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NCPI, new home for TMC rebels, in the dark: 'Don't know who party chief is'

Atri Mitra
Kolkata, June 15

FORTUNE FAVOURS the bold; sometimes it helps being just the opposite. Just ask the Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI), which is now the largest party in West Bengal in terms of the number of MPs— if, that is, you can figure out who is speaking for it.

With 20 rebel MPs of the TMC joining it Sunday to possibly dodge disqualification, »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN LNG TANKER CROSSES HORMUZ; OIL PRICES FALL, STOCKS ADVANCE

US and Iran reach deal to end war, reopen Hormuz

Trump says 'deal's all signed'; Israel PM says won't let Iran have nukes



A man flashes a victory sign after the deal, in Beirut, Monday. REUTERS

PM welcomes move, says ensure freedom of navigation, commerce

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, June 15

Parisa Hafezi, Maya Gebeily & Steve Holland
Dubai, Beirut, Evian (France), June 15

US PRESIDENT Donald Trump said on Monday a Memorandum of Understanding aiming to end the war in the Gulf has already been signed by the United States and Iran, drawing calls from his opponents to »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Energy worries far from over, India keeps fingers crossed

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, June 15

around \$83 per barrel by evening.

This is the closest the two countries have come to a deal since the West Asia war began in late February, raising hopes of a pick-up in »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

UNDERLINING THE "serious economic disruption across the world" and "loss of life in many countries" caused by the war, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday welcomed the "understanding" reached between Iran and the United States.

Later in the day, an Indian Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) carrier, operated and managed by the State-owned Shipping Corporation of India, crossed »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Sky-rocketing net worth!



Imphal: Protests outside hospital over admission of injured Kuki-Zo men

Sukrita Baruah & Jimmy Leivon
Guwahati, Imphal, June 15

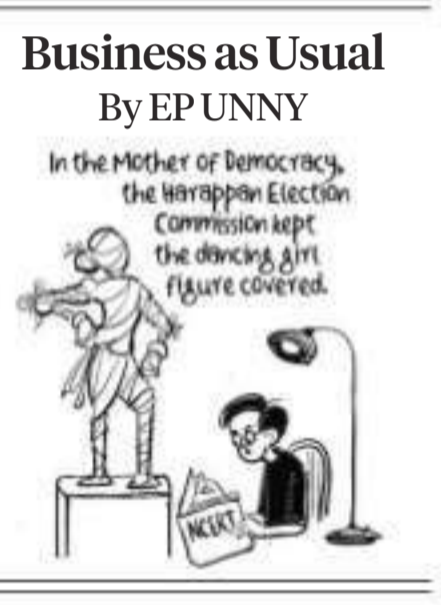
TENSIONS ESCALATED in Imphal on Monday as scores of people surrounded Manipur's premier healthcare institute, the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS), protesting the admission of three Kuki-Zo men who were brought in with bullet injuries following an »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

NCERT to restore original image of 'Dancing Girl'

After Express report on covered image in textbook

Ritika Chopra
Mumbai, June 15

HOURS AFTER *The Indian Express* reported that the iconic "Dancing Girl" of Mohenjodaro had been covered up in the »CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



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[FROM PAGE 1 | FULL REPORTS ON WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM]



Turning the Wheel

Kerala CM VD Satheesan and Transport Minister CP John with KSTRC's first PSC-recruited woman driver at the launch of 'Priyadarshini', free bus ride scheme for women, in Thiruvananthapuram on Monday. PTI

Ram Mandir funds row: SIT begins probe as political storm intensifies

Chairman: There will be no laxity in investigation

Maulshree Seth
Lucknow, June 15

A SPECIAL Investigation Team (SIT) has begun its probe into allegations of misappropriation of donations and valuables at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, as the controversy snowballed into a major political issue with opposition parties, religious leaders and temple saints demanding a thorough investigation.

Speaking in Ayodhya, Nripendra Mishra, chairman of Ram Temple Construction Committee, said Monday there will be no any laxity in the probe.

He added, "The speed with which the state government has taken a decision is commendable... The SIT team requested a meeting with the Chief Minister for guidance and blessings today. Immediately thereafter, they came here and started their work. Whatever cooperation the SIT seeks, the district administration will provide. I spoke to the district administration yesterday and they have also assured full cooperation."

The SIT was constituted by the government after allegations surfaced regarding irregularities in the handling of donations and valuables offered at the Ram Temple. Authorities have not yet made any findings public and the probe is at a preliminary stage.

It is headed by Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Vijay Vishwas Pant with Inspector General of Police (IGP) Kiran S and Special Secretary (Finance

Department) Neel Ratan as members. The committee was directed to submit a preliminary report in seven days and a final report within 15 days, officials said.

Opposition attack continues

The Samajwadi Party continued to mount a sustained attack on the BJP and the temple management, posting daily statements on social media and alleging large-scale irregularities. In one such post Monday, the party alleged that gold, silver and diamond ornaments donated to the temple had allegedly been replaced with fake items and alleged thefts worth crores of rupees.

Congress leaders joined calls for an impartial inquiry into the allegations.

Uttar Pradesh Youth Congress leader Sharad Shukla also put up posters and hoardings across Ayodhya carrying verses from the Skanda Purana and warning against misappropriation of temple offerings. The posters were later removed by municipal authorities.

The issue has also drawn reactions from prominent religious figures. Shankaracharya Swami Sadanand Saraswati Maharaj said the temple management should function with religious accountability and suggested that donations received by temples should be utilised for social and religious welfare activities such as gausshalas, pathshalas and gurukuls.

Earlier, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust had rejected the allegations. Trust general secretary Champat Rai had stated that no significant irregularity had been detected in the internal audits.

