious enough to require admission," the doctor said. At the Delhi government-run LNJP Hospital, authorities have designated a separate area for patients who are working under the sun."The patients coming in are rickshaw-pullers, drivers, labourers, mostly those who are engaged in manual work. Patients come in with complaints of abdominal pain, vomitting, dehydration, dizziness. These cases have increases in the last three days," the official added.

DECLARE COW AS 'RASHTRA MATA'

Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati on Thursday asked the Centre to declare cows as 'Rashtra Mata' and the states to declare them as 'Rajya Mata'. His media in-charge in a press conference here said the Swami has launched a nationwide 'Gau Dhwaj' (Cow Flag) campaign to press for action on his demands. "The campaign is calling on all 36 states and Union territories to recognise the cow with the honorary status of 'Rashtra Mata' at the national level and 'Rajya Mata' at the state level. "He said that there is also a demand to remove the cow from the category of animals and accord it the status of a revered mother figure," Shailendra Yogiraj, National Media In-charge for Avimukteshwaranand, said. He said that the Gau Dhwaj has also been planted at the Lord Hanuman Temple at Jakhu, Shimla. He said that there are still several states in India where there is no ban on cow slaughter. "If the central government declares the cow as the Mother of the Nation and enacts strict laws, it will effectively put a stop to cow slaughter," the Swami said, according to his publicist.

KARNATAKA BJP POSTPONES PROTEST AGAINST STATE GOVT

Karnataka BJP on Thursday announced that it has postponed its mega protest against the state government in Bengaluru on June 13 in connection with the recent stampede incident that killed 11 people, following the Air India plane crash near Ahmedabad airport. The protest was aimed at holding the state government and Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar responsible for the June 4 incident and to demand their resignation. The party leaders had also planned to lay a siege to the CM's residence."The BJP had planned a mega protest at Bengaluru's Freedom Park against the state government for its lack of preparedness, leading to the death of 11 people due to the stampede during the RCB team's IPL victory celebrations.



We are exploring path to reset ties

MEA on India-Canada relations

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Describing Indian and Canada as "vibrant democracies", the external affairs ministry on Thursday said New Delhi believes the forthcoming meeting between the prime ministers of the two countries on the sidelines of the G7 Summit will offer an important opportunity to exchange views and explore pathways to reset bilateral ties.

Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said this in response to a query during his weekly media briefing.

"Our Prime Minister had received a call from the Canadian Prime Minister last week. During the call, Prime Minister Mark Carney invited Prime Minister (Modi) to attend G7 (meeting), and as you are aware the invitation has been accepted," he said.

The call was also an occasion for the two prime ministers to reflect or talk about India-Canada relations, and how it can be taken forward, the MEA spokesperson said.

Canada will be hosting the crucial G7 meeting later this month.

"India and Canada are vibrant democracies, which are bound by shared democratic values and steadfast commitment to the rule of law. And, of course, very vibrant people to people ties," Jaiswal said.

"We believe that the forthcoming meeting between the two leaders on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Canada will offer an important opportunity for them to exchange views on bilateral and global issues, and explore pathways to set or reset the relationship, based on mutual respect, shared interests and sensitivity to each other's concerns," he said.

Later in response to another query on the future trajectory of India-Canada ties, Jaiswal said, "We are exploring path to reset ties."

Law & order situation in Tripura has improved: CM

PNS ■ AGARTALA

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Thursday said the law and order situation in the state has improved and the crime rate has reduced by 10 per cent in the first four months of the current year.

Saha said his government has a zero-tolerance policy for drug abuse and smuggling and the law enforcement agencies have achieved good success in seizure and destruction of drugs and narcotics.

"According to NCRB reports, Tripura stands third from the bottom of the crime chart among the 28 states of the country. The overall crime rate has been reduced by 19.40 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023. An average of 10 per cent of crime has reduced in the first four months of the current year," he said.

"An average 106 per cent increase in seizure of drug and contraband items in 2024 compared to 2023 while 132 per cent increase in destruction of seized drug and contraband items during same the period," he said.

The CM said infiltration from across the border (Bangladesh) will not be tolerated and the number of Bangladeshis arrested without valid documents in the state increased by 16 per cent in 2024 compared to 2023.

Major air crashes in India

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

After a London-bound Air India aircraft crashed shortly after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport on Thursday, the spotlight is back on India's history with aviation disasters.

From deadly mid-air collisions and fatal crashes due to poor weather conditions to runway overshoots at tabletop airports, the country has witnessed several tragedies over the decades.

Here's a list of the most devastating air accidents in India's aviation history:

- Air India Express Flight 1344 (2020): During the COVID-19 pandemic, Air India Express Flight 1344, operating as part of the Vande Bharat repatriation mission, skidded off the runway while landing at the Kozhikode (Calicut) International Airport on August 7, 2020. Amid heavy rainfall, the aircraft overshot the wet tabletop runway, plunged into a valley and split into two. Of the 190 people on board, 21, including two pilots, lost their lives.
- Air India Express Flight 812 (2010): Air India Express Flight 812 overshot the runway while landing at the Mangaluru International Airport in Karnataka on May 22, 2010. The Boeing 737-800, coming from Dubai, plunged into a gorge beyond the tabletop runway and burst into flames, killing 158 people. The tragic incident brought increased scrutiny to India's tabletop airports and landing protocols during adverse conditions.
- Alliance Air Flight 7412 (2000): Alliance Air Flight 7412 crashed into a densely populated residential area in Bihar's Patna while attempting to land on July 17, 2000. The Boeing 737-200 experienced a stall at low altitude due to the reported improper handling during the final approach. Sixty people were killed, including five on the ground. The accident prompted upgrades to approach procedures at smaller urban airports.
- Charkhi Dadri mid-air collision (1996): On November 12, 1996, 349 people were killed in what became India's most devastating aviation disaster. The tragedy occurred when Saudia Flight 763, a Boeing 747, and Kazakhstan Airlines Flight 1907, an Ilyushin Il-76, collided mid-air near Charkhi Dadri in Haryana. The accident was the result of a communication failure and the Kazakh crew descending below their assigned altitude. Following the incident, India introduced significant aviation safety measures, including mandating the installation of Traffic Collision Avoidance Systems (TCAS) on all commercial aircraft.
- Indian Airlines Flight 605 (1990): On February 14, 1990, Indian Airlines Flight 605 crashed while approaching Bengaluru's HAL Airport, killing 92 of the 146 people on board. The Airbus A320, a relatively new aircraft in India at the time, descended too low and hit the ground short of the runway, skidding onto a golf course. The investigation revealed that pilot error and unfamiliarity with the advanced digital cockpit of the A320 contributed to the tragic accident.
- Indian Airlines Flight 113 (1988): Amid poor visibility on October 19, 1988, Indian Airlines Flight 113, a Boeing 737-200, crashed on its approach to Ahmedabad Airport. The flight, arriving from Mumbai, struck trees and crashed short of the runway, killing 133 of the 135 people on board. Investigators pointed to pilot error, inadequate weather information, and procedural lapses by air traffic control.
- Air India Flight 855 (1978): On January 1, 1978, Dubai-bound Air India Flight 855, a Boeing 747, plunged into the Arabian Sea shortly after taking off from Mumbai, killing all 213 people on board. The disaster occurred only 101 seconds into the flight when a faulty Attitude Director Indicator led the captain to misinterpret the aircraft's orientation. The crash took place in nighttime conditions over the sea, contributing to the crew's spatial disorientation.
- Indian Airlines Flight 440 (1973): On May 31, 1973, Indian Airlines Flight 440 crashed during its approach to Delhi's Palam Airport. The Boeing 737-200 encountered severe weather and struck high-tension wires just short of the runway. Of the 65 people on board, 48 died. Among the dead was prominent Indian politician Mohan Kumaramangalam. The crash underscored the need for improved weather radar at Indian airports.

'Sycophancy will not work'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Newly-appointed chief of the Congress' Scheduled Caste Department Rajendra Pal Gautam on Thursday said"sycophancy" will not work in his department and one will get a place in the organisation only based on work. Speaking with reporters, Gautam said he will try to live up to the trust the Congress leadership has shown in him and will fight for the rights of the deprived sections.

Gautam, a former Delhi minister who resigned from the AAP last year to join the Congress ahead of the assembly polls, comes amid a strong push by the party for its social justice agenda. He had resigned from the post of Social Welfare Minister of Delhi in October 2022 after a political controversy arose over his alleged remarks against Hindu deities.

Karnataka to conduct new caste survey, says CM

PNS ■ BENGALURU

Karnataka cabinet on Thursday "unanimously" decided to conduct a new Socio-Educational survey, popularly known as the caste census, in the state, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said.

He said 90 days time will be given for the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission to conduct a fresh survey and submit the report, but did not wish to comment on the survey cost. "....we have taken a decision in the cabinet. It was a unanimous decision that a new survey is to be conducted," Siddaramaiah told reporters after a special cabinet meeting.

He said, "The government will consult the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission....we are going to give 90 days time to survey a fresh, and to give the report."

The decision comes after the Congress top brass -- including President Mallikarjun Kharge and leader Rahul Gandhi -- on Tuesday directed the state government to hold caste re-enumeration in Karnataka to address the concerns of some communities, who complained of being left out of the survey that was conducted 10 years ago.

The CM said as per the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission Act's section 11(1) too, the state government should go for a survey, as it has been ten years since the last survey was done.

He said, "After considering all aspects and law, as it has been ten years since the Socio-Educational survey was conducted by the Karnataka State Backward Classes Commission, the cabinet has decided to go for a new survey; and as per the section 11(2) of the Act it has been decided to consult the commission in this regard." The decision came at a time when the cabinet was already considering the Socio-Educational Survey report that was submitted to the government by the commission, based on the survey that was conducted in 2015.

Chaos in Bengal Assembly, BJP MLAs walk out

PNS ■ KOLKATA

BJP MLAs staged a walk-out from the West Bengal Assembly on Thursday after the Speaker refused to admit adjournment motions moved by them over violence in Murshidabad and Maheshtala.

Speaker Biman Banerjee charged the saffron party legislators with not following the decorum of the House, while the BJP accused him of functioning like a TMC worker.

The BJP legislators came to the House wearing saffron headbands and scarves.

Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari and three others moved the adjournment motion on the Murshidabad violence of April that left three people dead, while his party colleague Puna Bhengra was the prime mover - along with three others - of the other motion on Wednesday's violence in Mahestala near here, where police personnel were attacked by a mob.

Speaker Biman Banerjee rejected both motions stating that the Murshidabad violence is sub-judice and the issues related to the Mahestala clash could not be discussed in the House as an adjournment motion.

BJP MLAs protested the Speaker's decision and raised slogans against the TMC government. They also waved printouts of purported images of attacks on places of worship.

Led by Adhikari, the BJP legislators then walked out of the assembly and marched to Raj Bhavan. They discussed the state's situation with Governor CV Ananda Bose.

'Will revive Tulbul project in J&K'

PNS ■ SRINAGAR

Union Power Minister Manohar Lal Thursday said the government will revive the Tulbul project on the Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir as it no longer needs Pakistan's consent after the Centre put the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance.

The Union Minister also said India will "definitely" work on new hydro-electric projects in the wake of the suspension of the IWT with Pakistan following April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

"Before, whenever we had to undertake some work, we had to discuss that with them (Pakistan) and could not do anything without their consent.

"There was a project (Tulbul) under Wular Lake which was conceived in 1981. But, they did not give their consent and it was shelved.

Govt committed to providing 33 pc quota to women: Gadkari

PNS ■ BAGPUR

Union minister Nitin Gadkari on Thursday said the Modi government was committed to providing 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, and it has taken a decision to that effect.

Describing the 11 years of the Modi government as "very important" in the country's history, he said what failed to happen in the 60 years prior to that was achieved by the present dispensation cutting across sectors.

Addressing a press conference in Nagpur on the completion of 11 years of Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government, he expressed confidence that the country's logistics cost will come down to 9 per cent by the end of this year, which will boost exports and help businesses and industries to grow.

When asked about the issue of women's quota, Gadkari said, "It is our commitment to provide 33 per cent reservation to women and we have also taken a decision to that effect."

In September 2023, President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent to the women's reservation bill - Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam - which seeks to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

There are reports that the Modi government is likely to roll out 33 per cent reservation for women ahead of the 2029 Lok Sabha elections.

Talking about the achievements of the Modi government, Gadkari said the development of the country and the progress of villages, farmers, labourers and all sections of society in the past 11 years under the leadership of PM Modi is before everyone to see.

India slips to 131st position in Global Gender Gap Index 2025

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India has ranked 131 out of 148 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025, slipping two places from its position last year.

With a parity score of just 64.1 per cent, India is among the lowest-ranked countries in South Asia, according to the report released on Thursday.

India ranked 129 last year out of 146 countries.

"In 2025, India ranks 131st, with an overall gender parity score of 64.4 per cent. Compared to the 2024 edition, India sees a relative drop in rank due to the performance of other economies," it said.

The Global Gender Gap Index measures gender parity across four key dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.

The Indian economy's overall performance improved in absolute terms by +0.3 points.

"One of the dimensions where India increases parity is in Economic Participation and Opportunity, where its score improves by +.9 percentage points to 40.7 per cent. While most indicator values remain the same, parity in estimated earned income rises from 28.6 per cent to 29.9 per cent, positively impacting the subindex score," the report said.

Scores in labour force participation rate remained the same (45.9 per cent) as last year -- India's highest achieved to date.

In educational attainment, the report said, India scored 97.1 per cent, reflecting positive shifts in female shares for literacy and tertiary education enrolment, which resulted in positive score improvements for the subindex as a whole.

"India also records higher parity in health and survival, driven by improved scores in sex ratio at birth and in healthy life expectancy," it said.

However, similar to other countries, parity in healthy life expectancy is obtained despite an overall reduction in the life expectancy of men and women, the report said.

"Where India records a slight drop in parity (-0.6 points) since the last edition is in Political Empowerment. Female representation in Parliament falls from 14.7 per cent to 13.8 per cent in 2025, lowering the indicator score for the second year in a row below 2023 levels," it said.

