

PM sends stern warning to Pakistan

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Katra

In a resolute address, marking the one-month anniversary of Operation Sindoor, Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday sent a stern message to Pakistan, from the base camp of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine, declaring that Operation Sindoor will keep reminding Pakistan of its “humiliating defeat”.

Addressing an impressive gathering of people in Katra after inaugurating the world’s highest railway arch bridge and flagging off the maiden run of Vande Bharat Express, Prime Minister Modi emphasised the decisive blow delivered by India on the night of May 6, 2025, targeting terror camps across Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK).

The operation, executed with precision, dismantled decades-old terror infrastructure within minutes, catching Pakistan’s military and terror networks off guard.

PM also condemned Pakistan’s retaliation



PM Narendra Modi with Minister for Railways Ashwini Vaishnaw, MoS Jitendra Singh, J and K LG Manoj Sinha and CM Omar Abdullah during the inauguration of the Chenab rail bridge

tory actions, which targeted innocent civilians in Jammu, Poonch, and other districts of Jammu and Kashmir.

He highlighted the brutality of these

attacks, noting that the world witnessed Pakistan’s destruction of homes, bombing of schools and hospitals, and shelling of religious places, including temples,

mosques, and gurudwaras. “Pakistan’s frustration led to cowardly attacks on our people,” the PM said, underscoring the nation’s outrage at acts of aggression.

Praising the resilience of Jammu and Kashmir’s people, Modi lauded their courage in facing Pakistan’s onslaught. “Every Indian has seen the bravery of our brothers and sisters in J and K. Their strength is our strength,” he said, reaffirming the Government’s unwavering commitment to supporting affected families.

He declared that the entire nation stands in solidarity with those impacted, ensuring comprehensive support to help them rebuild their lives.

The PM’s address came in the context of heightened tensions following the April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, which Modi described as a deliberate attempt to sabotage J and K’s flourishing tourism industry and cripple the livelihoods of local workers.

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...Kashmir to Kanyakumari...

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Katra

In a landmark event for Jammu and Kashmir’s infrastructure development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday inaugurated the world’s tallest railway arch bridge, the Chenab Rail Bridge, and flagged off the maiden run of the Vande Bharat Express train connecting Katra, the base camp of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi shrine, to Srinagar.

The highlight of the day was the iconic moment when PM Modi waved the Indian tricolor while inspecting the Chenab Bridge, symbolising a new era of connectivity and progress for the region.

During the inspection visit, PM Modi also inaugurated the Anji Khad Bridge, India’s first cable-stayed railway bridge, which rises 331 metres above the riverbed and spans 725 metres.

The Katra-Srinagar Vande Bharat service, with commercial operations commencing on June 7, 2025, is set to boost spiritual tourism and economic opportu-

nities in the region, fulfilling the vision of linking “Kashmir to Kanyakumari” through India’s railway network.

Before officially flagging off the trains, PM Modi boarded the high-speed Vande Bharat Express and engaged in lively conversations with the young passengers, who were selected through painting, slogan writing and singing competition to be part of the inaugural journey. The students, brimming with excitement, shared their experiences and aspirations with the PM.

The PM also interacted with railway staff onboard, acknowledging their contributions to the successful launch of the service.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw, MoS Railways V Somanna, MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh, Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah. PM Modi also inspected a photo exhibition highlighting the technical challenges overcome during its construction.

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Bengaluru stampede fallout widens

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Bengaluru

Authorities in Karnataka have arrested four officials and suspended five senior police officers in a sweeping crackdown following the June 4 stampede outside M Chinnaswamy Stadium that killed 11 and injured 56 during Royal Challengers Bengaluru’s (RCB) IPL title celebrations.

In a coordinated operation on Friday, Bengaluru Police and the Crime Branch detained Nikhil Sosale, RCB’s head of marketing and revenue, and two executives from DNA Entertainment Networks Pvt Ltd — Sunil Mathew and Kiran Kumar. Some were reportedly apprehended at Kempegowda International Airport while allegedly attempting to leave the country.

Their arrests came a day after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah ordered immediate action against RCB, DNA Entertainment, and the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), all named

in FIRs filed on June 5.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka High Court on Friday granted interim protection from arrest to KSCA President Raghuram Bhat, Secretary A Shankar, and Treasurer E S Jayaram, who have petitioned to quash the FIR. Justice S R Krishna Kumar barred

As the political fallout escalated, MLC K Govindaraj — a close aide and political secretary to the Chief Minister — Siddaramaiah was removed from his post on Friday

“coercive action” against them until the next hearing on June 16, provided they cooperate with the investigation. The court has also taken suo motu cognisance of the incident and asked the State to submit a status report by June 10.

The Government has appointed retired High Court judge Justice John Michael

D’Cunha to lead a one-man inquiry commission into the incident.

As the political fallout escalated, MLC K Govindaraj — a close aide and political secretary to the Chief Minister — was removed from his post on Friday. Though no direct link was made to the stampede, the timing indicates efforts to manage the growing crisis. ADGP Intelligence Hemant Nimbalkar was also transferred, with CM Siddaramaiah admitting to an “intelligence failure,” though further actions are under review.

The suspensions of top law enforcement officials — including Commissioner of Police B Dayananda and Additional Commissioner Vikash Kumar Vikash - were ordered on Thursday. A Government statement cited “substantial dereliction of duty” after prior warnings from organisers were ignored and no formal denial of permission was issued, despite being informed of the June 4 celebration plans on June 3.

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RBI cuts interest rates to boost liquidity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cut interest rates by more than expected 50 basis points on Friday, a third consecutive reduction, and unexpectedly reduced the cash reserve ratio for banks to provide a major liquidity fillip to support the economy amid geopolitical and tariff headwinds.

The RBI’s six-member monetary policy committee, headed by Governor Sanjay Malhotra and consisting of three external members, voted five to one to lower the benchmark repurchase or repo rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent. It also cut the cash reserve ratio by 100 basis points to 3 per cent, adding ₹2.5 lakh crore to already surplus liquidity in the banking system.

With the latest reduction, RBI has now cut interest rates by a total of 100 basis points in 2025, starting with a quarter-point reduction in February — the first cut since May 2020 — and another similar-sized cut in April.



RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra

The central bank, at the same time, changed its monetary policy stance to “neutral” from accommodative, with Malhotra saying further action will depend on incoming data.

Giving rationale for the decision, the RBI Governor said inflation or price rise has

softened significantly over the last six months from above the tolerance band in October 2024 to well below the target, with signs of a broad-based moderation.

Growth, on the other hand, remains lower than aspiration amid a challenging global environment and heightened uncertainty.

“Thus, it is imperative to continue to stimulate domestic private consumption and investment through policy levers to step up the growth momentum,” he said. “This changed growth-inflation dynamics calls for not only continuing with the policy easing but also frontloading the rate cuts to support growth.”

The rate cut comes as the Indian economy slowed to a four-year low of 6.5 per cent in the fiscal year that ended March. RBI projected the economy to grow by the same measure in the current financial year that started on April 1 as rising trade tensions following US President Donald Trump’s tariff policies provide headwind.

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The ByStander



PM to attend G7 Summit in Canada from June 15

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will attend the G7 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, from June 15-17, and expressed enthusiasm about meeting newly elected Canadian PM Mark Carney. Modi thanked Carney for the invitation during a congratulatory phone call and emphasised strengthening India-Canada ties through mutual respect and shared interests.

FULL REPORT ON P5

Supreme Court permits NBE to conduct NEET-PG on August 3

The Supreme Court on Friday permitted the National Board of Examination (NBE) to conduct the NEET-PG 2025 exam on August 3 in a single shift, as per its May 30 directive. A bench of Justices Prashant Kumar Mishra and Augustine George Masih initially questioned the delay but found the NBE’s plea “bonafide.” The NBE cited logistical challenges, including arranging 1,000+ secure, tech-compliant centres for over 2.7 lakh candidates. The court warned no further extensions would be granted. The exam was originally set for June 15 but was deferred due to concerns over transparency and shift-based scheduling, prompting the Supreme Court to mandate a single-shift exam format.

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The offices of *The Pioneer* will remain closed on Saturday, June 7, 2025 on account of Id-ul-Azha. The next edition will appear on Monday, June 9, 2025

Extreme poverty fell in India: World Bank

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

With the World Bank’s latest report showing the proportion of people living on less than 2.15 US dollars a day, which is the international benchmark for extreme poverty, fell sharply from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 to just 2.3 per cent in 2022-23, the extreme poverty rate for India declines sharply to 5.3 per cent in 2022-23 from 27.1 per cent in 2011-12. Just some 3.3 crore Indians are extremely poor as against 23 crore a decade ago.

The World Bank finds that India has made strong gains in reducing poverty at the lower-middle-income level, measured at \$3.65 per day. Millions have benefited from this broad-based growth across both rural and urban areas.

These indicators cover various aspects of poverty, including rates of poverty and the total number of poor, using both national poverty lines and international benchmarks (\$2.15 for extreme poverty, \$3.65 for lower-middle-income, and \$6.85 for upper-middle-income).

Currently, the World Bank pegs extreme poverty reduced sharply from 16.2 per cent in 2011-12 to 2.3 per cent in 2022-23. While in rural areas it fell from 18.4 per cent to 2.8 per cent, in urban areas, it reduced from 10.7 per cent to 1.1 per cent.

The gap between rural and urban poverty shrunk from 7.7 percentage points to 1.7 percentage points, with an annual decline rate of 16 per cent in a decade.

The report notes that significant progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty across India, with key States playing a vital role in the decline of poverty

According to the World Bank report, if the five most populous States including Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh accounted for 65 per cent of India’s extreme poor in 2011-12, they contributed to two-thirds of the overall decline in extreme poverty by 2022-23.

The share of Indians living below the revised lower-middle-income category (LMIC) poverty line of \$4.20 per day (from \$3.65 in 2017 prices) also fell from 57.7 per cent in 2011-12 to 23.9 per cent in 2022-23. In absolute numbers, people living under the revised LMIC poverty line dips from 732.48 million to 342.32 million in a period of 11 years.

The Poverty and Equity Briefs (PEBs) from the World Bank highlight trends in

poverty, shared prosperity, and inequality for over 100 developing countries. Published twice a year for the Spring and Annual Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, these briefs offer a snapshot of a country’s poverty and inequality context, ensuring poverty reduction remains a global priority. Each PEB includes a two-page summary that presents recent developments in poverty reduction, along with updated data on key development indicators.

The report notes that significant progress has been made in reducing extreme poverty across India, with key States playing a vital role in both the decline of poverty and the advancement of inclusive development. As per World Bank’s report, India has made significant strides in reducing non-monetary poverty, and future poverty estimates are expected to change based on updated global standards.

The Spring 2025 World Bank’s Poverty and Equity Brief highlights these achievements. It underscores the country’s commitment to inclusive development. The sharp decline in both extreme and lower-middle-income poverty, along with the narrowing rural-urban poverty gap, reflects the effective efforts of the Government of India.

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Pakistan pleads Indus Treaty be reinstated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Amid facing a severe water crisis ahead of the Kharif sowing, Pakistan has written four letters, one after another, requesting India to reinstate the Indus Waters Treaty that was suspended in the wake of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack. Pakistan is staring at a water crisis and appears to be desperate, people familiar with the matter said.

Pakistan’s Ministry of Water Resources, Secretary Syed Ali Murtaza urged India to reconsider its decision to stop the Indus Waters Treaty in May before Operation Sindoor. Later, the ministry wrote three more letters to New Delhi and appealed to reinstate the agreement. According to sources, the Jal Shakti Ministry has sent all four letters from Pakistan to the Ministry of External Affairs. Pakistan had also requested the World Bank, which brokered the deal, to intervene in the matter, sources said. However, the World Bank refused to step into the issue, they added.

According to Pakistan media reports, Pakistan’s key dams — Tarbela on the Indus River and Mangla on the Jhelum River are running low on water, while there has been a “sudden decrease” in

The latest data released by the Pakistan Government shows that the availability of water in the Indus River System (inside Pakistan’s Punjab province) has declined by 10.3 per cent

Chenab River inflows after a short supply by India in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack.

The Kharif season generally begins in June and July with the onset of the monsoon rains. These are the months when many kharif crops are sown. The harvesting of kharif crops typically takes place in September and October, as well as during November and December. Basmati rice produced by Pakistan is considered the best in the world. The Basmati crops are likely to be hit if farmers fail to get enough water for irrigation.

The latest data released by the Pakistan Government shows that the availability of water in the Indus River System (inside Pakistan’s Punjab province) has declined by 10.3 per cent as of 02 June 2025, vis-a-vis 02 June 2024.

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Starlink gets licence for satellite internet services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Elon Musk’s Starlink has received a licence from the telecom department for providing satellite internet services in India, a key milestone that will take it closer towards launching commercial operations in the country.

Starlink is the third company after Eutelsat OneWeb and Jio Satellite Communications to get a licence from the Department of Telecommunications to provide satellite internet services in the country.

A fourth applicant, Amazon’s Kuiper is still waiting for approvals.

DoT sources confirmed on Friday that Starlink has indeed received the licence, and said the company will be granted trial spectrum in 15-20 days of applying for it.

Starlink will now have to comply with the security norms such as providing access for lawful interception, before starting services.

The licence came hours after a huge public spat between Musk and US President Donald Trump. The falling-out between the world’s richest man and the world’s most powerful person began when Musk, who left his role as head of

the Department of Government Efficiency a week ago, denounced Trump’s sweeping tax-cut and spending bill.

On Thursday, it erupted in the verbal duel after Trump criticised Musk in the Oval Office. Musk responded saying “Trump would have lost” without his help, prompting the US President to end US contracts.

The licence from DoT came nearly a month after the Starlink was issued a letter of intent (LoI) by the telecom department.

The companies that have received the licence would, however, have to wait a tad longer for commercial satcom spectrum as the Trai just recently sent its recommendations on pricing, and terms and conditions, to the Government for its consideration.

The players will be able to start their services after the allocation of radio wave frequencies.

Typically, even before the commercial spectrum, the trial spectrum is required to test, and verify the systems and processes on security parameters to demonstrate that all norms and requirements, are being complied with.

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Trump-Musk public feud escalates

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

President Donald Trump on Thursday threatened to cut Elon Musk’s Government contracts as their fractured alliance rapidly escalated into a public feud with Trump suggesting he would use the US Government to hurt his fellow billionaire financially.

The spectacular blow-up between the president of the United States and the world’s richest man played out on their respective social media platforms after Trump first broached the topic in a White House meeting with Germany’s new leader.

The rancorous breakup happened less than a week after they appeared together at the White House and Trump thanked Musk for his brief but tumultuous time in the US Government. Trump had largely remained silent as Musk stewed over the last few days on his social media platform X, condemning the president’s signature tax cuts and spending bill. But Trump clapped back Thursday in the Oval Office, lamented their frayed relationship and said he was “very disappointed in Musk”.

Musk responded on social media in real time. Trump ratcheted up the stakes when he turned to his own social media network, Truth Social, and threatened to use the US Government to hurt Musk’s bottom line with his internet company Starlink and rocket company SpaceX.



Elon Musk speaks during a news conference with President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House

“The easiest way to save money in our Budget, Billions and Billions of Dollars, is to terminate Elon’s Governmental Subsidies and Contracts,” Trump wrote on his social media network. “I was always surprised that Biden didn’t do it!” “This just gets better and better,” Musk quickly replied on X. “Go ahead, make my day.” The deepening rift unfurled much like their relationship started — rapidly, intensely and very publicly. It also quickly hit Musk financially, even

before Trump’s threat.

After Trump started speaking about Musk, shares of his electric vehicle company Tesla fell 9 per cent, their latest notable move since the election. The shares doubled in the weeks after Trump was elected, gave back those gains and more during Musk’s time at DOGE and then rallied after he vowed in April to focus much more on Tesla and his other companies.

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Providing resources, facilities as per need is govt's duty: CM Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gorakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised on Friday that it is the responsibility of a democratically elected government to ensure the availability of resources and facilities as per the needs of the people.

Addressing a public gathering during the inauguration of the city's second Kalyan Mandapam in Surajkund Colony, the chief minister noted that such provisions not only fulfill societal needs but also serve as platforms for addressing and resolving various issues.

He added, "The government's goal should be to improve the lives of all sections of society by ensuring access to high-quality facilities and services tailored to different income groups."

Built by the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation, the Kalyan Mandapam spans 35,500 square feet and has been completed at a cost of Rs 4.52 crore.

Praising the initiative, the chief minister highlighted that the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation is the first civic body in the state to pioneer the construction of Kalyan Mandapams, facilitating organised and affordable celebrations for lower and middle income groups. "Having a venue like this available for Rs11,000 to Rs 25,000 enables families to host auspicious ceremonies in a dignified and cost-effective manner," he remarked.

He also shared that five more Kalyan Mandapams are currently under construction, and that he has allocated the entire amount of his MLA fund toward supporting this initiative.

The chief minister encouraged other urban local bodies to emulate Gorakhpur's example, noting that such efforts can serve as benchmarks

for the rest of the state.

Addressing the issue of urban development, the chief minister stated, "The vision of a Smart City, as outlined by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, must also evolve into that of a Safe City." He emphasised the need to create urban spaces where every citizen, including daughters, business owners, children and senior citizens, feels secure. For this, he advocated for strong security systems and strict deterrents against those who attempt to disrupt public safety. He urged citizens to support this effort by installing CCTV cameras outside their homes, describing it as a key technological tool for enhancing safety.

Promoting environmental awareness, the chief minister emphasised that cleanliness and environmental protection are collective responsibilities that require the proactive participation of every citizen. He reiterated Prime Minister Modi's focus on cleanliness as a national priority and called upon everyone to contribute to this mission.

On this occasion, he urged municipal councillors to form 'Mohalla Committees' in their respective wards. These committees, he said, should be tasked with monitoring sanitation, promoting tree plantation, and supporting broader environmental conservation efforts. Touching on the growing challenges posed by climate change, including excessive rainfall, unseasonal weather, and drought, the chief minister stressed that human-induced issues require human-led solutions. He called for a return to nature to counteract the severe impacts of environmental degradation. In line with Prime Minister Modi's call for ecological

stewardship, the chief minister encouraged citizens to plant trees in the name of their mothers (Ek ped maa ke naam) and to plant saplings along riverbanks and catchment areas, emphasising that rivers are the lifelines of the nation.

Citing the example of the Godhoiya Nala, once a river that degraded into a drain due to encroachment and neglect, the chief minister noted that its revival is now underway. He said that planting trees along riverbanks was a meaningful way to honour both nature and our ancestors. The chief minister shared that 50 crore saplings are ready in nurseries this year, with a target of planting 35 crore trees, underscoring the state's commitment to a greener and more sustainable future.

At the inauguration ceremony of the Kalyan Mandapam, Chief Minister Yogi announced that the upcoming 75-bed working women's hostel, to be constructed by the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation, will be named after Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar, a symbol of women's empowerment and a stalwart of religious and cultural values.

He remarked that naming the hostel after Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar on the occasion of her 300th birth anniversary will not only honour her legacy but also serve as a source of lasting inspiration. Recalling her remarkable contributions, the chief minister said, "Ahilyabai Holkar led her Malwa empire toward self-reliance while championing the welfare of all segments of society, including women, farmers and artisans. A devout follower of Lord Shiva, she played a pivotal role in preserving religious and cultural heritage by renovating several iconic

temples, including Kashi Vishwanath, Puri, Gaya, Mahakal, Omkareshwar and Somnath."

During his address, the chief minister highlighted multiple facets of Gorakhpur's ongoing development, ranging from enhanced road connectivity and the fertiliser factory to AIIMS and the beautification of Ramgarh Tal. He noted that Gorakhpur is now seamlessly connected by four-lane highways from all directions. Once lacking a ring road, the city now boasts both inner and outer ring road connectivity.

The chief minister also spoke of significant urban transformation projects undertaken by the municipal corporation, such as the Integrated Waste Management City at Suthni, a multi-level parking at Bandhu Singh Park, a food street at Indira Bal Vihar, beautification of Ghantaghar and Laldighi Park, a commercial complex in TP Nagar, and Kanha Upvan, currently under construction in Tal Nador.

He emphasised the need for collective sensitivity and vigilance in the development process to ensure inclusive growth.

The chief minister appealed to citizens to actively participate in celebrating International Yoga Day on June 21 in every ward and locality. He also urged people to plant a tree in the name of their mother on June 23, in tribute to Pandit Syama Prasad Mookerjee, on his martyrdom day. Earlier, the chief minister formally inaugurated the Kalyan Mandapam and inspected its infrastructure. He also honoured 10 municipal corporation employees with certificates and tokens of appreciation for their exemplary service.

City all set for Bakrid celebrations today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

The city is all set for the celebration of Eid-ul-Azha, also known as Bakrid, on Saturday. Ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha festival, Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Dr Roshan Jacob, on Friday, inspected the Aishbagh eidgah to review cleanliness and other arrangements for the festival.

During the inspection, she issued directions to the municipal corporation regarding cleanliness arrangements during the festival. She said that a special cleanliness drive should be run at the eidgah premises and surrounding areas before and after the festival.

The Water Works and Electricity departments were instructed to ensure uninterrupted water and electric supply during the time of namaz. The Health Department was asked to ensure deployment of medical teams and ambulances and the police to identify the sensitive places and deploy adequate police force there, and ensure surveillance by drones and CCTV cameras.

The divisional commissioner said that Bakrid gave the message of brotherhood, sacrifice and humanity and it was the responsibility of the administration to ensure that all citizens celebrated this festival in a cordial, peaceful and safe environment. Dr Jacob also planted a sapling at Aishbagh eidgah.

