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CM: Govt to soon declare MSP for maize, open procurement centres

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Auraiya/
Lucknow/

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, stated that, for the first time, the double-engine government has sent scientists from Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) labs, agricultural university professors and Krishi Vigyan Kendras (Agricultural Science Centres) directly to the farmers' fields.

"This lab-to-land initiative is a part of a campaign that prioritises farmers' interests from seed to market. In a state where farmers were earlier limited to one or two crops, they are now growing maize on over five lakh hectares, earning good profits. This shift forms the foundation of agricultural transformation in Uttar Pradesh," he remarked.

As part of the Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan-2025, Chief Minister Yogi interacted with maize farmers at Janata Degree College at Ajitmal in Auraiya. He also honoured progressive farmers, distributed mini kits and awarded grants to eligible beneficiaries under various schemes. Furthermore, the chief minister visited stalls, participated in an 'annaprashan' ceremony for children, and planted saplings. Farmers also shared their views during the event.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Minister Yogi said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for a developed India was gaining momentum in 20-25 districts of Uttar Pradesh through maize farming. A single farmer is earning up to Rs 2.5 lakh per hectare, or nearly Rs 1 lakh per acre, he added.

"With the ability to grow three crops (potato, maize and paddy), our farmers are actively contributing to national prosperity," he said.

The chief minister noted that June 9 marks 11 years of Prime Minister Modi's leadership, during which India has risen as a global power. Under his leadership, New India continues to march ahead, balancing heritage and development, while protecting the interests of the poor, farmers, labourers, Dalits, Backward Classes, and the underprivileged, he added.

The chief minister remarked that for the first time in 2014, farmers became a part of a government's political agenda. Soil Health Cards were distributed, followed by schemes like PM Krishi Sinchai Yojana, PM Fasal Bima Yojana, and PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. Under this, 12 crore farmers nationwide, including 2.86 crore in UP, have benefited, with Rs 85,000 crore directly transferred to their accounts via DBT, he added.

The chief minister emphasised the government's commitment to transforming the future of farmers. "Before 2017, farmers faced distress with rising suicides and unpaid sugarcane dues, and lacked procurement centres for key crops like maize, oilseeds, pulses, potatoes, millet, sorghum, paddy and wheat. One of the government's first major steps after assuming office in 2017 was waiving Rs 36,000 crore in loans for 86 lakh farmers. Irrigation coverage was expanded significantly under the PM



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during an event organised as part of the 'Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan-2025' in Auraiya.

PTI

Lush maize fields during aerial survey delight CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow/
Auraiya

Before attending a farmers' seminar in Ajitmal, Auraiya on Sunday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath conducted an aerial survey of maize crops across Kanpur, Unnao, Kannauj and Auraiya districts. During the survey, he was deeply impressed by the lush, thriving maize fields spread across the region.

Expressing his appreciation during the seminar, he highlighted the importance of maize and described it as a "cash crop" that holds great potential for boosting farmers' incomes.

The chief minister took off from Lucknow in the morning and reached Auraiya after flying over Unnao, Kanpur and Kannauj. During the journey, he saw the lush green fields and appreciated the hard work of the farmers. While address-

ing the farmers at the seminar, he shared how impressed he was with what he saw.

He said that starting from Lucknow, he traveled over Unnao-Bangarmau, Kannauj-Chhibramau, Kanpur and finally arrived in Auraiya. Along the way, he witnessed the impressive work of farmers in the fields.

He noted that earlier, farmers in the state were limited to one or two crops, but now many are showing interest in growing a third crop as well. With maize being cultivated on five lakh hectares, farmers are now earning good profits. This shows the positive change in the lives of the food-giving farmers.

Maize cultivation has become a cornerstone of prosperity for farmers in Uttar Pradesh. With low input costs, high yields and strong market demand, it is emerging as a game changer.

Auraiya, the chief minister assured that procurement centres would soon be established and MSP (minimum support price) would be announced. He emphasised that maize is a nutritious food and can be used to produce sweet corn, baby corn, biofuel and bioplastic. He added that Prime Minister Modi has also emphasised value addition and food processing.

Amendment to brick kiln policy proposed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh is taking decisive steps to regulate the brick kiln industry with a focus on environmental sustainability. Departments including Environment and Goods and Services Tax, and Pollution Control Board are working in coordination to promote eco-friendly alternatives to traditional red bricks. Besides, based on the legal opinion of former Chief Justice of India BN Khare, an amendment to the Brick Kiln Policy-2012 has been proposed.

These efforts aim to enhance environmental protection while streamlining and making the industry more sustainable.

The brick kiln industry in Uttar Pradesh is undergoing a fresh round of regulation, with a renewed focus on pollution control and environmental conservation.

In a review meeting held by the Environment Department, officials informed that a proposal to amend the existing policy has been prepared based on the legal opinion of former Chief Justice of India BN Khare.

The proposal is currently under consideration at the government level. Once approved, the amendment will help regularise previously closed brick kilns and ensure long-term stability and sustainability for the industry.

Officials from the Environment Department stated that before 2012, there was no clear policy for brick kilns in the state. After the 2012 policy was implemented, nearly 6,500 brick kilns across the state were declared illegal. However, due to the irregular functioning of many kilns, appropriate tax collection could not be ensured. At the same time, many kiln owners operating under the rules faced financial losses. This led to an atmosphere of uncertainty in the entire brick kiln industry.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has formulated a comprehensive strategy for regularising the brick kiln industry while ensuring soil conservation and pollution

The brick kiln industry in Uttar Pradesh is undergoing a fresh round of regulation, with a renewed focus on pollution control and environmental conservation.

control. As part of this, coordination among the Environment Department, Pollution Control Board, and other departments has led to organised regulation of brick kilns across the state.

To address the decline in goods and services tax (GST) collection from the brick kiln industry, a joint meeting was held between the GST Department, Environment Department and Pollution Control Board. It was decided in the meeting that the list of all brick kilns approved by the Pollution Control Board would be submitted to the GST Department. This step is aimed at making the tax collection process more efficient. It will also promote transparency and tax compliance in the brick kiln sector.

In alignment with the vision of environmental protection, emphasis is also being laid on promoting alternatives to traditional red bricks. In a coordinated meeting of the Public Works, Housing and Urban Development, and the Environment departments, it was decided to promote eco-friendly options such as fly ash bricks, AAC blocks, and paver blocks.

According to officials from the Environment Department, these alternatives will not only reduce excessive exploitation of soil but also help control pollution by utilising industrial waste such as fly ash. These initiatives are expected to provide a new direction and regulatory framework for the brick kiln industry in Uttar Pradesh. The government's objective is to establish a balanced approach between environmental protection, industry stability and economic growth.

Govt planning to procure adv technology to protect key installations from CBRN threats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh government is planning to procure advanced technology for safeguarding key installations, the state assembly, and VIPs from chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats.

Drawing lessons from security protocols of Parliament, the state is working closely with agencies like the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Electronics Corporation of India Ltd (ECIL) to design a multi-layered safety mechanism. Senior officials familiar with the matter said that consultations are ongoing with the DRDO, ECIL, Uttar Pradesh Police, paramilitary forces, and both state and national disaster management authorities.

An evaluation by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) is also being considered as part of the plan, they said. "The system will be used for VIP and VVIP security, and during high-profile visits and events at strategic sites across the state," an officer aware of the development told PTI.

"It will be based on technology from foreign countries, either the US or France," the officer added. The proposed CBRN setup is part of a broader effort to strengthen internal security in light of recent geopolitical tensions, particularly with Pakistan. The initiative also builds on recent steps taken by the state government to secure the Uttar Pradesh Assembly complex.

Earlier this year, the traditional vehicle stickers for MLAs, MLCs and other visitors were replaced with RFID tags after reports surfaced of fraudulent access using tampered passes.

During a session of the assembly on March 5, Speaker Satish Mahana highlighted the security concerns, saying: "It has come to our notice that fake vehi-

cle passes are being created by tampering with those issued by the Assembly Secretariat. This is a serious security concern, and the matter has been referred to the state's purchasing department for investigation." Under the envisioned CBRN safety net, multiple technologies will be integrated to detect and neutralise threats like viruses, spores, and toxins. A single setup may cost up to ₹10 crore, according to initial estimates.

In a parallel move, the state is also planning to procure advanced robotic surveillance devices, inspired by the US Department of Homeland Security and recent security technology exchanges during a visit by US Senator J D Vance to the Taj Mahal in Agra.