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Editor's TAKE

Falling Fertility Rate: Crisis or course correction

India's demographic story is changing and with it comes a new set of opportunities and challenges

India, with concerns about overpopulation, now faces a very different demographic dilemma — one marked not by too many births, but by too few. According to the UNFPA's State of World Population 2025 report, India's total fertility rate has dropped to 1.9, slipping below the replacement level of 2.1. This means that, on average, Indian women are having fewer children than required to maintain the population size over time. While India remains the most populous country in the world with a population of 1.46 billion, the nature of this growth is undergoing a significant shift. The days of large families are fading, replaced by a quieter but deeply transformative trend of smaller households and fewer births. This decline in fertility didn't occur overnight. It is the cumulative outcome of decades of social progress and change. More girls are completing their education. Access to contraceptives and reproductive health services has expanded. Urbanisation has reshaped lifestyles and aspirations. Cultural norms are evolving, with more women delaying marriage, entering the workforce, and asserting autonomy over reproductive decisions.

In 1960, the average Indian woman had nearly six children. Today, that number has fallen to less than two. This change is more than a demographic trend; it is a powerful indicator of women's empowerment. The falling fertility rate brings with it several positive implications. First and foremost, it reflects an increase in personal choice, particularly for women. It signifies that more individuals now have the option to decide if, when, and how many children they wish to have. As life expectancy rises — currently at 74 for women and 71 for men — India will inevitably face a growing elderly population.

But this would also have negative impact as well. The country must prepare for a future in which fewer young workers support a larger ageing population. This could place immense pressure on public healthcare, social welfare systems, and family structures. A declining fertility rate can eventually lead to a shrinking labour force, which, over time, may hinder economic productivity and growth. Countries like Japan, Italy, and South Korea are already grappling with such consequences. India, though better placed demographically at the moment, must take lessons from their experiences to avoid similar pitfalls in the future.

Equally important is the need to address the deep regional and socio-economic disparities that continue to exist within India. While urban, educated families may be voluntarily choosing to have fewer children, many women in rural and low-income communities still lack access to adequate reproductive healthcare and have limited control over their reproductive choices. This uneven access undermines the very foundation of progress that falling fertility is supposed to represent. Therefore, India's falling fertility rate should not be viewed with alarm, but neither should it be met with complacency. It is not a crisis, but it is a signal — a call for thoughtful planning and inclusive policy. As the UNFPA rightly emphasises, the focus should not be on population panic but on empowering people to make informed, autonomous decisions about their reproductive lives.

PIC TALK

A full moon rises behind Galata Tower landmark, in Istanbul. PTI

Trump takes aim at Ivy League

In a controversial campaign, President Donald Trump has launched an aggressive offensive against America's most prestigious universities, particularly Ivy League institutions, through funding cuts, policy investigations, and harsh rhetoric

US President Donald Trump has targeted top US universities during his second term. He has been waging a war on Ivy League universities for the past few weeks. He has particularly targeted institutions such as Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Cornell, Brown, Dartmouth, and the University of Pennsylvania.

This move has shocked the American higher education system. Academia now faces a significant challenge fighting against the administration. Trump's attacks also have a political dimension. They are viewed as a conservative strategy to reduce the influence of liberalism in higher education. They could be aimed at eroding the Democratic Party's traditional support base.

The affected universities, which include those with funding cuts, are located in areas where the Democrats received strong support. Many of these institutions are now facing funding cuts and grant restrictions, which have significantly impacted their research and educational programmes. Conservatives have often complained about a bias in these institutions. Some view that these are part of the Trump administration's effort to reshape higher education.

One speculation is that Trump harbours resentment towards Ivy League schools for not granting him an honorary degree or inviting him to speak at graduation, despite his graduation from the Wharton School. Most recent American presidents have graduated from Ivy League universities, including Trump, who attended the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

KALYANI SHANKAR

In the first few months of 2024, the Trump administration has moved aggressively to strip federal funding from prominent colleges and universities. On March 10, the administration took action against Harvard, Columbia, NYU, and 60 other institutions. It also started investigations into possible violations of the Civil Rights Act due to incidents of antisemitic harassment. More than $10 billion in research grants have been cut.

Immigration and Customs Enforcement has apprehended student activists. International students are not eligible for admission to Harvard, which also risks losing its tax exemption status.Trump has also banned international students from attending Harvard.

Harvard risks losing its tax-exempt status. These actions have raised tensions among Ivy League universities. Many universities initially chose to adhere to Trump's policies. They have agreed to enhance on-campus security and also allow oversight in some specific departments. Columbia has been warned that failing to address antisemitic harassment incidents adequately could jeopardise its accreditation. Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania have also suspended hundreds of millions in research grants. The Department of Education is investigating ten universities for alleged antisemitism and has warned others that similar inquiries may occur. Furthermore, it is examining 52 universities for illegal race-based projects.

Trump has introduced new guidelines aimed at limiting international student admissions, including a cap on visas, and he has publicly criticised Harvard, stating, "Harvard needs to behave itself."

The confrontation marked a dramatic battle between Harvard, America's oldest and wealthiest University, and the president, Donald Trump. "Everyone knows that Harvard has lost its way," Trump posted in X. "Harvard is a JOKE, teaches Hate and Stupidity, and should no longer receive Federal Funds."

Harvard is hard hit both financially and otherwise. They include funding cuts and agreeing to follow new federal oversight rules, including scrutiny of curricula, admissions, and research priorities. Taking legal action, Harvard has initiated court proceedings and received temporary relief when a federal judge suspended the policy that restricted international students from obtaining visas.

As to the reason for Trump targeting the Ivy League institutions, the administration has offered various explanations. Some believe that during the 2024 Presidential campaign, Trump pledged to cut funding and accreditation for colleges that propagate "antisemitic propaganda."

After he returned to the White House in 2024, Trump launched a campaign targeting Ivy League schools. The White House says this campaign was prompted by concerns that these schools are not doing enough to deal with antisemitism on their campuses.

This concern has grown due to the anti-Israel protests at US universities since the Gaza conflict escalated. It is unclear how long the Trump versus Academia confrontation will continue. It all depends on how long the affected institutions can withstand the pressure. Will it fight back or comply with the White House? Even if the targeted universities refuse to change their policies soon, some will start changing on their own. For example, Michigan, Ohio State, and the University of California have already made changes, and more to follow.

International students hoping to join these elite institutions now face uncertainty and must consider alternatives in other countries. They contribute vast amounts of dollars mainly to the US economy. Some are considering universities in other countries as alternatives. It is said that it takes years to build an institution but only moments to tear one down. The conflict is escalating, and the affected universities may pursue more legal avenues. If it continues, American universities may lose talent, even as the Trump administration doubles down on its actions.

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

A Silent Revolution in Justice Delivery

SECOND Opinion

The Legal Aid Defense Counsel System (LADCS) in India is emerging as a critical initiative to enhance access to justice for the poor and marginalized. Launched by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), LADCS operationalises the constitutional rights to life and personal liberty (Article 21) and the state's duty to provide free legal aid (Article 39A).

The system adopts a public defender-style approach, a shift from the previous model relying on part-time empaneled lawyers. LADCS ensures full-time, salaried legal professionals are deployed in every district under the District Legal Services Authority (DLSA).

These teams are typically structured with a Chief Legal Aid Defense Counsel, Deputy Chief, and Assistant Legal Aid Defense Counsels, aiming for consistency, accountability, and dedicated service.

VIPUL YADAV

As a Legal Aid Defense Counsel in Gautam Buddh Nagar, the author highlights the practical impact of LADCS in bridging the gap between vulnerable individuals and the justice system. Their responsibilities extend beyond courtroom appearances to include advocacy, strategy, counseling, and coordination. They manage bail applications, revisions, and appeals, monitor case progress, and provide continuous legal assistance throughout criminal proceedings. Collaboration with jail authorities, court staff, police, and families is also integral to protecting the rights of the accused.

A key component of LADCS is the mandatory weekly jail visit protocol. During these visits, LADCs identify undertrial prisoners lacking legal representation or understanding of their cases, often their first interaction with the legal system after extended periods. They offer legal counseling, assess bail or discharge possibilities, and draft necessary legal documents.

Furthermore, LADCs report issues like custodial abuse, illegal detention, or procedural delays to the DLSA, contributing to both individual justice and systemic transparency.To uphold professionalism and integrity, NALSA's LADCS Scheme (2022) outlines operational and ethical guidelines.

Defense counsels are required to maintain client confidentiality, act without bias, and uphold individual dignity. Meticulous record-keeping of case files, court orders, jail visit notes, and monthly reports is mandated, with review by the DLSA. Significantly, LADCs are prohibited from private practice, ensuring their undivided focus on legal aid and preventing conflicts of interest.

Each district also has a Monitoring and Mentoring Committee responsible for evaluating LADCs' performance, with the authority to recommend disciplinary action for negligence or misconduct.

This institutional oversight aims to strengthen public confidence and professional accountability. LADCs are also expected to approach their work with empathy and social awareness, particularly in sensitive cases involving women, juveniles, disabled persons, or individuals from SC/ST or minority backgrounds, promoting a human-centric approach to justice.

From ground-level experience, the LADCS has shown tangible impact in Gautam Buddh Nagar, with many undertrial prisoners gaining access to bail, updates, and rightful representation.

By accelerating legal processes, LADCS helps reduce case backlogs and decongest jails, simultaneously restoring faith in the justice system. Courts also benefit from better-prepared defense counsels, leading to smoother case management. The system is not just about free legal services but about providing quality, ethical, and consistent representation.

While challenges like increasing awareness, addressing staff shortages, and expanding reach persist, LADCS is proving to be a foundational pillar of legal empowerment in India, defending constitutional values, human dignity, and the essence of justice for all.

(The author is a Legal Aid Defense Counsel with the District Legal Services Authority, Gautam Buddh Nagar. Views are personal)

Letters to the Editor

California on the brink

California, home to Hollywood, Disneyland, America's busiest port, and now the world's fourth-largest economy, is facing a serious crisis. President Donald Trump has controversially invoked Title 10 authority to deploy 700 National Guard troops to Los Angeles without the consent of Governor Gavin Newsom — a likely presidential candidate. Alarming reports suggest the troops have been instructed to arrest the Governor if he interferes.

The crisis stems from aggressive ICE raids in Los Angeles, Compton, and Paramount, which led to over 100 arrests and sparked widespread protests. These quickly turned violent, with incidents of looting, arson, and vehicle ramming.

Governor Newsom has launched legal action against the federal move, while US Marines are also being deployed, raising concerns about military force being used against civilians.

Over 100 arrests during aggressive ICE raids have triggered unrest, prompting President Trump to invoke Title 10 and send 700 National Guard troops — reportedly with orders to detain the Governor if he obstructs. With Marines joining the scene and 54 per cent of Americans supporting the President, California faces a growing crisis with national implications and an uncertain resltion.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

One nation one temperature!

Power Minister Manohar Lal Khattar's proposal to regulate AC temperatures so that they don't go below 20 degrees Celsius has been met with backlash by citizens worried that the Modi Government is interfering a little too much. It has pitted the 'greater good' of energy conservation against the consumer's right to choose. 'One nation, one temperature' and other hashtags are gaining ground on social media. The timing of the announcement — it was made as the country reels under extreme heat — has also been criticised.

New air conditioners in the Indian market will soon not go below 20 degrees, Khattar said Tuesday, referring to a "new provision" which he said would be "implemented soon". He pitched it as a bid to bring energy efficiency in the $3 billion AC market in the country. If the Government has its way, 'temperature standardisation' norms will apply to new AC units for malls, homes and cars that are manufactured and sold after this proposal comes into effect.

Many citizens have raised concerns about what they see as the Government infringing upon their choices as customers. Others argued that in the backdrop of rising temperatures, the Government should be working to make ACs more accessible for consumers, rather than bringing in "first-world" policies to the country. "What next, cars that can't drive below 20 km/h and above 60 km/h," remarked Supreme Court Advocate Sanjay Hegde.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Decline in micro financing

The news about 25 per cent decline in microfinancing (12-6-25) signals a serious situation warranting the immediate attention of the Government. Right now, this section is economically too weak to access anything other than essentials. This section, with around 100 crore consumers rendered redundant due to a lack of purchasing power, is helped by microfinancing firms by extending small loans under easy repayment terms.

The harsh means applied to recover loans have discouraged many. In spite of such positive interventions, a 25 per cent decline in performance is a serious alarm that signals the shrinking repaying capacity of the people. A growing number of jobless members in families, inflation, wage revisions frozen for a decade, and growing costs of healthcare and education are the directly or indirectly contributing factors. There is a dire need to empower the vast poor section of people to spend more to stimulate the market with increasing demand. Illness is already reported in the production sector.

We need more microfinancing firms to cater to more people. Lakhs of crores have gone down the drain as waived-off loans and haircuts, benefiting the production sector. It is still limping due to a lack of demand. Therefore, the immediate option is to activate microfinancing firms to expand their harassment-free operations.

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

INDIA REACHES OUT TO THE WORLD AND MAKES A POINT

Apropos of "A Diplomatic Victory Over Pakistan" (The Pioneer, 12 June, 2025), there is no gainsaying that India has scored a big diplomatic victory over war-torn Pakistan by deputing the All-Party Delegations to various countries to honestly present the Indian side of Operation Sindoor. Of course, apart from exposing the duplicity of the theocratic state and their role in enthusiastically investing in and aggressively promoting Pan-Islamic Terrorism across the globe, India has also won diplomatic brownie points, or goodwill, whatever one may call it. From the sidelines of the entire exercise, it can be seen that all the teams successfully finished their brief with élan and style.

No delegates failed in handling dicey or planted questions from moles planted by Pakistan. Secondly, what took the entire democratic world by surprise is the involvement of the opposition MPs in an exercise which would have put their political future in jeopardy at home.

It is also a moment of glory for the Indian democracy for yet again proving its strength and refreshing spirit during these testing times. The Western democracies, who always consider themselves to be mature, thriving democracies, have a lesson or two to learn from the latest Indian democratic example. India's diplomatic outreach through bipartisan delegations has not only exposed Pakistan's duplicity on terrorism but also strengthened global support for Operation Sindoor. The participation of opposition MPs showcased India's democratic maturity, surprising many in the West. Each team fulfilled its mission with clarity and composure, effectively countering hostile narratives. This rare political unity during a geopolitical crisis stands as a testament to India's democratic resilience and offers valuable lessons to even the most seasoned democracies.