The district administration has beefed up security in the city, particularly the Old City areas.

JCP (Law and Order) Babloo Kumar said 14 companies of PAC and one company of RAF would be deployed in different parts of the city on Saturday and the entire security arrangements would be monitored by 14 officers of gazetted rank.

The traffic police have announced diversions on alternative routes to avoid traffic jams.

Yogi: Every problem will be addressed effectively

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gorakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath met with the public on Friday morning at the Janata Darshan held at Gorakhnath temple in Gorakhpur.

Personally interacting with around 200 people, the chief minister attentively heard their grievances and collected their petitions. He directed officials to respond swiftly and sensitively to public complaints, ensuring timely, fair and satisfactory resolution. Reaching out directly to the citizens seated outside the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhavan, the chief minister patiently listened to each individual and issued immediate instructions to the administrative and police officers concerned for resolution. He emphasised that all matters should be resolved transparently and efficiently. Reassuring the public, the chief minister said, "Do not worry. The government is committed to taking effective action on every issue. In response to complaints related to crime and land encroachment, the chief minister issued clear instructions to police officials to take strict action against criminals and land mafia. He said that if any powerful individual or mafia was forcibly grabbing someone's land, they must face the strictest possible legal action. "No one harassing the poor will be spared," he added.

As in previous Janata Darshan sessions, several people came seeking financial help for medical treatment. The chief minister assured them that no one's treatment would discontinue due to lack of funds. He instructed officials to quickly prepare cost estimates for the required medical care and submit them so that the government could release the funds without delay.

He further directed that Ayushman cardholders should face no difficulty in availing treatment, and those eligible but yet to receive the card must be issued one at the earliest. Several women came to the Janata Darshan with their children. The CM warmly interacted with the little ones, offering them chocolates and blessings. Meanwhile, during his stay at Gorakhnath temple on Friday morning, the chief minister followed his usual routine of worship and service. He began the day by offer-



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during the Janta Darshan in Gorakhpur. PTI

ing prayers to Shivavtar Guru Gorakhnath and then visited the samadhi of his revered guru, Brahmalin Mahant Avedyanath, to pay his respects. As part of his regular practice, he visited the temple cowshed (gaushala), where he affectionately called the cows by their names. Familiar with his voice, many of the cows came running to him. The chief minister lovingly caressed them, gently stroked their foreheads, and fed them jaggery with his own hands, displaying his deep bond and compassion for the animals.

Earlier in the morning, a group of young martial arts students, mostly girls, came to meet the chief minister at the Gorakhnath temple to wish him a belated happy birthday. The children greeted him with a rose and warm wishes, saying "Happy Birthday, Maharaj ji!"

The children also presented a memento to the chief minister and performed a few martial arts steps to express their admiration. The CM lovingly accepted their wishes, interacted with them about their training and studies, and posed for photos with them. Although the chief minister does not celebrate his birthday since embracing the path of 'sanyas', people from all walks of life continue to mark the occasion with joy. On Thursday, his 53rd birthday was celebrated across the state through various programmes organised by individuals and social groups.

CA duped of ₹1.93 cr

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Cyber thugs in Lucknow duped a chartered accountant of Rs 1.93 crore by luring him to invest in crypto currency.

The victim alleged that a woman befriended him first on Facebook and lured him saying he could earn high profits by making investment in crypto currency. The chartered accountant subsequently deposited money in several installments.

In his complaint, the victim, a resident of Gonti Nagar, said that on April 26, he became friends with the woman, whom he named as Bhavika Shetty, on Facebook. He said Bhavika Shetty told him that she was planning to open a school and an old age home in Kolkata and needed help in financial planning and tax advice from him as from a chartered accountant.

As the conversation progressed, Bhavika Shetty told the victim that she was an expert in investment related matters in crypto currency. She also told him that he could earn huge profits by investing money in crypto currency.

The victim said that he agreed to make an investment and on her advice, he invested Rs 50,000 for the first time through the portal and after a few days, profit and bonus started appearing in the portfolio made on his portal.

According to the victim, later on the advice of Bhavika Shetty, he invested Rs 1.92 crore in several installments.

This money was transferred into 11 bank accounts and Rs 1.03 crore more was demanded from him in the name of tax.

The victim told police that he was asked to pay a tax of Rs 53.82 lakh when he sought withdrawal of the profit amount.

The woman told him that although the tax was Rs. 49 lakh, it had increased due to geopolitical tension between India and Pakistan.

When the victim refused to pay the amount, his portfolio was removed from the portal. Also, his number was blocked. After realising that he had been cheated, he informed the police. Inspector Brijesh Yadav said that an FIR had been registered on the complaint of the victim.

GURU NANAK DEV UNIVERSITY AMRITSAR

NOTICE

Applications are invited from allotment of messes/canteens/shops/ vehicle Stand of Guru Nanak Dev University Regional Campus, Gurdaspur Regional Campus Jalandhar and G.N.D.U college Jalandhar for the session 2024-25 (Extendable upto 30.06.2025) by 16.06.2025. Details terms and forms can be downloads from the university website link: <https://online.gndu.ac.in/tenders-notice.aspx>

Dean Students Welfare na/12/30469/2023/45200

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया Bank of India

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Zonal Office: "Star House" Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010, Ph.: 0522-2721512

POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security interest, Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (2) read the Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, had issued a Demand Notice, calling borrower to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of same. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section 13(4) of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the dates mentioned hereunder. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India for mentioned amount and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower & Guarantors	Description of Immoveable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount o/s as mentioned in the Notice u/s 13(2) Date of Demand & Possession Notice
Branch: Tikaitnagar			
1	Mrs. Santosh Kirana Store Prop. Mr. Santosh Kumar S/o Late Sri Ram Gulam (Borrower & Legal Heir of Late Ram Gulam (Guarantor & Mortgagor)) at Ramjanki Dharmshala, Mohalla Sarawagi, Tikaitnagar, Tehsil Sirauli Gauspur Distt. Barabanki- 225415	All that part and parcel of the property situated at Mohalla Noorwaf, Tikaitnagar District Barabanki - 225415, in the name of Late Mr. Ram Gulam S/o Lt. Bindra Prasad having area of 967.50 sq.ft.	₹ 23,27,361.44 + interest & other charges
2	Mr. Shiv Kumar S/o Late Sri Ram Gulam (Legal Heir of Late Sri Ram Gulam (Guarantor & Mortgagor)) at Mohalla Sarawagi Near P D Jain Inter College, Tikaitnagar, Tehsil Sirauli Gauspur, Distt. Barabanki-225415	On the East by - Gall then house of Mr. Daya Ram On the West by- Tikaitnagar to Kasba ichaulli Road. On the North by- Masjid and House of Mr Saleem On the South by- House and shop of Mr. Radhey Lal	Demand Notice dt. 10.01.2025 Possession Notice dt. 04.06.2025
3	Sri Raj Kumar Gupta S/o Late Sri Ram Gulam (Guarantor & Mortgagor)) at Mohalla Rai Sahab Tikaitnagar, Tehsil Sirauli Gauspur Distt. Barabanki- 225415		
Date : 07.06.2025		Place : Tikaitnagar	Authorised Officer, Bank of India

45 kg gold used in Ram temple construction

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ayodhya

A total of 45 kilograms of pure gold has been used in the construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, according to Nripendra Mishra, the chairman of the Ram Temple Construction Committee.

Mishra informed on Friday, a day after the consecration of the Ram Darbar on the first floor of the temple complex.

He said the estimated value of the gold, excluding taxes, is around Rs 50 crore. Gold has been used extensively in the doors on the ground floor of the temple and the throne of Lord Ram.

He added that gold work is still ongoing in the Sheshavtar Temple.

While the main structure of the Ram Temple has been completed, other parts of the temple complex, including the museum, auditorium, and guest house, are still under construction. These are expected to be completed by December 2025.

Following the consecration of the Ram Darbar, Mishra said arrangements are being made for controlled public access to the sacred space. For now, only a limited number of devotees will be allowed to visit the Ram Darbar, and entry will be regulated through passes, which will be issued free of cost. Meanwhile, the consecration ceremony has drawn large crowds to the sanctum sanctorum of the temple. Champat Rai, Secretary of Ram temple trust, said that on Thursday the consecration ceremony of seven idols was completed at the temple. He stated that the idols installed on the first floor above the sanctum sanctorum include Ram Darbar in the

Gujarat merchant donates ornaments

Ayodhya: A diamond merchant from Gujarat has donated an array of valuable ornaments, including 11 crowns and a golden bow and arrow, to the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust in Ayodhya, according to officials of the VHP.

The donations have been made by Surat-based Mukesh Patel, who is the owner of the renowned jewellery firm Green Lab. Dinesh Newadia, the national treasurer of the VHP, claimed that the donation included intricately crafted items made from diamonds, gold, silver, and rubies. "Mukesh Patel has donated 11 crowns made of diamonds, 30 kilograms of silver, 300 grams of gold, and rubies," Newadia claimed. In addition to the crowns, Patel has donated necklaces, earrings, forehead tilaks (ornamental marks for the deity,

four large and three small bows to represent the four brothers in the Ramayana, four quivers, three maces, and ceremonial fly whisks, Newadia told PTI. These items were transported to Ayodhya in a special chartered aircraft, underscoring the significance and scale of the contribution. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, which is overseeing the construction and ornamentation of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, has received multiple donations from across the country. The revelation comes a day after the consecration of 'Raja Ram' — Lord Rama in his royal form — along with the installation of idols in eight newly built temples inside the Ram Janmabhoomi complex was held on Thursday in the presence of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

PTI

day they can cause blisters." His companion, Sudhakar Tiwari, added that although the temple trust has placed red mats over parts of the path, many of them have torn and become dangerously hot. "It's best to wear thick socks while visiting the temple in this weather," he advised. A Ram Temple Trust official clarified that the newly consecrated Ram Darbar is not yet open for general public. The trust is expected to finalise a plan for public access in an upcoming meeting, Mishra added.

Thursday's was the second major ceremony at the Ram Temple, the first being the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol on January 22 last year in the presence of PM Narendra Modi and a host of dignitaries from across the country.

बैंक ऑफ़ इंडिया Bank of India

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Zonal Office: "Star House" Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010, Ph.: 0522-2721512

POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security interest, Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (12) read the Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, had issued a Demand Notice, calling borrower to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of same. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section 13(4) of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the dates mentioned hereunder. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India for mentioned amount and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower & Guarantor	Description of Immoveable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount o/s as mentioned in the Notice u/s 13(2) Date of Demand & Possession Notice
Branch: Khuramnagar			
1	M/S ISRT PROJECTS PRIVATE LIMITED (borrower), Mr. Vivek Tripathi (Mortgagor & guarantor), Mr. Parichay Chaudhary (guarantor) and Mr. Pankaj Dixit (guarantor)	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Plot no 194 out of Khasra no 246 together with building thereon, measuring 83.64 sq. mtr. situated at swapna lok Village Kamta Ismailganj Lucknow in the name of Mr Vivek Tripathi. Boundaries:- East-others land West- 12 mtr wide road North-H. no. 193 South-Plot no 195	₹ 19,85,557.11 + interest & other charges
2	Mr. SURESH KUMAR PRAJAPATI and Mrs. Rajni Soni	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of at E-3/10, Sector H Jankipuram District Lucknow 226021 measuring 30.00 sq mtr. in the name of Mr. SURESH KUMAR PRAJAPATI and Mrs. Rajni Soni. Boundaries:- On the North : by H.NO. E 3/11, On the South : by H.NO E 3/9, On the East : by 6.00 MTR WIDE ROAD On the West by : H.NO. E 3/19	₹ 28,49,618.88 + interest & other charges
3	Mr. DINESH KUMAR RAO and Mrs. PUSHPARAO	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of H.NO.592 GHA /KN 775 MIN RAJIV NAGAR GHOSIYNA KHARIKA TEHSIL SAROJANINAGAR LUCKNOW 226029 measuring 92.936 sq mtr. in the name of Mr. DINESH KUMAR RAO and Mrs. PUSHPARAO. Boundaries:- On the North by : HOUSE OF SELLER, On the South by : HOUSE OF MANATI DEVI, On the East by: 15.00 FT WIDE ROAD, On the West by: PROPERTY OF HAJI SAHABC	₹ 39,26,640.75 + interest & other charges
Date : 07.06.2025, Place : Lucknow			Authorised Officer, Bank of India

FC team visits Sarnath, BHU temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission (FC) Dr Arvind Panagariya, along with his wife and other members of the commission visited Sarnath on Friday. They saw the archaeological site as well as the museum in Sarnath and observed the archaeological remains kept there. After this the team also visited the Vishwanath Mandir in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) premises.

After inspection in Sarnath Museum, FC Chairman also wrote a message on the visitor's book. During the visit, Commission Chairman Dr Arvind Panagariya, Amita Panagariya, Secretary Ritwik Pandey, Chief Development Officer Himanshu Nagpal and other officers were prominently present.

Earlier the 15-member team of the 16th Finance Commission arrived in Varanasi on Thursday. On reaching Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, Divisional Commissioner S Rajalingam, Commissioner of Police (CP) Mohit Agarwal, District Magistrate Satyendra Kumar and other officers welcomed the team. After that, the Finance Commission team members reached Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham. After offering prayers, they were informed about the construction of the corridor from the officials present on the spot. The members of the commission, including the chairman, distributed some articles to the elderly people in the Mumuksh Bhawan in the corridor.

After this, the team members reached Banarasi Silk Centre, Panaya, an ODOF centre located at Chowkghat and got detailed information about the entire process of making Banarasi saree. During



Finance Commission Chairman Dr Arvind Panagariya and others visiting Sarnath in Varanasi on Friday.

this, the team members closely observed the Banarasi saree, stool, carpet and other materials being woven on handloom in the Panaya premises itself and got information about its process. During this, they also talked to the artisans working on the spot. The team members were shown many silk garments made on handlooms of many varieties, including Banarasi saree, ladies suit, etc prepared here.

They were stunned to see many works of zari etc being made on handlooms.

During this, the zari work done on Banarasi sarees made by hand 250 years ago was also shown. Seeing the old and preserved garments, on the suggestion of the members, including the chairman of the commission, the manager of Banarasi Silk Centre said that a museum was being built by the organisation in Varanasi itself, in which these very ancient garments would be displayed so that they remain safe and people can observe them. Then the team members visited the Rasoolpur vil-

lage of Pindra development block and did a field inspection of the development work done there. During the inspection in Rasoolpur, the chairman and members of the commission also saw Amrit Sarovar, Gram Sachivalaya etc. In the Gram Sachivalaya auditorium, the chairman and members talked to the gram pradhan and villagers and enquired about the works done with the funds of the Finance Commission. They also discussed important works like solid waste management, garbage disposal, plastic waste management etc.

During the inspection on the occasion of World Environment Day, the chairman and members planted saplings on the banks of Amrit Sarovar and also gave the message of environment to the people.

After that, the team members inspected the Dr Sampurnanand Sports Stadium located at Sigra and took stock of the new works like volleyball, badminton, basketball, swimming pool and tennis courts in the outdoor of the stadium premises, athletics track etc. During the inspection of Gram Panchayat Rasoolpur and Sampurnanand Sports Stadium, the chairman and members expressed happiness and satisfaction by observing the works done on the spot. Then the commission members also visited Namoh Ghat.

During the visit, along with the Chairman Dr Arvind Panagariya, Amita Panagariya, Anni George Mathav, Manoj Panda, Pushpanjali Panda, Soumya Kanti Ghosh, Ritwik Pandey, Rahul Jain, Raghavendra Singh, Kumar Vivek, Ashutosh Awasthi, Abhay Mittal, Nikita Jain, District Magistrate Satyendra Kumar, Chief Development Officer Himanshu Nagpal and other officers etc were prominently present.



Devotees carry pots filled with holy waters from various rivers during a 'Kalash Shobha Yatra' on the occasion of Nirjala Ekadashi in Varanasi on Friday.

PTI

Yoga Week to start at Namoh Ghat from June 15

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

On International Yoga Day, the government will give the message of keeping the world healthy from Kashi, the city of Adiyogi (Lord Shiva). The main programme will be organised at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham on International Yoga Day June 21. The government will also celebrate Yoga Week from June 15 to 21 and its formal inauguration will be done on June 15 at Namoh Ghat in the presence of administrative officials and public rep-

resentatives.

Yoga programme will also be started at other ghats of Kashi. Preparations are also going on to organise programmes on Yoga Day at tourist places, institutions, schools etc. This time the theme of International Yoga Day is 'Yoga for one earth one health'. For this, yoga practice will be conducted for a week to make people aware and ensure their participation.

The Yoga Week programme will start with Surya Namaskar from Namaste sculpture of Namoh Ghat in Kashi.

Open house session for candidates qualified in JEE (Adv) on June 11

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University), Varanasi, announced that the Open House Session for candidates qualified in JEE (Advanced) 2025 will be held on June 11 from 3:30 pm. The session will take place in online mode to ensure wider participation and accessibility.

The session will be chaired by the Director of the institute Prof Amit Patra. Key academic and administrative leaders of the institute, including the Deans, the chief proctor, the Council of Wardens and the Chairman JEE (Advanced) Prof AP Harsha will also be present. During the session, prospective

students will have the opportunity to interact directly with the leadership team and gain insights into the admission process, hostel facilities, campus security, and other aspects of life at IIT (BHU). All queries and concerns of the candidates will be addressed in detail.

Interested candidates must register through the provided Google Form link (<https://forms.gle/konz7bdWuuqscSFT>) to secure their participation. Registration is mandatory and must be completed by 6 pm on June 10. Only registered candidates will be granted access to the online session via Google Meet on June 11. The IIT (BHU) looks forward to welcoming aspiring students and sharing the exceptional opportunities that await them on campus, an official said.

Minister calls upon farmers to install solar pumps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Agriculture Education and Research Baldev Singh Aulakh called upon the farmers to install solar pumps on subsidy, use fertilisers based on soil testing and carry out agricultural work on time using improved seeds. Addressing the farmers under the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan organised at National Inter College Pindra on Thursday, the minister directed the officials of the Agriculture Department to ensure that farmers receive high quality seeds, fertilisers etc.

For this, Aulakh said that the private sellers should be constantly monitored and strict action should be taken against any seller who does any kind of adulteration or sells substandard chemicals or fertilisers so that the farmers can increase their income by getting high production at low cost.

Through a tractor rally MLA



UP minister Baldev Singh Aulakh inaugurating Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan in Pindra area in Varanasi

(Pindra) Dr Awadhesh Singh congratulated the soldiers for making 'Operation Sindoor' successful. The

tractor rally was also taken out to make farmers aware. MLC and district Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president

NTPC Rihand organises environmental awareness activities

CORRESPONDENT ■ Sonbhadra

NTPC Rihand organised a series of environmental awareness activities and a tree plantation drive on the occasion of World Environment Day. An awareness rally was taken out to promote environmental consciousness, which started from Lake Park and ended at Shivalik Guest House. The rally witnessed active participation from NTPC officials, employees, union and association representatives, women, children and local residents.

After the rally, a tree plantation programme was held in the Rihand township premises. The event saw the presence of Project Head Anil Shrivastava along with senior officials and staff. In his address,



Tree plantation drive conducted at NSI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

A large-scale tree plantation drive was organised at the National Sugar Institute (NSI) under the leadership of Director, Prof. Seema Paroha. During the event, the staff of the institute took a pledge to conserve and promote trees.

Dr BN Acharya, a homeopathic physician and President of the Rotary Club, was specially invited as the guest of honour for the event. Institute employees, daily wage workers, and students enthusiastically

planted a variety of saplings, including mango, jamun, ashok, neem, and mulberry within the experimental sugar mill premises and pledged to nurture them.

On this occasion, the director distributed *gamchas* (cotton towels) and water bottles as a token of appreciation to the workers engaged in gardening, farming, factory operations, and sanitation services.

In her address, Prof Seema Paroha said, "Greenery leads to prosperity. Nature is intricately woven into every aspect of our lives and nourishes us like a mother. It pro-

vides us with life-giving air, water, and sunlight free of cost. However, in pursuit of selfish interests, mankind is continuously cutting down trees, the adornment of the earth, which will have severe consequences in the future." She further expressed concern over the rising global temperatures, melting glaciers and the consequent rise in sea levels, which pose a serious threat to coastal and low-lying cities. She appealed to all to maintain a harmonious balance with nature, as it is essential for survival and well-being.

Shrivastava emphasised that environmental protection was a collective responsibility. He encouraged everyone to adopt tree plantation as a regular practice and to minimise the use of single-use plastic for the well-being of the planet.

The event also featured enthusiastic participation from the girls of the GEM-2025 empowerment campaign. These participants not only joined the rally and plantation drive but also staged a street play ('nukkad natak') highlighting the harmful effects of plastic pollution. Through this initiative, NTPC Rihand reaffirmed its strong commitment to environmental conservation and conveyed a powerful message — "A healthy environment is the foundation of a safe and sustainable future."

The programme was conducted by Assistant Director (Official Language) Mallika Dwivedi. Many dignitaries, including Shailendra Kumar Trivedi and Ashok Garg were present.

'EK PED MA KE NAAM' CAMPAIGN

Under the campaign 'Ek Ped Ma Ke Naam' a tree plantation drive was organised at Kendriya Vidyalaya IIT-K. The students participated enthusiastically in this programme.