Plea says Punjab failed to implement RTE Act; SC notice to Centre, state

Express News Service
New Delhi, June 15

THE SUPREME Court on Monday sought the response of the Centre and Punjab government to a plea which said the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act) is yet to be "substantially implemented" in the state despite the law being passed over a decade and a half ago.

A bench of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant and Justice A Mohana issued notice to the two on a plea by former bureaucrat Jagmohan Singh Raju on behalf of KS Raju Legal Trust.

The court also asked Raju, who appeared in person to find out the status of implementation of the RTE Act, to back up his contention. "We are issuing notice. Meanwhile, just do this. That will help us in understanding the issue," the CJ said.

Raju's plea said despite attempts to seek judicial remedies, including contempt proceedings and representation to the Centre "the state has failed to implement the mandate of Section 12(1)(c) of the RTE Act, which requires admission of children belonging to weaker sections and disadvantaged groups to the extent of at least 25% at the entry level in private unaided non-minority schools".

It added that "this statutory mandate, enacted to operationalise the fundamental right

under Article 21A, has remained substantially unimplemented in the state since inception" and that "the non-compliance by the state of Punjab is neither recent nor incidental, but has persisted since the inception of the Act".

The CJ asked, "Have you been able to identify some schools which are not implementing this?" Raju said it was not a question of one or two schools, the Act has not been implemented in Punjab at all in the last 15 years.

The CJ pointed out that in the proceedings before the HC, the government had filed an affidavit saying 476 children belonging to EWS were admitted in private-aided schools.

Raju said the rule is that 25% of the total number of students admitted in private schools have to be from the EWS quota. "As per government statistics, almost 2 lakh students are admitted at the entry level in private schools every year; 25% of that comes to 50,000," he said.

"What is the policy in Punjab? Do they compensate the school," the CJ asked. Raju said that is the policy universally.

The CJ told him, "We hope you are not fighting for the private schools" for payment from the government.

Raju said, "In 2009, I was joint secretary in the Government of India and was involved in drafting the RTE Act. I have no interest in the private sector. I left IAS." Raju resigned in 2022.

US, Iran

publish the text.

His statement came after both the US and Iran announced overnight that they had agreed on terms to end their war and reopen the Strait of Hormuz, news that brought relief to markets although the pact may hinge on an end to hostilities in Lebanon and defers talks on Tehran's nuclear programme.

There was no immediate response from Tehran to the report that the agreement had already been signed.

"The deal's all signed. And the strait is already partially opened," Trump said shortly after arriving in Evian, France for a summit of the G7 group of big economies, hailing the agreement to open the Strait of Hormuz, where a three-month blockade of Gulf oil supplies has caused global economic disruption.

An official signing ceremony for the agreement is due to be held on Friday in Geneva, just an hour's drive away from the summit venue in the French Alps.

Asked when the text of the memorandum would be made public, Trump said: "Probably pretty soon. I would say... sometime after Friday... I think sometime in the very near future."

Announcing the deal on his Truth Social platform at around 5:30 pm in Washington on Sunday, Trump wrote: "The Deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran is now complete. Congratulations to all. I hereby fully authorize the toll free opening of the Strait of Hormuz, and simultaneously herewith, authorize the immediate removal of the United States Naval blockade. Ships of the World, start your engines. Let the oil flow!"

His post came shortly after Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, whose country has served as a mediator, announced a deal had been struck.

Addressing a press conference later on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that with or without a deal, Iran will not obtain nuclear weapons. He also said Israel would keep its forces in southern Lebanon and maintain "freedom of action" against Hezbollah attacks.

"We created a security buffer zone there, we will remain there as long as is needed. Iran wanted us to withdraw from it but I stood firm... we are keeping our freedom of action and we are keeping the security zone to protect (Israel's) northern citizens," Netanyahu said, adding that Israeli forces killed four militants there on Monday.

Netanyahu also acknowledged he and Trump sometime

had their differences, saying that they sometimes do not see eye to eye.

In an early reminder of the agreement's fragility, Israel struck a car with a drone in southern Lebanon, where it has been battling the Iran-aligned Hezbollah movement.

Iran has said the deal requires a full cessation of hostilities there. Israel says it retains the right to act militarily.

A US official said Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon was not a condition of the deal. "The deal is a ceasefire, and it will not be a one-way ceasefire, meaning that if Iran is not able to control Hezbollah, and if they attack Israeli positions or Israeli towns, Israel will have the right to defend themselves and respond."

Oil prices tumbled on the prospect of an end to disruption to global energy supplies, and share prices soared, some hitting new records.

According to accounts from both sides, the agreement would reopen the blockaded strait and extend a ceasefire for a 60-day negotiation period, when contentious issues such as the future of Iran's nuclear programme are due to be decided.

While the terms remain unpublished, US officials say economic benefits to Iran foreseen under the deal are contingent on it satisfying US demands never to build a nuclear weapon.

Vance, speaking to CBS News, said the deal could ultimately end with Iran being given access to a reconstruction fund of up to \$300 billion, funded by its Gulf Arab neighbours, provided it fulfills promises to give up nuclear material.

Iranian officials, who have always denied intending to build a nuclear weapon, say they have given up little and have secured Washington's commitment to lift sanctions, release frozen assets and pay damages for the war Trump launched alongside Israel.

Meanwhile, the immediate fate of the pact could hinge on Lebanon

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi said there must be a complete halt to Israeli attacks against Lebanon and wrote on Telegram that the US bears responsibility for implementing the framework deal. Hezbollah welcomed the deal and said the inclusion of Lebanon reflected Iran's commitment to securing a halt to the war and preserving Lebanon's rights.