These robots, based on French technology, will offer day and night surveillance capabilities and can be deployed in high-risk zones such as assembly premises, airports, or during major public events.

Each robot, costing around ₹80 lakh, is designed to access hard-to-reach and hazardous zones without endangering human lives. With a range of up to 90 metres, these wheeled devices can scan vehicles — even go underneath them — for potential explosives, and are equipped to traverse stairs, rough terrains, and confined spaces.

"Robot-based threat assessments can significantly reduce the need for human intervention in danger zones," the officer said.

"Conventional wars and threats are a thing of the past now. We have to move past those trends and be future-ready," the officer added.

If implemented, Uttar Pradesh will become the first state police force in India to adopt a Parliament-style integrated security model against CBRN and explosive threats, the senior officer noted.

Residential proof now mandatory for registering marriage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Lucknow

Following the Allahabad High Court order, the Uttar Pradesh government has issued orders that no marriage will be registered in a city unless either the bride or the groom or one of their parents is a resident of that city.

With this order, the registration of marriage requires residency proof from either bride, groom, or their parents, following the High Court ruling.

Earlier, in compliance with the Supreme Court order in 2006, the state government framed the Uttar Pradesh Marriage Registration Rules, 2017, making the registration of marriage compulsory.

The UP government issued the orders on June 6 following an Allahabad High court on May 12 in a case involving couples who sought legal protection after eloping without the consent of their families. Many of these were couples who registered their marriage in Ghaziabad despite not being residents there, which resulted in jurisdictional issues when they sought protection.

"The High Court's directions are interim until the rules are amended; the court has also ordered the government to amend the Uttar Pradesh Marriage Registration Rules, 2017, in coordination with the inspector general of the Stamps and Registration Department within six months. The state government has ordered implementation of the High Court's interim directions with immediate effect till the rules are amended. One

of the main components of the directions states that a marriage will be registered in a particular city only if either the bride or the groom or their parents are generally the residents of the same city.

The directions also state that an unregistered rent agreement will not be considered proof of residence, the purohit or person who solemnised the marriage must be physically present at the office of the marriage registrar at the time of registration, and an affidavit by the purohit or person who claims to have solemnised the marriage shall be made mandatory at the time of registration.

Official sources said the High Court's interim directions shall specifically apply to the registration of marriages involving runaway couples — those who have entered into a matrimonial alliance without the consent of their family members. Provided that, if any of the family members of the parties to the marriage are present at the time of registration, the marriage officer may, at his discretion, waive the aforesaid conditions, either wholly or in part, after being satisfied as to the genuineness of the marriage. The Uttar Pradesh Marriage Registration Rules, 2017, state that registration is compulsory in cases of marriage/remarriage where one of the parties is a permanent resident of Uttar Pradesh or the marriage is performed inside Uttar Pradesh. Officials said that Ghaziabad had emerged as a popular destination for marriages of runaway couples as people and firms there offered them packages to perform and register marriages.

Protest after meat pieces found near eidgah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Agra

Pieces of meat were found strewn around in an empty plot near an eidgah on Barsana Road in Mathura district, police said on Sunday. The incident sparked protests by members of some right-wing outfits after locals alleged that it was cow meat, they said, adding the meat pieces were found in Govardhan area on Saturday night.

In a separate incident in the Mant area of the district, the recovery of a burnt cow carcass on the Yamuna Expressway service road also led to protests by Hindu activists.

An FIR has been registered in the Barsana Road incident under various sections of the Uttar Pradesh Prevention of Cow Slaughter Act against 24 named individuals and 50 unidentified persons, police said. "Locals alleged that it was cow meat, samples of which have been sent to a forensic laboratory for examination," Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar said. Kumar said that after receiving information about the meat pieces near the eidgah late on Saturday

evening, members of the Gorakshak Dal and some Hindu organisations gathered at the site and started protests.

"We reached the spot and pacified the crowd. An FIR has been registered against 24 named individuals and 50 unknown persons. We are now using CCTV footage to identify those who discarded the meat pieces. Strict action will be taken against the culprits," the SSP said. In the Mant area, the finding of a burnt cow carcass enraged Hindu activists.

Mant Circle Officer Gunjan Singh said that some Hindu activists protested over the incident and demanded an FIR.

According to police, locals informed them that the cow's body had been lying there for two-three days before someone set it on fire on Saturday. Local BJP leader Ashok Saraswat has filed a complaint on behalf of the Radharani Gauseva Trust in connection with this incident, police said.

Mant police station SHO Jasbir Singh said that the remains of the cow's carcass were cremated. Efforts are underway to identify individuals who were present near the incident site, Singh said.



SP MP Priya Saroj and cricketer Rinku Singh during their engagement in Lucknow on Sunday

PTI

Cricketer Rinku Singh gets engaged to SP MP Priya

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Indian cricketer Rinku Singh and Samajwadi Party MP Priya Saroj got engaged on Sunday in a grand ceremony graced by a host of prominent political figures. The engagement, held at a hotel in the capital city, was attended by top SP leaders, including party president and former chief minister Akhilesh Yadav and his wife, MP Dimple Yadav.

Other notable attendees included senior politicians Rajeev Shukla, Jaya Bachchan, Shivpal Yadav, Ramgopal Yadav, and cricketer Bhuvnesh Kumar.

Speaking to the media after the event, SP MP Awadhesh Prasad extended his warm wishes to the couple. "I have come to give my wishes to the couple. I hope that they have a happy future," he said.

Tufani Saroj, Priya Saroj's father and SP MLA from Karakat assembly constituency, said the celebrations began on Saturday night. According to family sources, the engagement had an exclusively vegetarian menu. Rinku Singh, a popular figure in

Indian cricket, played for the Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR) in the recently concluded 2025 edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL). Priya Saroj is a first-time Member of Parliament, having won the Machhlisahr seat on a Samajwadi Party ticket in the 2024 general elections.

A native of Karkhiana village in Varanasi, Priya Saroj has been actively involved with the SP for several years. She first gained public attention during her father's campaign for the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

The parliamentarian holds an arts degree from Delhi University and a law degree from Amity University in Noida.

Rinku Singh, born on October 12, 1997, in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh, became an overnight sensation in IPL 2023 when he hit five sixes in a single over, securing a victory for the KKR -- a team he has been a part of since 2018. He earned a spot in the Indian cricket team the same year. He has played two One Day Internationals (ODIs) and 33 Twenty20 Internationals. In first-class cricket, he has amassed 3,336 runs in 50 matches, including seven centuries.

Ensure 100% drain cleaning before monsoon: Ministers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Stamp and Court Registration Fees Ravindra Jaiswal and Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH and Food Security Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' during a meeting at Circuit House on Saturday directed the officials to ensure 100 per cent cleaning of drains before monsoon. The two ministers emphasised that there should be no water-logging on the roads in the city during the rain. For this, they instructed the officers concerned to identify the areas where waterlogging occurred and ensure immediate cleaning of drains there on a war footing.

Divisional Commissioner S Rajalingam, Commissioner of Police (CP) Mohit Agarwal, District Magistrate Satyendra Kumar, Municipal Commissioner Akshat Verma and other officials were present on the occasion. While giving instructions to the municipal commissioner, Jaiswal said that it should be ensured that no silt should come out of the drains at places where the drains have been cleaned. Apart from this, in the areas where the drains are being cleaned, debris should not be kept on the roadside and should be removed from the



UP ministers Ravindra Jaiswal and Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' holding a meeting of officers in Varanasi

spot. He also directed that in case of water logging in the low-lying areas during the rainy season, responsibility should be fixed to ensure drainage by installing pumps on the spot. He also directed that regular and proper cleaning system should be ensured in the entire city during the rainy season. There should not be any lax-

ity in lifting of garbage. Directing the engineers of the Public Works Department (PWD), he said that the work of repair and construction of roads, especially in the urban area, which is in progress, should be completed before the rains by making special efforts and negligence in this will not be tolerated.

IIT-BHU increases 111 seats

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University), Varanasi, has increased 111 seats in its most popular departments for students qualifying through the Joint Entrance Examination (JEE). For the 2025-26 academic year, the institute will offer a total of 1,589 seats for first year students, the same as last year.

Specifically, 111 seats were reduced in four departments—Ceramic Engineering, Metallurgical Engineering, Mining Engineering, and Pharmaceutical Engineering & Technology—and given to nine high-demand departments like Computer Science and Engineering, Electronics Engineering, and Mathematics and Computing. Four departments have no change in seat numbers. Speaking about this realignment, Director Prof Amit Patra said, "we are constantly working to ensure that our academic offerings match the aspirations of our students and the needs of the industry. This reallocation of seats in high-demand departments will provide more opportunities for talented students to pursue their chosen fields and contribute meaningfully to technological advancement and nation-building."