AI summer school held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

The Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Harcourt Butler Technical University (HBTU), Kanpur, successfully organised a six-day Artificial Intelligence (AI) Summer School from June 2 to 6 with support from IEEE and facilitation by young researchers. The initiative served as an innovative step towards instilling technological awareness in students. More than 150 meritorious students from classes VIII to XIII representing cities such as Kanpur, Lucknow, and Bareilly, actively participated in the workshop. The programme was coordinated by Dr Rashi Agrawal, Associate Professor, CSE Department, HBTU, under whose guidance the students explored and experienced the nuances of AI throughout the week. Programme coordinator Dr Rashi Agrawal said students received hands-on training each day, enabling them to grasp both basic and advanced technical skills in a practical manner.

At the conclusion of the summer school, students presented their projects based on what they had learned. These were evaluated by external examiner Dr Siddhartha, who praised the efforts of students and provided grading based on their performance. During the closing felicitation ceremony, the top three participating schools were honoured: Seth Anandram Jaipuria School (SAR Jaipuria), Pandit Deendayal Vidyalaya and City Montessori School (CMS), Lucknow.

OATH TAKEN

A programme was organised at Parshuram Vatika in Arya Nagar to raise awareness about the importance of protecting the environment. The event was attended by over 250 social workers, seniors and children. The key highlights of the programme were — plantation drive and oath-taking ceremony to protect trees, distribution of plants to over 200 people, plantation of 20 trees in Parshuram Vatika, discussion on the impact of pollution on health, including respiratory diseases, heart problems and skin cancer. Dr Hemant Mohan and Dr Arti Mohan emphasised the importance of protecting the environment for a healthy life. The event highlighted the need to reduce pollution, conserve greenery and promote sustainable practices. Participants took an oath to protect trees and promote environmental conservation. Deepak Malviya, Mahesh Mishra, Pankaj Sharma, and others participated in the event. The event aimed to promote environmental awareness and encourage people to take action to protect the planet.

AWARENESS EVENT

The Kanpur Metro, in collaboration with the NGO 'Madad Ki Raah' Foundation, organized a special awareness event. As part of the initiative, children aged 5 to 12 took their first ride on the underground metro and created impactful drawings at Nayaganj Metro Station highlighting the importance of environmental conservation.

Breakthrough in gallbladder cancer research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Researchers from Banaras Hindu University — Dr Ruhi Dixit, Dr Manoj Pandey and Dr Vijay Kumar Shukla — have achieved a breakthrough in gallbladder cancer (GBC) research by identifying novel genetic biomarkers that could transform early detection and targeted treatment of this deadly disease. Using advanced technology, the team analysed gene expression profiles from gallbladder cancer, cholelithiasis (gallstones), and healthy tissues. For the first time in India, a three-way comparative transcriptomic analysis revealed 10 key genes potentially driving cancer development. Most of these genes are involved in DNA repair, and their dysfunction promotes cancer growth. This suggests that,

regardless of the carcinogenic trigger, genetic pathways primarily involve DNA repair mechanisms, making treatment challenging.

Building on the team's prior transcriptomic study, these findings clarify pathways in carcinogenesis and differential gene expression. Additionally, five genes were common across all three groups, indicating their potential as markers of early transformation before cancer fully develops. This study identified a total of 3898 genes of which 2575 were upregulated and 1323 were down regulated. Mismatch repair pathway, nucleotide excision repair and homologous recombination were main pathways found to be involved in carcinogenesis.

Gallbladder cancer is among the most common cancers in the Gangetic belt,

often diagnosed late with a poor prognosis and a five-year survival rate of 10–20 per cent. Despite 25 years of research at Banaras Hindu University to identify its elusive causes, this study marks a significant advance. It is the first in India to compare genetic changes across cancer, gallstone, and healthy tissues simultaneously. These newly identified genes could serve as biomarkers for early detection and personalised treatment, paving the way for improved diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy for gallbladder cancer. "These findings could enable earlier detection of gallbladder cancer," the researchers noted.

"With further validation, these biomarkers have the potential to revolutionize how we diagnose and treat this devastating disease," they added.

Woman dies, son hurt as Bolero hits bike

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Prayagraj

A 50-year-old woman was killed and her 18-year-old son was seriously injured in a road accident on the Prayagraj-Murjapur highway near Kathouli village under the Meja police station area on Friday morning. The deceased was identified as Vimla Devi.

Police said that the accident occurred when the bike on which Vimla Devi and her son Suryabhan were travelling, was hit by an uncontrollable Bolero from the front near Kathouli village. As a result Vimla Devi succumbed to her injuries on the spot, while Suryabhan was seriously injured and rushed to a hospital for treatment. The collision was so severe that the Bolero overturned in a

roadside ditch, police said.

Meja police station in charge, Rajesh Upadhyay and Meja Road outpost in charge, Ramesh Singh, reached the spot with police force and started investigation. Both vehicles involved in the accident have been seized. Vimla Devi's body has been sent for post-mortem examination. Police are investigating the matter based on a written complaint from the family of the deceased. Meja Station House Officer Rajesh Upadhyay said that the police would continue to investigate the circumstances of the accident and ascertain its cause. He said that the fine family of the deceased had been informed and further action would be taken based on the findings of the investigation.

CATTLE SMUGGLERS ARRESTED

The Naini police in collaboration with SOG in Prayagraj arrested cattle smugglers on Friday. The SOG team, led by its in charge, Naveen Singh in association with the Naini police, conducted a raid in the Naini police station area and recovered dozens of cows, buffaloes and calves. Five individuals, including two women, were arrested from the spot. The police rescued six cows, two bulls and one calf.

Deputy Commissioner of Police for Yamunanagar Vivek Chandra Yadav said that the cattle smugglers would pick up stray cattle, load them onto a pickup vehicle, and sold them to butchers.

The police are investigating the matter and have identified several individuals who have fled from the spot.

Modi to attend G7 Summit in Canada



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said he will be attending the G7 Summit later this month in Canada and that he looked forward to meeting his newly elected Canadian counterpart Mark Carney.

PM Modi thanked Carney for an invite to the Summit, scheduled between June 15-17 in Kananaskis, in a telephone call he received from the Canadian prime minister. Modi said on social media, "Glad to receive a call from Prime Minister Mark Carney of Canada. Congratulated him on his recent election victory and thanked him for the invitation to the G7 Summit in Kananaskis later this month.

"As vibrant democracies bound by deep people-to-people ties, India and Canada will work together with renewed vigour, guided by mutual respect and shared interests. Look forward to our meeting at the Summit."

India's ties with Canada turned frosty

under the government of Carney's predecessor Justin Trudeau over a host of issues, including the activities of Khalistani separatists in the country.

Trudeau had alleged the likely Indian involvement in the killing of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a radical Khalistani activist. The diplomatic ties between the two countries were downgraded as the diplomatic row between them escalated.

G7 is the grouping of seven richest countries, and India has been getting an invitation to attend the prestigious Summit since 2019.

The expected meeting between Modi and Carney, who is the new leader of the ruling Liberal Party following Trudeau's resignation as his party's fortunes dimmed under him, has raised the hope of a thaw in the ties between the countries. Carney was elected as prime minister in the snap elections in March this year.

The G7 bloc includes the US, the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Japan besides Canada.

India appreciates Central Asian States, says Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India on Friday appreciated the Central Asian States for standing by it following the Pahalgam terror attack and reaffirmed that it would be a "trusted development partner" for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

In his opening remarks at the India-Central Asia Dialogue here, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said India is keen to expand cooperation with the five countries in a range of areas, including

connectivity, trade, tourism and education. "I appreciate that your countries stood by India and condemned the heinous terrorist attack that took place in April in Pahalgam," he said.

Jaishankar said India "deeply cherishes" its millennia-old civilisational and cultural ties with Central Asia.

The External Affairs Minister said the cooperation between India and Central Asia received a "quantum boost" following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's back-to-back visits to all five countries in the region in July 2015.

"India remains a trusted development partner for all of you," he said, adding that the two-way trade, economic and investment ties have strengthened significantly over the last decade.

"Today, we are well-connected by multiple direct flights. Our enhanced connectivity facilitates greater two-way tourist flows and businesses," he said.

Jaishankar said both India and the Central Asian nations are committed to advancing mutually beneficial cooperation in areas of trade and investment, defence, regional connectivity, security and new

and emerging technologies. The India-Central Asia Dialogue, launched in January 2019 in Samarkand, is a meeting of foreign ministers. It serves as a key platform for strengthening ties between India and Central Asia.

The second meeting took place virtually in October 2020 and focussed on regional security, counter-terrorism and infrastructure development.

The third meeting was held in New Delhi in December 2021 and emphasised connectivity to further deepen the ties between India and Central Asia.

BRICS Forum condemns terrorist attack in Pahalgam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BRICS Parliamentary Forum, which includes China and Iran, condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam and resolved to fight terrorism together on Friday.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who led the Indian parliamentary delegation to the forum meeting in Brasilia, made a strong case for cutting off financial assistance to terrorist organisations, sharing intelligence, preventing misuse of modern technologies and cooperating in investigation and judicial processes.

"The joint declaration strongly condemned the recent terrorist attack in Pahalgam, India, and it was agreed that the parliaments of all BRICS countries would work together united against terrorism," a statement from the Lok Sabha Secretariat said.



Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at closing ceremony of 11th BRICS Parliamentary Forum in Brasilia, Brazil

PIONEER PHOTO

Terrorists shot dead 26 people, mostly tourists, in the April 22 attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam.

The attack drew strong retaliation from India, with its armed forces targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on the intervening night of May 6 and 7.

The BRICS Parliamentary Forum meeting in Brasilia was attended by representatives from India, Brazil, Russia, China, South Africa, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia.

After several rounds of intense discussions and deliberations during the conference, a broad consensus was reached on key topics such as artificial intelligence,

global trade and economy, inter-parliamentary cooperation, global peace and security.

Birla presented India's decisive stance on fighting terrorism and called for adopting a zero-tolerance approach against terror, which was appreciated and unanimously included in the joint declaration.

The BRICS parliaments recognised that the active par-

ticipation of all nations is essential to maintain global peace and security.

At the conference, Birla presented India's clear and strong role on various topics — especially global cooperation against terrorism, a just and balanced global order, participation in technological innovations and democratic exchanges.

Active COVID cases in India cross 5,000



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India's active Covid case tally crossed the 5,000 mark with Kerala remaining the most affected State followed by Gujarat, West Bengal and Delhi, according to the Union Health Ministry data released on Friday. In view of the increase in cases, the Centre is conducting mock drills to check facility-level preparedness for COVID-19.

All States have been instructed to ensure availability of oxygen, isolation beds, ventilators, and essential medicines in view of rising cases of Covid.

There are 5,364 active cases in India and four fresh deaths have been reported in the last 24 hours. Official sources have maintained that most cases are mild and managed under home care.

Since January this year, 55 deaths have been reported in the country. There were a total of 257 active patients in the country on May 22.

A series of technical review meetings were held on June 2 and 3 under chairpersonship of Dr Sunita Sharma, Director General of Health Services (DGHS) with representatives of Disaster Management Cell, Emergency Management Response (EMR) Cell, National Centre for Disease Control

IIT-Guwahati develops affordable COVID-19 testing method

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, have found that clay particles interact differently in the presence of SARS-CoV-2 — the virus that causes COVID-19 — a finding they used for developing a simple, affordable testing alternative.

The approach developed looks at how quickly particles of clay settle in a salt water solution containing the virus.

"Due to changes in inter-particle forces of clay in the presence of the virus, the sedimentation rate of the clay-electrolyte system changed," the authors wrote in the study published in the journal Applied Clay Science. The findings offer a "simple and affordable" alternative to the complex, expensive methods currently used for detecting SARS-CoV-2, the team said.

"Current methods, such as Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR), are highly sensitive but time consuming and require heavy equipment. Similarly, the antigen testing is fast but lacks accuracy, while antibody testing is used after the infection has occurred, highlighting limitations at various levels," lead author TV Bharat, professor at IIT Guwahati's department of civil engineering, said.

Further, many of the currently available

methods are not practical in resource-limited settings or during large-scale outbreaks. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed a critical gap in how we detect and track viral infections, he added.

For the study, the researchers used Bentonite clay because its unique chemical structure allows pollutants and heavy metals to be easily absorbed.

"Previous studies have shown that clay particles can bind with viruses and bacteriophages, making it a promising material for virus detection," Bharat said.

The team looked at particles of Bentonite clay interacted with viral material in a saline solution. They found that a Coronavirus surrogate and Infectious Bronchitis Virus (IBV) bind to the negatively charged clay surfaces at a controlled room temperature and neutral pH of 7.

Bharat said the study offers a "faster, more affordable, and an accurate" alternative method — "as simple as watching sand settle in water" — to current methods, paving the way for a better disease monitoring and treatment strategies, especially during pandemics. The method also "holds great promise for improving how viral outbreaks are monitored and controlled, especially in regions where expensive lab equipment and trained personnel are not readily available," the lead author said.

(NCDC), Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP) and Central Government Hospitals in Delhi and with representatives from all states and UTs to evaluate the current COVID-19 situation and preparedness measures.

Official sources on June 4 said that State and District surveillance units under

IDSP are closely monitoring Influenza Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI).

"Testing is recommended for all admitted SARI cases and 5 per cent of ILI cases as per guidelines and positive SARI samples are sent for Whole Genome Sequencing through the ICMR VRDL network," an official source had said.

Over 400 participants attend workshop on 11th Yoga Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Over 400 participants from various Government departments attended a high-level virtual workshop organised by the Ministry of Ayush in collaboration with the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting as a significant step towards seamless coordination and wider outreach for the 11th International Day of Yoga (IDY).

The session held on Thursday was aimed at addressing the growing demand for timely, authentic and fresh information regarding grand Yoga Day celebrations as this year's IDY marks the historic 10-year journey since the global recognition of Yoga by the United Nations in 2014.

Ministry of Ayush Secretary Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha chaired the workshop which was attended by over 400 delegates from various ministries and departments, an Ayush ministry statement said.

The event underlined the Central Government's unified commitment to the theme of this year's celebration — 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health'. Senior officials including Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Joint Secretary C Senthil Rajan and Ministry of Ayush Joint Secretary Monalisa Dash addressed the participants, moderated discussions and outlined the media strategy.

Kotecha emphasised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's broad vision and the growing global and national relevance of IDY. "International Yoga Day is no longer just a date on the calendar, it is a decade-long national movement for wellness, unity and harmony. International Yoga Day 2025 is our opportunity to connect every citizen in every corner of the country with this shared celebration of wellness.

"With the Government's holistic

approach and integrated media outreach, we can ensure that every citizen of the country has access to this global event," he said. He further explained that Yoga has become a vehicle for both public health transformation and cultural diplomacy, establishing India as a global leader in preventive healthcare and holistic wellness.

Rajan, while addressing the session, spoke on the importance of media convergence across various platforms and the potential of visual content to inform citizen engagement and increase participation and awareness. Dash highlighted the role of coordinated planning and creativity in amplifying the message of IDY.

The session held on Thursday was aimed at addressing the growing demand for timely, authentic and fresh information regarding grand Yoga Day celebrations

The workshop also served as a platform to review the progress of inter-ministerial initiatives, deliberate on outreach strategies and ensure a coordinated nationwide campaign by June 21, the statement said.

Emphasis was laid on ensuring last-mile connectivity by taking the Yoga message and activities to tribal areas, urban areas, rural areas and deprived communities through both digital and grassroots channels. With just a few weeks to go for the 11th IDY on 21 June, preparations are in full swing for a historic, inclusive and impactful celebration of Yoga which is India's gift to the world. It is a practice that has united billions of people in the pursuit of health, peace and harmony.

Navy to launch first ASW-SWC Arnala in Visakhapatnam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Giving a boost to self reliance in defence manufacturing, Indian Navy is all set to commission the first Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC) Arnala at Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam, on June 18, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Anil Chauhan will preside over the ceremony, defence ministry said here on Friday.

The event marks the formal induction first of the sixteen ASW-SWC class ships into the Indian Navy. Designed and constructed by M/s Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) with M/s L&T Shipbuilders, Arnala is a testament to the success of the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative in defence manufacturing.

Constructed under the guidance of the Directorate of Ship Production and the oversight of the Warship Overseeing Teams in Kolkata and Kattupalli, Arnala was delivered to the Indian Navy on May eight this year.

Named after the historic Arnala Fort off Vasai, Maharashtra, the warship reflects India's rich maritime heritage. Much like the fort, which stood resiliently against var-

ious threats, the ship is designed to have a formidable presence at sea.

Its robust construction and advanced capabilities ensure that it can withstand the challenges of the maritime domain, safeguarding India's waters from emerging threats. The warship incorporates more than 80 per cent indigenous content and integrates advanced systems from leading Indian defence firms, including Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), L&T, Mahindra Defence and MEIL. The project has engaged over 55 Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), promoting domestic industry and generating related economic activity.

Designed for a range of ASW operations, Arnala is equipped to conduct Subsurface Surveillance, Search and Rescue missions and Low-Intensity Maritime Operations. This 77.6 m long warship, with a gross tonnage of over 1,490 tonnes, is the largest Indian Naval warship to be propelled by a Diesel Engine-Waterjet combination.

The commissioning of Arnala will mark a transformative moment in India's naval capabilities, strengthening coastal defence and reaffirming India's position as a self-reliant maritime power in the strategically vital Indian Ocean Region.

Congress criticises Modi Government, picks on Vijay Mallya's comment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress on Friday took a swipe at the Modi Government over fugitive liquor baron Vijay Mallya's reported remarks that he had informed then finance minister Arun Jaitley before leaving the country in 2016 and said "Narendra's whole system has turned out to be a surrender".

In another jibe, the opposition party also said Modi Government's "pakoda economics" turned into "bhagoda economics". The Congress often mocks the Government using the term 'pakoda economics', an apparent reference to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reported comment in 2018 that selling 'pakoras' is also employment.

The Congress shared a video clip from a recent podcast Mallya did with social media influencer Raj Shamani in which he claimed he had informed Jaitley before leaving India in 2016. "It is clear that Modi Government had a hand" in the businessman fleeing from the country, the party said. The party's media and publicity department head Pawan Khera also posted the same clip.

Mallya is heard saying in clip, "I told the finance minister, Arun Jaitley, before

leaving for the airport and then I flew from Delhi to London, I was on my way to Geneva for an FIA world council meeting which was fixed months ago. I told the finance minister because I went from Parliament to the Delhi Airport. When this news hit the media it once again created a storm."

The Congress shared a video clip from a recent podcast Mallya did with social media influencer Raj Shamani in which he claimed he had informed Jaitley before leaving India in 2016

People, he said, went running to Jaitley who denied meeting him. Then, a Congress MP saw them together and said so to the media.

Jaitley had to retract his statement and said, "yes, yes I met him but only while walking, it was a fleeting meeting," I never said I went to Jaitley's office, sat in front of him, had tea with him. All I said was that I told the finance minister while leaving, I am going to London, I have to go to Geneva for a meeting, I will be back,

please tell the banks to sit across the table and settle with me. "How long does it take to say this sentence, it can be talked about while walking'. But you see the way he denied it then when the Congress MP pointed out his mistake and said he saw us, he quickly changed," Mallya said.

Khera responded to the podcast with a post targeting the Government and reiterating party leader Rahul Gandhi's surrender comment. "The foreign minister tells Pakistan that it is being attacked. The bank fugitives flee the country by informing the finance minister. Narendra's entire system turned out to be surrender," he said. Party colleague, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh, tagged the post with the "pakoda economics" jibe.

"Pakoda economics jo ban gaya bhagoda economics (pakoda economics that turned into fugitive economics)," he said. Mallya, who fled to the UK in March 2016, is wanted in India over a default of ₹9,000 crore that was loaned to erstwhile Kingfisher Airlines (KFA) by several banks. India has been seeking Mallya's extradition from the UK. He had in the past offered to repay 100 per cent of "public money" but accused the banks and Government of refusing his offer.

Anticipatory bail must not be given mechanically, says SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court has said anticipatory bail in cases involving serious offences should not be given in a mechanical manner.

A three-judge bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sanjay Karol and Sandeep Mehta made the observation while setting aside an order of anticipatory bail to four accused in a murder case.

"The order of the High Court (Patna) does not disclose any reasoning for granting anticipatory bail in a matter involving serious offences under Sections 302 and 307 IPC," the bench said in its May 1 order.

It continued, "The impugned order is cryptic and lacking in judicial analysis. In cases involving serious offences, the grant of anticipatory bail in such a mechanical manner cannot be sustained and is liable to be set aside."

On a plain reading of the FIR and accompanying material, the court noted that the appellant's father was assaulted and killed in the presence of the appellant, who was also the informant.



"The incident appears to have stemmed from a dispute regarding obstruction of a pathway. The specific roles attributed to the accused, as stated in the FIR, indicate that they participated in the assault even after the deceased had collapsed," the top court said. The high court, it said, "clearly failed" to appreciate the gravity and nature of the allegations in the case.

The accused persons was, as a result, directed to surrender within eight weeks. The order came on a plea filed by the son of the victim, challenging the order granting them anticipatory bail.

The victim was assaulted in 2023 with an iron rod and sticks during a dispute between neighbours.

As a result of the head injury, he succumbed to injuries the same day and an FIR was registered on the basis of the appellant's statement against seven accused persons.

Editor's TAKE

Bengaluru stampede tragedy: Lessons learnt

As the families of the deceased demand accountability, there is urgent need for strict safety protocols

The tragic stampede at Bengaluru's M Chinnaswamy Stadium on June 4 has left the city shaken and mourning. What was meant to be a grand celebration of Royal Challengers Bengaluru's (RCB) first IPL title win in 18 years turned into a devastating catastrophe, claiming the lives of 11 innocent fans and injuring many more. The event, which drew an overwhelming crowd of over 2.5 lakh people to a stadium with a maximum capacity of just 33,000, became a nightmare due to a fatal combination of poor planning, political grandstanding, and lack of co-ordination. The stampede broke out outside Gate 3 of the stadium, where the surge of the crowd led to people being crushed and trampled. It was not merely a case of over-enthusiastic fans, but a structural and administrative failure involving both the cricket franchise and the state Government. Preliminary investigations reveal that the tragedy was the result of a breakdown in communication and responsibility.