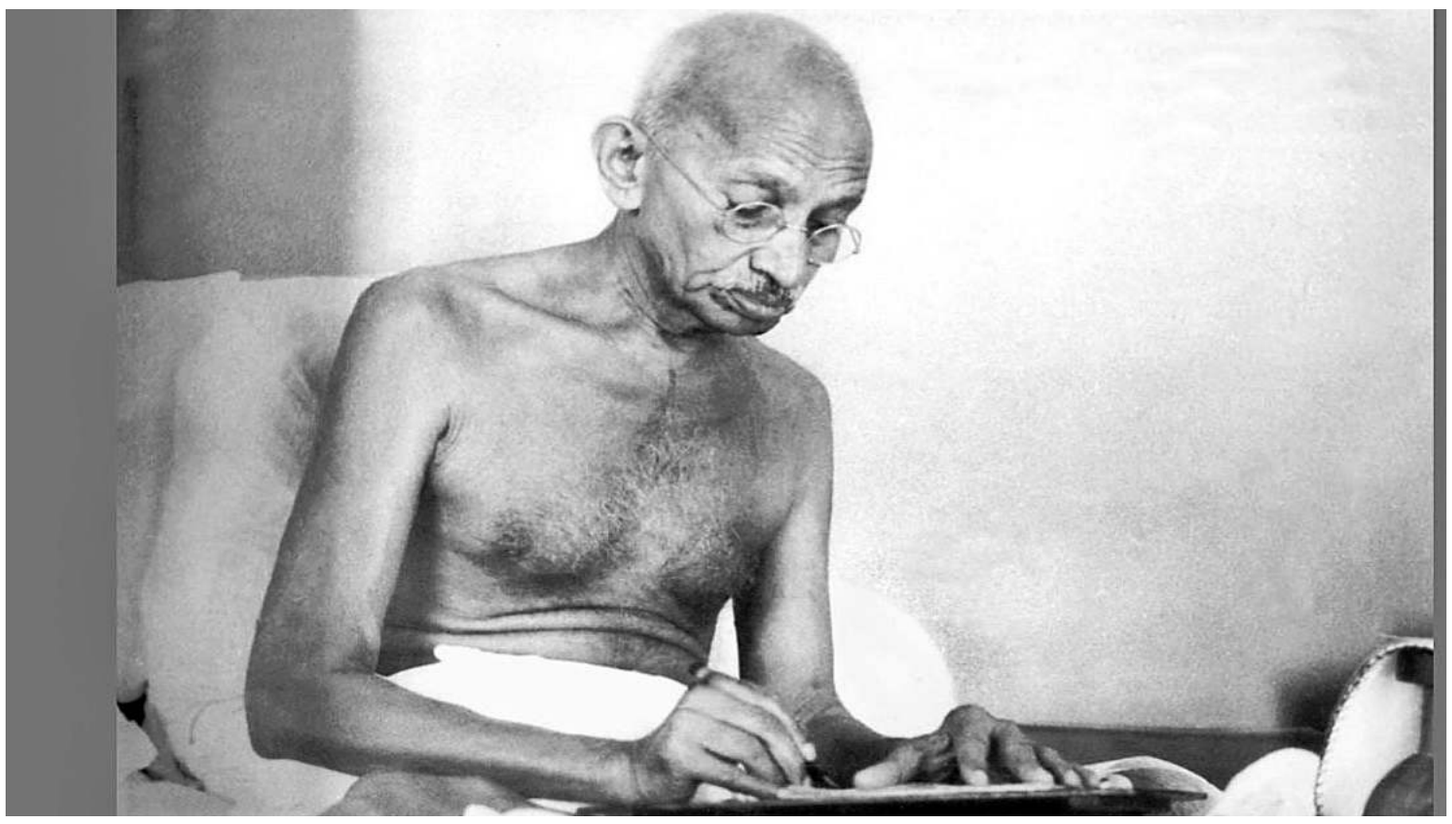
BICHU MUTTATHARA | PUNE

Please send your letter to the letterstopioneer@gmail.com. In not more than 400 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Gandhi's 'Indian Opinion' and its message for the digital age

In today's digital world of misinformation and fleeting outrage, Gandhi's model of principled media — anchored in trust, restraint and purpose — offers a timeless blueprint for using technology to serve truth, not trends

FIRST Column



On June 4, 1903, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi launched The Indian Opinion in South Africa, a publication that became a vital tool in his struggle against racial injustice. As detailed by Ela Gandhi in her book, "Mahatma Gandhi and the Media — The Indian Opinion" a publication of the National Gandhi Museum, New Delhi, the seeds of this resistance were sown on June 7, 1893, when Gandhi, despite holding a valid first-class ticket, was forcibly ejected from a train at Pietermaritzburg due to his race.

That freezing night in the station's waiting room marked a turning point; he resolved to stay and resist injustice instead of returning home. He also telegrammed the railway manager, urging corrective action against such discriminatory conduct. Ela Gandhi writes, "On that night, he rejected the idea of abandoning his case and immediately returning home to a life of dignity and respect. He rejected the idea of succumbing to the insults and accepting them as a way of life in South Africa. He decided instead to stay on and confront and transform the racist system".

His activism in South Africa spanned over two decades (1893-1914). During this period, he developed and refined his unique philosophy of non-violent resistance, which he termed "Satyagraha" (truth-force). He organised mass protests, boycotts, and civil disobedience campaigns against discriminatory laws, such as the Black Act (which required Indians to carry registration certificates) and the £3 poll tax (In 1913, the South African Government introduced a £3 tax on Indians, (mainly those who had completed their indentured labour contracts).

These struggles often led to (direct) confrontations with the authorities, and Gandhi, along with thousands of other Indians, faced numerous arrests and endured harsh prison sentences. His imprisonments — further drew attention to unjust laws through non-violent means — and were a deliberate act of civil disobedience for a righteous cause, further solidifying his resolve to fight injustice.

RAJDEEP PATHAK

Ela Gandhi notes that Gandhi had "Written hundreds of letters to the press about the irking racism and the various injustices suffered by South Africans. He wrote about the wretched conditions of service that the indentured workers were subject to in South Africa. He produced the famous green pamphlet to discourage Indians from being lured into indenture by false stories and promises".

Mahatma Gandhi's strategic use of alternative media was both innovative and deliberate. Deeply conscious of the press's influence, he also recognised the ethical responsibilities inherent in journalism. As Ela Gandhi notes, "He was also aware of the responsibility that a journalist carried. As a writer or journalist, he constantly exercised discipline over himself to ensure that his reporting was balanced." The persistent injustices faced by the Indian community in South Africa, along with the imperative for organised resistance, prompted Gandhi to launch 'The Indian Opinion'. Recognising the inadequacy and bias of the white-owned press, he envisioned a medium that would serve not only as a newspaper but also as a pedagogical tool for disseminating the principles of Satyagraha. It became a critical platform for mobilisation and dialogue, anchoring the nascent Indian civil rights movement.

'The Indian Opinion' began as a bilingual (later trilingual and quadrilingual) weekly, published in Gujarati, Hindi, Tamil, and English. Its primary objective was to articulate the grievances of the Indian community in South Africa, combat racial discrimination, and foster unity among diverse linguistic and religious groups. Mahatma Gandhi himself meticulously managed its production, writing a significant portion of its content, editing, and even doing manual labour at the press. The paper reported on legal cases, documented instances of injustice, provided educational content and served as a forum for community discussions. Through 'The Indian Opinion', Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi didn't just report the news; he shaped it, guiding his readers towards a deeper understanding of their collective plight and the imperative for non-violent resistance, and, simultaneously, Gandhi's evolution as a leader.

> MAHATMA GANDHI MIGHT HAVE LEVERAGED SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS TO DISSEMINATE HIS MESSAGE IN AN ERA OF INSTANT GRATIFICATION AND VIRAL CONTENT. HIS ICONIC QUOTES COULD BECOME POWERFUL MEMES, HIS CALLS TO ACTION AMPLIFIED THROUGH TRENDING HASHTAGS

Today, in a world grappling with the rise of divisive narratives and the proliferation of 'fake news,' 'The Indian Opinion's' commitment to truth and ethical communication remains profoundly relevant. The digital age has democratised information but has also unleashed a torrent of misinformation, making the discerning reader an endangered species. Imagine Gandhi in the 21st century, armed not with a hand-cranked printing press but with a smartphone.

Mahatma Gandhi might have leveraged social media platforms to disseminate his message in an era of instant gratification and viral content. His iconic quotes could become powerful memes, his calls to action amplified through trending hashtags. However, he would likely approach these tools with extreme caution, prioritising authentic engagement over superficial popularity.

He would use social media not for self-promotion, but for genuine community mobilisation, echoing the words of the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan, "The medium is the message."

For Gandhi, the message was always truth and non-violence, and the medium would be moulded to serve that higher purpose. Just as 'The Indian Opinion' served as a hub for organising protests and passive resistance campaigns, a modern-day 'Indian Opinion' would perhaps be deeply embedded in online activism. It would facilitate virtual meetings, organise digital petitions, and livestream acts of non-violent civil disobedience.

Going forward with what Marshall McLuhan had said, Gandhi would not have succumbed to popularity metrics like 'likes' or 'followers'. Instead, as historian Ramachandra Guha in his book 'Gandhi Before India notes, Gandhi "was never interested in public applause… he was interested in public awakening".

Gandhi's commitment to self-sufficiency and ethical production was evident in 'The Indian Opinion's' operation. He believed in local control and minimising reliance on external, often exploitative, systems. In today's tech landscape, this translates into a powerful critique of centralised digital platforms and data monopolies.

Mahatma Gandhi might have advocated for data privacy — as it is one of the greatest dangers people are facing. Further, going by his 'dharma' (righteous principles), Mahatma Gandhi would have advocated for ethical algorithms, transparent data practices, and the responsible use of artificial intelligence (AI), while cautioning about the dangers of the addictive nature of social media.

American media theorist Evgeny Morozov (2011) argues that online activism often gives a false sense of accomplishment — 'clicks have replaced commitment.' Mahatma Gandhi would challenge this hollow activism and call for real-world consequences. "It is not enough to be passively good; we must be actively good," he once wrote (Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi, Vol. 27, p. 164). 'The Indian Opinion' of the 21st century would, therefore, focus on 'converting online energy into offline results'. Today's journalists often find themselves caught between TRPs, clicks, and ethical compromise. A 2020 Reuters Institute report lamented the declining public trust in mainstream media globally. Gandhi's 'Indian Opinion', however, would choose 'trust over traffic'.

If the 'charkha' (spinning wheel) was Gandhi's symbol of resistance and regeneration in the 20th century, the smartphone — used mindfully — could become its 21st-century equivalent. Mahatma would strongly advocate for its use with restraint, truth, and compassion.

Last, but not the least, Mahatma Gandhi did not romanticise suffering, nor did he glamourise technology. He was pragmatic yet principled. His digital philosophy would be grounded in Satyagraha — not just in 'content', but in 'conduct'. His "The Indian Opinion" served that purpose.

(The writer is programme executive at Gandhi Smriti Sansthan. Views expressed are personal)

Redefining the Capital: Modi Govt drives massive infra push across Delhi

From Dehradun Expressway to Meerut Expressway and Central Vista to Bharat Mandapam — PM Modi executed projects worth approximately 1.50 lakh Crore in the national capital during his 11 years of tenure in the centre since May 26, 2014. Besides spending ₹53,000 crore on Delhi Metro projects, the central Government says around ₹68,000 crore has been directly spent on Delhi's development in the last decade. Furthermore, Detailed Project Reports (DPR) have been prepared for new infrastructure worth ₹24,000 crore in the pipeline. A major portion of the spending, nearly ₹41,000 crore, has gone into road infrastructure, while ₹15,000 crore was allocated to railway-related projects. Another ₹12,000 crore has been invested in airport-related infrastructure and surrounding connectivity. Projects like the Delhi-Merut Expressway, the Pragati Maidan tunnel, Dwarka Expressway, Urban Extension Road, and the Central Vista redevelopment have been some of the most visible changes that citizens can witness across the city.

Among the biggest completed projects is the Delhi-Meerut Expressway, which has cut down travel time to Meerut to just 45 minutes. This road has significantly improved the daily commute for residents in NCR towns. It is also part of a larger effort to expand high-speed corridors across India. The Government is also building the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, aiming to reduce the travel time between the two cities to about 12 hours. The Eastern and Western Peripheral Expressways, which had been stalled for years due to issues between state Governments, were completed during this period. These bypass highways were planned to divert heavy vehicular traffic away from Delhi. With an estimated 50,000 trucks that previously passed through the capital every day now using these routes, traffic congestion and air pollution in the city have seen some relief.

RAJESH KUMAR

In addition to major expressways, the Urban Extension Road-II, built at a cost of over ₹ 7,700 crore, has created an alternative route connecting north and west Delhi to the airport and south Delhi. The road is expected to ease pressure on congested internal roads, especially for commuters from Haryana, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir who often face bottlenecks entering Delhi. While this road was originally the Delhi Government's responsibility, it was taken over by the National Highways Authority of India, with full support from the Centre. One of the key projects in central Delhi is the redevelopment of Central Vista, a project that has stirred both political and public debate. It includes the new Parliament building, which was completed in under four years. The Kartavya Path, formerly known as Rajpath, has also been redesigned under this project. Earlier plagued by traffic and poor pedestrian access, the area now features better walkways, underground passages, and landscaping. The wider Central Vista plan includes the upcoming Central Secretariat complex, where several Government ministries will be housed under one roof. Another key transport intervention has been the Pragati Maidan Integrated Transit Corridor. Built to address traffic congestion during major events at the Pragati Maidan exhibition grounds, the corridor includes a tunnel that provides signal-free movement between Mandi House and east Delhi. This project has led to a significant reduction i n jams at ITO and on Mathura Road. It also includes parking facilities for thousands of vehicles and several underground U-turns to manage traffic flow.

Near the airport, two major convention centres have been established — Bharat Mandapam and Yashobhoomi. Bharat Mandapam, located at Pragati Maidan, hosted the G20 summit and now serves as a venue for large national and international conferences.