Privately, Israeli officials' views of the deal have been negative. One senior Israeli official told Reuters on condition of anonymity that the agreement was "terrible for Israel," and that this assessment was shared throughout the government from Netanyahu on down.

Happening today

● **KARNATAKA CONGRESS** will hold its Legislature Party meeting ahead of the June 18 Legislative Council election. It will be held at a resort amid buzz that legislators may be asked to stay there until voting day.

● **A PARLIAMENTARY** Standing

Committee will begin a series of meetings to hear the views of the Ministry of Home Affairs and other concerned bodies and ministries on crime against children.

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NCPI a party in dark



NCPI's registered office in Howrah district's Hatgacha. PARTHA PAUL

the NCPI sported overnight a buzzing Facebook page. It proclaimed its status as "the largest parliamentary bloc from West Bengal", and welcomed each of the new joiners citing their "long-term political experience, grassroots contacts and commitment to people".

However, off social media, it was hard to find anyone among the NCPI office-bearers or workers who could explain how two and two came together to make 20.

Almost hidden behind trees, the two-storey green building in Hatgacha of Howrah district that is the NCPI's registered office is non-descript but for the banners on its walls and the long list of qualifications of its founders painted on its gates. On Monday, police and Central forces arrived to keep a watch.

The premises are deserted, and the doors locked from the inside. One half of the gate talks about its founder Uttiya Kundu, describing him as "Editor of Bengali News Paper, Teacher of Mathematics, ISO Auditor, Health Consultant, RHP (PHPT), Yoga Volunteer (YCB), M.Sc. Math (Alison, Ireland), Diploma in Yoga, Diploma in Land Survey"; the other half describes his wife Shewly Kundu, as "Advocate, High Court, Calcutta, M.Sc (Math), ex-MBA, LLM, Diploma in Math (Alison, Ireland), Diploma in Land Survey, Survey Executive for Enumeration".

A banner hung on the building as well as a graffiti on it says "Jago Biswa", reportedly the name of an NGO run by the Kundus. Another graffiti states "Unorganised Women Workers' Association".

A neighbour, Raghunath Das, says he is as surprised as the rest of the state at NCPI's burst into the spotlight. "We knew the Kundus ran an NGO and brought out a publication. They also regularly distributed clothes among the poor. We thought they had some tie-up with governments or other organisations, or where would they get the funds from?"

Locals say the Kundus moved into the building from Nadia around eight years ago. That the building housed a political party only became known when NCPI put up candidates for the 2023 panchayat elections, Das says. "However, none of them won."

One of those candidates was Mintu Bera, who owns a barber shop about 2 km away, and contested in the panchayat polls at Duihya. Trimming the hair of a customer, Bera says: "Eleven of us were fielded by NCPI, for the Duihya and Jhorhat panchayat polls. All of us lost." Claiming the NCPI was "only helping the TMC", Bera calls himself "a regular BJP worker" now.

Election Commission rec-

ords show the NCPI registered with it in 2022, and is a "registered unrecognised political party" or RUPP. On paper, Shewly is NCPI president, Uttiya its vice-president and Shantanu Dey its organisational general secretary.

Ask Shewly about the TMC rebels' merger with her party and she demurs: "I was the founder-president of the NCPI but I have already resigned from the post. The new president can give the details." But, she adds, "I don't know who the new president is."

On the rapidly changing alliances in Bengal, Shewly adds that for them being with the BJP is not a departure. "We were with the NDA in Tripura." She attributes her "High Court practice" as reason to distance herself from party work.

By Monday evening, Shewly's phone was out of reach. Dey, one of the founder-members of the NCPI, says only Shewly as the party president could talk about the merger of the TMC MPs with the party. "We never had any discussion about it" within the party, he says.

Told that Shewly had "resigned", he says he is only just hearing of it.

However, he welcomes the merger, Dey adds. "It will allow our party to grow and help us work for the country. We support Prime Minister Modi and wish to work as an NDA partner."

Another general secretary of the NCPI, advocate Dilip Roy, says: "We came to know about the merger from social media. We think the deal was reached by Shewly Kundu. Those of us who are founder members are talking to each other and will clear our stand soon."

NCPI youth general secretary Titus Bhattacharya also claims to have been in the dark. "We are taking legal opinion and will publicly announce our stand."

Dey says the NCPI's founding motto was to strive for food security, clothes and shelter for all Indians as "a human rights organisation". "We mainly focused on West Bengal and Tripura. In Tripura, we have around a thousand members, and in Bengal, around 800. We also have members in Assam, Tamil Nadu and Delhi."

Uttiya could not be contacted despite repeated attempts. But the NCPI sums up his "life philosophy" in Bangla on Facebook: "To stay alive, one feels hungry"; "To sustain that livelihood, you need money"; "To get money, you need support"; "To get support, you need a household"; "As part of society, you need offspring"; "Trying to raise one's offspring"; "After responsibilities are over, becoming spiritual"; "End of earthly existence - crematorium".

India's energy worries

maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. But energy and shipping experts, though optimistic, are approaching the development with considerable caution.

India, which depends heavily on West Asian imports to meet its oil, natural gas, and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) needs, is watching the developments closely. Government sources said they hoped the deal would ease energy flows from the region, but are not fully convinced yet. Oil and gas sector insiders are similarly optimistic about the prospect of Iranian oil and gas returning to international markets as part of the agreement, but remain wary of counting on it.

The key concern is most of the deal's terms are still unknown. It remains to be seen how the agreement — if signed — will play out in the fraught waters of the strait, which used to carry a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) flows before the war began.

Besides, this is not the first announcement promising unimpeded maritime traffic through the strait in the past three-and-a-half months. Earlier announcements came to nothing, and the security situation in the Gulf remained precarious enough for shippers and energy

exporters to hold off.