Foundation stone for development work laid



UP minister Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' laying foundation stone of development work in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) for AYUSH Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' on Saturday laid the foundation stone for some development work to be done at a cost of Rs 4.68 lakh in Kharwan Kuan Hanuman Temple (Balua Gali, Kashipura) under Ward Number 84 (Gola Dinanath) in the parliamentary constituency of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The minister said that Kashi was continuously developing under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi. "It is our resolve that the light of development should reach every street and locality", he said, adding that this work was an important initiative towards improving public facilities through coordination of local representatives and workers.

Ward President Abhishek Gupta played a special role in making the foundation stone laying programme successful. Keeping in mind the local problems, he placed this proposal before the minister and after getting its approval, its formal foundation stone was laid. The people present on the occasion appreciated the efforts of the minister and expressed gratitude towards the development work being done by the government.

On this occasion corporator Sanjay Keshari, former mandal president of BJP Divesh Singh, Dr Dinesh Kumar 'Dinu', Chandra Vijay Singh, Ankur Mehrotra, Gaurav Rathi, Santosh Saini, Sanjay Mishra, Sudhir Tripathi, Saurabh Rai, Lalli

Chaudhary, Shivshankar Keshari, Markandey Tiwari, Vishal Seth, Satish Kasera, Anil Kasera, Arun Pandey, Karan Singh, Arun Kasera, Pawan Pal and others were also present.

Meanwhile, former UP minister and Varanasi South MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari inaugurated the renovation work of the famous cultural site Narsingh Chabutra. He said that Narsingh Leela has been taking place at the famous Narsingh Chabutra for the last 400 years. Apart from this, other cultural and religious works have been taking place here. Vat Savitri puja is also performed at this place by the local people. This place had become dilapidated. By carrying out renovation work of this place, it has been given a lively look again, the MLA said.

The MLA said that beautification work has been done at a cost of about Rs 8 lakh. Stones have been placed on the platform and railings have been installed all around. Apart from this, the MLA also laid the foundation stone for the development work to be done in Daranagar Garden located in Daranagar area. In the said park, pathway construction, swings for children and to provide adequate lighting, interlocking work with lights, will be done at a cost of about Rs 7.5 lakh.

On the occasion Tarkeshwar Gupta, Bablu Seth, Sandeep Chaurasia, Neeraj Jaiswal, Satish Chand Pandey, Alok Chand Shukla, Ravi Shankar Singh, Suresh Chaurasia, Tinku Arora along with other BJP workers, officers of Rural Engineering Department etc were present.

BLW GM stresses on cycling in daily life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

Under the 'Sunday on Cycle' campaign initiated by Indian Railways to promote the 'Fit India Movement' and environmental conservation, a grand cycle rally was organised on Sunday at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW). The rally was flagged off at 7.30 am from the main gate of the BLW Golf Course by General Manager (GM) Naresh Pal Singh, who also actively participated in the event by riding a bicycle himself. He urged all participants to adopt cycling in daily life, stay active for better health, and support green transportation.

The rally was organised jointly by BLW Administration, BLW Sports Association, Sports Authority of India (SAI), and the Public Relations Department. It saw enthusiastic participation from BLW officials, employees, RPF personnel, Bharat



Scouts & Guides, volunteers of St John's Ambulance Brigade, Civil Defence members, SAI coaches, and players.

After starting from Golf Course, it passed through Surya Sarovar, BLW Inter College, Kandwa Gate, Kanchanpur Colony, Sabzi Mandi, Nathupur, Administration Building and BLW

Stadium. It was culminated at Kundan Tiraha (trijunction), site of the first locomotive manufactured by BLW has been displayed. The rally served as a powerful example of environmental protection, health awareness and green mobility. Prominent participants included Principal Chief Electrical Engineer Sushil Kumar

Varanasi team of NER receives awards



NER (Varanasi Division) team receiving an award at ZRTI Bhusaval recently.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

The Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) received the best direction, actor and first Prerana Award in the All Railway Hindi Natyotsav-2024 organised at the Zonal Railway Training Institute, Bhusaval in

Maharashtra recently under the aegis of the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board). 18 drama teams of Railway zones and production units participated in this drama festival. The drama team of Varanasi Division participated representing the North Eastern Railway and staged the play 'Bade Bhai Sahab'. In the prize distribution pro-

gramme organised on the last day of the drama festival, the first Prerana Award was given to the drama of Varanasi Division by General Manager/Central Railway (CR) Dharmveer Meena and Director Rajbhusha / Railway Board Dr V Suguna. The Best Director Award was given to the drama director of Varanasi Division Aman Srivastava for the best acting in the play *Bade Bhai Sahab*.

On this occasion, Divisional Railway Manager/Bhusaval Iti Pandey, Principal of ZRTI CR (Bhusaval) Dr Ram Niwas Meena and members of Varanasi Division's drama team, Vidya Bhushan Tiwari, Aman Srivastava, Ankit Kumar, Shreya Tiwari, Archana Kumari, Anu Rani Rao, Amarjeet Kumar, Kshitij Bhushan Tiwari, Krishna Kumar Singh, Archana Kumari, Lakshmi, Ajay Kumar Singh, Anu Srivastava, Tanmay Mishra, Nageshwar Nath Srivastava, Asha Sharma and supporting staff were present. The drama *Bade Bhai Sahab* presented by Varanasi's team is a dramatic adaptation of the story written by Munshi Premchand with the same title.

The drama *Bade Bhai Sahab* is an attempt to revive the sense of duty which is vanishing from society. In this story, the elder brother is handling his duties and fulfilling his responsibilities towards his younger brother.

Cleanliness drive at Prahlad Ghat



A woman sanitation worker being felicitated at Prahlad Ghat in Varanasi on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Varanasi

A cleanliness drive was conducted at Prahlad Ghat here on Sunday under the joint aegis of Namami Ganga Ganga Vichar Manch Mahanagar Unit and 137 CETF 39 Ganga Task Force. The aim

of drive to create awareness among children learning swimming at the ghat.

After the cleanliness drive, led by Ganga Task Force Subedar Jagdish Chand and Namami Ganga Ganga Vichar Manch District Coordinator Shivam Agrahari, vigilant guards of cleanliness Kewal

Kushwaha, Mohit and Rambabu Sahnii who saved lives, Santosh Kumar Pathak who regularly conduct Ganga Aarti, Rama Guru from Panda community, woman sanitation worker Radha of Municipal Corporation were felicitated by giving them plants and angavastram.

Before this, a dialogue was held on the subject of Ganga cleanliness with the children who learnt swimming in the lap of Ganga during summer vacation. Children and parents were asked to make committed efforts for a clean Ganga. On the call of the team, everyone together cleaned the banks of the ghat. Soaps, shampoo pouches, clothes, polythene etc scattered on the steps of the ghat were collected and sent for disposal with the help of Municipal Corporation.

Jagdish Chand said that Ganga was everyone's mother. It was everyone's responsibility to keep her clean. While creating awareness among the people, Shivam said that the work of beautification of the ghats was going on at a fast pace. Due to the development work, the beauty of the Rani Ghat to Teliyanaala Ghat has increased and it should not be spoiled due to lack of cleanliness. Everyone has to take care of this, he added. Jai Vishwakarma, Bhim Singh, Akhilesh Sandeep and others were present on this occasion.

Metro tunnel construction from Rawatpur towards Company Bagh complete

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

As part of the 4.10-km underground stretch of Corridor-2 (CSA to Barra-8), the construction of the 'downline tunnel' from Rawatpur towards Company Bagh Chauraha — covering a length of approximately 620 metres up to the under-construction Corridor-2 Depot Ramp of Kanpur Metro — has been successfully completed. The breakthrough was achieved by Tunnel Boring Machine (TBM) 'Saraswati' amid a round of applause. With this, both the 'up-line' and 'downline' tunnels on this stretch are now complete. TBM 'Gomati' had earlier completed tunneling for the 'up-line' on the same stretch.

It is worth noting that TBM 'Saraswati' commenced tunnel boring work on February 24, 2025, from the launching shaft near Rawatpur Metro Station. With the machine now reaching the Corridor-2 Depot Ramp, Kanpur Metro has crossed a significant milestone in the underground tunneling of Corridor-2. During the breakthrough journey, the machine installed a total of 441 rings.