Its construction also transformed the surrounding infrastructure, including roads and metro access. Yashobhoomi, built over 221 acres with an investment of around ₹25,000 crores, is among the largest convention centres in Asia and can host up to 20,000 people at once. It is well-connected by metro and roads such as the Dwarka Expressway and UER-II. Efforts have also been made to boost rail-based regional connectivity. The first phase of the Delhi-Merut Regional Rapid Transit System, or RRTS, branded as Namo Bharat, is now operational between Delhi and a part of Meerut. When complete, the corridor will drastically reduce commute time between the two cities. Similar corridors have been proposed from Delhi to Panipat and Delhi to Alwar. These high-speed transit lines aim to bring surrounding towns into the fold of daily commuting zones, reducing the dependence on road travel and offering an alternative to private vehicles.

Several projects have focused on improving the internal infrastructure of the city. The flyover at Dhaula Kuan, for instance, was finally constructed after years of delay caused by land availability issues. The flyover eased movement between west Delhi and the airport. Another area of focus has been urban housing and the regularisation of settlements. Under the PM-UDAY scheme, efforts have been made to provide ownership rights to residents of over 1,700 unauthorised colonies. Around 29,000 houses have been sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban), and 3,000 flats for economically weaker sections were built with a total outlay of around ₹354 crore.

New public infrastructure has also included educational and cultural facilities such as the Veer Savarkar College at Delhi University, the Prime Minister's Museum, the Police Memorial, and the National War Memorial. Oxygen parks and green zones have also been developed in several parts of the city, intended as both environmental measures and public recreation spaces. In public transport, Delhi received support from the Centre for expanding its fleet of electric buses under the FAME scheme. The central Government funded a substantial portion of the cost of these non-polluting buses. Several projects are currently in the pipeline. Detailed Project Reports have been prepared for new infrastructure worth ₹24,000 crores, spanning over 120 kilometres. Among these are a 7-kilometre tunnel from Shiv Murti to Nelson Mandela Road, an elevated road connecting INA to the airport with possible extensions to Gurugram and Faridabad, and further extensions of UER-II to connect Alipur, Tronica City, and the Delhi-Dehradun route. A feasibility study is also being conducted for a tunnel connecting Sarai Kale Khan to IGI Airport, which could transform airport access for south and east Delhi residents. From new highways and tunnels to convention centres and transit corridors, the national capital has seen rapid transformation — one that is reshaping how the city moves, works, and presents itself to the world.

(The writer is a staffer with *The Pioneer*. Views expressed are personal)

Beyond the Optics: Why India's Strategic Focus Has Moved Past RIC

When Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov recently called for the revival of the Russia-India-China (RIC) trilateral dialogue, it echoed a familiar, if somewhat outdated, diplomatic refrain. Labeling RIC as an "independent mechanism," Lavrov argued that the moment is ripe for its reinvigoration — especially given the reported easing of India-China border tensions. On the surface, it sounded like a classic Eurasian initiative: three major powers coming together to balance global influence and reinforce multipolarity. But in substance, the call appears more symbolic than strategic, driven less by genuine trust and more by Moscow's shifting compulsions.

Originally conceptualised in the late 1990s, RIC was born out of a common need among the three nations to counterbalance Western dominance and to claim space in global decision-making. At the time, the idea of a trilateral dialogue made sense — India, Russia, and China were navigating a unipolar world, seeking to shape a more balanced international order. However, over the past two decades, the geopolitical context has transformed significantly. The foundational logic behind RIC has weakened as each member has chosen distinct strategic paths.

India's foreign policy has evolved through sustained engagements with a host of global actors — particularly the Indo-Pacific Quad (with the U.S., Japan, and Australia), France, and key Southeast Asian partners. These relationships are grounded in values like transparency, sovereignty, and a rules-based international system-values that China does not share. Beijing's military posturing along the Line of Actual Control, its strategic penetration into the Indian Ocean, and its use of economic coercion have deeply eroded trust in New Delhi.

PRASHANTO BAGCHI

Even Lavrov's claim of reduced border tensions is disputable. While disengagement has occurred in some friction zones, the larger strategic environment remains tense. Post-Galwan, India's diplomatic recalibration has been clear: less sentimentalism, more realism. New Delhi is no longer willing to engage in platforms that pay lip service to unity while ignoring hard truths. RIC, under these conditions, appears increasingly disconnected from the region's evolving security landscape.

Russia's position further complicates the equation. While defence and energy ties with India remain strong, Moscow's growing dependency on China — intensified by Western sanctions — undermines its role as a neutral partner. This tilt is not lost on India. Moscow's silence on Chinese aggression and its quiet alignment with Pakistani narratives in multilateral forums have not gone unnoticed. A recent decision to collaborate with Pakistan in reviving a Soviet-era steel plant only reinforces the perception of Russia's pivot away from India's sensitivities.

Given these shifts, Lavrov's push for RIC should be seen for what it is: a diplomatic move by Russia to maintain relevance in Asia without Western interference. RIC offers Moscow a platform, even if only symbolically, to present itself as a balancer. But symbolism alone does not constitute strategy. For RIC to be viable, it would require political will, mutual trust, and convergence on key issues — all of which are currently absent.

India, to its credit, does not reject any multilateral platform outright. It continues to engage in RIC, BRICS, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation. However, such participation is pragmatic, not preferential. These forums are now largely diplomatic stages rather than engines for transformative change. India's real focus lies on groupings where its values and strategic goals align with those of its partners. Moreover, India's democratic ethos increasingly diverges from the authoritarian and opaque governance styles of Russia and China. This divergence is more than ideological — it affects everything from crisis response to geopolitical alignment. Without shared principles and trust, trilateral mechanisms like RIC risk producing hollow rhetoric instead of substantive results.

It's also important to recognise that India isn't seeking to distance itself completely from either China or Russia. What it desires is strategic autonomy — the ability to act in its own interest without being tied down by legacy frameworks or false notions of equidistance.

In this context, dialogue remains important, but only when it is based on reciprocity, mutual respect, and a willingness to address core concerns. Beijing's attempt to compartmentalise its relationship with India — engaging economically while maintaining military standoffs — is something New Delhi has actively resisted. Under such conditions, expecting India to re-engage meaningfully in RIC amounts to ignoring ground realities. Any revival that does not address the trust deficit will remain superficial — serving little purpose beyond optics. Finally, the idea of multipolarity that once inspired RIC has itself evolved.

Today, the global order is shaped less by traditional power blocs and more by flexible, issue-based coalitions. India's active role in areas like digital governance, climate action, and global health demonstrates this shift. RIC no longer fits into this dynamic, forward-looking vision. Lavrov's appeal to revive RIC may resonate with diplomatic nostalgia, but it lacks contemporary relevance. The world has changed, and so has India. Clinging to outdated formats risks diverting attention from more effective collaborations. India's future lies in agile, purposeful, and values-aligned partnerships. Dialogue is welcome, but only if it's grounded in realism — not rhetoric.

(The writer is an International Relations scholar at JNU and a columnist. Views expressed are personal)

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ACROSS THE STATES

Sebi sets minimum two PAC meetings

Markets regulator Sebi on Thursday directed stock exchanges with commodity segments to ensure their Product Advisory Committees (PACs) meet at least twice a year, or more frequently if necessary. However, in the case of agricultural commodities, the PAC is required to meet at least once annually. Sebi's 'Master Circular for Commodity Derivatives Segment' in August 2023 issued various compliance requirements for stock exchanges and clearing corporations operating in the commodity derivatives segment. As per the Master Circular, each stock exchange is mandated to constitute a Product Advisory Committee for every group or complex of commodities that share common stakeholders or value chain participants, and on which derivatives are either currently traded or proposed to be introduced. Based on representations from market participants and following deliberations by Sebi's Commodity Derivatives Advisory Committee (CDAC), the regulator has revised the meeting frequency guidelines for PACs.

'Govt's focus should be on zero road fatalities'

The issue of road safety is very important, and the government's focus should be on working towards zero road fatalities, Minister of State for Highways Ajay Tamta said on Thursday. Addressing the National Summit on VRUs & Road Safety, Tamta said the government should work on ideas to reduce road fatalities. Also speaking at the event, UN Special Envoy for Road Safety Jen Todt called road crashes a silent pandemic and emphasized the urgent need to protect vulnerable road users like pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. Citing over 154,000 road fatalities in India in 2021, he stressed that while not every crash is avoidable, many are and those who die are often young people, daily commuters, and sole breadwinners. A key highlight of the event was the launch of 'Road Safety Paathshaala', a road safety module developed by TRAX for children aged 8 to 13 years.

Rourkela Steel Plant starts ladle furnace

The Rourkela Steel Plant (RSP) of SAIL on Thursday said it has commissioned a state-of-the-art Ladle Furnace 2D (LF#2D). A ladle furnace is the second unit used to refine molten steel after it is produced in a primary furnace. It was commissioned in Steel Melting Shop-II on Wednesday. This achievement underscores RSP's commitment to technological modernisation, enhanced productivity, and a strong culture of safety, the company said in a statement. The newly operational LF#2D is a critical facility that will significantly boost productivity by ensuring a timely and efficient supply of liquid steel to the new slab caster alongside the existing ones. Alok Verma, Director In-Charge, RSP, with additional charge of Durgapur Steel Plant & IISCO Steel Plant said, "Steel is not just what we make — it is who we are. RSP is truly proud of everyone's sincere and hardworking efforts."

CURBS ON RARE EARTH METALS

China hints at holding talks with India

PNS ■ BEIJING

Rare earths are a group of metals consisting of 17 elements. Though present in several counties, their extraction is costly and messy, causing massive amounts of pollution.

China on Thursday hinted at holding talks with India over its restrictions on export of rare earth materials, saying it is willing to enhance dialogue and cooperation with relevant countries to keep industrial supply chains stable.

China's recent restrictions on the exports of key metals caused widespread disruption in the manufacturing of automobiles and semiconductor chips in a host of countries, including India. "We are willing to enhance dialogue and cooperation with relevant countries and regions to jointly keep the stability of global industrial and supply chains," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said. Lin was responding to a question from PTI whether China is willing to lift restrictions on exports of rare earth metals to India as it began clearing export licences to the US and the EU.

Lin, however, reiterated that for specifics, the relevant authorities should be approached.

On June 16, Indian Ambassador Pradeep Kumar Rawat met Chinese Vice Minister Sun Weidong and held talks on bilateral issues. They discussed "common concerns" among others, a foreign ministry statement here said.

Reports from India spoke of growing concerns about shortages of the rare metals in automobiles and other industries.

After several months of a squeeze on rare earth metals over which China holds a monopoly, Beijing began clearing selective export licenses reportedly for the US as both countries held talks in London over the issues. Rare earths are a group of metals consisting of 17 elements. Though present in several counties, their extraction is costly and messy, causing massive amounts of pollution.

According to the International Energy Agency, China accounts for 61 per cent of global mined rare earth production but controls 92 per cent of the global output.

US President Donald Trump on Wednesday announced that a deal with China "is done" after two days of talks in London, marking a turnaround in the trade war between the two major economies. Trump's announcement came after the negotiating teams from both sides concluded two-day talks in London, where they agreed to resolve their trade disputes.

China has opened talks with the US and EU to address complaints of shortages but remained silent about India's request for talks on the issue.

An Indian delegation of auto industry representatives is gearing up for a China visit to expedite the import of rare earth magnets to Indian entities, according to industry sources in New Delhi.

Retail inflation falls to 6-yr low of 2.82% on cooling food prices

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Retail inflation dipped to an over six-year low of 2.82 per cent in May due to subdued food prices, remaining below the RBI's median target of 4 per cent for the fourth consecutive month, according to government data released on Thursday.

Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based retail inflation was 3.16 per cent in April and 4.8 per cent in May 2024. The previous low was in February 2019 at 2.57 per cent.

On easing inflation, the Reserve Bank effected a jumbo rate cut of 50 basis points last week, taking the total to 100 bps since February. Food inflation was 0.99 per cent in May, significantly lower from 8.69 per cent in the year-ago month, according to the National Statistics Office (NSO) data. "The significant decline in headline inflation and food inflation during the month of May 2025 is mainly attributed to a decline in inflation of pulses & products, vegetables, fruits, cereals & products, households goods & services, sugar & confectionary and egg and the favourable base effect," NSO said in a statement.

The food inflation in May 2025 is the lowest since October 2021.

According to NSO data, inflation in rural areas was 2.59 per cent in May, while it was 3.07 per cent in urban India.

Among states and UTs, the highest inflation was recorded in Kerala at 6.46 per cent, followed by Punjab (5.21 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (4.55 per cent), Haryana (3.67 per cent) and Uttarakhand (3.47 per cent).

Gold jumps Rs 850 to Rs 99,340/10 g

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices jumped Rs 850 to Rs 99,340 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a rise in precious metal prices in the overseas markets, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The yellow metal of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 800 to Rs 98,800 per 10 grams (inclusive of all taxes). However, silver prices went lower by Rs 100 to Rs 1,07,000 per kilogram (inclusive of all taxes) on Thursday. The most traded gold contracts for August delivery bounced by Rs 1,585 to trade at Rs 98,289 per 10 grams. Subsequently, the contracts for October delivery rallied Rs 1,520 to Rs 99,214 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX).

Meanwhile, spot gold increased by USD 15.74 per ounce or 0.47 per cent to USD 3,370.87 per ounce in the international markets. Globally, spot silver fell 0.54 per cent to trade at USD 36.05 per ounce.

BoM slashes retail loan rate by up to 50 bps

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Bank of Maharashtra on Thursday said it has reduced its interest rate by up to 50 basis points on retail loans, including home, car, education and other loans linked with Repo Linked Lending Rate.

The interest rate reduction by Pune-based lender is in line with the rate moderation done by RBI last week and the new rates are effective from June 10. With the rate cut, its home loan now starts from 7.35 per cent and car loan from 7.7 per cent, which is among the lowest interest rates in the banking industry, BoM said in a statement.

Bharat Biotech, GSK to develop vaccine for severe diarrhoea

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Bharat Biotech on Thursday said it has partnered with GSK plc for the development of a vaccine for Shigellosis, a severe form of bacterial diarrhoea.