Even if the deal holds and vessel movements through the strait pick up meaningfully — once shippers feel safe letting their vessels cross the waterway — it will take months for energy flows to recover to pre-war levels. The war forced major Gulf energy producers to shut in large volumes of oil and gas production, as shipping activity in the region ground to an effective halt and they could not evacuate output for export markets.

The disruption has hit India hard. Around 40% of India's crude oil imports, 60% of its LNG imports, and 90% of its LPG imports came from West Asia through the strait. The country's import dependence stands at over 88% for oil, 60% for LPG, and about 50% for natural gas.

"...a signed agreement is not a functioning one, and the sequencing dispute, with both sides insisting the other must move first, remains the main fault line, while Lebanon continues to represent a wildcard that neither Washington nor Tehran fully controls. Markets have seen this playbook before, with an initial rally on the headline followed by a fade as implementation risk re-emerges and there is little to suggest that pattern has been broken," said Claudio Galimberti, Chief Economist

at Rystad Energy.

"A return to normalized market conditions immediately upon signature in Switzerland would look optimistic, as sentiment has clearly improved... but sentiment is not the same as supply. It will take time for production to ramp back up, for logistics to normalize, and for the risk premium embedded in crude prices to dissipate, particularly given that the structural shift implied by the UAE's exit from OPEC+ is not reversed by any near-term diplomatic outcome. If the deal holds, it will therefore represent a step in the right direction, and an important one at that, but still a step rather than a destination," Galimberti added.

Oil prices remain about 20% above pre-war levels, reflecting the market's continued unease over supply risks and transit through the strait. Even if the agreement succeeds and eventually leads to normalisation of traffic through the strait, crude oil prices could take up to a year to return to pre-war levels, beyond any knee-jerk short-term easing, according to Prashant Vasisht, Senior Vice President and Co-Group Head, Corporate Ratings, at ICRA. Gulf energy infrastructure — export terminals, refineries, oil fields, and LNG processing units — could take months, even years in some cases, to return to normal production.

"Beyond the immediate

PM on deal

the Strait of Hormuz. According to ship tracking data and industry watchers, LNG Carrier *Disha* was the first vessel to cross the Strait since the announcement of the deal between the US and Iran. The vessel, carrying Qatari LNG, is expected to arrive at Dahej in Gujarat on June 18.

In his post on X after the US-Iran deal was announced, Modi said: "I welcome the understanding reached between the United States and Iran on ending the conflict in West Asia, which has caused serious economic disruption across the world and led to loss of life in many countries."

Modi is in Slovakia's capital Bratislava for a day-long visit as part of his Europe trip.

"India hopes that the implementation of this understanding will help restore peace and stability in the region and ensure the freedom of navigation and commerce. We look forward to deliberations on the remaining issues reaching a sustainable final agreement," he said.

At least 13 Indians, including seafarers, have been killed in attacks during the war in West Asia over the last three-and-a-half months. The most recent was on June 10, when three Indian seafarers died in a US missile strike on a commercial ship.

About 1 crore Indians are estimated to be living in West Asia. According to official estimates,

about 18,000 Indian seafarers, including about 500 who are stranded in the Strait of Hormuz, are currently in the region.

Besides, about 60 per cent of India's energy needs come from the Gulf, and the near-closure of the Strait of Hormuz has severely impacted the supply of LPG, LNG, petrol, diesel and fertilisers, leading to rise in prices.

Modi's emphasis on the economic disruption and loss of lives caused by the war signals the stakes involved for Delhi. As does his emphasis on "freedom of navigation and commerce" — a major concern for the country.

The statement also strikes a cautionary note, expressing hope that the "deliberations on

the remaining issues" reach a "sustainable final agreement". Contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear programme, a toll-free Strait of Hormuz and sanctions relief for Iran, are yet to be fleshed out. Also, since Israel is not a party to the pact, Delhi will be keeping a close watch on how the situation unfolds.

Modi will be meeting US President Donald Trump in Evian, France, on Wednesday afternoon, and a clearer picture may emerge. Also, French President Emmanuel Macron has called leaders of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to Evian for a separate session on West Asia, on the sidelines of the G7 leaders' summit on June 16-17, and that will be an opportunity to hear their views.

NCERT

new Arts Education textbook for Class 9, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has decided to restore the original image of the Harappan-era bronze figurine.

This newspaper has learnt that changes will be carried out immediately in the digital version of the textbook available on the NCERT website — any copies yet to be printed will also carry the revised image. "From next year, it will be reflected in the hard copy, too," sources told *The Indian Express*.

Following *The Indian Express* report Monday, the Education Ministry learnt to have sought an explanation from NCERT, after which the autonomous body was nudged to reverse the decision. "If the photo is already there in a Class 6 So-



The Indian Express report dated June 15

cial Science textbook, it doesn't make any sense why the image was retouched for the Class 9 textbook," sources, familiar with the discussions, said.

The question had surfaced earlier as well.

In an interview with *The Indian Express* published on May 27, historian Michel Danino, who headed the textbook development committee for NCERT's new Class 6 Social Science books, disclosed that NCERT had objected to placing the "Dancing Girl" on the opening page of a chapter on the Indus Valley Civilisation because the figurine was nude and could become "controversial".



Danino said he had resisted the move, arguing that the original artefact was displayed at the National Museum in Delhi and routinely taught in schools. While he eventually agreed to shift the image to an inside page and reduce its size, he succeeded in ensuring it remained in the textbook.

NCERT Director Dinesh Prasad Saklani did not respond to requests for comment. It is learnt that in its explanation to the Government on the Class 9 textbook, the Council defended the shading of the figurine's torso on the grounds that it wanted students to use their "imagination".