While the tunneling from Rawatpur to Company Bagh Chauraha is complete,



construction is actively progressing from Rawatpur towards Double Pulia Ramp via Kakadeo. TBMs 'Gomati' and 'Parvati' are working on the 'up-line' and 'downline' tunnels respectively in this stretch. These machines will bore underground tunnels beneath Kakadeo and Double Pulia stations to eventually reach the Double Pulia Ramp.

Notably, three TBMs — 'Gomti', 'Saraswati', and 'Parvati' — are being deployed for the tunneling work in the underground section of Corridor-2. Corridor-2 spans approximately 8.60

km, comprising a 4.10-km underground section and a 4.50-km elevated section. The underground section includes three stations: Rawatpur, Kakadeo, and Double Pulia. The elevated section consists of five stations: CSA (Agriculture University), Vijaynagar Chauraha, Shastri Chowk, Barra-7, and Barra-8.

The train will begin its journey from the elevated CSA station and enter the underground stretch around 650 meters before Rawatpur at the Corridor-2 Depot Ramp. It will then pass through the three underground stations — Rawatpur, Kakadeo, and Double Pulia — before surfacing at the Double Pulia Ramp and continuing towards Vijaynagar, Shastri Chowk, Barra-7, and finally Barra-8.

Rawatpur will serve as a crucial interchange station between Corridor-1 and Corridor-2. Construction of the underground station is underway adjacent to the existing elevated station to facilitate this integration.

Congratulating the Kanpur Metro Team on this milestone, Managing Director of UPMRC, Sushil Kumar, said, "With the breakthrough achieved by TBM 'Saraswati', tunneling from Rawatpur to the under-construction Corridor-2 Depot Ramp in

the direction of Company Bagh Chauraha is now complete. This marks a major accomplishment for us. The Earth Pressure Balance (EPB) TBM has successfully executed the tunnelling without disturbing surface traffic, ensuring complete safety. The day is not far when residents on both sides of the railway line will benefit from smooth, uninterrupted transit on this modern Corridor-2 of the Kanpur Metro."

CULTURAL PROGRAMME

The Kanpur Central Metro Station hosted a special cultural programme featuring music and poetry. Budding artists took to the stage to showcase their talent in singing and poetry recitation.

The event began with a soulful musical performance by Abhiraj Singh, accompanied by Dhruv on the guitar. The duo captivated the audience with a series of popular Bollywood melodies. Following the musical segment, a poetry recital added to the charm of the evening. Participants like Akshay Mishra, Ritik Tiwari, Shubham Tiwari, Shivansh Shukla, Prashant Dwivedi and Prateek Tiwari recited poems and earned enthusiastic applause from the crowd.

Importance of Hindu culture emphasised



RSS activists celebrate Hindu Empire Day at Parashuram Vatika on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Kanpur

Parashuram Vatika, Arya Nagar, resonated with patriotic songs and the spirit of nationalism on Hindu Empire Day on Sunday morning.

The event was organised by RSS volunteers, who paid tribute to Shivaji's bravery. Dr Hemant Mohan, a senior homeopathic physician and social worker, participated in the event. The celebration included discussions on Shivaji's valour, patriotic songs and intellectual

sessions. Fruits and sharbat were distributed as *prasad*, courtesy Dr Hemant Mohan and Arogyadham. Dr Hemant Mohan emphasized the importance of Hindu culture, Sanatan Dharma and the greatness of Indian civilisation. Local residents, social workers and morning walkers participated in the event, which was held from 7 am to 11 am. The event was a grand success, with participants coming together to celebrate Hindu Empire Day and promote national unity and pride.

BJP-led NDA redefined women-led development in 11 years: PM Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

A day before his Government marks its first anniversary in third term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that the ruling BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has redefined women-led development in its 11 years in power. In all sectors, including science, education, sports, start ups and the armed forces, women are excelling and inspiring several people, Modi said on social media.

He cited a number of welfare programmes which, he noted, have benefited women immensely.

Various initiatives, from ensuring dignity through Swachh Bharat to financial inclusion via Jan Dhan accounts, the focus has been on empowering the women, he said.

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



Prime Minister Narendra Modi

PTI

dreams on their own terms. Houses under the women's name in PM Awas Yojana too have made a remarkable impact, he added.

'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' (save daughter, educate daughter) programme ignited a national movement to protect the girl child, he said.

The Prime Minister shared a thread of a Government-run citizenship engagement platform, which listed benefits brought to women by several Government schemes. It said the maternal mortality ratio declined to 93 per lakh live births in 2019-21 from 167 in 2011-13, and the households with tap water connections zoomed to 15.64 crore in May 2025 from 3.23 crore in August 2019.

Over 10 crore cooking gas connections were given under the Ujjwala scheme, it said, while highlighting several other welfare measures targeting women.

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

NIA arrests three insurgents for attack on security forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has arrested three insurgents in a case related to a deadly attack on security forces that killed two police commandos and injured several others in ethnic violence-hit Manipur last year, officials said on Sunday.

The three men, along with their associates, planned, conspired and executed the attack on an Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) post and security forces at Moreh in Tengnoupal district on January 17, 2024, they said. Among the arrested accused is Thangminlen Mate, a resident of Tengnoupal district and member of the Kuki Inpi Tengnoupal (KIT) insurgent group, an official statement said.

He played a key role in orchestrating and carrying out the attack, it said.

"He was apprehended on May 19, 2025, from Silchar, Assam, and produced before the NIA court in Guwahati, which remanded him to custody until May 28. He is currently lodged in Guwahati Central Jail under judicial custody," the

statement issued by the probe agency said. The other accused, Kamginthang Gangte, a member of the Kuki National Army (KNA), and Hentinthang Kipgen alias Thangneo Kipgen, associated with the village volunteers' group in Churachandpur district, were arrested from Imphal on June 6, the statement said.

"They were presented before the duty magistrate, who granted a transit remand until June 9 for their transfer to the NIA special court in Guwahati. The duo was part of the team that executed the deadly attack," it added.

More than 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless in the violence between the Imphal valley-based Meiteis and adjoining hills-based Kuki-Zo groups since May 2023.

The Centre imposed President's Rule in Manipur on February 13 this year after Chief Minister N Biren Singh resigned.

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

Resignation only option before Justice Yashwant Varma to avoid impeachment by Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Resignation is the only option before Justice Yashwant Varma to avoid impeachment by Parliament as the Government pushes for bringing a motion to remove the Allahabad High Court (HC) judge over alleged corruption.

Officials aware of the procedure to appoint and remove Supreme Court (SC) and high court judges pointed out that while defending his case before lawmakers in any of the House, Justice Varma can announce that he is quitting and his verbal statement will be considered as his resignation.

Should he decide to resign, he will get pension and other benefits entitled to a retired HC judge.

But if he is removed by Parliament, he will be deprived of pension and other benefits, they noted.

According to Article 217 of the Constitution, a high court judge "may, by writing under his hand addressed to the President, resign his office".

A judge's resignation does not require any approval. A simple resignation letter is sufficient.

A judge may give a prospective date to step down. In such cases, the judge can withdraw the resignation before the date he or she has mentioned as the last day in office. Removal by Parliament is the other way a judge can vacate office.

Then Chief Justice of India Sanjiv Khanna had written to the president and the Prime Minister to remove Justice Varma, mired in the cash discovery row.

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

which investigated the case.

Justice Khanna had prodded Varma to resign but he had refused, sources had earlier said. A motion could be brought in either of the two Houses of Parliament. In the Rajya Sabha, at least 50 members have to sign the motion. In Lok Sabha, 100 members have to support it.

According to the Judges (Inquiry) Act of 1968, once a motion to remove a judge is admitted in any of the Houses, the speaker or the chairman, as the case may be, will constitute a three-member committee to investigate the grounds on which the removal (or, in popular term, impeachment) has been sought.

A motion could be brought in either of the two Houses of Parliament. In the Rajya Sabha, at least 50 members have to sign the motion. In Lok Sabha, 100 members have to support it

The committee consists of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) or a Supreme Court judge, the chief justice of one of the 25 high courts and a "distinguished jurist".

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju had last week said the present case is "slightly different" as an in-house committee formed by then CJI Khanna has already submitted its report.

"So what is to be done in this matter, we will take a call," he said.

The minister said the process has to be followed, but how to "integrate the inquiry already conducted" needs to be decided.

"As per the rule, a committee has to be

constituted and then the committee has to submit a report and the report will be tabled in the House and discussions will start to impeach. Here, a committee has already been constituted, not by Parliament. But it cannot be brushed aside" as it was constituted by the CJI, he said.