The altSonflex1-2-3 vaccine candidate, developed by GSK and now advancing through a strategic collaboration with Bharat Biotech, represents one of the most advanced Shigella vaccine candidates globally, the company said in a statement. With no licensed Shigella vaccine currently available and rising antimicrobial resistance, this candidate stands out for its broad serotype coverage, innovative Generalized Modules for Membrane Antigens (GMMA)-based platform, and robust early clinical results, it added.

"With no approved vaccine currently available and antimicrobial resistance on the rise, there is an urgent need for scalable, science-backed solutions focused on low and middle-income countries," Bharat Biotech Executive Chairman Krishna Ella said.

As part of this agreement, Bharat Biotech will lead the further development of altSonflex1-2-3, including Phase 3 clinical trials, regulatory advancement, and large-scale manufacturing.

GSK will continue to support the programme by assisting with clinical trial design, securing external funding, and contributing to the Access and Delivery Plans and commercialisation strategy.

Sensex, Nifty tumble 1% on weak trends, geopolitical tensions

PNS ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex tanked 823 points on Thursday following a selloff in oil & gas, power and capital goods shares in tandem with weak global market trends amid growing tensions in the Middle East.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 823.16 points or 1 per cent to settle at 81,691.98 with 27 of its constituents declining and three ending higher. During the day, it plunged 991.98 points or 1.20 per cent to 81,523.16. Snapping its six-day winning streak, the broader NSE Nifty tumbled 253.20 points or 1.01 per cent to 24,888.20. Fresh foreign fund outflows also dented investors' sentiment, traders said.

Among Sensex stocks, Tata Motors, Titan, Eternal, Power Grid, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra and Hindustan Unilever were among the biggest laggards.

Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints and Tech Mahindra were the gainers. "Consolidation in domestic markets is evolving into a broad-based trend, now extending to large-cap stocks. Valuation concerns and rising oil prices -- driven by Middle East tensions -- are fuelling risk aversion among investors.

"Adding to the uncertainty, the US is considering unilateral tariff hikes on several key trading partners, with a decision expected within the next one to two weeks, ahead of an early July deadline," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

The BSE midcap gauge tanked 1.52 per cent and smallcap index dropped 1.38 per cent. Among sectoral indices, power tumbled 2.19 per cent, utilities (2.18 per cent), oil & gas (2.10 per cent), realty (2.07 per cent), consumer durables (2.02 per cent), industrials (1.98 per cent), auto (1.71 per cent), consumer discretionary (1.67 per cent) and metal (1.63 per cent).

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 5.98L cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 5.98 lakh crore on Thursday, tracking weak trends in equities where the BSE Sensex tumbled 1 per cent.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 823.16 points or 1 per cent to settle at 81,691.98. During the day, it plunged 991.98 points or 1.20 per cent to 81,523.16. The market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms dropped by Rs 5,98,759.27 crore to Rs 4,49,58,383.92 crore (USD 5.26 trillion). "The weekly expiry of derivatives contracts added to intraday volatility and profit-booking, amplifying the downward move," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

From the Sensex firms, Tata Motors, Titan, Eternal, Power Grid, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra and Hindustan Unilever were among the biggest laggards.

Reliance Industries sells 3.64 pc stake in Asian Paints for Rs 7,703 cr

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Billionaire Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries on Thursday divested a 3.64 per cent stake in Asian Paints, while SBI Mutual Fund picked up the shares for Rs 7,703 crore through an open market transaction.

Reliance Industries, through its affiliate Siddhant Commercials Pvt Ltd, sold 3.50 crore equity shares or 3.64 per cent stake in Asian Paints, as per the block deal data available with the National Stock Exchange (NSE).

The shares were disposed of at an average price of Rs 2,201 apiece, taking the transaction value to Rs 7,703.50 crore.

After the stake sale, RIL arm Siddhant Commercials' shareholding in Asian Paints dipped to 1.26 per cent from 4.90 per cent. With the acquisition of shares, SBI Mutual Fund's shareholding in Asian Paints rose to 5.15 per cent from 1.51 per cent.

Shares of Asian Paints went up 0.73 per cent to close at Rs 2,225 apiece on the NSE.

Rupee falls 7 paise to settle at 85.60 against US dollar

PNS ■ MUMBAI

The rupee declined 7 paise to close to 85.60 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday amid a steep fall in the domestic equity markets and a rise in global crude oil prices.

However, a weaker dollar against major currencies capped the losses, forex traders said. At the inter-bank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 85.43 against the US dollar and traded in the range of 85.43-85.65 before closing at 85.60 (provisional), down 7 paise from its previous close.

The local unit had settled at 85.53 on Wednesday.

"The Indian rupee fell today (Thursday) after rising to 85.43 as oil companies bought the dollar after the oil prices touched USD 70 per barrel," Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP, said.

"The rupee is expected to be in the range of 85.35-95.95 on Friday as we get the US PPI number and our CPI number." Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was down 0.43 per cent at 99.20.

RBI asks banks to give due notices to customers for periodic KYC update

PNS ■ MUMBAI

RBI on Thursday asked banks and other regulated entities to give due notices to their customers for periodic updation of Know Your Customer (KYC) with a view to enhance consumer protection as well as service.

In a circular, the RBI said it has observed a large pendency in periodic updation of KYC, including in the accounts opened for credit of Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)/ Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) under government schemes to facilitate credit of DBTs and/or scholarship amount (DBT/EBT/scholarship beneficiaries) and accounts opened under PMJDY.

In order to further ease the process for the convenience of customers, the instructions regarding updation/ periodic updation of KYC have been amended with the intent, inter alia, to allow BCs to facilitate in the process of KYC updation.

In this regard, it issued the Reserve Bank of India Know Your Customer (KYC) (Amendment) Directions, 2025 on Thursday.

According to the latest directions, regulated entity (RE) shall intimate its customers, in advance, to update their KYC, it said.

"Prior to the due date of periodic updation of KYC, the RE shall give at least three advance intimations, including at least one intimation by letter, at appropriate intervals to its customers through available communication options/ channels for complying with the requirement of periodic updation of KYC," it said.

"Prior to the due date of periodic updation of KYC, the RE shall give at least three advance intimations, including at least one intimation by letter, at appropriate intervals to its customers through available communication options/ channels for complying with the requirement of periodic updation of KYC."

Subsequent to the due date, the RE shall give at least three reminders, including at least one reminder by letter, at appropriate intervals, to such customers who have still not complied with the requirements, despite advance intimations.

RBI further said that the letter of intimation/ reminder may, inter alia, contain easy to understand instructions for updating KYC, escalation mechanism for seeking help, if required, and the consequences, if any, of failure to update their KYC in time.

"Issue of such advance intimation/ reminder shall be duly recorded in the RE's system against each customer for audit trail," the Rserve Bank said, and asked REs to expeditiously implement the same but not later than January 01, 2026.

It also said that a self-declaration from the customer in case of no change in KYC information or change only in the address details may be obtained through an authorised Business Correspondent (BC) of the bank.

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT PANCHAYAT RAJ ENGINEER
TENDER NOTICE

Lr.No: TO/42-89/MUDA/2025-26, Dt: 10.06.2025

No of works (48), Number of works in Balanagar Mandal (22), Devarakadra Mandal (02), Jadcherla Mandal (03), Kaukuntla Mandal (04), Rajapur Mandal (02), Hanwada Mandal(06), Mahabubnagar Mandal(09) in Mahabubnagar District Total ECV **Rs. 398.00 lakhs** Tender Notice Starting Dated: **13.06.2025 to 23.06.2025**, Opening Date: **24.06.2025.**

Sd/- District Panchayatraj Engineer,
PIU Division. Mahabubnagar.

DPR R.O.No: 3469-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt: 12-06-2025

GOVERNMENT OF TELANGANA
O/o THE REGIONAL OFFICER PANCHAYATHI RAJ REGION NIZAMABAD
QUOTATION TENDER NOTICE Dt: 12.06.2025

Quotation Notice No and date: 1/2025-26/1st Call Dated: 12.06.2025

The following quotation tender Dt: 12.06.2025 by the Regional officer Panchayati Raj Region Nizamabad for the following works. **Name of the Work:** Sealed Quotations are invited from the reputed firms Supply, delivery and fixing of Gym Equipments, Children play Equipments and planting of Korean Carpet grass at various parks in Nizamabad Town. The last date for receiving quotations will be **17.06.2025 up to 3.30 PM.** Officer Inviting Tenders: Regional Officer, P. R. Region Nizamabad. Contact Phone Nos.: 9700433138, The details of items Can be had from the Office of the District Panchayath Raj Engineer, PIU Division Nizamabad during Office hours.

Sd/- Regional Officer
P.R. Region, Nizamabad

DPR R.O.No: 3477-PP/CL/ADVT/1/2025-26, Dt: 13-06-2025

The Pioneer
Hyderabad

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FRIDAY JUNE 13, 2025

Cricket, Culture and Check-ins

TEJAL SINHA
tejal.sinha30@gmail.com

Cricket in India is more than just a sport—it's a way of life. But in 2025, it's also becoming a way to travel. According to Skyscanner's Travel Trends 2025 report, 53% of Indian travellers are planning trips—domestically and internationally—specifically to attend sporting events this year. With the IPL 2025 season recently concluding and the World Test Championship final just around the corner, a new wave of Indian fans is packing their bags not just for the stadiums, but for the cities, the cultures, and the experiences surrounding the matches.

We caught up with Taran Singh, an avid traveller, cricket lover and content creator, to explore how this phenomenon—coined fan travel—is transforming tourism for a new generation of sports enthusiasts.

"I'm an avid traveller and a cricket enthusiast. As someone who is constantly hopping from one city to the next, often across borders, I've noticed a shift in the way cricket fans travel."

According to him, the passion for the game is no longer limited to what happens inside the stadium. "They aren't just turning up for the game; they're there for the full experience—the energy at the stadium, the buzzing crowds and the thrill of cheering alongside fellow fans," he explains.

Singh admits he once thought he was one of the few combining sports with travel. "But it turns out, I'm part of a much bigger trend," he says. Skyscanner's Pitch Perfect Journeys report confirms this: nearly 47% of Indian cricket fans are keen to travel—both within India and abroad—to watch live matches. "And it doesn't stop at the stadium," Singh adds. "Fifty percent of them are extending their cricket trips by three to four days, turning match days into mini-holidays."

A key reason for this trend? Inspiration from the digital world. "What's even more relatable is that 65% say influencers and social media inspire them," Singh notes. "It's clear this isn't just about sport anymore; it's become a whole travel experience. That's exactly what I see in my community—people asking for tips, DMs about where to stay, what to eat, and how to make the most of a match city. Cricket isn't just a sport anymore. It's a reason to explore."

According to Singh, tournaments like the IPL and WPL have become much like India's festive calendar—moments fans plan their lives around.

"I've seen so many around me—friends, family, even fans online—starting to put together travel plans the moment the schedule drops," he says. "It's more than just about scoring a seat at the stadium; it's about booking flights, hotels, and soaking in the full vibe." And the numbers back that sentiment. "Skyscanner's report shows that 80% of Indian fans want to travel for the IPL this year, and nearly half—48%—start planning up to two months early," Singh shares. "Personally, it's the chants at the stadium, the connection with other fans, and discovering a city through cricket that makes it all worth it."

Having travelled across continents for cricket, Singh has some clear favourites. "In India, Wankhede tops my list," he says. "There's an unbeatable vibe when the stadium is packed, especially during the evening matches." But the post-match experience is just as important. "The real celebration spills out onto Marine Drive after the match," he shares. "Fans in jerseys, waving flags, soaking in the joy—it's a vibe. Whenever I'm in Mumbai, I always grab a vada pav and do some street shopping. It's now a ritual."

According to Skyscanner, Singh is far from alone in this. "Their report says 41% of Indians are keen on trying Mumbai's iconic vada pav when they travel for cricket. It also mentions that 57% love to shop during match travel—something I totally relate to," he adds.

Internationally, Singh's most cherished cricket memory is at Lord's. "It's always been the dream—there's something surreal about its history and atmosphere," he says. "I'm hoping to catch the World Test Championship final there this June." He also praises the Australian cricket experience: "I had the chance to visit Australia during a recent tour, and it completely lived up to the hype."

He adds, "Skyscanner's report reflects this trend too—56% of Indian fans are keen on travelling to Australia for cricket, and 46% are eyeing England. Between iconic stadiums and vibrant local cultures, these trips are what every cricket lover's dreams are made of."

For those just starting to plan cricket-centric travel, Singh offers practical guidance. "My biggest advice is to stay flexible," he says. "The demand for match tickets and flights surges quickly once the schedule drops, so having flexible dates and timings helps."

As for the perfect stadium spot? "I always aim for the upper-tier seats right behind the bowler's arm. You have a perfect view of the game and the field, and being higher up means you catch a bit more breeze—which, trust me, makes all the difference during long innings in summer."

Singh treats match day with a blend of excitement and military precision. "I double-check my ticket, ID, and entry time the night before—nothing kills the mood like realising you've forgotten something essential," he laughs.

His secret to a smooth day? Leave early. "I head to the stadium a couple of hours before the gates open to avoid traffic and long queues."

To save on travel, Singh gets creative. "I mix and match flights and airports, book one-way tickets with different airlines, or fly into one city and out of another—it helps save money. Skyscanner makes all of this really easy."

Once he's inside, he taps into the buzz. "There's something surreal about fans arriving in jerseys, drums playing in the background—the energy building up to the game. I usually scout the food stalls early—pro tip: the best stuff runs out fast!" When it comes to match travel, Singh keeps it simple and efficient. "Packing light is the best," he says. "A good check-in suitcase makes life easier when you're running between airports and stadiums."

His must-haves? "My jersey, sunglasses, sunscreen, and some of my camera gear. And I always wear breathable clothes—something easy to move in." With most stadiums limiting bag size, he sticks to a small sling. "Just enough for the essentials," he adds.

As a Gen Z traveller and content creator, Singh says his camera is as important as his ticket. "It's about capturing the vibe, the crowd energy, and the local culture—ensuring my audience can feel it through their screens," he shares.

He believes that some cities just light up for cricket. "Mumbai and Bengaluru are always buzzing—the cafés, the streets, the celebrations. According to Skyscanner, 57% of Gen Z fans say stadium atmosphere excites them most. I couldn't agree more."