RCB had announced a victory parade early on the morning of June 4 through social media, despite not having secured the mandatory police permissions under the Karnataka Police Act. Their request for a parade, made the previous night, had already been rejected by the police due to the risk of a massive crowd. Regardless, the franchise went ahead with their announcement, and by 9 am the information had gone viral across platforms, bringing tens of thousands of fans to the streets. Simultaneously, the Karnataka Government decided to hold its own felicitation event for the RCB team at the Vidhana Soudha, just a kilometre away from the stadium, at nearly the same time. This resulted in the Bengaluru police being stretched beyond its capacity.

Officers had already been on duty late into the night due to the IPL finals, and were now expected to provide security for the team's airport arrival, transport, felicitation at the Vidhana Soudha, and the stadium event — all on short notice and with limited manpower. An FIR has now been registered against RCB, the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), and a private event management company called DNA Events for negligence. The Karnataka Government has since ordered a full inquiry into the incident. The High Court has taken suo motu cognisance of the tragedy and asked for explanations from all involved parties. Politicians have not escaped scrutiny in the aftermath. Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar, who had taken the initiative to felicitate the team, attended both the Government and stadium events. This tragedy must serve as a wake-up call.

It highlights the dangers of allowing celebrations to go ahead without adequate safety checks, co-ordination, and crowd management. What happened on June 4 was not an accident — it was a preventable disaster born out of administrative chaos and competing egos. No public celebration should ever proceed without thorough planning, clear communication, and above all, respect for human life. The victory of a cricket team is meant to unite, uplift, and inspire — not become a day of mourning. The hope now is that lessons are learnt, responsibilities are fixed, and that never again will joy turn so swiftly into sorrow.

PICTALK



Walled city of Jaipur on a cloudy day. PTI

Reimagining higher education

As we near the 100th year of independence, India stands on the cusp of a historic leap empowered by knowledge. What we need is an education system that not only trains the head and hands, but also inspires the heart

As India marches toward the centenary of its independence in 2047, the vision of Viksit Bharat — a self-reliant, inclusive, and developed nation — places education at the very heart of its transformation. Higher education is not merely an instrument for economic growth but a vehicle for intellectual evolution, cultural continuity, and moral clarity.

It must not only equip youth with market-ready skills but also shape them into conscious citizens, ethical leaders, and visionary thinkers. The dream of a developed India extends far beyond infrastructure or GDP — it rests on harnessing the true wealth of the nation: its people. To unlock this potential, we need a complete reimagining of the spirit, structure, and purpose of education — an ecosystem that encourages critical thinking, creativity, life skills, global perspectives, and deeply rooted human values. A nation's future is scripted in its classrooms. For a country that boasts the world's largest youth population, education is not a sector — it is the soul of its progress. It bridges the gap between aspiration and achievement, between demographic potential and democratic excellence. As such, education must receive central focus in policy, investment, and innovation.

While India's premier institutions are gaining global recognition, there remains an urgent need to universalise quality education, particularly in rural and underserved regions. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with its goal to raise the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) to 50 per cent by 2035, marks a pivotal step. Yet access alone is not the destination; excellence must accompany expansion. Every learner, regardless of socioeconomic or geographic background, must have a genuine opportunity to realise their full potential. This demands a flexible and diverse academic architecture — undergraduate and postgraduate programmes that are adaptable, interdisciplinary, and outcome-oriented. The emphasis must shift from traditional, input-heavy models to a learner-centred framework focusing on real-world applicability, innovation, and holistic development. In today's knowledge-driven world, critical thinking is not a luxury — it is a necessity. Our education system must evolve from rote memorisation to nurturing analytical minds. Students should be encouraged not only to answer questions but to question answers. The university space must transform into a zone of inquiry, dialogue, and debate — where every discipline encourages exploration and dissent. Pedagogies must promote problem-solving, project-based learning, interdisciplinary research, and Socratic questioning. In such an environment, curiosity becomes the compass and imagination, the



engine. True innovation arises when science intersects with ethics and when technology blends with aesthetics. Creativity, too, must be seen not as a niche skill, but as central to national progress. As India aspires to lead in start-ups and innovation, we must instill creative confidence in our students.

Traditional classroom settings — characterised by one-way lectures and passive learning — are increasingly losing relevance for Gen Z learners. Today's students are disengaged by rigid formats and static curricula. Their dwindling attention spans demand immersive, skill-based, and participatory learning methods. Modern students thrive in experiential learning ecosystems — where they learn through case studies, simulations, field visits, internships, classroom debates, and hands-on projects. They connect better when presented with real-life scenarios before abstract theories. Institutions should champion flipped classrooms, technology-enabled learning, and hybrid pedagogies to replace conventional "chalk-and-talk" models. Resources and training for educators are crucial to foster such dynamic, engaging experiences. In an era of constant disruption, technical prowess is necessary — but not sufficient. An educated individual must be equipped to navigate life with resilience, integrity, and empathy. Our higher education system must balance domain expertise with life literacy — the capacity to understand and manage one's emotions, col-



RAGHAVENDRA PRASAD TIWARI

laborate effectively, and act responsibly. Skills like emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, environmental stewardship, digital discipline, and financial literacy must be made integral to all curricula. These are no longer auxiliary competencies — they are foundational for individual well-being and societal harmony. One urgent area is mental health. With rising stress, anxiety, and burnout among students, institutions must foster cultures of psychological safety and mindfulness. Dedicated counselling services, well-being workshops, stress-management programs, and spaces for reflection are no longer optional — they are essential. Education must nourish not only sharp minds but also kind hearts.

Equally crucial is the nurturing of human values. Qualities like *vinay* (humility), *karuna* (compassion), and *seva bhav* (a spirit of service) must be inculcated deeply. These values form the backbone of India's civilisational ethos. Consider the Sikh practice of *Seva*, or selfless service — reflected in community kitchens, grassroots outreach, and inclusive welfare. Such traditions teach us that true leadership lies not in control, but in service and humility. When students embody these values, they evolve from mere job seekers to nation builders. They become socially conscious, ethically grounded individuals who carry forward the spirit of India into every realm they enter.

India's aspiration to become a \$30 trillion economy by 2047 hinges on how well we prepare our youth. The future will be shaped by breakthroughs in AI, robotics, biotechnology, space exploration, climate innovation, and digital transformation. Higher education must align with this future. Our universities must become centres of innovation — hous-

ing incubation hubs, research parks, and start-up accelerators. Industry-academia collaboration is vital. Curricula must reflect market realities, emerging technologies, and skill gaps. Stackable degrees, modular learning, and certification programmes should empower students to learn, unlearn, and relearn across their lifetimes. Entrepreneurial thinking should be embedded within every discipline. Our aim must be to produce not just job seekers, but job creators. Government initiatives like the Anusandhan National Research Foundation and Startup India need to be amplified at the institutional level. Every college, every university must become a breeding ground for innovation and enterprise.

Importantly, economic empowerment must be inclusive. Educational justice demands that all citizens — irrespective of caste, gender, location, or ability — have equal opportunities to thrive. Scholarships, digital equity programmes, mentorship, and special support for marginalised communities are essential pillars. As India embraces rapid technological change, we must also deepen our inner compass. Our curricula must prioritise not only breadth but depth, not only speed but reflection. Educational spaces should include zones for nature, meditation, contemplation, and ethical inquiry — alongside digital labs and high-speed connectivity.

In the age of acceleration, character will be our greatest differentiator. Let us design education that helps young people live wisely, act compassionately, and create meaningfully. We must nurture a generation that is grounded in India's wisdom yet global in its outlook; technologically adept yet ethically anchored.

(The writer is Vice-Chancellor, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda. Views are personal)

Search for God: The one pursuit that cannot wait

SECOND Opinion

In today's world, life is a never-ending sprint — alarms, deadlines, emails, meetings, goals, and ever-growing to-do lists. We're constantly in motion, chasing success, recognition, and comfort. But in all this striving, one essential truth often gets lost: everything else can wait — except your search for God. Think about it.

Most people wouldn't dream of missing a job interview or a doctor's appointment. Yet, time with God? That often gets delayed, postponed, or forgotten altogether. Spirituality slips to the bottom of our list, pushed aside by urgent but often unimportant things. We tell ourselves there will be time later — after the project ends, after the kids grow up, after retirement.

But life never really slows down. There's always another storm, another milestone, another distraction. Time is a silent thief. No one can guarantee the next moment.

And beneath all the chaos, the soul is quietly calling out — whispering from the depths of our being, reminding us that we are more than our routines, our achievements, or our social media personas.

We are spiritual beings, yearning for connection, peace, and meaning. We soothe ourselves with thoughts

like, "I'll focus on God later." But later is uncertain. The search for the Divine is not a future task — it's a present invitation. Imagine being lost in a dense forest. Would you wait for nightfall before searching for a path, or would you begin while there's still light? The answer is clear. Begin now.

This journey inward is not about perfection, rituals, or religious performance. It is about presence. God isn't asking us to be flawless. He is simply asking us to show up — with our longing, our honesty, our brokenness, our hope. Even a single, sincere step toward the Divine is never wasted. As the Bhagavad Gita assures us, "Even a little effort in the right direction never goes to waste." We mistakenly believe we control time. But unexpected losses, illnesses, or global crises quickly shatter that illusion.

In a world that feels increasingly fragile, the search for God is not only important — it is urgent. Across traditions and centuries, spiritual masters like Rumi, Ramakrishna, Jesus, and the Buddha have shared a consistent message: Seek now. Not after you've achieved something. Not after life settles down. Not after the storm passes. Seek now. Why now? Because the soul is not fed by applause, wealth, or vacations.

The ego feeds on praise; the soul is nourished by silence, surrender, and sacredness. Real peace won't come from acquiring more but from going deeper



SAKSHI SETHI

Letters to the Editor

Cheers, drowned by sirens

Apropos the news item, "PM shares anguish, 11 crushed in RCB victory frenzy", published on June 5, this is my response.

The heartbreaking loss of 11 lives during what should have been a joyous celebration at Bengaluru in connection with RCB's maiden IPL title triumph, is a stark reminder of the critical importance of meticulous planning, empathy, and safety in public gatherings. While the spirit of victory unites communities, it must never come at the cost of human life.

The most important question that continues to haunt us is why the celebrations continued despite the stampede taking place. When sirens were blaring outside the Chinnaswamy stadium, how and why the celebrations were allowed to carry on and who will take the responsibility for this crassitude? While it was wholly meant for fans, some of those fans lost their lives, and yet the celebrations went on!

Do human lives really matter or have we become totally heartless? What happened in Bengaluru should be a life lesson for all of us.

As we honour RCB's remarkable achievement, equally we must ask ourselves: how can Bengaluru or India as a whole build safer, more inclusive spaces for public joy that protect every individual.

RANGANATHAN SIVAKUMAR | CHENNAI

The aftermath of Operation Sindoor

In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, seven all-party delegations visited several countries to convey India's message against cross-border terrorism. Key questions raised by countries visited by the delegations have been related to US President Donald Trump's role in the India-Pakistan ceasefire, the number of fighter jets India lost in the military face-off, the status of Muslims in India, the western narrative portraying India and Pakistan as equally responsible, the potential use of nuclear weapons, and Pakistan's inclusion in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list.

The most challenging outing was in Malaysia, where Pakistan tried to invoke "Islamic solidarity" to undermine India's outreach. While the Indian delegation was in Kuala Lumpur, the Pakistani embassy reportedly urged Malaysian officials to cancel the delegation's programmes. Malaysia, however, reportedly refused to entertain Pakistan's request. BJP MP Brij Lal, who was part of the Sanjay Jha-led delegation that visited Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, and Indonesia, said, "Pakistan tried to scuttle our mission. The Malaysian embassy was very active and questioned why we were making the trip." With this, the Indian delegation failed to convince the countries they visited against Pakistan.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Justice served but shadows persist

The recent conviction in the Anna University rape case is a welcome step, but serious procedural lapses continue to cast a shadow.

BJP leader K Annamalai has flagged key concerns that warrant deeper attention. The then Chennai Police Commissioner's premature statement that no one else was involved — made even before the investigation was complete — was rightly criticised by the Honourable Madras High Court for potentially prejudicing the probe.

While the investigation proved that the convict's phone was in airplane mode when he pretended to call someone post-incident, Annamalai has raised doubts over actual calls made later to police personnel and political functionaries, and the taking into custody, release, and re-arrest of the accused.

These raise unresolved questions about possible wider involvement. Though a Special Investigation Team (SIT) was constituted, the lack of clarity in its reporting structure may have undermined its effectiveness. Moreover, the unethical leak of the FIR, despite court directions for action, appears to have gone unaddressed.

Justice, to be meaningful, must rest not just on conviction but on procedural integrity. For the sake of both the victim and public confidence, lingering doubts must be transparently resolved.

GOPALASWAMY J | CHENNAI

ENVIRONMENT: A DAILY AFFAIR OR ANNUAL RITUALS?

The editorial on environment concerns (6-6-25) is perfectly worded. There is a dire need to give up mere gestures and symbolic rituals but to take tangible steps with commitment to pass this Earth on to our own siblings for their comfortable living.

Most leaders deliver nice lectures on environmental damages and the steps to be taken but stop there without plunging into action. Plastic manufacturing can be banned. But it requires a lot of political will and social commitment to do so. Yet, every day passes with a callous attitude towards the imminent task of saving this Earth from plundering, which is nothing but hastening the task of making the Earth unsuitable for living.

The way forests are being destroyed by the avaricious investors and their sycophant rulers for their pecuniary concerns, positive turns are not in sight. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of the people to take up the task and

act. As a first step, let people disown and reject plastics and show their commitment to preserve the Earth. Climate turning erratic and its furious manifestations fail to sensitise the concerned. Most of us are preparing to face and adjust our lifestyle to manage the damages rather than addressing the cause.

The latest findings about microplastic particles entering human and animal bodies should caution everyone and make them understand the seriousness of the situation turning too dangerous. Capital knows no mercy or sentiments, and its nexus with politics poses the imminent dangers, which could be effectively addressed only by a democratic movement of the people. It is our life and we can only save it. Let saving environment become a part of our life. Let us save nature for nature to save us.

AG RAJMOHAN | JANANTPUR

Op Sindoor: How India’s precision strikes forced a ceasefire

In a stunning display of technological prowess and strategic clarity, India’s Operation Sindoor reshaped the contours of modern conflict by compelling Pakistan to request a ceasefire within just 80 hours

FIRST
Column

The sudden ceasefire request by Pakistan within 80 hours of India’s decisive Operation Sindoor left many analysts and strategists stunned. Pakistan had abruptly called off its own military operation, Bunyan Marsoos (“Wall of Lead”), signaling a white flag in what was expected to be a protracted escalation. What caused this rapid turnaround? The answer lies in the Indian Air Force’s (IAF) precision strikes on Pakistan’s most secure military assets — especially their deeply buried command and control centres at key airbases. These surgical strikes shattered Pakistan’s operational capability and broke their will to continue hostilities.

The flashpoint for Operation Sindoor was the horrific terrorist attack in Pahalgam — the deadliest since the 2019 Pulwama bombing. This attack was claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), a proxy terror outfit linked directly to Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which enjoys overt support from Pakistan’s establishment. Despite global condemnation, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and their Army Chief remained unapologetic and silent on state — sponsored terrorism.

India’s response was swift and calculated. Since the 2019 Balakot airstrikes, the IAF had refined its doctrine of striking terror infrastructure deep inside Pakistan with surgical precision, backed by highly accurate intelligence. This time, nine terror-related targets were hit, including the JeM’s training academy at Bahawalpur and LeT’s headquarters at Muridke.

The Pakistani retaliation was brutal but ineffective: drone attacks, shelling border villages, and failed attempts by the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to target Indian military bases. India, in turn, struck back with coordinated attacks on Pakistan’s air defense radars, surface-to-air missile (SAM) sites, integrated air defense systems (IADS), and other critical PAF installations at 13 locations. These strikes were not just tactical but demonstrative — designed to showcase India’s technological edge and disrupt Pakistan’s ability to respond or escalate further. **Targeting Pakistan’s Hardened Deeply Buried Targets (HDBTs)** One of the most critical aspects of these strikes was the destruction of Pakistan’s Hardened Deeply Buried Targets (HDBTs). These underground military complexes are designed to withstand aerial and even nuclear attacks. Militaries worldwide dig deep to protect their critical command, control, communications, and intelligence (C4I) centres from enemy strikes.

Pakistan’s network includes at least 22 such underground bunkers around its major airbases and strategic cities like Islamabad and Karachi. These facilities are reinforced with multilayer concrete, steel rebar, and equipped with advanced heating, ventilation, and



air conditioning (HVAC) systems to sustain prolonged occupancy underground.

During Operation Sindoor, the IAF successfully struck two vital HDBTs: one at Chaklala (now Nur Khan) Airbase near Islamabad, and another at Murid Airbase on the Pothohar Plateau. According to the Indian Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) Air Marshal A.K. Bharti, these were command and control air defense centres — but the author contends they functioned more broadly as C4I nerve centres, integrating radar data, intelligence feeds, and coordinating air operations.

The Chaklala Airbase Strike: A Technical Masterclass

The underground facility at Chaklala was built in the 1990s by General Electric Aviation, a US company specialising in subterranean military infrastructure. It spanned roughly 750 square meters and was considered one of Pakistan’s most advanced air defense hubs. In fact, VIPs and foreign military delegations frequently toured this bunker to marvel at Pakistan Air Force’s indigenous technological integration.

The IAF’s strike on Chaklala was a demonstration of extraordinary precision. Satellite imagery revealed the bomb entered through a tiny HVAC shaft barely 45 centimeters wide — an incredibly small target given the best satellite resolution of 30 cm per pixel. This meant zero margin for error, requiring perfect intelligence, exact coordinates, and probably the deployment of the best pilots and

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ONE OF THE MOST CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THESE STRIKES WAS THE DESTRUCTION OF PAKISTAN’S HARDENED DEEPLY BURIED TARGETS (HDBTs). THESE UNDERGROUND MILITARY COMPLEXES ARE DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND AERIAL AND EVEN NUCLEAR ATTACKS

weaponry available.

The bomb’s explosion was so powerful that it blew a large chunk of the concrete roof into the air, pulverising the entire facility underground and everyone inside instantly. Following the strike, Pakistan took days to clear debris, eventually deciding to bury the remains of fallen personnel in situ since nothing else remained. This strike was likely the first of its kind in aerial warfare history — hitting such a tiny and deeply buried target with pinpoint accuracy and total destruction.

Overcoming Advanced Defences

Murid Airbase’s underground facility was even more sophisticated. Pakistan’s Special Works Department had learned from earlier constructions and implemented advanced countermeasures — extending HVAC shafts away from the facility to prevent precision strikes via ventilation ducts.

Faced with this challenge, the IAF adapted its tactics, opting to strike the central section of the bunker directly. Post-strike satellite images revealed a small, sharply defined crater consistent with a deep penetrating bomb exploding underground, not on the surface. The light color of the crater edges confirmed it was an impact crater with the explosion occurring deeper below.

Imagery showed a large truck stationed at the entrance, likely involved in salvage or recovery operations, and a lone ambulance nearby — suggesting at least one survivor but significant casualties among airbase personnel. Pakistan quickly cemented the

crater to obscure evidence from overhead satellites.

Strategic Implications and Aftermath Pakistan’s attempts to shield critical command centres underground were foiled spectacularly by Indian ingenuity, intelligence, and precision weapons. The destruction of these two HDBTs, alongside other strikes at Sargodha and Jacobabad airbases, crippled Pakistan’s air defense command and air operations infrastructure for months.

Further satellite imagery revealed additional bunkers, including one near Islamabad International Airport believed to protect the PAF Chief of Air Staff (CAS). Despite fortifications added as recently as March 2025, these too were rendered ineffective.

This lack of functioning C2 nodes meant Pakistan’s air operations became fragmented and ineffective. Orders from the CAS could not reach field commands or aircraft, severely degrading Pakistan’s ability to wage aerospace warfare or activate nuclear options.

A Calculated yet Devastating Message

The IAF’s strikes were meticulously calibrated to avoid triggering Pakistan’s nuclear threshold, while still delivering crippling blows to Pakistan’s military infrastructure. The destruction was so complete that Pakistan had no face — saving nuclear option, yet the scale of damage forced them to seek an early ceasefire to prevent further humiliation.

India also took a strong diplomatic stance, suspending the Indus Water Treaty and cutting water flow to Pakistan until it ceases support for terrorism. This multi-domain pressure — from aerial strikes to economic leverage — exemplified a new, integrated approach to national security.

Conclusion: The Unseen Triumph

The world was largely silent on the satellite evidence, but India’s demonstration of air power during Operation Sindoor was unprecedented in modern warfare. Within barely 80 hours, the IAF achieved what many believed impossible: obliterating the backbone of Pakistan’s air defense and command capabilities underground, and forcing a reluctant adversary to call a halt to hostilities.

The strikes at Chaklala and Murid airbases remain benchmarks of precision, intelligence fusion, and technological excellence. These operations showcased India’s ability to blend advanced ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) assets, superior weapons technology, and tactical innovation — sending a clear message that aggression backed by terrorism will meet with swift and decisive consequences.