Responding to questions that a committee has to be mandatorily formed under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, Rijiju said the speaker will take a decision in this regard.

He said reconciling the report of the in-house panel and the one under law is a "secondary matter". The primary objective is to bring the impeachment motion.

Monsoon session begins July 21 and ends August 12. A fire incident at Justice Varma's residence in the national capital in March, when he was a judge at the Delhi High Court, had led to the discovery of several burnt sacks of cash at the outhouse.

Though the judge claimed ignorance about the cash, the Supreme Court-appointed committee indicted him after speaking to a number of witnesses and recording his statement.

The apex court has since transferred him to his parent high court, the Allahabad High Court, where he has not been assigned any judicial work.

Supreme Court judge V Ramaswami and Calcutta HC judge Soumitra Sen had earlier faced impeachment proceedings but they resigned.

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

Congress targets PM over Manipur violence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

With fresh violence rocking parts of Manipur, the Congress on Sunday targeted Prime Minister Narendra Modi for his "insensitivity" to the suffering of people in the state.

In a social media post, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the pain, distress, and agony of the people of Manipur continues unabated as five districts of Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, Kaching, and Bishnupur in Manipur have been rocked by violence in the last 24 hours.

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

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

Hitting out at the Government, Ramesh claimed that in February 2022 the BJP "engineered a majority for itself alone" in the Assembly elections.

"But less than fifteen months later from the night of May 3, 2023 Manipur was made to burn. Hundreds of innocent men, women, and children were killed. Thousands were displaced. Places of worship were destroyed," he said.

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



Charred remains of a bus used for transporting central forces, which was set on fire by a mob in Imphal East district, Manipur

PTI

2025, he noted. On August 1, 2023, Ramesh said the Supreme Court observed that there had been an "absolute breakdown of constitutional machinery" in the state for the past two months.

"The Union Home Minister went through the motions of visiting Manipur while the PM maintained absolute silence refusing to say anything and meet anybody from the state.

"Demands were made by the Indian National Congress for the imposition of President's Rule to begin with. That was ignored till the INC announced that it was bringing a no-confidence motion against the CM in the Assembly session beginning February 10, 2025. The BJP read the writing on the wall, got the CM to resign on the night of February 9, 2025 and finally imposed President's Rule on February 13, 2025," he said.

"President's Rule, however, has made no

difference," Ramesh said.

He claimed the Governor himself has been forced to travel from Imphal airport to his residence by helicopter. Law and order in many parts of the state remains in a state of peril, he added.

"When will the PM find the time and inclination to visit Manipur? His drum-beaters once claimed that he had stopped the war between Ukraine and Russia for a while. That claim, like most of his boasts, proved completely bogus.

"The PM has travelled to different parts of the world and visited numerous states of our country to do his trademark inaugurations. But he has never met with political leaders or civil society organisations from Manipur having outsourced the management of the state's affairs to the Union Home Minister who has failed miserably," the Congress general secretary alleged.

Canadian journalist alleges assault by pro-Khalistan activists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Canadian independent investigative journalist has alleged that he was physically assaulted and threatened by a group of pro-Khalistan activists while reporting on a rally in Vancouver on Sunday. The journalist, Mocha Bezirgan, said he was targeted for his editorial independence and previous coverage of Khalistan-related protests.

The incident occurred while Bezirgan was in the city to cover a rally organised by pro-Khalistan supporters. He alleged that the attackers acted like "thugs" and deliberately targeted him.

"It just happened 2 hours ago and I am still shaking. I was surrounded by multiple Khalistanis who acted like thugs. They surrounded me, threatened me, and got physical with me, and they grabbed my

phone out of my hand," Bezirgan said, sharing the ordeal on social media.

The incident occurred while Bezirgan was in the city to cover a rally organised by pro-Khalistan supporters. He alleged that the attackers acted like "thugs" and deliberately targeted him

The journalist alleged that he was attacked by an individual who had been harassing him for a "long time online using dehumanising language".

"I have been covering Khalistan protests in Canada, UK, US, New Zealand. My only goal is to do independent journalism and record and report what's going on and

because I'm editorially independent, this frustrates some people," Bezirgan added. He further alleged that the pro-Khalistani groups want to "influence" and "buy" him.

"These intimidation tactics won't stop me or influence my editorial independence," Bezirgan asserted, sharing a video of the alleged incident, which shows a man confronting the journalist.

"He refused to keep his distance from my face and began making threats of violence if I were to touch him. I kept walking away from him but his harassing behaviour wouldn't stop... He continued following me around, mobilising others to interfere with my job, and kept appearing behind me despite being told to stay away from me," Bezirgan explained.

He said the alleged attacker had targeted him earlier as well, and that he had filed a police report at the time. He added that

he has filed another report today.

Sunday's incident comes amid a string of attacks on reporters covering the separatist movement. In October 2024, Canadian MP Chandra Arya warned Parliament of "growing violence faced by journalists who report on Khalistani extremism," citing assaults on broadcasters Rishi Nagar, Sameer Kaushal and others, and noting that Bezirgan himself had received death threats.

India has repeatedly raised concerns over Canada allegedly giving a free hand to Khalistani extremists and their supporters.

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

Active COVID-19 cases in India cross 6,000-mark

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India's active COVID-19 case tally crossed the 6,000 mark with 769 new infections being reported in the last 48 hours, according to the Union health ministry data released on Sunday.

Kerala continues to be the most affected state, followed by Gujarat, West Bengal and Delhi, according to the ministry. Due to the rising COVID-19 cases, the Centre is conducting mock drills to check facility-level preparedness and has instructed all states to ensure availability of oxygen, isolation beds, ventilators, and essential medicines, official sources had said.

There are 6,133 active Covid cases in India, and six more deaths have been

reported in the last 24 hours, the ministry said. Official sources have maintained that most cases are mild and managed under home care. Since January this year, 65 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 June 3 under the chairpersonship of Dr Sunita Sharma, Director General of Health Services, to evaluate the Covid situation and preparedness measures. Official sources on June 4 said State and district surveillance units under the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme are closely monitoring Influenza-Like Illness (ILI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Illness (SARI).

Jaishankar embarks on week-long visit to Europe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Sunday embarked on a week-long visit to Europe to hold talks with leaders of France, the European Union and Belgium to boost bilateral ties and reaffirm India's policy of zero-tolerance against terrorism.

Jaishankar's visit to Europe comes a month after India launched Operation Sindoor in response to the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack and it is expected that he will apprise the European leaders about New Delhi's firm approach in dealing with cross-border terrorism.

In the first leg of his tour, Jaishankar will visit France, a country that has emerged as an all-weather friend of New Delhi. "The external affairs minister would travel to Paris and Marseille where he would be holding bilateral discussions with his counterpart minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean Noel Barrot," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said.

Jaishankar would also participate in the inaugural edition of the Mediterranean

Raisina Dialogue to be held in the city of Marseille.

In Brussels, Jaishankar will hold a strategic dialogue with the EU High Representative and Vice President Kaja Kallas. "India-European Union strategic partnership has strengthened over the years across diverse sectors and got a big boost with the first-ever visit of the EU College of Commissioners to India in February this year," the MEA said.

Jaishankar will engage also with the senior leadership from the European Commission and the European Parliament, besides interacting with think tank and media.

In the third and final leg of his visit, the external affairs minister will hold wide-ranging talks with leaders of Belgium. "India and Belgium share warm and friendly relations along with a very robust economic partnership. Today, the collaboration between the two countries spans various domains like trade and investment, green energy, technology, pharmaceutical, diamond sector and strong people-to-people ties," the MEA said.

Shubhanshu Shukla terms preparations for Axiom-4 mission as 'amazing journey'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Ahead of his historic journey to the International Space Station (ISS), Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla has termed the preparations for the Axiom-4 mission as an "amazing journey" and that he was extremely fortunate to be part of something that is "much larger than yourself".

The 39-year-old Indian Air Force pilot is all set to travel with three other crew members to the ISS onboard SpaceX's Dragon spacecraft, mounted on a Falcon 9 rocket, that will lift off from the Kennedy Space Centre in Florida on Tuesday at 5:52 pm IST.

Shukla, who goes by the nickname "Shux", will be the second Indian to travel to space, 41 years after his idol Rakesh Sharma undertook a spaceflight in 1984 onboard erstwhile Soviet Union's Soyuz spacecraft for an eight-day stay in orbit.