Post-match euphoria is where content magic happens. "After a big win, places like Marine Drive or India Gate turn into full-blown celebration zones—fireworks, singing, dancing. Capturing that kind of joy in such iconic locations? It hits differently." For Singh, Skyscanner is an essential travel companion. "IPL isn't just a hectic time for players—it's just as packed for fans like me who follow teams from city to city."

He appreciates the flexibility it offers. "Their Price Alerts feature is a lifesaver. Once set up, it notifies you of flight price drops, so you know exactly when to book." Even better? "The Multi-City search tool. You can book all your trips in one go without hopping across tabs. Whether it's syncing with match schedules or finding last-minute deals, Skyscanner makes the planning smooth and cost-effective," Singh concludes.

In 2025, cricket is shaping not just India's weekends—but its wanderlust. And if Singh's journey is any indication, fan travel is no fleeting trend. It's a lifestyle. "Cricket isn't just something I watch," Singh says with a smile. "It's how I see the world."

The war for frontline talent

There is a silent revolution brewing in India's consumer durables sector—not on the shelves, but behind the scenes. As demand for products picks up and supply chains become more sophisticated, frontline staff have emerged as the most prized asset in a company's execution strategy. They are the showroom salespeople, the field engineers making installations seamless, the service technicians developing customer relationships, and the warehouse workers getting stock moving. However, recruiting and retaining this critical talent is fast emerging as the most challenging war for brands.

Notably, shortage is not a result of lack of labor—it's a function of changing expectations. Frontline talent today wants more than a job that pays the bills. They want purpose, a career growth, respect, personal development, and a higher quality of life. Winning this war for talent requires brands to shift beyond compensation competition and reimagine how they connect, develop, and keep the individuals who carry their brands on the frontlines.

RISING COMPETITION AND LIMITS OF PAY

The traditional recruitment levers are losing effectiveness in times when the space is filled with new players intensifying the talent war. A higher salary margin may help close a role quickly, but it does little to foster long-term loyalty or performance. Pay is just the starting point—no longer the differentiator.

Today's frontline workers are highly aware of their options and rights. They evaluate employers on multiple dimensions: workplace culture, career growth, training support, and even how aligned a company's values are with their own. They don't just look for a basic job, they want a career development ecosystem that secures their family's future. As a consumer brand in 2025, you must establish a process involving- open communication of values, equal treatment regardless of positions, and the development of an identity they are proud to be identified with. If individuals feel they are part of something significant, they will stay and put in more effort.

CLEAR CAREER GROWTH PATHWAYS WITH ADEQUATE SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Career progression is amongst the strongest drivers for frontline workers. Unfortunately, most brands still work in flat hierarchies, with frontline jobs as fixed. Brands can demonstrate to employees that their careers are progressing by investing in structured career routes like technician to team lead or sales executive to area manager.

Brands can create a robust culture of learning focused on enhanced competence and a dedication to the individual. Regardless of the technical skill, communications, digital skills, or customer service being enhanced, regular training boosts confidence and professional satisfaction. Additionally, training programs that are regionally based and in regional languages bring workplaces closer to being inclusive, giving employees the competencies to excel in their work environment.

CULTURE OF RESPECT AND RECOGNITION

Respect isn't an attribute—it's a baseline in any given occupation and industry. But it gets neglected in frontline roles, where customer interactions are transactional and hierarchical in nature. Brands that build a culture of dignity, belonging, and everyday recognition enjoy improved retention and performance. Small gestures—such as celebrating work accomplishments, acknowledging job problem-solving, or engaging frontline voices on customer issues—go a long way towards building loyalty. People want to be seen and valued, not merely managed.

FLEXIBILITY AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

The frontline staff frequently work in inflexible, physically demanding rosters. Providing even relatively small amounts of flexibility—stable hours, equitable leave entitlements, proximity-based deployments—has a major impact on employee wellbeing and loyalty. In an industry where long shifts and seasonality are the norm, brands with compassion for employees' home lives will automatically get ahead.

TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER

As much as customers gain from intelligent, networked devices, technology can also empower frontline workers. Mobile applications for scheduling, performance management, communication, and training make work easier and more interesting. Providing employees with simple-to-use apps or online platforms also simplifies tasks and minimizes manual mistakes—improving both productivity and confidence.

LOCALIZED ENGAGEMENT AND INCENTIVES

There isn't a one-size-fits-all engagement strategy that can work in India because the country and its labor force are extremely diverse, with local cultures, languages, and incentives widely differing. Incentive programs need to be included within local frameworks—festive reward, recognition within the community, or regional opportunity for growth because this has the potential to create stronger relationships with staff members. Localized actions show sensitivity to local culture and appreciation of what really counts to the labor force within various areas. Let's check out the pointers on how to do this in the consumer durable space.

LISTENING, ALIGNING AND ACTING WITH PURPOSE

A robust feedback mechanism should be deployed to retain and nurture today's purposeful frontline employees. With continuous sentiment tracking through surveys, check-ins, and feedback loops, brands can remain attuned to changing expectations and act accordingly. The data then can be utilized to take necessary actions for fostering trust among the employees by enhancing schedules, improving safety, or upgrading equipment as per job requirement.

Brands also need to realize the increasing desire of frontline workers, particularly the younger generation of workers, to work for brands that have well-defined and clear values in the form of sustainability, ethical sourcing, or community involvement. Brands that have a specific emphasis on these aspects are likely to create a stronger emotional bond with workers, thereby creating a loyal workforce with increased productivity and commitment to delivering exceptional customer experiences.

COLLABORATING WITH CHANNEL PARTNERS FOR TALENT LOYALTY

One of the most important aspects in the consumer durables industry is the synergy with the channel partners. Since the majority of the workforce is employed via third-party partners—retail chains, service agencies, or logistics vendors, brands must make efforts to build long-term loyalty with these partners to ensure consistent employee engagement, training, and recognition standards. There should be provisions such as loyalty programs, training certifications, and shared incentive structures to align interests across the value chain.

WINNING THE WAR WITH EXPERIENCE, NOT EXPENSE

Ultimately, the key to winning the war for frontline talent will be how brands treat their people, not how much they pay them. An end-to-end employee experience involving respect, growth, flexibility and purpose will retain people better than any salary increase ever has.

The companies that get this realignment—and act on it—won't merely hire more talent. They'll create better businesses, inside and out.

(The author, Pawan Kumar, CEO of Elista.)

MONSOON HAIR WOES?

Expert tips for frizz-free hair

The arrival of monsoon brings a refreshing shift in weather, cooling temperatures, and a soothing calm in the air. Yet, for hair, this season often spells trouble. Increased humidity, frequent rain showers, and fluctuating temperatures can wreak havoc on the scalp and strands—triggering frizz, dryness, dullness, and a general lack of manageability. For many, monsoon becomes synonymous with uncooperative hair, regardless of hair type, texture, or length.

It's during this season that hair care routines require more than just shampoo and conditioner. Daily protection, nourishment, and hydration become essential—not just occasional indulgences. One of the simplest yet most effective tools during this time is a lightweight, leave-in hair serum. When used consistently, especially on towel-dried hair post-wash, a good serum forms an invisible shield that locks in internal moisture while repelling excess humidity from the environment. This dual action not only tames frizz but also enhances shine, giving hair a smooth, polished appearance throughout the day.

What sets the right serum apart is its ability to blend seamlessly into daily routines. Non-sticky and quick to absorb, it suits various hair types and lifestyles—whether you're air-drying, heat-styling, or stepping out into uncertain weather. Applied from mid-length to ends, just a few drops can dramatically improve texture, reduce tangles, and make hair more manageable even on the most humid days. Monsoon hair care doesn't stop with the morning routine. A small amount of serum can also be applied throughout the day to smooth flyaways, rehydrate strands post-exposure to rain, or add a quick boost of shine before stepping into a meeting or dinner.

Incorporating this simple step—morning or as needed—can turn monsoon hair care from a challenge into a confident ritual. Over time, the hair becomes more resilient, hydrated, and styled with minimal effort. Rain may fall, but with the right daily defense, your hair remains calm, conditioned, and in control. Monsoon hair care is all about consistency—switch to a versatile daily serum and let your hair stay calm, healthy, and frizz-free, come rain or shine.

(The author, Rochelle Chhabra, is the Head of Streax Professional (HRIPL).)

PARTY

Dr.Laaksha

FinE unveiled its innovative online platform, Finversity, at a grand event held on June 12, 2025, at Mercure Hotel. The platform is designed to make financial education accessible, engaging, and practical for students, working professionals, and anyone seeking financial independence. The launch was attended by Jagadeeshwar, IAS (Retd.), former Principal Secretary to the Government of Telangana.

Blesida Benny

Abhilasha

Sri teja

Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli hosts exclusive TK's Oriental Grill pop-up to mark first anniversary

Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli is delighted to host an exclusive pop-up at TGs in collaboration with TK's Oriental Grill, the celebrated Oriental cuisine restaurant at Hyatt Regency Delhi, to mark its first anniversary. For a limited time, Hyderabad's food enthusiasts will have the chance to experience the classic flavours of TK's Oriental Grill — steeped in tradition — brought to life at TG's with a modern twist that reflects the evolution of Oriental cuisine over the years.

TK's Oriental Grill — short for Teppanyaki Kitchen — is a 30-year-old restaurant, renowned for its dynamic, interactive dining experience, where chefs prepare exquisite four-course meals live in front of guests using the freshest market ingredients.

To mark its first anniversary, TG's at Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli presents a unique culinary collaboration with the iconic TK's Oriental Grill from Hyatt Regency Delhi, showcasing a thoughtfully curated menu that blends classic flavours with contemporary flair.

Guests can savour a delectable range of soups, appetisers, sushi, mains, and desserts—each course offering a signature creation from both TK's and TG's, including standout dishes like the Spicy Chicken Miso Soup, Norwegian Salmon Tuna Tartare, Banana Leaf Wrapped Tofu, and the indulgent 54% Wasabi & Jameson Affogato. This limited-edition celebration menu highlights the creative harmony of two distinctive culinary legacies brought together in one extraordinary dining experience.

At the forefront of this culinary showcase is Chef Robin Sharma from TK's Oriental Grill, who brings over 17 years of experience. A master of Japanese, Thai and Korean delicacies, Chef Robin is celebrated for blending traditional techniques with modern presentation.

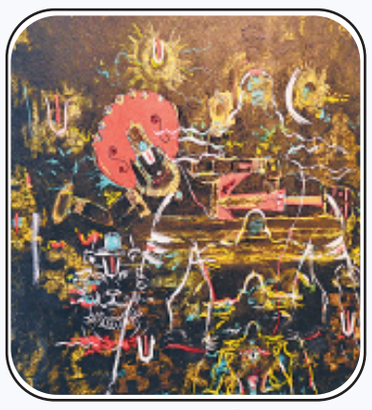
Mr. Piyush Sharma, Director of Food & Beverage, Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli, added, "This collaboration represents our commitment to delivering innovative and memorable dining experiences. We are proud to host TK's Oriental Grill at our hotel and offer our guests a taste of succulent Oriental delicacies."

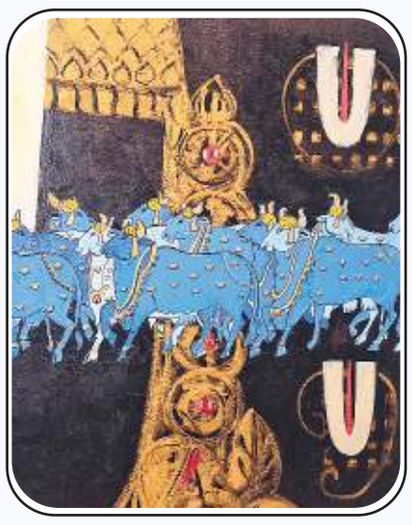
Chef Yogender Pal, Executive Chef, Hyatt Hyderabad Gachibowli, said, "Chef Robin's expertise and the legacy of TK's Oriental Grill together create a rare and dynamic culinary showcase. This pop-up brings a taste of Delhi's finest Oriental kitchen to Hyderabad, in both spirit and flavour."

"At TK's, every dish is more than just a recipe — it's a performance that brings together technique, authenticity, and guest connection. With this pop-up, we aim to bring that spirit to Hyderabad and craft moments that guests will savour, remember, and talk about long after the meal is over," shared Chef Robin Sharma.

The ambience will reflect TK's signature aesthetic — earthy tones, glowing grills, and contemporary Oriental design — making this pop-up not just a meal, but a complete sensory celebration.

Photos by- SV Chary





Deva Devam, a solo painting exhibition by artist Shrikanth Babu, was inaugurated on June 12, 2025, by Dr. K. Lakshmi, IAS, Managing Director of the Warehousing Corporation and Director of the State Gallery of Art. The exhibition, featuring 35 paintings, will be on view at the State Gallery of Art till June 17, 2025.

The iQOO Z10 Lite set to launch on June 18

iQOO is all set to launch the iQOO Z10 Lite 5G on June 18. Built for students and users with active lifestyles, the iQOO Z10 Lite is designed to handle everyday needs—whether it's attending classes, staying connected, streaming videos, scrolling through reels, gaming on the go, or multitasking with multiple apps. With reliable all-day battery life and smooth 5G connectivity, it keeps pace with your daily hustle and entertainment cravings. Packing a massive 6000mAh battery, the Z10 Lite 5G offers ultra-endurance without compromising on portability. The iQOO Z10 Lite is also the segment's biggest battery 5G smartphone1. From attending classes and completing assignments to browsing content or staying connected with friends, the battery is designed to support a full day of varied use.