This episode in modern conflict underscores a new paradigm of aerospace warfare, where intelligence accuracy, technological superiority, and surgical strikes dictate the outcome before full-scale battles even begin. For India, Operation Sindoor was not just a military success but a strategic victory that restored deterrence and sent an unequivocal warning to Pakistan and the world.

(The writer is a retired Colonel in the Indian Army. Views expressed are personal)

The case for a new international communications framework

Institutions in 2025 are undergoing a deep shift, one that’s not just structural but perceptual. It’s not only about geopolitics or multilateral equations anymore; it’s about how the narrative of power is built, sustained, and fought over. Power shifts are no longer isolated; they play out on backdrops that are curated with strategy, layered with intent, and fuelled by the urgency to dominate the narrative space. The flashpoints keep growing, and so does the pace.

There is now a rising call, soft but persistent, for a global institutional framework that may help bring consistency to how the world communicates during geostrategic tension. It’s not just about press releases or soundbites anymore. As crises multiply and conflicts evolve, a more permanent space to think, shape, and guide international messaging could prove invaluable. More and more, observers are asking: do we need a standing global body that can anchor communication strategy, information architecture, and perception management across borders?

Because here’s the truth, we’re facing gaps. Not just gaps in infrastructure or intelligence, but in alignment; between message, medium, and messenger; between the event and its interpretation; between what’s real and what’s allowed to pass as real. In this chaos, perception turns volatile, and messaging becomes a battleground.

Historically, conflict communication had a kind of order to it. It was ceremonial, visual, and symbolic — a white flag, a signed treaty, and messages delivered with intention and weight. Even in the Cold War, diplomacy expanded into media but still retained rhythm; grainy press visuals, state briefings, symbolic seating arrangements. It all meant something. It was slow but deliberate. Today, communication is loud, constant, and often borderless.

Social media, livestreams, memes, reels, podcasts; everything’s a potential weapon or a viral distortion. We’ve entered a space where information carries no shared watermark of authenticity. No one knows what’s true anymore, and no one’s bound by any common standard. And that’s where the need for a structured, collaborative approach starts to feel less like a good idea and more like an eventual necessity.

This is where the idea of a Framework for International Communications Collaboration comes in. Not a rigid authority, but a dynamic, evolving space; bringing together voices from across nations, with expertise in digital ethics, media regulation, information warfare, and communication law. Its job could be to gently lay the foundation for a shared protocol, something that may help fact-check at scale, design responsible crisis communication, and set broad contours for messaging ethics.



We don’t have to imagine it from scratch. We’ve seen glimpses already. India’s WAVES 2025 global media summit was one such moment; it showed that when storytelling, technology, and tradition are placed on the same table, something extraordinary can happen. WAVES didn’t just host dialogue, it sparked trust, layered complexity with hope, and created space for nations to be seen and heard on their terms. The same spirit can shape this proposed framework, one that is inclusive, future-facing, and fundamentally human.

This framework, if realised, may align itself with values enshrined in the UN Charter and the Sustainable Development Goals. It could offer a moral compass, anchored in responsible communication, narrative equity, and truth as a shared global good.

The guiding principles could be kept simple but strong: communication as a public good; universal access to factual, verified information; accountability in digital and emerging media; respect for cultural nuance and narrative diversity; and zero tolerance for misinformation warfare.

The framework may also explore a visual authentication protocol, a watermark that confirms source credibility in real-time. A global fact-check network could be designed, powered by AI but human-led. It could supervise viral misinformation with urgency and care. Emergency communication standards may be developed for conflict, disaster, or humanitarian moments. Ethical audits for digital platforms may be introduced to assess intent and impact.

Training simulations could be offered to media professionals, built on the immersive models showcased at WAVES 2025. There is also scope to set light-touch norms for responsible content creation, especially in fast-growing mediums like podcasts and independent storytelling. The idea isn’t censorship, but curation; to create incentives for platforms that promote constructive story-

telling and take accountability for harmful virality, while still respecting freedom of expression.

Another critical dimension is balance. For decades, developing nations have been misrepresented or erased altogether in global news cycles. Western media bias isn’t a conspiracy theory, it’s a pattern.

A framework like this could gently shift the scales. It could offer emerging nations a fairer chance at narrative sovereignty, allowing stories to be told by those who live them, not filtered through the lens of geopolitical power centres.

To make it real, the process must start with a group of aligned nations. India may consider taking the lead, using the momentum and goodwill created by WAVES 2025. From there, regional dialogues could follow, supported by partnerships with global media alliances, tech platforms, AI councils, and institutions such as UNESCO, UNDP, and the G20. It doesn’t have to be big on Day One; it just has to be sincere, strategic, and capable of growth.

Eventually, the framework could grow into something treaty-backed. It could carry legal recognition, soft enforcement authority, and enough institutional weight to influence norms. That’s the long game, not to police narratives, but to protect truth from being drowned out by volume, algorithms, or viral fear.

Because today, warfare isn’t just about weapons or borders. It’s about timelines and trending hashtags; about distortion as a strategy. And in that kind of battlefield, the tools of storytelling can be as destructive, or redemptive, as anything else.

India isn’t just offering an idea here, it’s offering a way forward; a path from noise to clarity, from suspicion to consensus. This framework may not fix everything, but it might just hold the line, one that keeps truth visible, dignity intact, and global dialogue possible in the face of chaos.

(The writer is former civil servant, writes on cinema and strategic communication. Views are personal. Inputs provided by Zoya Ahmad and Vaishnavie Srinivasan)

Katchatheevu: A longstanding issue of livelihood, and national interest

Over the past few days, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar addressed the longstanding and sensitive issue of Katchatheevu, a small island whose sovereignty remains contested between India and Sri Lanka. This dispute, along with other recurring conflicts such as the Cauvery water dispute, Mullaperiyar Dam controversy, and Palar river issues, tends to resurface annually in public discourse before gradually fading away.

Minister Jaishankar traced the origins of the Katchatheevu matter back to the early 1970s. Correspondences from that era reveal that the then Indian Foreign Secretary Kewal Singh engaged in discussions with Tamil Nadu’s Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi and other officials in 1973 and 1974. The central Government, including then Union External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh, kept the Tamil Nadu administration informed as part of ongoing diplomatic negotiations with Sri Lanka.

Despite this, Karunanidhi publicly opposed the transfer of Katchatheevu to Sri Lanka, arguing that the island was handed over without the Tamil Nadu Government’s proper consent. He called for protests and convened an all-party meeting that included opposition leaders, communist parties, and other political groups — though the ADMK, which had split from the DMK at the time, walked out in protest.

Historically, the issue predates this period. During Jawaharlal Nehru’s tenure, parliamentary leaders raised concerns over Katchatheevu, but Nehru dismissed it as a minor land matter. In the 1960s, legal experts advised the central Government against ceding the island. Under Lal Bahadur Shastri’s administration, a committee including Tamil Nadu’s minister Pudukkottai Ramaiah was sent to Colombo to negotiate. Nonetheless, despite opposition, the island was officially ceded in 1974 during Indira Gandhi’s tenure without parliamentary approval, based solely on diplomatic exchanges between India and Sri Lanka. This agreement, widely condemned by various members of Parliament — including leaders from the DMK and Atal Bihari Vajpayee — occurred amid broader geopolitical shifts in the Indian Ocean region. These included increased U.S. military presence in Diego Garcia and Sri Lanka’s development plans for Trincomalee Port.

In exchange for Katchatheevu, India received the Wadge Bank, a 6,500 square kilometer barren sandbank within its Exclusive Economic Zone near Kanyakumari. A 1976 agreement formalised fishing rights and boundaries in the Gulf of Mannar, restricting Sri Lankan boats from fishing in Wadge Bank after a transitional period. However, this sandbank proved to be of little economic value to India, while the rich fishing grounds surrounding Katchatheevu became inaccessible to Indian fishermen.

Since the transfer, Tamil Nadu’s fishing community has faced severe hardships. Reports document over 115 attacks by the Sri Lankan Navy on Tamil Nadu fishermen, resulting in more than 300 deaths and numerous boats seized or destroyed. Fishermen are often arrested or fired upon for crossing into disputed waters despite relying on these grounds for their livelihoods. Multiple political resolutions and legal challenges in Tamil Nadu have sought to reclaim the island. Notably, a unanimous 1991 Tamil Nadu Assembly resolution affirmed the fishermen’s historic rights in the region.

The ongoing distress faced by Tamil Nadu fishermen is compounded by intensified harassment from the Sri Lankan Navy, which reportedly attacks fishermen by cutting their nets, seizing motorboats, and even sinking vessels. These incidents have been repeatedly reported to the central Government. Between 1983 and 1991 alone, the Sri Lankan Navy reportedly carried out 236 attacks, destroying or damaging 51 boats, injuring over 135 fishermen, killing more than 50, and arresting 205.

Historically, Katchatheevu belonged to the Sethupathi kings of Ramanathapuram, who leased it to traders for harvesting medicinal herbs. The island, located in the Palk Strait near Pamban Island, was part of the Ramanathapuram kingdom and was integrated into India after the Zamindari Abolition Act of 1947. The British also used the island for naval purposes. In 1955, the Indian Parliament opposed Sri Lanka’s plan to use Katchatheevu for naval training.

While national leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi showed limited interest in contesting this transfer, Tamil Nadu politicians, including Vaiko and former Chief Ministers Jayalalitha and Karunanidhi, have repeatedly raised the issue and pursued legal action to reclaim the island. Historical documents and maps affirm Katchatheevu’s Indian ownership, a position even acknowledged by some Sri Lankan officials referencing the Ramanathapuram Samasthanam. The dispute is not merely territorial but also touches on matters of national dignity and security. Katchatheevu’s strategic location offers advantages for security against foreign dominance, naval training, communication systems, and marine research. The unresolved status of the island threatens India’s sovereignty and the livelihood of Tamil Nadu’s coastal communities.

Given these stakes, the Tamil Nadu Assembly has demanded that the central Government intensify diplomatic and legal efforts to reclaim Katchatheevu. Some voices have even called for military options, if necessary, to protect India’s geopolitical interests and the welfare of its fishermen.

(The writer is a political activist. Views expressed are personal)



VINAYAK BHAT



CHAITANYA K PRASAD



KS RADHA KRISHNAN

12 hard-core Maoist surrender before Maharashtra CM Fadnavis

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

Twelve hard-core Maoists, including core divisional committee member-cum wife of a senior Maoist leader and three senior cadre functionaries, surrendered before Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at the naxalite-infested Gadchiroli in eastern Maharashtra on Friday.

The 12 surrendered Maoists were carrying a total cash reward of ₹1.12 crore announced by the Maharashtra Government on their heads.

The surrendered Maoists comprised Sapanakka, a divisional committee member and wife Maoist leader Geerreddy Pavananda Reddy, three senior cadre Maoists, one Commander, two Dy Commanders, four assistant commanders and one party member.

For the first time, two hardcore Maoists surrendered in uniform with automatic AK-47 rifles and other weapons in the presence of the Chief Minister.

At a function held on the occasion, a

total of 13 Maoist couples, including Giridhar (in charge of Gadchiroli Divisional Committee) and Lalita, got married in the chief minister's presence.

After blessing the surrendered Maoist couple at the mass marriage ceremony, Fadnavis said: "They once carried weapons...now they will start families".

For the first time, two hardcore Maoists surrendered in uniform with automatic AK-47 rifles and other weapons in the presence of the Chief Minister

Donning traditional Adivasi headgear, Fadnavis interacted with locals at the Kawande outpost along the Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh border.

Earlier, at the Gadchiroli district police headquarters, the chief minister felicitated the officers and personnel of Gadchiroli police, C-60 commando team of Anti-Naxalite Operations and Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (COBRA) of

the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF).

Announcing that the Maoist menace would be eliminated by March 31, 2026, the chief minister said: "We have removed the security vacuum...we have established our dominance. During 2024-28, 28 Naxalites have been neutralised, 31 have been arrested while 44 have surrendered".

The chief minister inaugurated a series of developmental projects in Gadchiroli, aimed at transforming the region's economic and social landscape. These included industrial plants, educational institutions, and healthcare facilities.

Fadnavis also launched a green mining initiative to promote sustainable practices and announced plans for Gondwana University to collaborate with an Australian university to offer mining-related courses. These projects, with a total investment of ₹6,200 crore, are expected to generate over 4,000 jobs.

During the event, essential items were distributed to citizens present. The items distributed included spray pumps, large cooking utensils, musical instruments,

sewing machines, blankets, lower-T-shirts, sarees, and footwear for women also school students received bicycles, pens, notebooks, school bags, cricket kits, volleyballs with nets, clothes, compasses, chocolates and biscuits.

In his interaction with the villagers, the chief minister reiterated the state government's commitment to bring about all-round development of the region including construction of roads, bridges and mobile towers.

Earlier in the day, Fadnavis flagged off the campaign for 'jal, jangal, jameen' rights of the Adivasi community on a RSS platform in Nagpur, Fadnavis said: "We are undertaken development initiatives in Gadchiroli as a multi-pronged strategy... As a first step, we are enhancing the security environment, secondly, we are boosting development, thirdly, we are bringing in industries and companies, fourthly, generating employment for locals, and, finally, we are taking care of the 'jal, jangal, jameen' rights of the people".

Extreme poverty fell in India: World Bank

Continued from >> P1 Additionally, the rise in employment, especially among women, and the reduction in multidimensional poverty point to broader improvements in living standards. As India continues its

journey, these achievements serve as a solid foundation for sustained progress in tackling poverty and inequality.

Notably, not all in the country are convinced that poverty has well and truly

declined to the extent the statistics suggest and call for careful scrutiny. Critics counter that there's really no glory in telling people stuff they either don't believe or cannot accept as ground reality. They rea-

son that in the absence of broad-based growth, there's no way of spinning the math to make poverty numbers look rosy and without growth, nothing can actually kill poverty.

Trump-Musk public feud escalates

Continued from >> P1 Musk later offered up an especially stinging insult to a president sensitive about his standing among voters: "Without me, Trump would have lost the election," Musk retorted. "Such ingratitude," Musk said in a follow-up post.

Politicians and their donor patrons rarely see eye to eye. But the magnitude of Musk's support for Trump, spending at least \$250 million backing his campaign, and the scope of free reign the president gave him to slash and delve into the Government with the Department of Government Efficiency is eclipsed only by the speed of their falling out.

Musk announced his support for Trump shortly after the then-candidate was nearly assassinated on stage at a Butler, Pennsylvania, rally last July. News of Musk's political action committee in support of Trump's election came days later.

Musk soon became a close adviser and frequent companion, memorably leaping in the air behind Trump on stage at a rally in October. Once Trump was elected, the tech billionaire stood behind him as he took the oath of office, flew with him on Air Force One for weekend stays at Trump's Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach, Florida, slept in the White House's Lincoln Bedroom at the president's invitation and joined his Cabinet

meetings wearing a MAGA hat (sometimes more than one).

"I'll be honest, I think he missed the place," Trump said Thursday. "He got out there, and all of a sudden he wasn't in this beautiful Oval Office." Musk bid farewell to Trump last week in a subdued news conference in the Oval Office, where he sported a black eye that he said came from his young son but that seemed to be a metaphor for his messy time in Government service.

Trump, who rarely misses an opportunity to zing his critics on appearance, brought it up Thursday.

"I said, Do you want a little makeup? We'll get you a little makeup.' Which is interesting," Trump said.

The Republican president's comments came as Musk has stewed for days on social media about Trump's "Big Beautiful Bill" warning that it will increase the federal deficit. Musk has called the bill a "disgusting abomination."

"He hasn't said bad about me personally, but I'm sure that will be next," Trump said Thursday in the Oval Office. "But I'm very disappointed in Elon. I've helped Elon a lot."

Observers had long wondered if the friendship between the two brash billionaires known for lobbying insults online

would flame out in spectacular fashion. It did, in less than a year.

"Look, Elon and I had a great relationship. I don't know if we will anymore," Trump said. The president said some people who leave his administration "miss it so badly" and "actually become hostile."

"It's sort of Trump derangement syndrome, I guess they call it," he said.

He brushed aside the billionaire's efforts to get him elected last year, including a \$1 million-a-day voter sweepstakes in Pennsylvania. The surge of cash Musk showed he was willing to spend seemed to set him up as a highly coveted ally for Republicans going forward, but his split with Trump, the party's leader, raises questions about whether they or any others will see such a campaign windfall in the future.

Trump said Musk, the CEO and founder of Tesla, "only developed a problem" with the bill because it rolls back tax credits for electric vehicles.

"False," Musk fired back on his social media platform as the president continued speaking. "This bill was never shown to me even once and was passed in the dead of night so fast that almost no one in Congress could even read it!"

In another post, he said Trump could keep

the spending cuts but "ditch the MOUNTAIN of DISGUSTING PORK in the bill."

The bill would unleash trillions of dollars in tax cuts and slash spending but also spike deficits by \$2.4 trillion over a decade and leave some 10.9 million more people without health insurance, according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office, which for decades has served as the official scorekeeper of legislation in Congress.

Besides Musk being "disturbed" by the electric vehicle tax credits, Trump said another point of contention was Musk's promotion of Jared Isaacman to run NASA.

Trump withdrew Isaacman's nomination over the weekend, days after Musk left his Government role.

"I didn't think it was appropriate," Trump said, calling Isaacman "totally a Democrat."

Musk, reverting to his main form of political activity before he joined forces with Trump, continued slinging his responses on social media.

He shared some posts Trump made over a decade ago criticizing Republicans for their spending, musings made when he, too, was just a billionaire lobbying his thoughts on social media.

"Where is the man who wrote these words?" Musk wrote.

...Kashmir to Kanyakumari...

Continued from >> P1 He praised the engineers and workers for their dedication in completing the 359-meter-tall bridge, which stands 35 meters taller than the Eiffel Tower. He observed that while people travel to Paris to see the Eiffel Tower, the Chenab Bridge surpasses it in height, making it not only a crucial infrastructure achievement but also an emerging tourist attraction. As the Vande Bharat Express embarked on its maiden journey, locals and tourists in Katra celebrated with enthusiasm, performing aarti and showering flower petals on the Prime Minister's cavalcade as he headed towards the venue of the public rally. Addressing a gathering in Katra, PM Modi described the day as "a special day for the people of Jammu and Kashmir," emphasizing that the inauguration of infrastructure projects worth over ₹46,000 crore, including roads, flyovers, and foundation stone of Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Institute of Medical Excellence in Katra, it marks a turning point in the region's development journey.

He highlighted that enhanced rail connectivity between Jammu and Kashmir will open new doors for local entrepreneurs,

driving economic growth. Modi noted that Kashmir's apples will now reach major markets across India at lower costs, making trade more efficient. Furthermore, dry fruits and Kashmir's renowned Pashmina shawls, along with other traditional handicrafts, will now be easily transported to every corner of the country, strengthening the region's artisanal industry.

The Prime Minister also unveiled a commemorative coin and a special postage stamp during the ceremony, underscoring the significance of the event. He interacted with engineers and workers involved in the USBRL project, acknowledging their contributions to this monumental achievement. Railways Minister Ashwani Vaishnav, in his address, said the dream of connecting Kashmir to the rest of the country through a railway link has become a reality due to the determination and sharp focus of Prime Minister Narendra Modi."The nation had nurtured the dream of the Jammu-Srinagar-Baramulla railway line for decades. There were many difficulties, like tall mountains and deep valleys. But we do not have to fight nature... through a network of bridges and tunnels,

this railway line has become a reality.

It has become possible due to the strong will, determined endeavour, and laser-sharp focus of the PM," Vaishnav added. Vaishnav said it was a historic day as "another jewel has been added to Maa Bharti's crown", referring to the rail line.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Omar Abdullah hailed the rail link, stating, "Kashmiri apples can now reach the rest of the country and the world through this new rail connectivity." He reassured residents of Jammu that the rail link to Srinagar would enhance trade and tourism without negatively impacting the region's economy.

The Chief Minister also took up the issue of the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the public rally. "There are four persons on this stage who were present at the inauguration of the Katra railway station (in 2014). You had just won the election, becoming the Prime Minister for the first time. MoS in PMO Jeetendra Singh was present then and our LG Manoj Sinha sahib was discharging duties as MoS Railways and I was

here as chief minister. "If you see, by the blessings of Mata (Vaishno Devi), Sinha has got a promotion, and I had a demotion. I was the chief minister of a state, and now I am the CM of the UT. However, I believe that it will not take long to rectify it. Jammu and Kashmir will again get the statehood under your watch only," Abdullah said. Omar said many people have dreamt of seeing a train chugging into Kashmir. "Even the British had dreamt of connecting Kashmir by train, but they did not succeed. They planned to bring rail from Uri, along the banks of the Jhelum, to connect with the country. What the British could not achieve has happened at your (Modi's) hands and Kashmir has been connected to the rest of the country," he added. Abdullah paid rich tributes to former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee for declaring the train to Kashmir a project of national importance."It will be a grave mistake if I do not thank former PM Vajpayee. This project was undoubtedly started in 1983-84.... but it was completed only after Vajpayee declared it a project of national importance and made provisions in the budget," he said.

PM sends stern warning to Pakistan

Continued from >> P1 PM Modi accused Pakistan of attacking *insaniyat* and *Kashmiriyat* by targeting tourists in Pahalgam, saying the intent was to trigger communal clashes in India and rob Kashmiri people dependent on tourism of their livelihoods."Pakistan intended to trigger communal riots in India. It wanted to strip people of Kashmir of their earnings, that's why Pakistan attacked tourism," he said.

Tourism was increasing during the last five years in J and K, and tourists were arriving in record numbers, PM Modi said. "Pakistan wanted to destroy the livelihoods of guides, pony operators, guest house owners, shop owners, and roadside dhaba operators who are dependent on tourism. Adil, who challenged the terrorists, was also there to earn his livelihood," he said, referring to the pony wala, who was among the 26 people gunned down by terrorists in Pahalgam on April 22.