"It has been an amazing journey; these are the moments that really tell you that you are getting to be a part of something that is much larger than yourself. I can

only say how extremely fortunate I am to be a part of this," Lucknow-born Shukla said in a short video issued by Axiom Space ahead of Tuesday's launch.

Shukla's crewmates, commander Peggy Whitson and mission specialists Tibor Kapu from Hungary and Sławosz Uznanski-Wisniewski from Poland, describe him as "operational-savvy", "focused" and "wicked smart" when it comes to space technologies.

It has been an amazing journey; these are the moments that really tell you that you are getting to be a part of something that is much larger than yourself

— SHUBHANSHU SHUKLA, ASTRONAUT

"Shux's wisdom, the knowledge he possesses, shows he could be 130 years old," said Kapu, the second Hungarian astronaut to travel to space since 1980.

"For me, having him as my pilot in the dragon capsule is great. He is already

operational-savvy, and he is just wicked smart when it comes to spacecraft technologies," said Whitson, a veteran US astronaut who has spent 675 days in space and undertaken 10 spacewalks.

Sławosz said Shukla is very focussed in his approach and quick to respond to situations.

"He is very focussed. He will go one, two, three, four in record time. I don't even know how he gets there so fast," the Polish astronaut said.

Shukla heaped high praise on his crewmates, describing them as a "fantastic" squad, saying they would be his "friends for life".

SpaceX's Falcon-9 rocket and the Dragon space capsule were rolled out to the launchpad 39A at the KSC in Florida on Saturday. The Axiom-4 (or Ax-4) crew checked on the spacecraft they will travel in to the ISS.

"Launch is targeted for 8:22 am ET, with a backup opportunity available on Wednesday, June 11 at 8:00 am ET," SpaceX announced in an update about the mission.

ICG inaugurates dedicated jetty at Vizhinjam Harbour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Indian Coast Guard (ICG) Director General (DG) Paramesh Sivamani, inaugurated a new dedicated ICG jetty at Vizhinjam Harbour, Kerala on Saturday, defence ministry said here on Sunday. The 76.7-metre state-of-the-art berth will support faster deployment and turnaround of ICG vessels, enhancing mission readiness for coastal surveillance, search and rescue, anti-smuggling and fisheries protection.

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

Editor's
TAKE

A political bromance turned bitter feud

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

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

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

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

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

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

Maithili cuisine: A one of its kind

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

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

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

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



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



ANIL RAJPUT

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

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

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

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

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

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

Understanding Karma, and divine control through Gita

SECOND Opinion

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

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

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

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



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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

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

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

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



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

Letters to the Editor

Indian workers face harrassment

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

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

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

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

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

JUBEL D'CRUZ | MUMBAI

Donald Trump Elon Musk part ways

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

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

DATTAPRASAD SHIRODKAR | MUMBAI

Water ATM's in Delhi

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

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

TT SAKARIA | DELHI

INCREASING WORKING HOURS IS COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE

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

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

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

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

AG RAJMOHAN | JANANTPUR

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

How climate change is pushing agriculture to the brink

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

FIRST
Column

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

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

With monsoon rains becoming less reliable, farmers are increasingly turning to groundwater to keep their crops alive. Borewells and tube wells have become essential lifelines during prolonged dry spells. However, this fallback is fast becoming a crisis of its own. Unregulated and widespread extraction of groundwater is rapidly depleting aquifers, especially in regions already under significant water stress. According to the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB), over 1,000 of the 6,607 assessed groundwater blocks across the country have been classified as “overexploited.” The situation is particularly severe in the northwestern, western, and southern peninsular regions of the country.

In states like Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, decades of intensive agriculture — especially the cultivation of water-intensive crops such as wheat and paddy — have severely strained groundwater reserves. According to CGWB 2023 data, 87 per cent of Punjab's 153 assessed blocks are classified as overexploited, critical, or semi-critical, leaving only 13 per cent in the ‘safe’ category. Haryana fares no better, with more than 75.5 per cent of its groundwater blocks deemed unsafe for continued extraction. This unsustainable pattern of groundwater use is driven by a mix of poorly designed policy incentives, unreliable surface water availability, and weak regulatory oversight. Subsidies for electricity used in groundwater pumping and procurement policies that favour water-guzzling crops have inadvertently encouraged overuse.

The growing water crisis in India is made even



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

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

6
THE INCREASING SOIL SALINITY IS DRIVING DOWN AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIVITY AND ESCALATING RECLAMATION COSTS — OFTEN TOO EXPENSIVE FOR SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS. MANY ARE FORCED TO ABANDON FARMING OR SHIFT TO ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS LIKE SHRIMP AQUACULTURE, WHICH CAN FURTHER EXACERBATE SALINITY PROBLEMS



BKP
SINHA



ARVIND
KUMAR JHA

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

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

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



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

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



ARCHANA
DATTA

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

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

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

From discipline to display: The silent erosion of traditional Yoga

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

principles with yogic postures.

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

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

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

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

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



SHARMILA
DAS

Trump deploys California National Guard to quell protests

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Paramount (US)

President Donald Trump is deploying 2,000 California National Guard troops to Los Angeles over the objections of Governor Gavin Newsom after a second day of clashes between hundreds of protesters and federal immigration authorities in riot gear. Confrontations broke out on Saturday near a Home Depot in the heavily Latino city of Paramount, south of Los Angeles, where federal agents were staging at a Department of Homeland Security office nearby. Agents unleashed tear gas, flash-bang explosives and pepper balls, and protesters hurled rocks and cement at Border Patrol vehicles. Smoke wafted from small piles of burning refuse in the streets. Tensions were high after a series of sweeps by immigration authorities the previous day, including in LA's fashion district and at a Home Depot, as the week-long tally of immigrant arrests in the city climbed past 100. A prominent union leader was arrested while protesting and accused of impeding law enforcement. The White House announced that

Trump would deploy the Guard to "address the lawlessness that has been allowed to fester". It wasn't clear when the troops would arrive. Newsom, a Democrat, said in a post on the social platform X that it was "purposefully inflammatory and will only escalate tensions". He later said the federal government wants a spectacle and urged people not to give them one by becoming violent. In a signal of the administration's aggressive approach, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth threatened to deploy the US military. "If violence continues, active-duty Marines at Camp Pendleton will also be mobilised — they are on high alert," Hegseth said on X. Trump's order came after clashes in Paramount and neighbouring Compton, where a car was set on fire. Protests continued into the evening in Paramount, with several hundred demonstrators gathered near a doughnut shop, and authorities holding up barbed wire to keep the crowd back. Crowds also gathered again outside federal buildings in downtown Los Angeles, including a detention centre, where local police declared an unlawful



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

ed a procession of Border Patrol vans as they departed and careened down a boulevard. US Attorney Bill Essayli said federal agents made more arrests of people with deportation orders on Saturday, but none at the Home Depot. The Department of Homeland Security

has a building next door and agents were staging there as they prepared to carry out operations, he said on Fox11 Los Angeles. He didn't say how many people were arrested Saturday or where. Paramount Mayor Peggy Lemons told multiple news outlets that community members showed up in response because people are fearful about activity by immigration agents. "When you handle things the way that this appears to be handled, it's not a surprise that chaos would follow," Lemons said. Some demonstrators jeered at officers while recording the events on smartphones. "ICE out of Paramount. We see you for what you are," a woman said through a megaphone. "You are not welcome here." More than a dozen people were arrested and accused of impeding immigration agents, Essayli posted on X, including the names and mug shots of some of those arrested. He didn't say where they were protesting. Trump federalised part of California's National Guard under what is known as Title 10 authority, which places him, not the governor, atop the chain of

command, according to Newsom's office. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said in a statement that the work the immigration authorities were doing when met with protests is "essential to halting and reversing the invasion of illegal criminals into the United States. In the wake of this violence, California's feckless Democrat leaders have completely abdicated their responsibility to protect their citizens". The president's move came shortly after he issued a threat on his social media network saying that if Newsom and Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass did not "do their jobs" then "the Federal Government will step in and solve the problem, RIOTS and LOOTERS, the way it should be solved!!!!" Trump signed the order shortly before he went to attend a UFC fight in New Jersey, where he sat ringside with boxer Mike Tyson. Newsom said in his statement that local authorities "are able to access law enforcement assistance at a moment's notice", and "there is currently no unmet need". The California Highway Patrol said Newsom directed it to deploy additional officers to "maintain public safety".