Imphal

incident of firing in Kangpokpi district in the morning.

According to a senior police officer, an incident of firing had taken place in the area between Konsakhul, a Naga village, and Leilon Munlui, a Kuki-Zo village, at around 6 am on Monday. This is an area that has seen heightened tensions in recent days due to the abduction of six Naga residents of Konsakhul on May 13 and the discovery of their bodies last week.

"According to reports received, there had been firing from both sides, and a total of three people were injured in L. Munlui. All three were evacuated to RIMS and were taken by the CRPF and the Army since it is the only place that has the required medical facilities to treat their bullet injuries," said the officer.

Kuki groups have identified the three injured men as Genlemang Vaiphei, Paugoulal and Lunliandaw Vaiphei, and said that they are "village volunteers" — an informal term used in Manipur to refer to armed men stationed at villages amid the ongoing conflict.

After news spread that three Kuki-Zo men had been brought to RIMS — a central government healthcare centre located in Imphal West — for medical treatment, protesters surrounded the institute. Many of the protesters were from the Naga community, and several were also from the Meitei community, who have been in conflict with the Kuki-Zo community since May 2023.

One of the key features of the conflict between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has been the restricted movement of people from one community to areas where the other community is in the majority, meaning restricted access to Imphal by

members of the Kuki-Zo community. With a conflict flaring up between the Kuki-Zo and Naga communities as well now, Naga groups and individuals objected to the Kuki-Zo men being brought to the capital for medical treatment by security forces, with many of the protestors referring to them as "militants".

Thangtinlen Haokip, a member of the Kangpokpi-based Committee on Tribal Unity, said, "This is a very terrible and unacceptable situation. RIMS is not for any particular community, but we have people saying that people from one particular community cannot go and take treatment there, and putting unwell and injured people in danger."

The Churachandpur-based Kuki-Zo Council also called the incident "disturbing". "Such actions reinforce the painful perception that Kuki-Zo lives do not matter in Manipur," the council said.

'GAVE FARMERS AN HOUR TO DECIDE': UP CM YOGI ON LAND ACQUISITION HURDLE

1st flight operates with farmers, others who gave land for airport



(From left) At Noida International Airport in Jewar; the farmers on Monday. PRAVEEN KHANNA

Express News Service
Lucknow, June 15

WELCOMING 170 farmers who arrived on the first flight from the Noida International Airport to Lucknow Monday morning, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath recalled how the government faced a difficult situation during land acquisition. He said he gave farmers one hour to think about it.

"When the Cabinet approved the proposal for the airport in Jewar, I instructed the Noida District Magistrate and other officials that the land acquisition process should begin within 100 days, but it could not. I visited Noida and held a review meeting to know that no progress was made.

Later, I organised a meeting with a group of about 100 farmers at Gautam Buddha University, Greater Noida, and convinced them that land acquisition is a must to build an airport. They refused to give their land to me as well," the CM recalled.

"It was an uncertain situation. The government wanted development in the area, yet people were refusing. I requested them to think for one hour as this airport would

WHAT NEXT



12 daily domestic flights in June

40 increase in flights expected by July

- 5 million passengers projected within 10-12 months
- International flights slated to begin before year ends
- Construction for 2nd phase expected to begin before 2030 ends

change their destiny," Yogi said, addressing the farmers at his residence. He added, "This is a place where even 'Kuber (god of wealth)' wants to come now.

The CM noted that the farmers had placed their trust in him, and the Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority and the Civil Aviation Department fast-tracked the process to acquire more than 13,000 acres of land.

The airport will be developed in four phases, and the first phase has been completed, he informed the farmers.

Future plans

The CM said that the airport is going to become India's first

apparel park, medical device park, and world-class IT and electronics cities will be established in the Jewar region. Five prestigious universities from among the world's top-ranked institutions are planning to establish campuses there.

Adityanath told the farmers that by making the right decision at the right time, they helped create India's largest airport. The CM said that young people must be trained as engineers so they can find employment close to home.

"Investment coming to Jewar will require skilled manpower. The Yamuna Authority has initiated the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in collaboration with Tata at a cost of Rs 225 crore. Young people will receive training in modern technologies, certificates, diploma courses, degree courses, and skill development opportunities. Local youth will also get opportunities to participate in local development. Incoming investments will become a basis for employment," he said.

Additional Chief Secretary (Civil Aviation) Deepak Kumar, IndiGo Special Director R K Singh and Chief Minister's Advisor Avani Awasthi were also present at the event.

'Never thought I'd fly in a plane': Farmers on board Jewar airport's maiden flight

Devansh Mittal
Noida, June 15

IT WAS not a usual Monday morning for Babu Lal. He was elated to fly for the first time. "We could have never thought that we would be flying in an airplane, let alone from an airport built on our land," said the 72-year-old from Kishorpur village in Gautam Buddha Nagar's Jewar. Around 8:30 am, Noida International Airport's (NIA) maiden flight took off for Lucknow. Onboard the special IndiGo flight was a delegation — people whose land was acquired for the airport, including farmers such as Babu Lal — headed to meet Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

On the commencement of operations, Union Minister for Civil Aviation Ram Mohan

Naidu said, "Today is a day of great joy and a historic milestone as the first flight prepares to depart from Noida International Airport. Under the guidance of Yogi Adityanath, we have made special arrangements for 170 farmers, who contributed their land to this project, to travel on this inaugural flight to Lucknow following a special meeting with them."