He reiterated that Operation Sindoor was a testament to India's resolve to combat terrorism and protect its citizens. The

operation not only disrupted Pakistan's terror networks but also showcased the strength of Atmanirbhar Bharat, with India's armed forces leveraging indigenous defense capabilities.

PM Modi announced that families affected by cross-border firing have already received Government assistance, including appointment letters for jobs and financial aid for home repairs. Modi announced an additional financial assistance of Rs 2 lakh for families whose homes were severely damaged by Pakistani shelling and Rs 1 lakh for those with partially damaged properties.

"The pain of these families is the nation's pain," Modi emphasised, pledging continued relief efforts.

Highlighting the strategic importance of border residents, the PM described them as "India's frontline protectors." He noted that over 10,000 new bunkers constructed in border areas played a critical role in safeguarding lives during the aftermath of Operation Sindoor.

PM Modi also called on J and K's youth

to join India's manufacturing revolution, emphasising that Operation Sindoor demonstrated the power of a self-reliant India.

He urged young innovators to contribute to the Mission Manufacturing initiative, aimed at bolstering India's defense and economic growth. "India is now a leading defense exporter, and our next goal is to rank among the world's top defense exporters," Modi said, highlighting the employment opportunities this would create.

The Prime Minister urged all Indians to prioritise Made in India products, describing them as a reflection of the nation's hard work and a true service to the country. He expressed confidence in J and K's bright future, driven by collaboration between the Central and State Governments. "With the blessings of Mata Vaishno Devi, we will build a developed India and a developed Jammu and Kashmir," the PM concluded, celebrating the region's spirit of progress.

The event was attended by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Minister

Omar Abdullah, and Union Ministers Ashwini Vaishnav, V. Somanna, and Dr. Jitendra Singh, among other dignitaries.

Speaking on the occasion, the Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, called it a momentous occasion that will go down in history. In his address, the Lieutenant Governor expressed his heartfelt gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for dedicating the historic railway projects to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and the nation.

"Kashmir to Kanyakumari" is no longer a slogan. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has turned this decade-long dream into reality. He has connected the hearts of millions of Indians, forging an unbreakable bond from North to South.

With Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Rail Link (USBRL) and the launch of Vande Bharat trains to Kashmir Valley, Prime Minister has fulfilled the resolve of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee, who had dreamt of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat," the Lieutenant Governor said.

Bengaluru stampede fallout widens

Continued from >> P1

According to official sources, the event proceeded without formal police clearance or ticketing systems, following a now-deleted RCB social media post inviting fans to the stadium. Massive crowds surged to the venue, resulting in chaos at the gates and triggering the fatal stampede.

KSCA, in its court filing, distanced itself from the event, stating that venue management was RCB and DNA's responsibility. It also claimed the FIR was a "knee-jerk reaction" under political pressure. Supporting its defense, a June 3 letter shows KSCA had actually requested permission for DNA to hold the celebration at Vidhan Soudha, where a separate felicitation event concluded without incident.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, defend-

ing the government's response, said, "Prima facie, those responsible and who failed in their duties have been suspended. We are not indulging in blame games but taking responsibility." The opposition BJP and JD(S) have demanded his and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar's resignation, accusing the government of scapegoating the police.

RCB's Nikhil Sosale also approached the High Court on Friday, with his counsel alleging his arrest was selective and politically motivated - a claim denied by the Advocate General, who noted Sosale was caught while trying to board a flight to Dubai. As legal, political, and administrative responses intensify, public anger remains high over what is now being called one of Karnataka's most severe civic tragedies in recent history.

Pakistan pleads Indus...

Continued from >> P1 This situation may get worse in the coming weeks with the onset of the Southwest monsoon still at least four weeks away.

India had on April 23 announced a string of punitive actions against Pakistan in the aftermath of the April 22 terrorist attack in Jammu and Kashmir's Pahalgam that killed 26 people, mostly tourists. These included the suspension of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, the closure of the integrated check post at the Attari border and the reduction of the strength of Pakistani high commissions in India.

The IWT, which was signed in 1960, governs the sharing of the waters of six rivers - Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej - between India and Pakistan. While Pakistan has been violating the IWT by trampling its spirit of goodwill through thousands of terrorist attacks and by obstructing the updating of the infrastructure to ensure its safety, India has shown extraordinary patience

and magnanimity. The treaty gives India 20 percent of the water from the Indus River System and the rest 80 per cent to Pakistan. India had formally asked Islamabad on several occasions in the last two years to discuss modifications to the treaty but to no avail.

Meanwhile, India is planning to construct a 130-km-long canal that will connect the Beas River to the Ganga canal. There is also a proposal to build a canal to connect Indus with the Yamuna, sources said.

A 12-km-long tunnel is planned to be built as part of the 200-km-long project. States like Rajasthan, Haryana, Punjab, and Delhi are expected to benefit from the project.

According to the government, work is going on at a fast pace on the project and is expected to be completed within two to three years. A Detailed Project Report (DPR) of the entire project regarding Indus water will be made soon.

Starlink gets license for satellite internet services

Continued from >> P1

The status of the Starlink's final nod from the Indian space regulator, In-SPaCE could not be immediately ascertained.

Starlink is a satellite internet service developed by SpaceX -- the American aerospace manufacturer and space transportation company founded in 2002 by the world's richest man Musk. It provides high-speed, low-latency broadband internet worldwide using satellite technology and is aptly described by some as broadband beamed from the skies.

Unlike conventional satellite services that rely on distant geostationary satellites, Starlink utilises the world's largest low Earth orbit or LEO constellation (550 km above Earth).

This constellation of LEO satellites (7,000 now but eventually set to grow to over 40,000) and its mesh delivers broadband internet capable of supporting streaming, online gaming, and video calls. Starlink, which had been vying for an India licence for some time now, recently signed pacts with Ambani's Reliance Jio and Mittal's Bharti Airtel, which together control more than 70 per cent of the country's telecom market, to bring the US satellite internet giant's services to India.

The nod for the satcom offering -- known for its resilience in harsh conditions and conflict zones -- coincides with escalation of Donald Trump-Elon Musk feud in the US. Early last month, the government had issued stringent security norms mandating legal interception of satellite communication services and barred companies from linking connection of users in any form with any terminal or facility located outside the country's border as well as processing of their data overseas.

The tighter security rules also mandate service providers to indigenise at least 20 per cent of their ground segment of the satellite network within years of their establishment in the country. The satcom service licence holders will require security clearances for specific gateway and hub locations in India and compliance to monitoring, interception facilities and equipment requirements.

India's rules mandate satcom firms to demonstrate system capabilities with respect to security aspects, including monitoring, to the Department of Telecom (DoT) or its authorised representatives before starting operations in India.

It is pertinent to mention that Telecom regulator TRAI last month recommended that satellite communication companies like Starlink pay 4 per cent of their adjusted gross revenue (AGR) as spectrum charges to the government -- a rate steeper than what these firms had been lobbying for.

Operators offering satellite-based broadband internet services in urban areas would have to shell out an additional Rs 500 per subscribers annually, TRAI recommended. No additional levy would be applicable for services in rural areas. COAI, whose members include Reliance Jio and Airtel, recently approached the telecom department to raise concerns over TRAI recommendations on the satcom spectrum.

The industry body argued that "incorrect assumptions" have led to unjustifiably low spectrum charges for satellite services relative to terrestrial networks - a claim strongly rejected by Trai, which has ruled out any review of recommendations at this stage, based on industry body COAI's charges.

RBI cuts interest rates to boost liquidity

Continued from >> P1 The central bank lowered its inflation projection to 3.7 per cent for 2025-26 from 4 per cent earlier.

"While price stability is a necessary condition, it is of course not sufficient to ensure growth," he said. Malhotra said the RBI remains committed to provide sufficient liquidity to the banking system.

The 100 basis point cut in cash reserve ratio (CRR) will be carried out in four equal tranches of 25 bps each with effect from the fortnights beginning September 6, October 4, November 1 and November 29, 2025. "The cut in CRR would release primary liquidity of about Rs 2.5 lakh crore to the banking system by December 2025. Besides providing durable liquidity, it will reduce the cost of funding of the banks, thereby helping in monetary policy transmission to the credit market," he said.

Strong macroeconomic fundamentals and a benign inflation outlook provide space for monetary policy to support growth, while remaining consistent with the goal of price stability, he said.

"As global environment remains uncertain, it has become even more important to focus on domestic growth amidst sus-

tained price stability. Accordingly, today's monetary policy actions should be seen as a step towards propelling growth to a higher aspirational trajectory."

He hastened to add that there was "no tussle" between price stability and growth in the medium and long term. "Price stability preserves purchasing power, imparts certainty to households and businesses in their savings and investment decisions and ensures congenial interest rates and financial conditions, all of which foster consumption, investment and overall activity. Moreover, it is crucial for equitable growth and shared prosperity because its absence is disproportionately burdensome on the poor."

While price stability is a necessary condition, it is not sufficient to ensure growth, he said. "A supportive policy environment is vital. This is even more important during periods of high uncertainties such as the current times."

At the RBI, while price stability remains the focus of monetary policy, it is not oblivious to putting in place complementary monetary and credit policies and regulations that support growth and prosperity, he added.

Trump-Musk break up; Washington holds its breath

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

Maybe it was always going to end this way, with two billionaires angrily posting about each other on social media, fingers flying across pocket-sized screens as their incandescent feud burned hotter by the minute.

But even if the finale was predictable, that didn't make it any less shocking. After long months when Donald Trump and Elon Musk appeared united in their chaotic mission to remake Washington, their relationship imploded this week like a star going supernova.

It began with Musk complaining about the centerpiece of Trump's legislative agenda, which the president at first took in stride. Eventually Trump let slip that he was disappointed in his former adviser, prompting Musk to unleash a flood of insults and taunts.

He accused Trump of betraying promises to cut federal spending, shared a suggestion that the president should be impeached and claimed without evidence that the government was concealing information about his association with infamous pedophile Jeffrey Epstein. Perhaps most viciously, Musk insisted that Trump wouldn't have won last year's election without his help.

Trump, not one to slouch from a fight, could hold back no longer. He posted that Musk had been "wearing thin," that he had "asked him to leave" his administration, that the tech titan had "gone CRAZY."

Maybe, Trump threatened, he should save taxpayer money by cancelling Government contracts and subsidies for Musk's companies.

Bad blood with high stakes

On and on it went, as liberals savored the spectacle of their most despised political opponents clawing at each other's digital throats and conservatives reeled at the

prospect of having to pick sides. Laura Loomer, a right-wing provocateur and conspiracy theorist, saw an opportunity to position herself as the voice of reason.

"This fight should be taken offline," she said - on social media, of course.

The question now is whether Trump and Musk find some way to step back from a battle that is tearing apart one of the most consequential relationships in modern American politics. If they don't, there's little telling how far the fallout could spread from a collision between the world's most powerful man and its wealthiest.

At stake are the future of Musk's companies, including electric automaker Tesla and rocket manufacturer SpaceX; government programs that rely on the billionaire entrepreneur's technology; legislation for advancing tax cuts and Trump's other priorities in Congress; Republican chances in next year's midterm elections; and an entire political ecosystem that has orbited around Trump and Musk deteriorating partnership.

"It's like India and Pakistan," said Republican Rep. Ryan Zinke of Montana, referring to two nuclear-armed nations that recently skirmished along their border. "It just escalates and neither one of them seem to back down and understand the strength of each other."

Opposites attracted (for a time)

Trump and Musk were always an odd pairing, with contrasting world views and deep generational and stylistic differences.

Trump, 78, comes from old-school New York real estate and never appears in public without a suit and tie unless he's on the golf course. Before running for president, he became a household name as a reality television star.

Musk, 53, is an immigrant from South Africa who struck it rich in Silicon Valley. In addition to running Tesla and SpaceX, Musk owns the social media company X.



He's fashioned himself as a black-clad internet edgelord, and his wealth vastly outstrips Trump's.

But Trump and Musk are kindred spirits in other ways. They're experts at generating attention who enjoy stirring the pot by riling up their opponents.

Each has sought more power to accomplish existential quests. Trump assails the federal "deep state" that resisted him during his first term, while Musk warns about the country going bankrupt from excessive spending and promotes an interplanetary future powered by his rocket technology.

Musk endorsed Trump after the Republican candidate was nearly assassinated in Butler, Pennsylvania, and he began spending millions to support him.

His social media megaphone was a powerful addition to Trump's comeback campaign, magnifying his efforts to court tech leaders and young, very online men.

Trump rarely tolerates sharing the spotlight, but he seemed enamored with his powerful backer, mentioning him in stump speeches and welcoming him onstage at rallies.

After the election, Musk was a fixture around Mar-a-Lago, posing for photos with Trump's family, joining them for dinner, sitting in on meetings. Instead of growing tired of his "first buddy," Trump made plans to bring Musk along to Washington, appointing him to lead a cost-cutting initiative known as the Department of Government Efficiency.

Cracks emerge

Musk tried to establish himself as the president's omniscient and omnipresent adviser. He held court in Cabinet meetings, slept over in the Lincoln Bedroom and helped himself to caramel ice cream from the White House kitchen. The federal bureaucracy practically trembled before Musk, who oversaw layoffs and downsizing with his team of acolytes and engineers embedded in various agencies.

Musk appeared thrilled at his opportunity to tinker with the Government and exulted in his bromance with Trump, posting on Feb. 7 that he loved the president "as much as a straight man can love another man." Trump returned the favor on March 11, allowing Musk to line up Tesla vehicles on the White House driveway as his company was struggling with declining sales. Trump made a show of choosing a cherry red electric car for himself.

But cracks were emerging, especially as Trump pursued tariffs that could raise costs for Musk's businesses. Musk said Peter Navarro, the president's trade adviser, was "truly a moron" and "dumber than a sack of bricks" on April 8.

The billionaire entrepreneur, who had never before worked in public service, seemed to be souring on government. He suggested there wasn't enough political will, either in Congress or in the White House, to adequately reduce spending.

Trump started signaling that it was time for him to leave even though Musk said he would be willing to stay.

Shortly before announcing his departure, Musk said he was "disappointed" by legislation that Trump called the "big beautiful bill" because it would increase the deficit. The measure includes tax cuts, more money for border security and changes to Medicaid that would leave fewer people with health insurance.

"I think a bill can be big or it could be beautiful," Musk said. "But I don't know if

it could be both." The criticism didn't prevent Trump from giving Musk a send-off in the Oval Office, where he presented his outgoing adviser with a ceremonial key. "Elon is really not leaving," Trump said. "He's going to be back and forth." Musk said, "I'll continue to be visiting here and be a friend and adviser to the president." The implosion comes hard and fast

It's hard to imagine that now

Musk escalated his attacks on the legislation Tuesday, calling it a "disgusting abomination," and Trump tried to fend off the criticism.

"He hasn't said bad about me personally, but I'm sure that will be next," the president said Thursday in the Oval Office during a meeting with the German chancellor. Musk quickly took to X to vent his anger at Trump, saying his tariffs "will cause a recession in the second half of this year" and accusing him of lying. He also said it was "very unfair" that the legislation would eliminate tax incentives for electric vehicles.

Trump fired back in real time as he tried to maintain momentum for his legislation, which faces a difficult debate in the Senate. "I don't mind Elon turning against me, but he should have done so months ago," the president posted. "This is one of the Greatest Bills ever presented to Congress." Meanwhile, some of Trump's allies plotted revenge.

Steve Bannon, a former Trump adviser who hosts an influential conservative podcast, said the president should direct the U.S. Government to seize SpaceX. He also encouraged Trump to investigate allegations that Musk uses drugs and "go through everything about his immigration status" in preparation for potential deportation.

"We'll see how good Elon Musk takes a little of that pressure," Bannon said, "because I happen to think a little of that pressure might be coming."

Iranians react to new Trump travel ban

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tehran

Iranians again face a US travel ban imposed by President Donald Trump, with the decision drawing anger, frustration and some shrugs given the decades of tensions between the two countries.

Trump imposed a similar ban during his first term before withdrawing America unilaterally from Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, under which Iran drastically limited its programme in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions.

But when he returned to the White House and began seeking a new deal with Iran, it saw the country's Rial currency improve and stocks rise, but worries have grown as its government appears poised to reject an initial American proposal.

The travel ban has further darkened that mood and led Iranians to fear Trump will lump the nations' 80 million people alongside of its theocratic government even after he's repeatedly praised them while seeking a deal.

"Now I understand that Trump is against all Iranians, and his attitude is not limited to the government," said Asghar Nejati, a 31-year-old man working in a Tehran pharmacy. Even in the years after the 1979 Islamic Revolution and subsequent US Embassy hostage crisis, Iranian students travelled to the US to attend universities. Between 2018 to 2024, an average of around 10,000 Iranian students went to the US annually.

Estimates suggest some 1 million Iranian-origin people live in the US today. Mehrnosh Alipour, a 37-year-old graphic designer, said the nations could have better relations if they could spoke to each other in softer tones.

"This is another foolish decision. Trump cannot reach his goals by imposing pressures on ordinary Iranians," she said. "The two nations can have better relation through openings, not restrictions." Bank teller Mahdieh Naderi said

Trump was lashing out over his frustration efforts to reach ceasefires in the Israel-Hamas war and the Russia-Ukraine war. "Trump just expressed his anger about his failed plans," Naderi said. "He is complaining about the Chinese and others who are living in the US, too."

Some said interest in the US was already waning before the latest ban.

Trump imposed similar ban during his first term before withdrawing America unilaterally from Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, under which Iran limited its programme in exchange for the lifting of economic sanctions

"Over the past years, two of my grandchildren went to Canada to continue their education there," said Mohammad Ali Niaraki, 75. "Iranians are not limited in immigration and they are not as interested to go to the US as they were decades ago. Iranians prefer Canada, as well as neighbouring countries with flourishing economies like the (United Arab) Emirates."

But others pointed out that high-ranking government officials have children living or working in the US, despite the tensions. "It's fine, but if he also kicks out the children of officials who live there it would be very nice," said a man who just gave his name as Mehdi. "We can't afford travelling to the US, almost 80 per cent of us can't. But if he kicks out those who are already there it would be much better." Tehran resident Mehri Soltani offered rare support for Trump's decision.

"Those who have family members in the US, it's their right to go, but a bunch of bad people and terrorists and murderers want to go there as well," he said.

Indian envoy to China meets official, discuss bilateral ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beijing

Top diplomats from India and China discussed bilateral relations to implement the consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries last year, the foreign ministry here said on Friday.

The meeting between Indian Ambassador to China Pradeep Kumar Rawat and China's Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong on Thursday is the first diplomatic engagement between the two countries post the Operation Sindoor.

Both sides expressed their willingness to work together to earnestly implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, the Chinese Foreign Ministry statement said.

The two sides are also working out ways to promote cultural exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation, properly manage differences, and promote the development of China-India relations along a healthy and stable track, it said.

The two sides also exchanged views on the issues of common concern, the statement added. Sun is the former Chinese Ambassador to India and currently



Chinese Foreign Ministry's pointsman on South Asia. Thursday's meeting also took place as the two countries are finalising preparations to resume the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra in Tibet for the Indian pilgrims. The Yatra, when it starts, would be the first among the steps being initiated by the two countries after normalising the relations after over four-year-long military standoff in eastern Ladakh, which had

brought the ties to a standoff.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) announced on April 26 that the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra is set to take place from June to August via two routes — Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand and Nathu La in Sikkim. The Yatra was suspended initially in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequently because of the military standoff in eastern Ladakh.

Judge puts hold on latest Trump ban on Harvard students

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Washington

A federal judge late Thursday temporarily blocked a proclamation by President Donald Trump that banned foreign students from entering the US to attend Harvard University.

Trump's proclamation, issued Wednesday, marked the latest attempt by his administration to cut off the nation's oldest and wealthiest college from a quarter of its student body, which accounts for much of Harvard's research and scholarship.

Harvard filed a legal challenge the next day, asking for a judge to block Trump's order and calling it illegal retaliation for Harvard's rejection of White House demands. Harvard said the president was attempting an end-run around a previous court order.

A few hours later, US District Judge Allison Burroughs in Boston issued a temporary restraining order against Trump's Wednesday proclamation. Harvard, she said, had demonstrated it would sustain "immediate and irreparable injury" before she would have an opportunity to hear from the parties in the lawsuit.

Burroughs also extended the temporary hold she placed on the administration's previous attempt to end Harvard's enrollment of international students. Last month, the Department of Homeland Security revoked Harvard's certification to host foreign students and issue paperwork to them for their visas, only to have Burroughs block the action temporarily. Trump's order this week invoked a different legal authority.

If Trump's measure survives this court

challenge, it would block thousands of students who are scheduled to come to Harvard's campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, for the summer and fall terms.

"Harvard's more than 7,000 F-1 and J-1 visa holders — and their dependents — have become pawns in the government's escalating campaign of retaliation," Harvard wrote Thursday.

While the court case proceeds, Harvard is making contingency plans so students and visiting scholars can continue their work at the university, President Alan Garber said in a message to the campus and alumni.

"Each of us is part of a truly global university community," Garber said Thursday. "We know that the benefits of bringing talented people together from around the world are unique and irreplaceable."

Trump open to dialogue, committed to NATO: Germany's Merz

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Berlin

German Chancellor Friedrich Merz said on Friday, a day after meeting President Donald Trump at the White House, that he encountered a US administration open to discussion and returned confident that Washington remains committed to NATO.