FBI Director warns protesters against hitting cops

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

FBI Director Kash Patel has warned protesters facing off with US immigration authorities in Los Angeles that anyone who hits a policeman will be "going to jail". Immigration authorities and demonstrators have clashed for two days in the Los Angeles area, with unrest beginning Friday after dozens of people were detained by federal immigration agents across different locations. The arrests come amid the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration, which has involved waves of raids and deportations across the country. The Department of Homeland Security said in a statement that "1,000 rioters surrounded a federal law enforcement building and assaulted Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, slashed tyres, and defaced buildings." "Hit a cop, you're going to jail... doesn't matter where you came from, how you got here, or what movement speaks to you. If the local police force won't back our men and women on the thin blue line, we @FBI will," Patel posted on X on Saturday night.

Patel's remarks, however, prompted some social media users to point out the different stance taken by the Trump administration on the January 6 rioters — hundreds of whom were pardoned by President Donald Trump. "Unless you're doing it for (Donald) Trump," one user responded to Patel's comment, with another adding, "Unless you are trying to overturn an election." During the violent insurrection at the US Capitol in 2021, more than 140 police officers were injured. Meanwhile, President Donald Trump signed a Presidential Memorandum deploying 2,000 National Guardsmen to Paramount, a city in Los Angeles County, after the protests on Friday. Trump criticised the city's Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom and Mayor Karen Bass in a post on his Truth Social platform, calling them "incompetent". He also said protesters would no longer be allowed to wear masks. Officials from the Trump administration described protesters as "lawless rioters." US Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem said protesters would not slow ICE agents down and cautioned rioters. "If you lay a hand on a law enforcement officer, you will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law," Noem wrote in an X post. FBI Deputy Director Dan Bongino said the agency is seeking information regarding the identity of those throwing rocks at vehicles conducting critical law enforcement operations.

New disputes ahead of US-China trade talks

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Beijing

US-China trade talks in London this week are expected to take up a series of fresh disputes that have buffeted relations, threatening a fragile truce over tariffs. Both sides agreed in Geneva last month to a 90-day suspension of most of the 100per cent-plus tariffs they had imposed on each other in an escalating trade war that had sparked fears of recession. Since then, the US and China have exchanged angry words over advanced semiconductors that power artificial intelligence, "rare earths" that are vital to car-makers and other industries, and visas for Chinese students at American universities. President Donald Trump spoke at length with Chinese leader Xi Jinping by phone last Thursday in an attempt to put relations back on track. Trump announced on social media the next day that trade talks would be held on Monday in London. The latest frictions began just a day after the May 12 announcement of the Geneva agreement to "pause" tariffs for 90 days. The US Commerce Department issued guidance saying the use of Ascend AI chips from Huawei, a leading Chinese tech company, could violate US export controls. That's because the chips were likely developed with American technology despite restrictions on its export to China, the guidance said.



Pictured before the previous round of talks are (from left) US trade representative Jamieson Greer, US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, China's Vice-Premier He Lifeng and Chinese international trade representative Li Chenggang, in Geneva on May 10. The Chinese government wasn't pleased. One of its biggest beefs in recent years has been over US moves to limit the access of Chinese companies to technology, and in particular to equipment and processes needed to produce the most advanced semiconductors. "The Chinese side urges the US side to immediately correct its erroneous practices," a Commerce Ministry spokesperson said. US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick wasn't in Geneva but will join the

talks in London. Analysts say that suggests at least a willingness on the US side to hear out China's concerns on export controls. One area where China holds the upper hand is in the mining and processing of rare earths. They are crucial for not only autos but also a range of other products from robots to military equipment. The Chinese government started requiring producers to obtain a license to export seven rare earth elements in April. Resulting shortages sent automakers worldwide into a tizzy.

Russia accuses Ukraine of delaying exchange of dead

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Moscow

Russian officials said on Sunday that Moscow is still awaiting official confirmation from Kyiv that a planned exchange of 6,000 bodies of soldiers killed in action will take place, reiterating allegations that Ukraine had postponed the swap. Russian state media quoted Lt. Gen. Alexander Zorin, a representative of the Russian negotiating group, as saying that Russia delivered the first batch of 1,212 bodies of Ukrainian Armed Forces soldiers to the exchange site at the border and is waiting for confirmation from the Ukrainian side, but that there are "signals" that the process of transferring the bodies will be postponed until next week. Russia and Ukraine each accused the other on Saturday of endangering plans to swap 6,000 bodies of soldiers killed in action, which was agreed upon during direct talks in Istanbul on Monday that otherwise made no progress toward ending the war. Vladimir Medinsky, a Putin aide who led the Russian delegation, said that Kyiv called a last-minute halt to an imminent swap. In a Telegram post on Saturday, Medinsky said that refrigerated trucks carrying more than 1,200 bodies of Ukrainian troops from Russia had already

reached the agreed exchange site at the border when the news came. In response, Ukraine said Russia was playing "dirty games" and manipulating facts. According to the main Ukrainian authority dealing with such swaps, no date had been set for repatriating the bodies. In a statement on Saturday, the agency also accused Russia of submitting lists of prisoners of war for repatriation that didn't correspond to agreements reached on Monday. It wasn't immediately possible to reconcile the conflicting claims. In other developments, one person was killed and another seriously wounded in Russian aerial strikes on the eastern Ukrainian Kharkiv region. These strikes came after Russian attacks targeted the regional capital, also called Kharkiv, on Saturday. Regional police in Kharkiv said on Sunday that the death toll from Saturday's attacks had increased to six people. More than two dozen others were wounded. Russia fired a total of 49 exploding drones and decoys and three missiles overnight, Ukraine's air force said Sunday. Forty drones were shot down or electronically jammed. Meanwhile, Russia's defence ministry said that its forces shot down 61 Ukrainian drones overnight, including near the capital.

Indian-Americans win runoff races in Texas' city councils

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Houston

Two Indian-American candidates have won their respective city council runoff elections in Texas. Sanjay Singhal, a retired energy executive and IIT Delhi graduate, secured a decisive victory over fellow Indian-American Nasir Hussain in Sugar Land's District 2. According to unofficial results from Fort Bend County, Singhal received 2,346 votes against Hussain's 777. Sukh Kaur, a Sikh-American and education reformer, scored a landslide victory in San Antonio to retain her District 1 council seat. Kaur, a nonprofit leader who lives in San Antonio with her husband and two children, defeated challenger Patty Gibbons with 65 per cent of the votes. "This victory belongs to the residents of District 2," Singhal told supporters. "I am deeply grateful for the community's support and ready to serve with transparency and dedication," said Singhal, who campaigned on transparent governance, infrastructure improvements, and community engagement. Kaur, the first Sikh woman elected to the San Antonio City Council, focused her campaign on affordable housing, public transit expansion, and inclusive urban development. "I think we really talked to the community and shared that we want

Sukh Kaur, a Sikh-American and education reformer, scored a landslide in San Antonio to retain her District 1 council seat. Kaur is a nonprofit leader

to work," Kaur told the media after the results. "And one of the things that we said is District 1 is about preserving our history while still moving our district forward," she said. Both candidates are expected to solidify Indian-American representation in Texas's civic leadership. In a closely watched mayoral contest in Sugar Land, a Houston suburb with a large Indian-origin population, Carol McCutcheon defeated William Ferguson to become the city's new mayor. She will succeed Joe Zimmerman. McCutcheon secured 6,103 votes, while Ferguson received 5,402, according to unofficial tallies. McCutcheon, a retired reservoir engineer with decades of public service experience, said she entered the race to help guide Sugar Land's growth with "strategic vision." Her priorities include improving crime response, supporting law enforcement, and ensuring quality of life for residents.

Italians vote on citizenship, job protections amid low awareness, turnout concerns

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Rome

Italians vote over two days starting Sunday on referendums that would make it easier for children born in Italy to foreigners to obtain citizenship, and on providing more job protections. But apparent low public awareness risks rendering the vote invalid if turnout is not high enough. Campaigners for the change in the citizenship law say it will help second-generation Italians born in the country to non-European Union parents better integrate into a culture they already see as theirs. Italian singer Ghali, who was born in Milan to Tunisian parents, urged people to vote in an online post, noting that the referendum risks failure if at least 50per cent plus one of eligible voters don't turn out. "I was born here, I always lived here, but I only received citizenship at the age of 18," Ghali said, urging a yes vote to reduce the residency requirement from 10 to five years. The new rules, if passed, could affect about 2.5 million foreign nationals who still struggle to be recognised as citizens. The measures were proposed by Italy's main union and left-wing opposition parties. Premier Giorgia Meloni has said she would show up at the polls but not cast a ballot — an action widely criticised by the left as antidemocratic, since it will not help



Banners in favour of five abrogative popular referendums on employment and Italian citizenship

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

and freedom of movement within the EU. "The real drama is that neither people who will vote yes' nor those who intend to vote no' or abstain have an idea of what (an) ordeal children born from foreigners have to face in this country to obtain a residence permit," said Selam Tesfaye, an activist and campaigner with the Milan-based human rights group "Il Cantiere." "Foreigners are also victims of blackmail, as they can't speak up against poor working conditions, exploitation and discrimination, due to the precariousness of the permit of stay," she added.