LISTINGS

Dr V Mohan Wins EASD Global Impact Prize 2025

In a historic recognition, Dr. V. Mohan, India's foremost diabetologist and Chairman of Dr. Mohan's Diabetes Specialities Centre and Madras Diabetes Research Foundation, has been named the first recipient of the EASD Diabetes Global Impact Prize 2025 by the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD).This prestigious international honour, being conferred for the first time, celebrates Dr. Mohan's decades-long contribution to clinical and translational diabetes research—work that has tangibly impacted the health and well-being of millions across the globe. The award will be formally presented during the 61st Annual Meeting of the EASD in Vienna, Austria, in September 2025

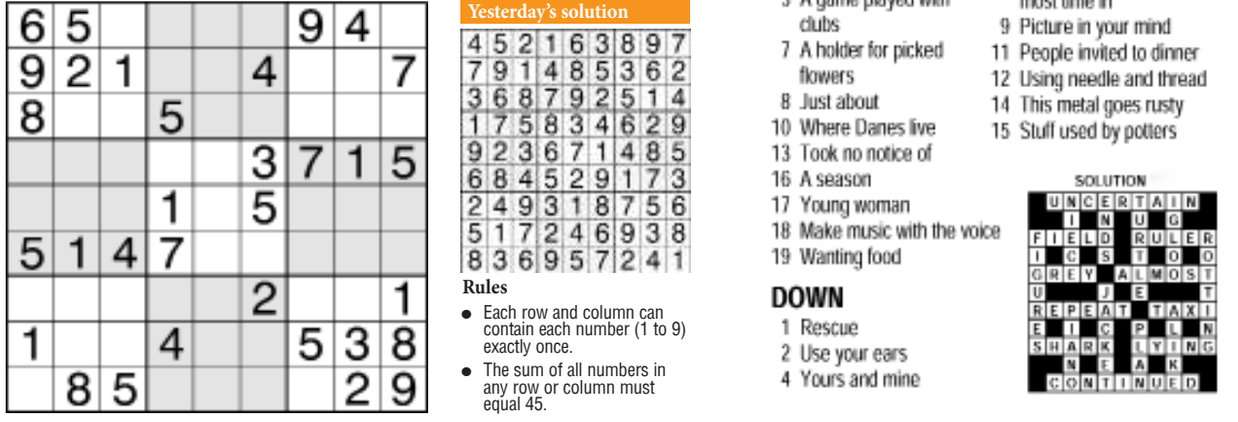
Bayer launches BICOTA

Bayer, a global enterprise with core competencies in the life science fields of agriculture and healthcare, announces the launch of BICOTA, a new product designed to help rice farmers manage stem borer pests effectively. BICOTA combines Bayer's exclusive innovation to provide strong protection against these damaging pests. BICOTA will be available across key rice-growing states, including Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Western UP, West Bengal, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana, starting in June 2025.Stem borers can cause significant damage to rice crops, leading to reduced yields. BICOTA works quickly to stop the feeding of these pests and provides longer-lasting protection. With just one application, farmers can enjoy extra protection for a longer duration as compared to the other solutions available in the market. Additionally, it promotes better root and tiller development, helping to enhance overall crop health and address key challenges of controlling stem borer infestation amid changing weather conditions while ensuring higher yields.

FUN

ARCHIE

CALVIN AND HOBBES



GARFIELD

REALITY CHECK

SPEED BUMP

CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 A precious metal
3 A game played with clubs
7 A holder for picked flowers
8 Just about
10 Where Danes live
13 Took no notice of
16 A season
17 Young woman
18 Make music with the voice
19 Wanting food

DOWN

1 Rescue
2 Use your ears
4 Yours and mine
5 Airborne
6 The room you spend most time in
9 Picture in your mind
11 People invited to dinner
12 Using needle and thread
14 This metal goes rusty
15 Stuff used by potters

SOLUTION

NANCY

SUDOKU

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Yesterday's solution

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2	4	9	3	1	8	7	5	6
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Rules

- Each row and column can contain each number (1 to 9) exactly once.
- The sum of all numbers in any row or column must equal 45.

GINGER MEGGS

The Pioneer
HYDERABAD | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

'KUBERAA IS ABOUT CHARACTERS, NOT STAR POWER'

Producers Sunil Narang and Pushkar Ram Mohan Rao open up about their ambitious bilingual project *Kuberaa*, starring Dhanush, Nagarjuna, and Rashmika Mandanna. Backed by director Sekhar Kammula's signature storytelling, the film explores a unique conflict between a beggar and a billionaire, set against the backdrop of real locations like Mumbai slums and dumping yards

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Director Sekhar Kammula is now coming up with the film Kuberaa, which stars Dhanush, Nagarjuna, and Rashmika Mandanna. Sunil Narang and Pushkar Ram Mohan Rao are jointly producing this film and spoke about it on Thursday. Both expressed happiness over how the film has shaped up. Sekhar Kammula, who has primarily worked with newcomers and mid-range actors, is for the first time directing stars like Dhanush, Nagarjuna, and Rashmika. How did he handle these stars, and was there any pressure on him?

"Actually, Sekhar Kammula never looks at them as stars; he always sees them as characters, not as Nagarjuna and Dhanush," said Ram Mohan. "He is a different kind of filmmaker where the characters speak in his films. In this film too, you can see his style. The story is about the conflict between the poorest man in the world (a beggar) and the richest man in the world (a billionaire)," he added.

Answering another question, the producer shared that Rashmika Mandanna was roped in for the film even before Pushpa 2 released. "She is now a national-level star, but we signed her three years ago. She has done a fantastic job in this one too," said the producer.

When asked why they chose Tamil actor Dhanush over a Telugu actor, Sunil Narang responded, "If you narrate the story, will just anyone accept it immediately? Dhanush is looking for different kinds of roles and subjects, so when we approached him, he immediately agreed to do it."

One of the major challenges for the film was shooting at real locations. "We shot in the Bombay slums, which was a real challenge. Everyone knows how busy Mumbai roads are, and we shot there for nearly 25 days. We also shot in other real locations like dumping yards. The biggest challenge for us as producers was obtaining all the permissions and ensuring smooth shooting, but the real challenge was with the actors, who worked extremely hard at these locations," said the producers.

When Sekhar wrote the story, he first envisioned Nagarjuna in the role. "We too wanted to work with Nag sir. He liked the story immediately, and we never imagined any other actor in this role. He delivered a fantastic performance," said the producers. They added that they never thought about the budget while making this film. "Whatever the film needed, we put in that money. We are releasing the film on a large scale across around 1600 screens," said Sunil.

The producers confirmed that the film was made as a bilingual. "We shot the film in Telugu and Tamil, and dubbed it into Hindi and other languages," said Ram Mohan. He added that Dhanush is known across languages. "His films release in Telugu, he has acted in many Hindi films, and is currently working on another one. Rashmika is now a big star in Hindi too. Nagarjuna has also done Hindi films and is a known face. So, we believe this film will do well in Hindi and other languages too," said the producer.

Trivikram locks films with Venkatesh and NTR, clears rumours

It was earlier reported in these columns that Trivikram Srinivas is directing Venkatesh in his next film. On Thursday, the news was officially confirmed. Producer Naga Vamsi of Sithara Entertainments—who also produces films through Fortune Four Cinemas, owned by Trivikram's wife Soujanya—announced the director's upcoming two projects.

"Trivikram garu's next two projects are locked with Venkatesh sir and Tarak anna. Everything else is mere speculation. Any confirmed project of Trivikram garu will be announced by me in this space," said Naga Vamsi on social media.

Reports had suggested that Trivikram was teaming up with Ram Charan after the latter finishes his film with director Buchi Babu. There were also rumours of a film with Allu Arjun, which some claimed had been shelved. Addressing all this speculation, the director has now confirmed his upcoming projects.

The first film will begin immediately with Venkatesh, marking the director's first collaboration with the actor as a filmmaker. Previously, Trivikram worked as a writer for Venkatesh's films like Nuvvu Naku Nachav and Malleswari, both of which were huge hits and are considered among the best in Venkatesh's career.

The second project is with Jr. NTR, reportedly a mythological film based on Lord Karthikeya. Trivikram had originally planned the story with Allu Arjun, but it is now confirmed that the same script will be made with NTR. The actor is currently shooting for his film with Prashanth Neel, and his Bollywood debut War 2 is set to release on August 14.

Major mishap on Nikhil's *India House* set as water tank bursts

A major accident occurred during the shooting of Nikhil Siddhartha's upcoming film India House. Nikhil plays the lead in this period drama produced by Ram Charan. The shoot is currently underway at an erected set on the outskirts of the city near Shamshabad.

According to a source, the makers planned a scene with a sea backdrop and placed a huge water tank behind the set. While the shoot was in progress, the tank burst, and the entire set was flooded. A video of the incident has gone viral on social media, showing the powerful flow of water destroying everything in its path. The source reveals that an assistant cameraman and a few crew members were injured in the mishap. It is not known whether lead actor Nikhil was present at the time, but the actor later confirmed via social media that there was no human casualty.

The film was announced by Ram Charan in 2023 on the occasion of Veer Savarkar's 140th birth anniversary. Ram Vamsi Krishna is making his directorial debut with this film, and veteran actor Anupam Kher plays an important role. Abhishek Agarwal of Abhishek Agarwal Arts is also producing the film. He too responded on social media, stating, "A mishap occurred on the sets of #TheIndiaHouse while shooting today. Everyone on the sets is safe and sound. Thank you for all your concern."

The incident occurred on Wednesday, and Nikhil responded on Thursday, posting, "We are all safe. Sometimes in our quest to give the best cinematic experience, we take risks. Today we survived a huge mishap thanks to the alert crew and precautions taken. We lost expensive equipment, but by God's grace, there was no human damage."

'I follow her on Instagram with a fake ID,' says Allu Aravind on casting Niharika NM

Social media influencer and actress Niharika NM is making her Telugu film debut with Mithramandali. Directed by Vijayanand, the film stars Priyadarshi, Vishnu Oi, Rag Mayur, and Prasad Behara in lead roles.

Bunny Vas is the presenter, and Kalyan Manthina, Bhanu Pratapa, and Dr. Vijender Reddy Teegala are the producers. The teaser was released on Thursday at a function in Hyderabad.

Popular producer Allu Aravind attended the event as chief guest and launched the teaser. On this occasion, Bunny Vas shared an interesting anecdote about how Niharika NM was finalized for the film. "We shortlisted five actresses and I planned to send their photos to Allu Aravind garu. When I sent the first photo—Niharika's—he immediately said, 'Take her. She's the one. No need to look at others,'" Bunny Vas recalled.

He further revealed that Allu Aravind recognized Niharika instantly.

"He said he knew her already because he watches her reels on social media," added Bunny Vas.

Allu Aravind said, "My friends Bunny Vas, Bhanu Pratapa, and Kalyan Manthina have made a fun entertainer with Mithramandali. I'm here to support them and extend my best wishes to the entire team. Being around all these youngsters makes me feel young again. I believe director Vijay has a lot of potential."

Praising actor Priyadarshi, Aravind added, "He is a dedicated actor and will have a long career." He also shared a humorous confession: "When Bunny Vas showed me 4–5 pictures to pick the heroine for this film, I selected the first one, Niharika. I even follow her on Instagram with a fake account."

RR Dhruvan has composed the music. The teaser is packed with fun and entertaining dialogues, and the team believes Mithramandali will certainly strike a chord with audiences.

Gopichand turns fierce warrior in Sankalp Reddy's historical epic

On the occasion of actor Gopichand's birthday on Thursday, the makers of his upcoming film, directed by Sankalp Reddy of Ghazi fame, unveiled a special glimpse. The film is tentatively titled #Gopichand33 and is being produced by Srinivasaa Chitturi. This grand historical epic, mounted on a massive scale with a high budget, is progressing steadily with its shoot.

To mark Gopichand's birthday, the makers dropped a jaw-dropping special poster and a glimpse that has fans roaring with excitement. Gopichand unleashes a ferocious warrior avatar—sporting long hair, a thick battle-worn beard, a fiery sindoor-streaked forehead, and eyes brimming with intensity. Seated with resolute calm, sword in hand and a battlefield in the backdrop, the poster screams power and valor. Director Sankalp Reddy, known for his unique storytelling and technical brilliance in critically acclaimed films like IB 71 (set in the sky), Ghazi (set on water), and Antariksham (set in space), now ventures into uncharted territory.

Sankalp Reddy presents a visually stunning and captivating portrayal of a crucial and forgotten event in Indian history. Set in the 7th century, the film delves deep into a significant yet unexplored historical event, bringing to life a forgotten chapter of Indian heritage.

LAVANYA TRIPATHI GLOWS AS SHE FLAUNTS BABY BUMP IN MALDIVES

Actor couple Varun Tej and Lavanya Tripathi, who announced a few months ago that they are going to be parents soon, are currently enjoying a vacation in the Maldives. The couple posted some adorable pictures from their trip, and in one of them, Lavanya is seen flaunting her baby bump. They shared the photos on social media with the caption, "I try to live in black and white, but I'm so blue." Varun Tej, who is currently shooting for his upcoming Indo-Korean horror comedy, written and directed by Merlapaka Gandhi, took a break from the shoot to spend quality time with his wife. Both look happy and are cherishing every second of this special vacation. Varun and Lavanya tied the knot in November 2023. Interestingly, Lavanya's classic film Andala Rakshasi is set to re-release this Friday, June 13.

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Make England tour memorable: Gambhir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Beckenham (England)

India head coach Gautam Gambhir can move out of its "comfort zone" and make the upcoming Test series against England a "memorable" one, especially in the absence of retired stars Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma and R Ashwin.

India will search for their maiden series victory in England since 2007, when the five-match rubber starts with the first Test at Leeds on June 20. "There are two ways of looking at this tour. One is we are without our three most experienced players or we got this phenomenal opportunity to do something special for the country," Gambhir told BCCI.Tv, referring to the recent retirements of Ashwin, Rohit and Kohli.

The former India opener said he can feel the "passion and the commitment" to achieve something special flowing through the current bunch, led by Shubman Gill.

India head coach Gautam Gambhir PTI

"When I look around in this group, I think I see the hunger, the passion and the commitment to do something special. If we make sacrifices, if we come out of our comfort zone, if we start fighting not every day but every session, every hour and every ball, I think we can have a memorable tour," he added.

Gambhir welcomed the whole squad to the tour of England, and extended a special tribute to some of the members, starting with B Sai Sudharsan.

"First Test calls are always special, so I want to welcome Sai, who has a fabulous three months with the bat and make sure you have a very very successful red ball career."Gambhir hoped that pacer Arshdeep Singh would remain his impactful self in red-ball cricket as well.

"I want to welcome Arshdeep Singh. You have been phenomenal with the white ball and I am sure you will make it count with the red ball in your hand." The 43-year-old then patted Gill and his deputy Rishabh Pant.

"I want to congratulate Shubman as well, captain for the first time. There is no bigger honour than leading your country's Test team. Congratulations. Rishabh Pant as well, who is part of the leadership group now," he noted.