Merz described his Oval Office meeting and extended lunch with Trump as constructive but also candid, noting that the two leaders expressed different views on Ukraine. "Yesterday, in the meeting at the Oval Office, I expressed a distinctly different position on the topic of Ukraine than the one Trump had taken, and not only was there no objection, but we discussed it in detail again over lunch," Merz said in Berlin after his return.

Thursday's White House meeting marked the first time the two sat down in person. Merz, who became chancellor in May, avoided the kind of confrontations in the Oval Office that have tripped up other world leaders, including Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy and South Africa's Cyril Ramaphosa. The two leaders opened



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz

with pleasantries. Merz presented Trump with a gold-framed birth certificate of the president's grandfather, Friedrich Trump, who emigrated from Kallstadt, Germany. Trump called Merz a "very good man to deal with". The American administration, he said, is open to discussion, listens, and is willing to accept differing opinions.

Add he added that dialogue should go both ways: "Let's stop talking about

Donald Trump with a raised finger and wrinkled nose. You have to talk with him, not about him." He said he also met with senators on Capitol Hill, urging them to recognise the scale of Russian rearmament.

"Please take a look at how far Russia's armament is going, what they are currently doing there; you obviously have no idea what's happening," he said he told them. "In short, you can talk to them, but you

must not let yourself be intimidated. I don't have that inclination anyway."

Merz, who speaks English fluently, stressed the need for transatlantic trust and said he reminded Trump that allies matter. "Whether we like it or not, we will remain dependent on the United States of America for a long time," he said. "But you also need partners in the world, and the Europeans, especially the Germans, are the best-suited partners." "This is the difference between authoritarian systems and democracies: authoritarian systems have subordinates. Democracies have partners — and we want to be those partners in Europe and with America." He reiterated the US remains committed to NATO, particularly as Germany and others boost their defense spending. Trump has in the past suggested the US might abandon its commitments to the alliance if member countries don't meet defence spending targets.

"I have absolutely no doubt the American Government is committed to NATO, especially now that we've all said we're doing more. We're ensuring that we can also defend ourselves in Europe, and I believe this expectation was not unjustified," Merz said.

India-Sri Lanka explores ways to expand bilateral defence ties

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Colombo

India and Sri Lanka explored ways to further expand their bilateral defence cooperation, especially in areas of maritime security, the island nation's defence ministry said.

The deliberations took place at the Sri Lanka-India Defence Dialogue held in Colombo on Thursday.

It was the first high-level meeting after India and Sri Lanka signed the first ever defence partnership on April 5.

A statement from the Defence Ministry said that the Sri Lankan delegation was led by Defence Secretary Air Vice Marshal Sampath Thuyacontha (Retd), while the visiting Indian Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh led the Indian delegation.

"The high-level dialogue focused on strengthening bilateral defence cooperation, enhancing maritime security, and exploring new avenues for collaboration in training and strategic engagement," the statement said.

Senior officials from both sides participated in the discussions, reaffirming the longstanding defence partnership between Sri Lanka and India, it said. The Indian Defence Secretary also met the Deputy Minister of Defence, Major General Aruna Jayasekara (Retd) and Thuyacontha separately.

On April 5, India and Sri Lanka signed the first-ever defence partnership agreement — firmed up during talks between visiting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake -- signalling a major boost the bilateral defence ties nearly four decades after the Indian Peace Keeping Force's intervention in the island nation strained the relations.

The agreement will institutionalise the existing military engagement and pave the way for more structured cooperation including potential collaboration in the defence industrial sector, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had said then.

Limited space for further rate cut: RBI Governor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Governor Sanjay Malhotra on Friday said there is very little scope for rate cut in the current circumstances after the central bank reduced the policy rate by 50 basis points taking the total reduction to 100 bps since February.

Addressing media after unveiling bi-monthly monetary policy, Malhotra said, future monetary policy actions will depend upon incoming data.

“There is now very limited space for the monetary policy, actually, given the current circumstances...Growth (projection) is about 6.5 per cent, inflation, we are projecting at 3.7 per cent for this year and above 4 per cent for the next next year...If these were to play out, there is very limited space,” he said.

“We will continue to monitor the



RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra gestures while delivering the Monetary Policy statement in Mumbai

incoming data and we will move primarily what the data suggests to us,” he said.

Earlier in the day, RBI cut key policy rate by more-than-expected 50 basis points, a third consecutive reduction. With this, the repo rate has now come

down to 5.5 per cent, the lowest in the last three years. In all, RBI has now cut interest rate by a total of 100 basis points in 2025, starting with a quarter-point reduction in February - the first cut since May 2020 - and another similar-sized cut in April. The central bank, at the same time, changed its monetary policy stance to “neutral” from accommodative.

Stressing that rate cut will have positive effect on growth, he said, the impact will be seen only in the later half of FY26.

He also expects rate transmission to be faster compared to the past trends.

On inflation, Malhotra said it can be assumed that RBI has won the fight against price rise. The RBI has also slashed inflation forecast for the current fiscal to 3.7 per cent from the earlier estimate of 4 per cent in April, as it expects core inflation to remain benign with the easing of international commodity prices. The sub-4 per cent average retail inflation projection is the lowest in recent years. The RBI, which cut key policy rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent, said that despite these favourable prognoses, it would remain watchful of weather-related uncertainties and still evolving tariff-related concerns with their attendant impact on global commodity prices.

As regards CRR cut, he said, it will certainly boost credit flow.

RBI decided to slash Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) by a huge 100 bps, which will unlock Rs 2.5 lakh crore liquidity by December to the banking system for lending to productive sectors of the economy. With the reduction in four equal tranches ending November 29, 2025, the CRR would come down to 3 per cent. This means that commercial banks would have to maintain a lower level of 3 per cent in cash with the RBI allowing them to have higher funds for lending.

RBI says Indian economy shows strength, stability, opportunity

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday retained GDP growth projections for the current fiscal at 6.5 per cent, saying the Indian economy presents a picture of strength, stability and opportunity in the backdrop of global uncertainty.

The FY26 growth projections are compared with the 6.5 per cent economic growth recorded in the 2024-25 fiscal year.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected economic growth at 6.5 per cent for the June quarter and 6.7 per cent for the September quarter. For the December and March quarters of FY26, GDP growth is estimated at 6.6 per cent and 6.3 per cent, respectively.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) on Friday cut the benchmark policy rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent and said frontloading rate cuts would support economic growth.

“As global environment remains uncertain, it has become even more important to focus on domestic growth amidst sustained price stability. Accordingly, today’s monetary policy actions should be seen as a step towards propelling growth to a higher aspirational trajectory,” RBI Governor Sanjay Malhotra said.

In the bi-monthly monetary policy, Malhotra said that amidst heightened volatility in capital flows and exchange rates, central banks of emerging market economies have a tougher task to stabilise their economies against global spillovers.

“In this global milieu, the Indian economy presents a picture of strength, stability, and opportunity... This ... Matrix of fundamentals provides the necessary core strength to cushion the Indian economy against global spillovers and propel it to grow at a faster pace,” he said.

Elaborating, Malhotra said the strength comes from the strong balance sheets. Besides, there is stability on all three fronts - price, financial, and political - providing policy and economic certainty in this dynamically evolving global economic order.

Thirdly, the Indian economy offers immense opportunities to investors through 3Ds - demography, digitalisation and domestic demand.

The RBI Governor said India’s growth remains lower than aspirations amidst a challenging global environment and heightened uncertainty. Thus, it is imperative to continue to stimulate domestic private consumption and investment through policy levers to step up the growth momentum.

“This changed growth-inflation dynamics calls for not only continuing with the policy easing but also frontloading the rate cuts to support growth,” Malhotra said.

Going forward, the outlook for the agriculture sector and rural demand is expected to receive further impetus from the expected above normal southwest monsoon rainfall, he added.

SEBI attaches accounts of Mehul Choksi to recover dues

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Markets regulator SEBI has ordered the attachment of bank accounts and shares and mutual fund holdings of absconding diamondaire Mehul Choksi to recover dues totalling ₹2.1 crore in a case of violation of insider trading rules in the shares of Gitanjali Gems. The latest move followed a demand notice issued to Choksi on May 15, warning attachment of assets as well as bank accounts if he failed to make the payment within 15 days.

The demand notice came after Choksi failed to pay the fine imposed by the

Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) in January 2022 in a case of violation of insider trading rules in the shares of Gitanjali Gems Ltd.

Choksi, who was the chairman and managing director as well as part of promoter group of Gitanjali Gems, is the maternal uncle of Nirav Modi. Both are facing charges of defrauding state-owned Punjab National Bank (PNB) of more than ₹14,000 crore. Both Choksi and Modi fled India after the PNB scam came to light in early 2018.

In April, Choksi was arrested in Belgium following an extradition request by Indian probe agencies. He was located in Belgium

To recover the dues, SEBI asked all the banks, depositories — CDSL and NSDL — and mutual funds not to allow any debit from the accounts of Mehul Choksi

last year when he went there for getting medical treatment. He had been staying in Antigua since 2018 after leaving India. Modi was arrested by the Scotland Yard Police in March 2019 and is currently in jail in that country. In an attachment notice dated June 4, SEBI said the pending dues

of ₹2.1 crore include the initial fine of ₹1.5 crore and interest of ₹60 lakh.

To recover the dues, SEBI asked all the banks, depositories — CDSL and NSDL — and mutual funds not to allow any debit from the accounts of Choksi. However, credits have been permitted. Further, SEBI has directed the banks to attach all accounts, including lockers, held by the defaulter. Initiating the recovery proceedings, SEBI said there is sufficient reason to believe that Choksi may dispose of the amounts in the bank accounts, mutual fund folios and securities in the demat accounts held with the depositories and “realisation of the amount due under the

certificate would, in consequence, be delayed or obstructed”.

In its order passed in January 2022, the regulator imposed a penalty of ₹1.5 crore on Choksi and restrained him from the securities market for one year.

SEBI had found that Choksi communicated unpublished price sensitive information to one Rakesh Girdharlal Gajera, who sold his entire shareholding of 5.75 per cent in Gitanjali Gems in December 2017 with the intention of avoiding loss ahead of any event which may lead to disclosure of fraudulent issuance of LoUs (letter of undertaking) to Gitanjali Group and magnitude in public domain.

Airlines profit margin never crossed 5 per cent: IATA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Airlines are grappling with a skewed value chain globally and historically, the profit margin has never crossed 5 per cent, according to IATA Chief Economist Marie Owens Thomsen. Also, she expressed hope that any efforts to address making the airline value chain less skewed will surely be an example for other countries. India is one of the world’s fastest growing civil aviation market.

At an interaction in the national capital this week, Thomsen said the skewed value chain for the global airlines industry is also a result of legacy policies. Thomsen is the Chief Economist & Senior Vice President Sustainability at the International Airport Transport Association (IATA), a grouping of over 350 airlines. “Nobody sat down from the beginning and said, I’m going to create a super skewed value chain and make sure that the airlines never

Make any money. “I don’t think anybody had that intent. But unfortunately, that’s sort of where we’ve ended up. And our industry globally has never made a profit margin in excess of 5 per cent,” she said.

While noting that all participants in the value chain make more money than the airlines, she mentioned about the oligopolistic pricing power among the aircraft manufacturers and the outsized market power of oil companies.

“... Then downstream, you know, notably here in India, maybe a very price competitive environment... Our customers choose their airlines primarily on price. So the airlines are left completely squeezed between these two with very few ways out,” she said.

Further, Thomsen said that if the Indian government tries to do everything to create a less skewed value chain, and that becomes possible, then that would surely be an example to follow for every other country.

Passenger vehicle retail sales dip 3 per cent

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Passenger vehicle retail sales witnessed a 3 per cent on-year decline in May with customers delaying purchases in several states due to India-Pakistan conflict and further softening of demand for entry-level models, dealers’ body FADA said on Friday.

The passenger vehicle registrations last month stood at 3,02,214 units, as compared to 3,11,908 units in May 2024. Entry-level models were hardest hit, as constrained financing and subdued consumer sentiment compounded the slowdown, the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) said in a statement.

Heightened war-related worries and border tensions in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat further prompted buyers to delay purchases, it added. Although bookings remained fairly healthy, retail conversions lagged on margin-money challenges and deferred decisions, the dealers’ body stated.

The passenger vehicle Original



FILE PHOTO

Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) must adopt a cautious, ground-reality-aligned approach to production planning and channel incentives so that dealers are not burdened by rising carrying costs or forced into excessive discounting, it noted.

Two-wheeler retail sales rose 7 per cent year-on-year in May at 16,52,637 units, as against 15,40,077 units in the year-ago period. Dealers attribute this resilience to

a higher number of auspicious marriage days, a strong Rabi harvest, and pre-monsoon demand — especially in semi-urban and rural markets, FADA said.

“That said, financing constraints in the economy segment capped full upside potential. Looking ahead, stakeholders should continue to monitor liquidity access and model availability to preserve momentum,” it added.

Tata Power organises camp for RWAs in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In celebration of World Environment Day, and with a view to raising awareness about the pressing challenges posed by climate change, Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL), supplying electricity to populace of around nine million in North Delhi, organised a special workshop cum Camp for Resident Welfare Associations at its Learning Centre, CENPEID, sector 11, Rohini.

The initiative, aimed at accelerating the adoption of rooftop solar solutions, aligns with Tata Power-DDL’s commitment to fostering a sustainable energy ecosystem. Aply named ‘Suryaansh’, the workshop focused on rooftop solar adoption as a key step toward mitigating the adverse impacts of climate change. Senior officials from Tata Power-DDL conducted detailed presentations and thematic sessions during the workshop, offering insights into rooftop solar technology, subsidy application procedures, and long-term benefits for consumers.

Over 80+ designated RWA members from 40+ RWAs of North and North-West parts of Delhi actively participated in the event, reflecting growing public interest in sustainable and self-reliant energy alternatives. Participants were briefed on the PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana (PMSGY)-a flagship initiative of the Government of India, along with Delhi Solar Policy, encouraging households to harness solar energy through rooftop installations.

During the workshop, participants were encouraged to enroll for the scheme and to facilitate immediate action, on-the-spot registration support was provided at the event. Commenting on the initiative, Spokesperson at Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited, said, “This initiative reflects Tata Power-DDL’s unwavering commitment to promoting clean energy and advancing sustainability measures. Delhi holds immense potential for solar energy generation, and the adoption of rooftop solar systems is a critical step forward.

Sensex jumps 747 points as RBI cuts repo rate by 50 bps; realty, bank, auto surge

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Benchmark equity indices surged on Friday, with the Sensex climbing 746.95 points and Nifty reclaiming the 25,000-level after the RBI cut interest rates by more-than-expected 50 basis points -- a third consecutive reduction -- and reduced the cash reserve ratio for banks to provide a major liquidity fillip to support the economy amid geopolitical and tariff headwinds.

Recovering all the early lost ground, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 746.95 points, or 0.92 per cent, to settle at 82,188.99. During the day, it surged ₹85.87 points, or 1.05 per cent, to 82,299.89.

The 50-share NSE Nifty reclaimed the 25,000-level and climbed 252.15 points, or 1.02 per cent, to settle at 25,003.05.

Interest-rate-sensitive realty index jumped 4.74 per cent, while auto index went up 1.50 per cent and bankex climbed 1.25 per cent. The Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI’s) six-member monetary policy committee, headed by Governor Sanjay Malhotra and consisting of three external members,



FILE PHOTO

voted five to one to lower the benchmark repurchase or repo rate by 50 basis points to 5.5 per cent.

It also cut the cash reserve ratio by 100 basis points to 3 per cent, adding ₹2.5 lakh crore to already surplus liquidity in the banking system.

With the latest reduction, the RBI has cut interest rates by a total of 100 basis points

in 2025, starting with a quarter-point reduction in February — the first cut since May 2020 — and another similar-sized cut in April.

The central bank, at the same time, changed its monetary policy stance to “neutral” from accommodative, with Malhotra saying further action will depend on incoming data.

Gold LTV raised for under ₹2.5 lakh loans

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

The Reserve Bank is all set to raise the loan-to-value (LTV) ratio for lending against gold to 85 per cent for loans under ₹2.5 lakh from the present 75 per cent, Governor Sanjay Malhotra announced on Friday.

Speaking to reporters at the central bank headquarters, Malhotra said the relaxation will come with riders, and pointed out that both principal as well as interest will be included while computing the LTV as against the current industry practice of sticking only to the principal.

“The LTV was 75 per cent till now. We are expanding it to 85 per cent for small loans of below ₹2.5 lakh per borrower,” Malhotra said, adding that this will be included in the final regulation on gold lending which has been in the works for some time.

He said the revised norms are aimed at regulating the category in a better way with minimum risk.

The Governor said state-owned lenders have been including both inter-

est and principal while making gold loans under the current LTV limit of 75 per cent, but in the case of some non-bank lenders and smaller banks, the LTV was being stretched till 88 per cent.

A few months ago, the RBI had come out with a draft on gold lending, and Malhotra made it clear that the draft is just a reiteration and consolidation of all the regulations issued earlier.

The final regulation will be issued after a public consultation on it and also assessing the impact of the moves, the Governor said.

Among other facets, the new gold loan rules will also give clarity on the ownership and include the facility for a self-declaration from the borrower in case he is unable to furnish receipts of the gold purchase, Malhotra said.

It will do away with the need for credit appraisal for loans of up to ₹2.5 lakh where gold is a collateral, Malhotra said.

The end-use monitoring of the loans will be compulsory only if a lender is taking advantage of a loan by classifying it as among priority sector lending, he said.

GAIL operates Dabhol LNG terminal in monsoon for the first time

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

India’s biggest gas utility GAIL has started operating its 5 million tonnes a year liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal at Dabhol in Maharashtra at full capacity as it received its first ever cargo at the facility during monsoon.

The company had to shut the Ratnagiri terminal, popularly known as the Dabhol LNG plant, for four months from May 25 each year to avoid high swell in the sea damaging ships or the jetty while berthing. The firm has now completed building a breakwater to guard the ships during the monsoon season.

“GAIL (India) Limited has successfully berthed and discharged its first LNG vessel at the Dabhol LNG terminal following the completion of the landmark breakwater project,” the company said in a statement. The vessel, GAIL Bhuwan, was received on June 2, 2025, by GAIL

Chairman and Managing Director Sandeep Kumar Gupta and GAIL Director (Marketing) Sanjay Kumar, marking the commencement of uninterrupted, round-the-year operations at the terminal.

Gupta had last month stated that the breakwater was complete and the company had applied for an all-weather terminal status with the authorities. The approval has now come, allowing the import of LNG during the monsoon period as well.

“With the commissioning of the breakwater after receipt of all statutory approvals, Dabhol LNG terminal has now been designated an all-weather port which is a critical transformation that ensures safe and reliable LNG operations even during the Southwest monsoon, traditionally a challenging period for marine logistics on India’s west coast,” the statement said.

Natural gas extracted from below ground and the seabed, when cooled to a



FILE PHOTO

liquid state at around minus 162 degrees Celsius turns into liquid. Gas in this form, called LNG, can be easily stored and transported in ships. At the receipt terminal, LNG is warmed back into gas, which then is piped to power plants for generating electricity, to fertiliser units for making

urea, or sold to city gas for turning into CNG or piped cooking gas.

India is aiming to raise the share of natural gas in the country’s energy basket to 15 per cent from the current 7 per cent by 2030. With its lower emissions, gas is considered a transition fuel as the country

migrates to a net zero scenario by 2070.

Dabhol Power Company (DPC) of now a bankrupt US energy giant Enron, was formed for setting up a power plant in Maharashtra. Construction started in 1992, and the first phase of 740 MW (Naphtha based) was commissioned in May 1999. The construction of Phase-II of the power plant and an LNG import terminal started and was due for completion in late 2001. But due to various controversies, the project was stalled.

Enron’s bankruptcy led to the company abandoning the project altogether. To rescue the asset, the government in 2005 formed a special purpose vehicle (SPV), called Ratnagiri Gas and Power Private Limited (RGPPL), with the participation of GAIL, power producer NTPC, MSEB Holding Company Limited and Indian financial institutions to take over the assets of the erstwhile Dabhol Power Company (DPC) and revive the abandoned project.

Threads of Kasuti Magic

Kasuti embroidery blends bold detail with cultural pride, turning every fabric into a piece of living art, says SAKSHI PRIYA

What secrets do Kasuti stitches hold? How does this ancient craft keep Karnataka's heritage alive? What stories lie hidden in the delicate threads of Kasuti embroidery? How does a simple needle trace the rich history and culture of Karnataka, weaving centuries of tradition into every stitch?

Let's step into the world of **Kasuti** and explore the needle's timeless journey. In an age where speed and mass production rule, some hands still move slowly, purposefully etching memory into cloth. This is the world of Kasuti, an age-old embroidery tradition from Karnataka that does not cry out for attention, yet captures it effortlessly. Its symmetry, patience and devotion through the fabric, offering a glimpse into a community's lasting relationship with thread, belief, and craft.

Why does this embroidery matter today? Because every stitch is a record of life lived with care, restraint and attention to meaning. And in today's world, that's worth looking at again.

Rooted in the northern districts of Karnataka, particularly Dharwad, Bijapur and Belgaum, Kasuti (derived from the Kannada word Kai Suti, meaning "handwork") is as much a mental discipline as a craft. It is done entirely by hand, without the aid of tracing or stencils. Each motif is counted and aligned with mathematical precision on handwoven or handloom cloth, most traditionally on Ilkal or Khun fabric. The craft demands the needleworker to work from the reverse side of the fabric, building the final design stitch by stitch, with astonishing accuracy. There is no jumping across, no shortcuts each turn, each mirror image must align seamlessly with its twin.