At the 15-acre land in Rohi village acquired in 2019 on which Rajwati (61) used to grow wheat, rice and vegetables, now stands this slick international airport, slated to be the largest airport in Asia, rivalling Dubai and Shanghai, once complete. But she was jubilant, not because of the commencement of the airport operations, but because she was meeting her friends, who were once her

neighbours but they had to relocate due to the land acquisition. "Koi kahi chala gaya hai, koi kahi aur... (someone is here, someone is there, everyone is scattered)," she said, talking about the major shift their lives saw after land acquisition. "I still cry sometimes when I think of my land. I still go out of my house... sometimes thinking I will see my cows," she said.

While some lamented giving up their land for the project, others were enthusiastic of the proposed development that areas around the airport are expected to see.

Happily carrying a certificate, which said Nikshipta Chhonkar's 'First Flight', Sachin Singh (27) arrived at the airport with his parents, wife and daughter for a flight to Amritsar. "I always wanted a memory like

this with my daughter... so we booked a family vacation to Amritsar, which was among the first flights out of Noida," said Singh, whose land in Thora village was taken for Phase 2 of the airport.

On the certificate, which he wanted to get signed by the pilot, he said, "It will be a memory for her... that her first flight was among the first to fly out of the airport built on our land."

The airport, which was inaugurated by PM Narendra Modi in March, is the second international airport in the National Capital Region. Initially, flights from Noida International Airport will connect passengers to five destinations across the country: Amritsar, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Jammu and Navi Mumbai. By the end of this year, international flight operations are expected to begin.

EXPRESS Careers

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Advt. No. LBC/NTAdvT-01/2026 Date: 11.06.2026

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MUMBAI

Physicist, former head of 2 IIMs: Meet Ashoka V-C Krishnan

Express News Service
New Delhi, June 15

MORE THAN three months after Vice-Chancellor (V-C) Professor Somak Raychaudhury announced his decision to step down, Ashoka University Monday named Professor Rishikesh T Krishnan, former Director of IIM Bangalore and IIM Indore, as its next V-C.

Krishnan will assume office on August 1 for an initial three-year term, succeeding Raychaudhury, who informed the university earlier this year that he would not seek a second term. In an email dated March 5, Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Pramath Raj Sinha, and Chancellor Rudrangshu Mukherjee wrote that following Raychaudhury's decision, the Governing Body of Ashoka University had formally constituted a Search Committee to look for a successor. The email stated that Raychaudhury would remain "associated with Ashoka as a scientist and professor". The committee was tasked with identifying candidates and recommending two names to the Chancellor.

Krishnan has led two of India's premier management institutes. He served as Director of IIM Indore between 2014 and 2018 and as Director of IIM Bangalore from 2020 to 2025. A physicist by training, he earned an Integrated MSc in Physics from IIT Kanpur and pursued Engineering-Economic Systems



Rishikesh T Krishnan

at Stanford University. He completed a doctoral programme in Management and Public Policy at IIM Ahmedabad.

Over the years, he has emerged as one of India's leading scholars of innovation and public policy. His research has focused on innovation at organisational, industrial and national levels, and has been published in international journals spanning management, economics, development and science policy.

Beyond academia, Krishnan has played an active role in public policy. He has served on committees of the Department of Science and Technology and was a member of the Justice BN Srikrishna Committee that proposed a data protection framework for India. He has also served on the boards of many educational, public institutions.

At IIM Bangalore, Krishnan oversaw the establishment of the School of Multidisciplinary Studies and led preparations for the institute's undergraduate programmes in Economics and Data Science. In 2025, IIT Kanpur conferred on him its Distinguished Alumnus Award, its highest alumni honour.

116 tonnes of waste removed from Yamuna ghats in a day: Govt

New Delhi: A day after a mega cleanliness drive was carried out across 28 major ghats along the Yamuna in Delhi, Water Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh Monday said approximately 116.6 metric tonnes of waste was removed in just one day.

"Yamuna is not merely a river; it is the cultural, spiritual, and emotional lifeline of Delhi. For years, conversations around the river focused on what was wrong. Today, thousands of Delhiites came together to demonstrate what can be made right when citizens and government

work hand in hand," said Singh. "Cleaning the Yamuna is not a one-day exercise. It is a long-term commitment. The government is working on multiple fronts, but lasting change will come only when every citizen considers the river their own responsibility. The campaign has shown that Delhi is ready to take ownership of that mission," Singh said.

Extensive cleaning operations were carried out at Yamuna ghats, banks, access roads, and adjoining public areas on Sunday. ENS

PUBLIC NOTICE

For kind attention of general public, allottees and stakeholders of the real estate project "SS CENDANA and SS KIAVASA" situated at Sector 83 developed by M/s. A & D Estates Pvt. Ltd.

- This is to inform the general public, allottees, stakeholders, and concerned authorities that the promoter of the following project has applied for change of the bank accounts.
- The above-mentioned project was registered with the HAREERA Gurugram vide registration no. 77 of 2023 dated 17.07.2023 and the registration was valid up to 31.03.2029.
- Existing Bank Account and New Bank Account Details are as follows:

Particular	Existing Bank Accounts	New Bank Accounts
Bank Name	Kotak Mahindra Bank	Axis Bank Limited
Branch address	Shop No. 4, B Block, Vipul Orchid Square, Sushant Lok, Phase 1, Gurgaon - 1	M-Block, Jaccaranda Marg, DLF Square, DLF-City, Phase-II, DLF O.E.S.O, Gurgaon - 122002
IFSC	KKBK0000291	UTIB0005152
Master account	9047209742	926020021490689
RERA account	9047209773	926020021469371
Free account	9047209759	926020021469397

- The promoter has submitted a request for change of the designated bank accounts before the Authority, which is presently under consideration.
- This notice is being issued for information purposes only to the general public, allottees, and stakeholders in respect of the above-mentioned project.