Trump officials vowing to end school desegregation orders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ferriday (US)

Even at a glance, the differences are obvious. The walls of Ferriday High School are old and worn, surrounded by barbed wire. Just a few miles away, Vidalia High School is clean and bright, with a new library and a crisp blue "V" painted on orange brick. Ferriday High is 90 per cent Black. Vidalia High is 62 per cent white. For Black families, the contrast between the schools suggests "we're not supposed to have the finer things," said Brian Davis, a father in Ferriday. "It's almost like our kids don't deserve it," he said. The schools are part of Concordia Parish, which was ordered to desegregate 60 years ago and remains under a court-ordered plan to this day. Yet there's growing momentum to release the district — and dozens of others — from decades-old orders that some call obsolete. In a remarkable reversal, the Justice Department said it plans to start unwinding court-ordered desegregation plans dating to the Civil Rights Movement. Officials



started in April, when they lifted a 1960s order in Louisiana's Plaquemines Parish. Harmeet Dhillon, who leads the department's civil rights division, has said others will "bite the dust." It comes amid pressure from Republican Gov Jeff Landry and his attorney general,

who have called for all the state's remaining orders to be lifted. They describe the orders as burdens on districts and relics of a time when Black students were still forbidden from some schools. The orders were always meant to be temporary — school systems can be released if

they demonstrate they fully eradicated segregation. Decades later, that goal remains elusive, with stark racial imbalances persisting in many districts. Civil rights groups say the orders are important to keep as tools to address the legacy of forced segregation — including disparities in student discipline, academic programs and teacher hiring. They point to cases like Concordia, where the decades-old order was used to stop a charter school from favouring white students in admissions. "Concordia is one where it's old, but a lot is happening there," said Deuel Ross, deputy director of litigation for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. "That's true for a lot of these cases. They're not just sitting silently." Last year, before President Donald Trump took office, Concordia Parish rejected a Justice Department plan that would have ended its case if the district combined several majority white and majority Black elementary and middle schools. At a town hall meeting, Vidalia residents vigorously opposed the plan, saying it would disrupt students' lives and expose their children to drugs and violence.

Demonstrators march to call for an end to the war in Gaza

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Rome

Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched through the streets of Rome on Saturday against the war in Gaza in a protest called by Italy's main opposition parties, who accuse the right-wing Government of being too silent. Protesters held a banner reading "Stop the massacre, stop complicity!" at the start of the march, which moved peacefully through the centre of Rome amid a massive display of rainbow, Palestinian and political party flags. The protest attracted a diverse crowd from across the country, including many families with children. According to organisers, up to 300,000 people participated in the rally organised by the leftist opposition to ask the government for a clear position on the conflict in Gaza. "This is an enormous popular response to say enough to the massacre of Palestinians and the crimes of (Israeli leader Benjamin) Netanyahu's govern-

ment," the leader of Italy's centre-left Democratic Party, Elly Schlein, told reporters at the march. "There is another Italy that doesn't remain silent as the Meloni government does," she said, referring to Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. Meloni was recently pushed by the opposition to publicly condemn Netanyahu's offensive in Gaza, but many observers considered her criticism too timid. "(The Italian Government) is not reacting despite an abnormal massacre, despite an absolutely cruel and inappropriate reaction. The (Italian) government remains silent," said Nadin Unali, a Tunisian demonstrator at the march. Earlier this week, the Italian premier urged Israel to immediately halt its military campaign in Gaza, saying its attacks had grown disproportionately and should be brought to an end to protect civilians. Israel faces mounting international criticism for its offensive and pressure to let aid into Gaza during a humanitarian crisis.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

said.

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

According to TRAI, the rating manual will enable adoption of uniform assessment methodology by the Digital Connectivity Rating Agencies for rating of properties.

It will also provide a standard reference for the property managers for creation of digital connectivity infrastructure (DCI) in their properties. Buildings shall be evaluated based on defined parameters in the regulation — fiber readiness, mobile network availability, in-building solutions, and wi-fi infrastructure, service performance among others. The regulator had also submitted its recommendations to the government on 'Rating of Buildings or Areas for Digital Connectivity' in February 2023, with an aim to create an ecosystem for building of DCI as a part of any development activity. TRAI has also released the regulation Rating of Properties for Digital Connectivity Regulations, 2024 in October last year to bring a framework for rating of properties for digital connectivity. The idea is to promote creation of good digital connectivity through a collaborative and self-sustainable approach.

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

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

Auto sector seeks Government help for rare earth imports

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Odisha now an industrial powerhouse: CM Mohan Charan Majhi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bhubaneswar

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

India poised to benefit from FTAs, says RAI CEO

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Singapore

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST POF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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



establishing his direct involvement," the Trust had alleged.

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

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

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

been taken by the bank over two decades and at every stage Prashant Mehta and his other family members have launched numerous vexatious legal actions," the statement said. Having consistently failed at all levels including the Supreme Court, they have now resorted to the recent mala fide personal attacks on the bank's MD & CEO with the sole objective of intimidating and bullying the bank from carrying out the mandate of recovering all outstanding loans in every possible manner permissible under law, it added.

Additionally, the Trust has sought a bar on Jagdishan from holding office in any SEBI-regulated entity while investigations are ongoing.

The Trust also alleged that the offer of ₹1.5 crore disguised as CSR funds to hospital staff shows the intent to destroy evidence and obstruct justice.

Despite judicial findings and multiple complaints, HDFC Bank failed to act, violating Section 166 of the Companies Act and SEBI Governance mandates, the Trust alleged.

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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



Choose Happiness

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



CELEBRATE YOUR SMALL WINS

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

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

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

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

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



Shankar, Associate Consultant, Psychiatry at Aakash Healthcare.

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

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

And in today's world, a cheerful face might just be the best medicine of all.



DUMMY SUBHEAD DUMMY SUBHEAD

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

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

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

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

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

LIMIT NEGATIVITY

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



ENGAGE IN CREATIVE EXPRESSION

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

Sleep Habits Impact Brain Ageing

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

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

Chronotype Matter More

The lead author of the study — Ana Wenzler explained that one's chronotype — the natural inclination toward a particular sleep-wake cycle — plays a crucial role in brain health.

"Are you an early bird or a night owl? It's hard to adjust what your biological clock — your so-called chronotype — is, but you can adjust your life to it as best you can," Ana Wenzler noted. Unhealthy behaviour like smoking, drinking and unhealthy eating happens more often in the evening.



Harmful Habits of Late Sleepers

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

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

Crucial Role of Sleep Quality

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

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

Can You Change Your Chronotype?

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

HOW COGNITIVE DECLINE SHOWS UP

Symptoms of cognitive decline commonly seen include:

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

ADJUSTING TO YOUR BODY CLOCK

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



TRIVIA



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

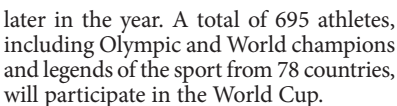
FIT FACT



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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Munich

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



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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Barcelona

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Amstelveen

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



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

draw. We want to push ourselves as hard as we can, especially against a team like the Netherlands," India head coach Craig Fulton said after Saturday's match.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Tenerife (Spain)

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

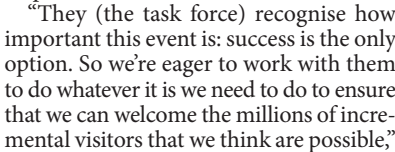


Walsh had an abysmal third round and she shot five-over 77 to stumble down the order.

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New York

At the same time, the tournament is being played amid reports of foreign tourists being detained and visa processing delays. Chaotic US Immigration and Customs Enforcement activities and

Association President Geoff Freeman said, for example, that the wait in Colombia for a visa interview appointment is



“We want it to be a success. It’s a priority for the president,” said Rubio. But the Trump administration may have

Danny Navarro, who offers travel advice to followers on his social media platforms under the moniker TravelFutbolFan, said the World Cup Task Force announcement

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