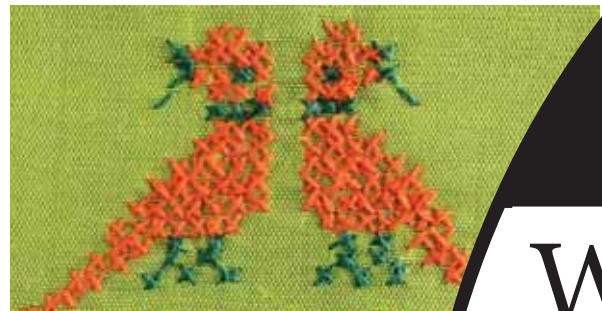
What emerges is a form of geometry married to storytelling. Motifs include temple gopurams, chariots, lamps, parrots, peacocks, and lotuses all encoded with cultural significance. Each has its place, both in ritual and in everyday life. Some patterns trace divine journeys. Others recall scenes from village fairs or mythological parables once narrated in courtyards and under neem trees. Historically, Kasuti was practised by women from the Deshastha Brahmin and Lingayat communities. It was considered a part of a young girl's preparation for marriage just like learning to cook or chant hymns. Her hand-embroidered blouse or Ilkal saree was a labour of love and learning. Once completed, it became part of her trousseau, passed down or preserved for her daughter's wedding. Unlike commercial embroidery, Kasuti's value was never transactional. It was devotional, familial and timeless. Each garment held stories in silence, visible only to those who knew how to look.

Over time, the decline in traditional weaving and the rise of machine-made fabrics pushed Kasuti into the margins. As with many handcrafts, it lost visibility. Yet, it never truly disappeared. Some families continued it quietly. Others migrated and carried it along. And in the last few decades, a quiet resurgence has begun—thanks to the efforts of revivalists, state-run initiatives, and self-help groups that train women to carry the skill forward.

IN THE END, A QUESTION

However, raise important questions: Will the integrity of the craft survive the pull of trend cycles? Can machine-made mimicry be kept at bay? Most importantly, will the new custodians understand that this is not just a pattern, but a practice?

TILT THE CLOTH. TRACE THE LINES. CRAFT IS OFTEN SPOKEN OF AS HERITAGE. BUT KASUTI ASKS US TO THINK OF IT AS INHERITANCE, SOMETHING LIVED, LEARNED AND PASSED ON WITH RESPONSIBILITY



The Art of What's Unsaid



BY TEAM VIVA

It isn't every day that you find yourself standing in front of a painting and feeling a script breathe. At **Aksharscape**, Nikheel Aphale draw letters, he transforms them into expressions of memory, cultural identity and spiritual quiet. This solo exhibition, presented by Artisera, offers a contemplative space where the Devanagari script becomes a visual meditation.

Artist's deep-rooted bond with Devanagari is evident in the strokes and the silence between them. He approaches the alphabet not as a designer or a scribe but as a seeker. The letters are forms to be felt. What emerges on his canvases are not calligraphic declarations, but poetic impressions, some playful, others delicate, all pulsing with a quiet energy. The black and white palette heightens this effect. It draws you in through restraint.

There's something intensely moving in the way he manipulates ink feathered here, dense there, sometimes trailing off into a smudge or burst. You find yourself leaning closer, not to decipher words, but to understand their spirit.

The brushstrokes seem choreographed, but not overly composed. There's a balance between control and freedom. What's remarkable is how Aphale marries precision with unpredictability. Tools like coconut husk, feathers and toothbrushes make appearances in his process, not as gimmicks, but as honest instruments of exploration.

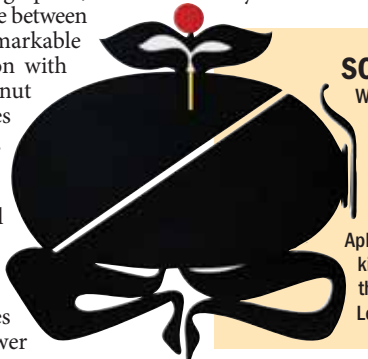
The textures they create feel tactile, human, flawed in the best way. Some works feature clusters of minuscule script, barely visible, others use repeated shapes that trick the eye, inviting a slower



engagement. The white space is not empty, it carries the weight of breath and reflection. At times, you sense myth and prayer murmuring beneath the surface, not through iconography, but through mood. The idea that letters contain no judgement, only form and sound is quietly moving.

SCRIPT AND SILENCE

What artist does is remind you that language begins with lines and sometimes, those lines can mean everything. In a time when attention is fragmented and meaning often oversimplified, Aphale's art asks for quiet. Not the kind of silence that is empty, but the one filled with awareness. Look and listen with your eyes.



Listening Close To Living Trees

The exhibition invites viewers to experience the intimate connection between humanity and nature through, soulful tree paintings, says SAKSHI PRIYA

Some exhibitions speak softly but stay with you long after. Beenu Gupta's solo show **Divinity: A Symphony of Nature**, at Bikaner House, does exactly that. The works draw the viewer into a space where trees are not painted subjects but living entities holding stories, memories, and quiet strength. Each painting is a study in patience. Leaves are not brushed in haste, they are individually created, shaped, and layered. The trunks show textured lines and twists, almost as if the bark remembers storms, seasons, and silence.

The effect is striking, not through boldness, but through presence. The trees seem to wait, not pose. They are witnesses to something older than time. The theme of divinity through nature plays out with restraint and grace. There is no dramatic symbolism or forced messaging. Instead, the spiritual quality comes through the precision of the work and the deep stillness it creates. Gupta's trees breathe inwards, inviting the viewer to do the same. Sacred

geometry finds subtle placement in many of the works. Circles and quiet patterns emerge not as design choices, but as part of an internal rhythm.

They reflect the structure within nature, symmetry balanced by wildness. It feels less like ornament and more like a quiet truth revealed. Gupta, who spent her early years travelling across India, brings a layered sensibility to her art. The influence of landscape, culture, and memory is felt in the way each piece holds weight.

These are not imagined forests, they are shaped by years of observation and emotional connection. Her use of colour remains grounded, yet full of movement. Her technique, while refined, never feels distant. In **Divinity: A Symphony of Nature**, trees do not stand still. They speak, they lean, they remember. The viewer sees the work and feels its pulse. The exhibition remains on view **until June 9**. Step in and imagine yourself beneath these trees, attentive and open to what they might reveal.



PATTERNS IN NATURE

I am deeply drawn to nature's duality, its symmetry and asymmetry order and wildness. This tension reveals itself in the geometric that structure these works offering a dialogue between the organic and intentional.

SACRED CONNECTION

Divinity series explores the sacred relationship between humanity and nature through the enduring form of the tree. Each painting is composed using non-conventional techniques every leaf is individually painted the intricate detail.



Piyush Chawla announces retirement from cricket

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Veteran leg-spinner Piyush Chawla, who was part of India's two World Cup-winning campaigns, on Friday announced his retirement from all forms of cricket after a career spanning more than two decades to undertake a "new journey" that he did not specify. The 36-year-old made the announcement via an Instagram post. "After more than two decades on the field, the time has come to bid adieu to the beautiful game," Chawla wrote. "Though I step away from the crease, cricket will always live within me. I now look forward to embarking on a new journey, carrying with me the spirit and lessons of this beautiful game," he said. Chawla was a member of India's T20 and ODI World Cup-winning squads in 2007 and 2011 respectively. He represented India in three Tests,

25 ODIs, and seven T20Is, taking 43 wickets across the three formats of the game. "From representing India at the highest level to being part of the victorious 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup squads, every moment in this incredible journey has been nothing short of a blessing. These memories will forever remain etched in my heart," Chawla said in the post. He thanked his coaches, teams and IPL franchises for playing a part in shaping his career, and described his time in the popular T20 league as "a special chapter in my career." "A heartfelt thank you to the IPL franchises who placed their trust in me — Punjab Kings, Kolkata Knight Riders, Chennai Super Kings, and Mumbai Indians. "The Indian Premier League has been a truly special chapter in my career, and I have cherished every moment playing in it. I owe my deepest gratitude to my coaches — Shri KK Gautam and Late Shri Pankaj Saraswat-for nurturing and shaping me into the cricketer I became," he said. "Today is a deeply emotional day for me as I officially announce my retirement from all forms of international and domestic cricket," he added. The leg-spinner was a part of KKR's 2014 IPL-winning team and hit the winning runs for the Gautam Gambhir-led side in the summit clash against the Punjab Kings in Bengaluru. "A special mention to my late father, whose belief in me lit the path I walked. Without him, this journey would never have been possible," he stated. Chawla made his competitive cricket debut at 15, and also represented India Under-19 and Uttar Pradesh Under-22 sides. He burst onto the scene when he bowled Sachin Tendulkar with a googly in the Challenger Series 2005-06, and made his first-class debut at 17. Chawla has over 1000 wickets across formats in domestic cricket.

After more than two decades on the field, the time has come to bid adieu to the beautiful game: Chawla

I am still heavily committed to DC, says Mitchell Starc

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

Mitchell Starc is still "heavily committed" to his Indian Premier League team Delhi Capitals but only "time will tell the repercussions" after he decided not to return after the resumption of the tournament unlike some of his other Australian colleagues. Starc decided against returning to India when IPL resumed on May 17 following a 10-day break after country's armed forces executed Operation Sindoor, a military operation in response to Pakistan-backed terrorists killing 26 civilians in Pahalgam. Starc, who was a vital cog in the Capitals' bowling line-up, took 14 wickets

in 11 matches, featured in the contest against Punjab Kings in Dharamsala on May 8 when lights abruptly went off in the stadium and the game was abandoned.

Time will tell with repercussions or how it looks with guys that didn't return. But I've had my questions and concerns leading into that game
— MITCHELL STARC, CRICKETER

Starc's wife and Australia Women's captain Alyssa Healy was also attending the game when the game was stopped and the stadium was urgently evacuated due to Dharamsala's proximity with the interna-

tional border. The 35-year-old Starc said he had his doubts heading into that IPL game between Delhi Capitals and Punjab Kings given the tensions. "I'm comfortable with my decision and how I felt about the whole situation and how it was handled," Starc was quoted as saying by The Age. "That's why I made my decision post-that, and my focus changed to red-ball cricket for about a week prior to coming over here (the UK)." "Time will tell with repercussions or how it looks with guys that didn't return. But I've had my questions and concerns leading into that game, and obviously we

saw what happened, which played a part in my decision," he said. Starc said for the same reasons he had decided not to travel to Pakistan for the Champions Trophy with the Australian team earlier this year. "There was a little bit of that to my decision around the Champions Trophy (in Pakistan) and then once the tournament (IPL) was delayed, you start to think about guys' preparation for the Test match," he said, referring to Australia's World Test Championship final against South Africa to be played at Lord's from June 11. Starc said things were "handled differently for different players and different teams" in Dharamsala.

Meetings would all be about how to dismiss Pujara: Rohit



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

How to dismiss Cheteshwar Pujara? It was the million dollar question Rohit Sharma and his Mumbai teammates discussed the most in a huddle during their junior cricket days, as they knew the Saurashtra batter could ground them to the dust over two or three days of persistent batting. Rohit reminisced that the wicket of Pujara was often the difference between a victory or defeat for his team in age-group matches, the early signs of the doughty batter who made 7,195 runs at 43.60 with 19 tons and 35 fifties from 103 Tests.

"I still remember, team meetings only revolved around him (on) how to get him out, and if we don't get him out, probably we'd lose the game," Rohit said at the launch of Pujara's wife Puj's book 'The Diary of a Cricketer's Wife' here on Thursday. The former India skipper quipped that his looks would change so much after playing against Pujara under the sun that even his mother would fret a bit. "All I remember is that when I used to go to the ground, when I was 14-years-old, and when I came back in the evening, the colour of my face would be completely different," he said. "Because he used to bat all day and we used to field in the sun for (even) 2-3 days. I still remember that my mother asked me a couple of times that when you go to play from home, you look different and when you come home, after a week or 10 days, you look different. "I would say, 'mom, what do I do? There's a batsman by the name of Cheteshwar Pujara. He's been batting for

three days... So that is the first impression that we had of him," Rohit added. Rohit credited Pujara for playing more than 100 Tests after suffering ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injuries to both his knees right at the start of his career. "It was such a bad injury (and) such a bad injury. Both his ACL were gone. For any cricketer, leave alone if you are not an athlete or not playing any sport, for a sportsman it's very, very tough if you lose both your ACL," he said. "We used to tease him about his running technique and all that but he managed to play more than 100 Test matches for India after that, a lot of credit goes to him for how he managed it. Great amount of dedication and passion he had to play the sport," Rohit said. Pujara rated the Border-Gavaskar Trophy at home against Australia in 2016-17 as the toughest series he was involved in his career. "I can mention one incident, in 2017, when India was bowled out for 200 odd runs against Australia, that was one of the toughest Test series I've been part of," Pujara said. "This was the second Test match at Bangalore, and the team didn't do well in the first innings, and we were again in a spot of bother in the second innings, but I spoke to Anil (Kumble) bhai about how to tackle Nathan Lyon, and he came up with a technical suggestion." On his part, the former India coach Kumble said he was only trying to second-guess the bowler. "Because I was second guessing the bowler, and I got it right after the 115 (read 132) Test matches, so it was all about guess work," Kumble said.

Gukesh is tenacious defender but should not provoke struggle every time: Anand

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Stavanger (Norway)

D Gukesh's tenacity in the face of setbacks is admirable but he shouldn't make it a habit to wait for mistakes from his opponents when faced with difficult situations in long-drawn-out games, feels his mentor and former world champion Viswanathan Anand. The reigning world champion has pulled off wins against world number one Magnus Carlsen and world number four Arjun Erigaisi in the Norway Chess here, despite being in serious trouble, by provoking a struggle and forcing them to make mistakes. World number two Hikaru Nakamura has expressed surprise at the Indian's style, saying he has been lucky to have survived Carlsen and Erigaisi being in a losing position for most part in both the showdowns. "I feel he is a tenacious defender. People often give up and he just keeps on playing these totally lost positions, but not pointless ones. He plays the ones where he still has a little bit of counterplay and he finds resources to hang in there. And people get careless and fatigued," said Anand during an interaction on the sidelines of

Norway Chess. "Is he doing it all the time? It's a couple of games in this time control (at Norway Chess). It's true here; this stuff is happening... I don't know. There are a lot of trends to unpack. There's also the fact that Hikaru was mentioning that it's very hard to find some interesting lines to play," added the five-time former world champion.

Both these games he played (against Carlsen and Erigaisi) extremely poorly. If that's a conscious decision to provoke a struggle, I would be alarmed
— VISWANATHAN ANAND, FORMER CHESS PLAYER

Gukesh has trained at the Westbridge Anand Academy set up by the 55-year-old chess maestro. The 19-year-old prodigal talent has often stated that he wouldn't be where he is without his "Vishy sir". And Anand said he does not want his ward to be a defensive player. "Both these games he played (against Carlsen and Erigaisi were played) extremely poorly. If that's a conscious decision to provoke a struggle, I would be alarmed,"

said Anand. "It tells me that he's an amazing fighter (and) at the same time, I would not be happy if he defended in this way." **Carlsen the best classical player** Anand has great admiration for five-time world champion Carlsen, saying he is still the best classical player in the game's history. The legendary Norwegian player has, of late, expressed his desire to move away from the long format to focus on Freestyle, Rapid and Blitz chess. "He's done it (played classical chess) for quite a long time. And also it is natural (to move on). Let's be clear, if he stopped (playing classical chess), (and) these (Norway Chess games) were his last, he is still the best classical player in history," Anand said. "I understand there are other contenders, but I think he probably pulls ahead because of many details. He's really put his stamp, especially very early, by keeping that quality all along, winning equal positions, snatching points out of the blue, he's done so much," he added. However, Anand was clear that the game will find its new star when Carlsen leaves the scene.

Satwik-Chirag bow out of Indonesia Open

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Jakarta

I ndia's top men's doubles pair Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bowed out of the Indonesia Open Super 1000 tournament after losing to Malaysia's Man Wei Chong and Tee Kai Wun in the quarterfinals here on Friday. The former world number one Indian duo, who won the title in 2023, went down 19-21, 16-21 in a 43-minute contest against the flat-hitting Malaysian pair, who notched up their first win over the Indians in five meetings. Satwik-Chirag's loss ended the Indian challenge in the competition. The Indians looked rusty as they struggled with their serve and return against Man and Wee, who won the Malaysia Masters last month and Indonesia Masters in January. The Indians also lacked the discipline in defence and anticipation and were often put in uncomfortable positions and rushed errors throughout the match by the Malaysians. Satwik sent a couple into the net, allowing the Malaysians to edge ahead 9-7. They went into the mid-game interval leading 11-9. Satwik-Chirag levelled at 11-all with aggressive flat exchanges, but Man and



Tee restored a 15-12 cushion. The Indians clawed back to 17-17 after the Malaysians hit the net twice, but couldn't capitalise. A quick return from Tee took the score to 19-17 before Chirag pounced on a loose net shot. However, Satwik faltered at the net again to hand the Malaysians game point, which they converted. Switching sides, the Indians looked unsettled and trailed 3-7 early in the second game. The Malaysians used the flat trajectory and drift to their advantage, and a sharp smash from Tee widened the gap to 15-9. Despite being 13-17 down, the Indians showed late resistance. A run of

attacking points brought them back to 16-18, including a couple of high-quality flat smashes. But Man's brilliance at the net and Tee's curling floater at 20-16 sealed four match points and they sealed the contest without further delay to enter the semifinals. Albania and Serbia face off in a politically charged World Cup qualifier Tirana (Albania), Jun 6 (AP) The roar of the crowd or the thrill of the game are hallmarks of international soccer. But when Albania and Serbia meet Saturday in a 2026 World Cup qualifier, the energy will be different.

Brazil draws 0-0 with Ecuador in World Cup qualifying

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Sao Paulo

Brazil held Ecuador to a 0-0 draw Thursday in a South American World Cup qualifying game that marked Carlo Ancelotti's debut as national team coach. The match in Guayaquil offered few scoring opportunities for either team, and featured once again a Brazilian lineup that struggled to be creative. Ecuador edged closer to one of the direct World Cup spots by maintaining second place in the round robin competition with 24 points. Brazil is in fourth place with 22 points. The top six teams in South America qualify automatically for the World Cup next year in the United States, Canada and Mexico. World Cup champion Argentina, which has already secured its place at the 2026 global tournament, beat 10th-place Chile 1-0. Lionel Messi went on as a second-half substitute in his first run for the national team in seven months. Argentina has 34 points, 10 clear of Ecuador. Paraguay moved into third spot on 24



points after a 2-0 home win over Uruguay, which dropped to fifth. Matias Galarza scored the opener in the 13th minute and Julio Enciso added a second from the spot in the 81st.

Ancelotti's changesAncelotti made a lot

of lineup changes compared with his predecessor, Dorival Júnior, who was fired after the team's 4-0 defeat at Argentina. The result was a team that successfully blocked the hosts almost all of the match but also failed to be creative and aggressive in offense, a flaw also under Ancelotti's predecessors. The 65-year-old Italian coach gave Vinicius Júnior Brazil's No. 10, brought veteran midfielder Casemiro and striker Richarlison back into the starting lineup, gave a debut to defender Alex and played teenager Estêvão on the left wing as a replacement to suspended Raphinha. Brazil seemed comfortable defending against Ecuador, which is unbeaten in its

last 14 home games. The best chance for Ancelotti's team came in the 22nd minute, when Vinicius shot from close range and was stopped by goalkeeper Gonzalo Valle. Ancelotti predicted Brazil won't be as defense-minded next week when it hosts Paraguay in Sao Paulo. "We will have more opportunities to control the match, have more mobility and intensity," Ancelotti told a post-match news conference. "This game was more complicated for the three (strikers). We needed more of an offensive game. But Ecuador defended well." "It was a very good match in the defensive stage — I saw the team doing well with the ball, with a more fluid game," Ancelotti added. "This was a good draw and we leave here satisfied, with confidence for the next match." The 33-year-old Casemiro, who played his first match for Brazil in more than a year, was happy to return and play under a coach he enjoyed a lot of success with at Real Madrid. "Little by little we will grow," Casemiro said.

French Open: Coco Gauff faces Aryna Sabalenka

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paris

The biggest difference Coco Gauff sees between the player who lost her first Grand Slam final at the 2022 French Open at age 18, and the one who will play for the trophy again on Saturday at 21, this time against number one Aryna Sabalenka, is the way she views the importance of the occasion. Three years ago at Roland-Garros, Gauff was making her debut on that sort of stage and with that sort of prize at stake. It felt like the outcome meant absolutely everything, a burden that was a lot at the time and made her nervous. Now, the number two-ranked Gauff says, she understands "how miniscule" the result Saturday is in the scheme of things. "Everybody is dealing with way bigger things in life than losing a final," the American said after beating 361st-ranked French wild-card entry Loïs Boisson 6-1, 6-2 in the semifinals

Thursday. "I'm sure there are hundreds of players that would kill to win or lose a final, so just knowing that (makes) me realise how lucky and privileged I am to be in this position," Gauff said. "At first, I thought it would be the end of the world if I lost, and, you know, the sun still rose the next day. Regardless of the result, the sun will still rise." Here's another key difference: The Gauff of today is a Grand Slam champion. She won the 2023 US Open; her opponent in that final just so happened to be Sabalenka. "I just remember kind of feeling," Gauff said, "like I was holding my breath to the match point." Their head-to-head series is tied 5-5 entering the first number one vs number two matchup in a French Open women's final since Serena Williams beat Maria Sharapova in 2023. Sabalenka beat Gauff in their most recent meeting, which came at the Madrid Open in May on the type of red clay used at Roland-Garros.

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