Sd/-
Secretary,
For Haryana Real Estate Regulatory Authority, Gurugram

Dated: 16.06.2026

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Last date for submitting online applications | **14.07.2026**

15 EXECUTIVE POSITIONS IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (IT) & SAFETY

From Regular/Contractual Officers/Managers working in Central PSUs/SPVs/Metro Railways/Ministry of Railways/Government Departments to join the company on Absorption Basis.

Last date for submitting online applications | **09.07.2026**

Details of vacancies may be seen at the official website: www.nhsrcl.in | Addendum/further communication in this regard, (if any), will be notified on the Nhsrcl website ONLY.

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Educational Qualification

Candidates must have passed Matriculation Examination with minimum 50% marks in aggregate from the Boards of School Education recognised by Ministry of Education, Govt. of India and completed three years diploma course from AICTE recognised Polytechnic Institutes with 50% marks in aggregate in notified courses.

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Employment News Dated 06 June 2026

Safeguarding Seas for a Viksit Samridha Bharat

Hybrid vehicles and charging infra: Experts from IIT back draft EV Policy 2.0

Gayathri Mani
New Delhi, June 15

EMPHASIS ON the inclusion of Strong Hybrid Electric Vehicles (SHEVs) and boost in the charging infrastructure are among the highlights of the feedback shared by experts from IIT Delhi and IIT Kanpur, among others, on the Delhi government's Draft Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy 2.0. *The Indian Express* has learnt. Reduction in vehicular emissions, improvement of consumer confidence in clean mobility, enablement of faster transition from internal combustion engine vehicles: these are the aspects they backed in the draft, said officials.

The current policy — launched in 2020 and extended multiple times — will expire on June 30. The Transport department released the draft EV policy 2026-2030 in April, seeking feedback from the public and stakeholders within a month.

"We have received a lot of suggestions from various sectors and stakeholders... Largely, the feedback is positive. Experts have stressed on the inclusion of SHEVs, strengthening and expanding EV infrastructure and revising the mandates for two wheelers, among others," said a senior official of the Delhi government.

"The policy rightly prioritises high-utilisation segments such as two-wheelers, three-wheelers, commercial fleets, and goods vehicles, which contribute significantly to urban emissions... appreciate the inclusion of SHEVs in the policy framework... Cleaner intermediate technologies can play a useful role in supporting emissions reduction while improving consumer confidence," said Dr Vikas Nimesh, Assistant professor, School of public policy, IIT Delhi.

Experts from IIT-Kanpur have recommended extending the scrappage linked benefits to consumers purchasing hybrid

electric vehicles. "...By extending policy support to proven green technologies, BEVs and SHEVs, government of Delhi is advancing practical and inclusive transition toward cleaner mobility, enabling wider adoption, encouraging a faster shift from internal combustion engine vehicles, and delivering near-term air quality benefits," a senior professor with the Department of civil engineering at IIT Kanpur underlined in the feedback.

"...studies have also shown a major contribution of pollution from the transport sector, which accounts for 15 to 20% of total air pollution in Delhi, mostly from older vehicles."

Experts from IIT Delhi also stressed on expanding charging infrastructure in residential areas. "Residential charging remains one of the biggest practical barriers to EV adoption in Delhi, particularly in apartments and group housing societies... The policy may consider standardised guidelines and model by-laws for RWAs regarding EV charger approvals, safety guidelines for shared charging systems," said Nimesh. "Pilot case studies in residential campuses and institutional complexes can help assess charging behaviour, peak demand management, and practical feasibility in dense urban settings."

Meanwhile, a source from the Transport department said that the government is making some revisions in the draft following the suggestions. "Some of them are putting a cap on the proposed road tax exemption for SHEVs to the first two years after the policy's rollout, with a possible one-year extension based on its impact, including e-ricshaw in scrappage linked incentives, ban on re-registration or selling EVs purchased in Delhi under the scheme in other states, revision of EV mandates for two wheelers... these are currently under consideration."

Greater Noida family follows Google Maps, car falls into drain; rescued

Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, June 15

A FAMILY of five from Greater Noida had a narrow escape after their car fell into a drain in Uttar Pradesh's Hapur Sunday night while following Google Maps, officials said, following which a fire team rescued them.

Officials said the man at the wheel was following Google Map instructions and reportedly took a wrong route for their destination. Firemen responded to a distress call and pulled out the five occupants — three men, a woman and a 6-month-old child — from the car. "It took about two hours ensuring the family remained unhurt throughout the operation," said Chief Fire Officer (CFO) Ajay Sharma.

Sharma told *The Indian Express* that the family had left their home in Dadri area of Greater Noida for Kithore locality in Meerut. A man, Sahil, was

driving the car and had connected to Google Maps for navigation. While moving through Hapur, he drove through Shyam Nagar locality. Fireman Sudhir Kumar, who was one of five members of the rescue team, told *The Indian Express* that Sahil appeared to have taken a wrong route here and went on a congested road passing by a railway overbridge.

He said this is not a common road for commuters and is only used as a shortcut by the locals. Locals know about the drain besides the road and usually only take two-wheelers on the route, Kumar said.

On Sunday, this road was waterlogged and the drain too filled up, officials said. Kumar further said the driver took the hatchback onto the road and attempted to drive through it when the vehicle skidded into the drain around 10 pm. "While trying to steer it out, the entire car slid into the drain," the fireman said.

ment referred to the Delhi High Court's May 29 order and said the "effect and operation" of the June 6, 2025, notification would be stayed till the next date of hearing on July 7, while shedding light on the use of emergency powers. The circular has been sent to a wide set of agencies and officials, including Delhi Police, DDA, MCD, NDMC, PWD, NHAI, CPWD, Delhi Jal Board, DMRC, DTC, discoms, district magistrates and all principal secretaries, secretaries and heads of departments of the Delhi government.