Gambhir was lavish in his praise for Karun Nair, who stitched a stirring comeback to Team India on the back of a wonderful run in domestic cricket.

"Comebacks are never easy, someone who has made a comeback after seven years, had a phenomenal last year.

"The amount of runs that you have got, and most importantly that never say die attitude, which is something that got you back into the team, and that is something inspiring for everyone in this group. Welcome Karun Nair," said Gambhir.

Karun said he was "grateful" to get a second chance to play for India.

"Grateful for this opportunity again. I am really looking forward to grabbing this opportunity with both hands. I am sure there will be a lot of feelings, once I go out there but right now I can't express them," said Karun.

Put ourselves under pressure at nets: Gill

Skipper Gill urged his colleagues to put themselves under a bit of pressure so that they will not be overwhelmed by situations when the series starts.

"Let's make each and every net session meaningful. Let's put ourselves under a little pressure. When we are going out there, it's not about going out there and just surviving, let's find out our game, how we are going to play when we are put under pressure - be it bowlers or batters," he said.

India will be well prepared as Test team: McCullum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

England head coach Brendon McCullum believes India have arrived well-prepared and full of belief for the upcoming five-match Test series but his team is also clear about where it wants to be in the eagerly-anticipated showdown beginning June 20 in Leeds. The series will kick off India's new World Test Championship cycle.

"They're an outstanding cricketing nation, who will come here with high hopes, and we are looking forward to seeing them," McCullum told 'Sky Sports Cricket'. England on the other hand have just completed a whitewash of the West Indies in a six-match white-ball series. Their focus now shifts to the red-ball format as they gear up to take India and also prepare for the Ashes later this year.

"It's important the guys refresh. We know where we want to get to as a Test team." England will be without tearaway pacer Mark Wood, who has been ruled out of at least the first three Tests due to injury. Fellow quick Jofra Archer will also miss the opening Test, while Gus Atkinson is still recovering from a hamstring strain. Despite the setbacks, McCullum remains confident in England's bowling options. "There are some quality bowlers that are unavailable, but we have a nice, varied bowling attack with Chris Woakes, Sam Cook, Brydon Carse, Jamie Overton, Josh Tongue for the high-pace element," the former New Zealand skipper said.

"We have Shoaib Bashir, who is growing in Test cricket every day. We know we are going to be tested against India, and they will arrive prepared," he added.

India begin a new era after Test retirements of veterans Virat Kohli, Rohit Sharma, and R Ashwin. The team will be led by Shubman and features Sai Sudharsan and Yashasvi Jaiswal. England all-rounder Jacob Bathel has been recalled and McCullum was all praise for the 21-year-old.

Azteca Stadium to feature hybrid field for 2026 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mexico City

A hybrid field, updated locker rooms, elevators and hospitality zones are among the new features of Azteca Stadium for the 2026 World Cup. Ollamani, the sports entertainment company that owns the stadium, also confirmed Wednesday that Azteca will reopen March 26, which will be 75 days before the start of the World Cup as Mexico City Mayor Clara Brugada announced recently.

"The centerpiece of the stadium's renovation is the people who visit it. Our main objective is to substantially improve their experience in every way," stadium director Felix Aguirre said in a statement.

The iconic venue closed last May for renovations ahead of next year's 48-team competition hosted by Mexico, the United States and Canada. The 83,000-seat Azteca, which recently was renamed, will host five games including the tournament opener. It also hosted the first matches in the 1970 and 1986 World Cups.

Ollamani, which is affiliated with Grupo Televisa, Mexico's largest television network, also said the stadium will have bigger capacity, but did not specify how many extra seats it will have.

It will be the second time that Azteca has a hybrid pitch - one was installed in 2018 but returned to natural grass a year later. The poor field conditions in November 2018 forced a last-minute change of venue for an NFL game between the Kansas City Chiefs and the Los Angeles Rams. "The pitch, being subjected to intensive use, will have a new ventilation and suction system, thereby achieving better recovery, stability and resistance," Ollamani said in a statement.

The new locker rooms will be located at the center of the stadium under the luxury boxes and with a tunnel leading to the pitch. Before, they were located in the north and south part of it.

"The project includes new facilities in the competition areas, improving the experience of the player, fans and media in line with the most modern stadiums in the world," the company said.

The plan includes installing large LED screens inside and outside the stadium. Before the renovations, the stadium had just two big screens that were installed in 2015.

Ollamani did not provided specific details about elevators or escalators. In the past, the only way to move between the lower and upper sections was using an old ramp. The hospitality zones were also a necessity. The old stadium had a small concession area outside the venue, but inside there were no food courts and the fans were forced to buy from the vendors roaming the seating area.

Among other renovations, the stadium owner also announced a new press box area, improved restrooms, a 200-unit CCTV surveillance system and a new sound system. Originally, a major renovation was planned including a shopping center and hotel, but residents of Santa Úrsula, a popular neighborhood located south of the capital, opposed them.

ISSF World Cup: Sift Kaur Samra wins bronze in women's 50m rifle

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Munich

Indian shooter Sift Kaur Samra tackled a strong field with aplomb to claim the bronze medal in the women's 50m rifle 3 positions event at the ISSF World Cup here on Thursday. The 23-year-old Samra, who holds the current world record in women's 50 metre rifle three positions event which she had set while winning the gold medal at the 2022 Asian Games, shot 453.1 in the eight-player final.

Norway's Jeanette Hegg Duestad won the gold medal with 466.9, while Emely Jaeggi of Switzerland bagged silver with 464.8. Emely was placed ninth in the qualifications with 590 but made the final as two markswomen among the top eight were shooting for ranking points only (RPO). Samra, who is from Faridkot, Punjab, was second in the qualifications with a total of 592 across the three stages of kneeling, prone and standing.

She won a gold medal at the World Cup in Buenos Aires earlier this year, starting the season on a rousing note after a disappointing campaign at the 2024 Paris Olympics. France's Agathe Cecile Camille Girard, who also shot 592, topped the qualifications on the account of having more inner 10 (Xs), while Switzerland's Audrey Gogniat was placed third heading into the finals. The other Indians in the competition, Ashi Chouksey finished 11th with 589, while Anjum Moudgil ended 27th with 586.

Adam Scott at another US Open, headed for century mark in majors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Oakmont (US)

Adam Scott is one year away from an impressive streak that the Australian considers to be a classic glass half-full moment in golf.

The US Open is his 96th consecutive major championship appearance dating to the 2001 British Open at Royal Lytham and St Annes.

"It sounds like a lot to have won one," Scott said with a laugh, referring to his lone major title in the 2013 Masters.

"It would be twice as good if there was one more." Still, he realises he is approaching a big milestone. The PGA Championship next year, assuming he qualifies or gets an invitation, will be his 100th career major. He could make it 100 in a row if he makes it to Shinnecock Hills for next year's US Open.

A streak like that requires eligibility and good health. Tiger Woods and Phil Mickelson only had eligibility in their favor. Woods played 46 straight majors until knee surgery after he won the 2008 US Open. Mickelson played 61 in a row before he sat out the 2009 British Open as his wife was being treated for breast cancer. The record is among the most untouchable in golf — Jack Nicklaus played 146 in a row from the 1962 US Open through the 2008 US Open.

"Probably whenever it ends, whether it's 100 or more or less, I think it will be hard for guys to get to that number going forward," Scott said. "I think it's getting harder. And I think I have been a consistent player over a 25-year career. I could probably pick three troughs where my game was looking pretty ordinary and I fell outside the top 50 and I was really struggling. But over 25 years, I'd expect that of almost any player."

Scott had a few close calls in the US Open. He made it through 36-hole qualifying with one shot to spare in 2018.

He failed to make it through qualifying last year (he was first alternate) but became exempt at Number 61 in the world. Grayson Murray, who took his life in May 2024, was still ahead of him in the world ranking and the USGA went down one spot. Scott said Mickelson and Rory McIlroy are among the few who never went through bad spells or serious injury "and we're talking about two of the greatest of their generation."

McIlroy's streak was interrupted when he injured his left ankle and couldn't play the 2015 British Open. Oakmont is his 39th consecutive major.

US Open prize money

For the first time since 2021, the US Open is not increasing its prize money. It will be $21.5 million for the second straight year, with $4.3 million going to the winner. It remains the biggest purse of the four majors. The Masters was $21 million this year, while the PGA Championship was at $19 million. The British Open hasn't announced its total purse for next month at Royal Portrush. It was at $17 million last year.

The US Open purse was $12.5 million in 2020 and 2021 before making a big leap to $17.5 million in 2022 at Brookline.

"I feel comfortable that we've been a leader in moving fast and bigger," USGA CEO Mike Whan said Wednesday.

The Players Championship has a $25 million purse. The USGA and R&A get the bulk of their revenue from their Opens. They also use that money to invest back in the game, including the Women's Opens and amateur events such as the Walker Cup and Curtis Cup that several of the top stars once played.

Poland coach resigns after dispute with Lewandowski

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Warsaw (Poland),

The coach of Poland's national soccer team announced on Thursday has resigned as head coach, days after a spat with star striker Robert Lewandowski.

"I have come to the conclusion that, given the current situation, the best decision for the good of the national team is my resignation from the position of head coach," Michal Probierz said in a statement published by the Polish Football Association. Probierz stripped Barcelona striker Lewandowski of his position as team captain on the eve of a World Cup qualifier against Finland earlier this week, and named Inter Milan midfielder Piotr Zielinski as the new captain.

> I have come to the conclusion that, given the current situation, the best decision for the good of the national team is my resignation from the position of head coach
> — MICHAL PROBIERZ, POLAND COACH

Lewandowski reacted by saying he would no longer play for the national team as long as Probierz remains head coach. Poland went on to suffer an embarrassing 2-1 defeat to Finland, to put its qualifications hopes into jeopardy.

The 36-year-old Lewandowski, who has played a record 158 games for his country and is the leading scorer with 85 goals, is arguably the most outstanding player in the history of Polish soccer.

Lewandowski pulled out of last Friday's friendly over Moldova, citing tiredness from a La Liga title-winning season with Barcelona. Probierz, who took over in September 2023 after the disappointing tenure of Fernando Santos, managed to secure qualification for the 2024 European Championship but has since struggled.

Since we run IPL team, capable of running Rugby league: Trivedi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

Rugby might rank low in the popularity charts of India's sporting landscape but it has tremendous potential to garner eyeballs with the upcoming Rugby Premier League (RPL), feels GMR Sports CEO and the event's promoter Satyam Trivedi.

The inaugural RPL will be held from June 15 to 29 at the Mumbai Football Arena in Andheri featuring six franchises Delhi Redz, Hyderabad Heroes, Kalinga Black Tigers, Chennai Bulls, Mumbai Dreamers and Bengaluru Bravehearts.

Trivedi, who has considerable experience of running multiple IPL franchises, including the GMR co-owned Delhi Capitals, told PTI about the rationale behind the group becoming a driving force in organising the inaugural edition of Rugby Premier League.

"We thought that we've been managing this business for a very long time. And I think of the scale of managing an IPL team, you can imagine is one of the largest properties, and we've developed capabilities internally," Trivedi said.

"So idea was that, why don't we leverage our experience, our expertise, and move up the value chain and look at opportunities outside franchise. So when this opportunity came, obviously it started with a franchise conversation.

"But we just took one day to go back and say that not at a franchise level, but we want to invest at a League level," he recalled when asked about how it all started. The format will be Rugby 7s, which is recognised as an Olympic sport.

Unlike traditional Rugby Union format where there are two halves of 40 minutes each with 15 players per side, the 7s is a format where there are seven players on field with two halves of 7 minutes.

However in RPL, keeping the TV audience in mind, it has been tweaked to four quarters of four minutes each with two-minute break between quarters. Trivedi underlined why he thought the league can work in the long run. "It's a shorter format and we think it works very well. Because if you look at the consumer pattern...They want to look at shorter format.

The attention span has drastically gone down.

"We had to keep that in mind. So we think that this is a great on-ground as well as television product. That's one reason to hold the league," he reasoned.

"Secondly, Rugby India is a great Federation to work with. They are very committed. (Actor) Rahul Bose, who is the president of Rugby India, is also very committed towards the development of sport. Today, there are 250 districts in India where rugby is played," he added.

Trivedi also gave a peek into the kind of money marquee players will be getting for the two-week tourney.

"International marquee player coming here for two weeks and one week of camp or maybe 10 days of camp, they would get about $15,000.

The bridge players (from Tier-2 Rugby Nations) will be getting around $2500."

The Indian players will be paid between ₹50,000 to ₹550,000. "The salary cap was kept at ₹77 lakh per team," he informed.

Radha Yadav replaces Shuchi in India squad for England tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Mumbai

Left-arm spinner Radha Yadav on Thursday replaced injured Shuchi Upadhyay in the India women's squad for their upcoming tour of England for five T20Is and three ODIs starting on June 28.

The BCCI informed in a statement that the 20-year-old left-arm spinner Upadhyay, who made her ODI debut last month during the tri-series in Sri Lanka, has sustained a left shin injury.

"The Women's Selection Committee has named Radha Yadav as a replacement for Shuchi Upadhyay in Team India's squads for the England tour," the BCCI said. "Shuchi was ruled out of the tour after sustaining a left shin injury, which was diagnosed during the pre-tour camp at the BCCI Centre of Excellence (COE) in Bengaluru," it added.

The women's team's tour begins with the opening T20I on June 28 at Nottingham with the second match slated on July 1 at Bristol. The third T20I will be at the Oval on July 4, fourth on July 9 at Manchester and fifth on July 12 at Birmingham.

The three ODIs will be played on July 16, 19 and 22 at Southampton, Lord's and Chester-le-Street respectively.

Squads:

T20Is: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Sneh Rana, Sree Charani, Amanjot Kaur, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Sayali Satghare, Radha Yadav.

ODIs: Harmanpreet Kaur (c), Smriti Mandhana (vc), Pratika Rawal, Harleen Deol, Jemimah Rodrigues, Richa Ghosh (wk), Yastika Bhatia (wk), Harleen Deol, Deepti Sharma, Sneh Rana, Sree Charani, Amanjot Kaur, Arundhati Reddy, Kranti Gaud, Sayali Satghare, Radha Yadav.