The stayed notification had been issued under Section 33 of the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, giving directions to

IN LINE WITH PM'S VISION OF BECOMING A DEVELOPED NATION BY TARGET YEAR

Horizon year for Master Plan may change from 2041 to 2047

Devansh Mittal
New Delhi, June 15

THE HORIZON year for the Delhi Master Plan 2041, which is yet to be notified despite a five-year delay, may be changed to 2047. This is one of the several aspects under consideration apart from issues related to the land pooling policy, green development area policy and the Yamuna O-Zone, an eco-sensitive protected floodplain in Delhi. *The Indian Express* has learnt.

The Central government is holding discussions on these aspects at the highest level, said sources. "These plans are prepared with a vision of 20 years. Since the plan has already been delayed by five years now, there are discussions on whether we should change the horizon year to 2047. Nothing has been finalised yet," said a source. The horizon year refers to the year in which the government aims to fulfill its long-term goals.

Changing the horizon year to 2047 will also align the plan with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of India becoming a developed nation by 2047. "As far as policies are concerned, population projections till the new year will have to be taken into account," sources with knowledge

• THE TIMELINE

June 2021: DDA puts draft Delhi Master Plan-2041 in public domain
February 2023: Draft approved by DDA
April 2023: DDA forwards approved draft to MoHUA
April 2023: Deadline set by SC for notifying the master plan
September 2024: MoHUA's

approval deadline missed

October 2024: Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal says plan still at consultation stage amid technical challenges

June 2026: Manohar Lal says the Master Plan is in its final stage, to be cleared after a meeting chaired by Home Minister Amit Shah.

of the development said.

The Delhi Master Plan 2041 was approved by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) on February 28, 2023, and sent to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) for notification on April 13, 2023. Since then, several deadlines have been missed, including the 100-day deadline set by the MoHUA after the Modi government was elected for the third term.

The DDA and the LG's Office did not respond to queries sent by *The Indian Express* regarding the expected revision.

At the beginning of this month, Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal had said that the Master Plan 2041 would be finalised after one "last meeting" to be chaired by Union Home Minister Amit

Shah. "We have completed the work and submitted it... Just two-three final suggestions from there have to be incorporated and one last final meeting will be held..." he had said.

The discussions on the possible revisions come in the backdrop of the meeting of the National Capital Region Planning Board (NCRPB), which is scheduled to be held on Tuesday. At the meeting, officials concerned are expected to take a final call to draft the NCR Regional Plan-2041, which has faced similar delays.

Among others, policy on how the government intends to deal with unauthorised colonies in Yamuna's O-Zone, which houses over five lakh people is set to be in spotlight in the wake of Delhi High Court order last

month that residential colonies in the ecosensitive floodplain are "completely impermissible". In the absence of the full notification, the government has introduced key policy changes to Delhi's urban planning framework in recent months.

In April, MoHUA had notified the new Transit Oriented Development (TOD) policy for Delhi, which is expected to open up large swathes of land near Metro corridors to high density development. The government had also announced the decision to regularise 1,511 unauthorised colonies of Delhi on an "as-is-where-is-basis", removing the prerequisite of having an approved layout plan.

The government is also formulating a new policy for in-situ slum rehabilitation. *The Indian Express* had reported earlier that the Delhi government is planning a revision in its new slum rehabilitation policy — to extend the cut-off date in the current policy by around 10 years from January 1, 2015, to January 1, 2025. Drafted under the Delhi Development Act, 1957, the first Master Plan for Delhi was announced in 1962, followed by Master Plans of 2001 and 2021. The Delhi Master Plan 2021 had also missed deadlines and it was notified in 2007.

'Whose daughters are we raising?': Couple's IVF nightmare after DNA test

Nirbhay Thakur
New Delhi, June 15

RAHUL RATHORE (41) and his wife Meenu (39) — already parents to two daughters and well past their 30s — decided in 2024 to undergo in-vitro fertilisation (IVF). The couple live in Gurgaon. Meenu gave birth to twin girls on January 5 this year. They noticed that the babies looked nothing like them and found themselves confronting a question: were these their children?

DNA tests eventually confirmed their worst fears: the girls were not biologically related to them. Meenu said: "I had to endure four months of injections. I carried those innocent children in my womb for nine months. Whose children are they?"

Following the shocking discovery, the couple moved court alleging an embryo mix-up at a Delhi fertility clinic. In March, a Delhi court ordered that an FIR be lodged. On June 5, it also dismissed a petition by the hospital challenging the previous order.

According to the couple, their gynecologist introduced them to an IVF specialist, leading them to the doorsteps of SCI IVF Hospital in Greater Kailash. On January 9, 2025, the diagnostic workups began. On May 14 that year, the medical team delivered miraculous news: five healthy embryos had successfully developed. That very day, three of the embryos were implanted.

Meenu gave birth to twin baby girls. But their joy was short-lived as a nagging doubt took hold: the twins looked nothing like them. Rahul, who works as a builder, said he tried to arrange a DNA test through the IVF clinic, only to meet the



Rahul and Meenu with the children. PRAVEEN KHANNA

hospital's heavy resistance. The couple eventually submitted samples to two independent DNA testing agencies on January 8, 2026.

The findings arrived on January 10 and 14: According to the genetic profiles, the twin girls were not biologically related to Rahul or Meenu; they were completely anonymous donor embryos.

On January 17, the couple approached the police but when no action was taken, they moved court in March. On March 23, Metropolitan Magistrate Devanshi Janmeja issued a scathing order directing the police to register an FIR against the clinic's doctors.

In her order, the judge observed: "... it appears that all facts and circumstances... hint at commission of grave and heinous cognizable offences which are not limited to forgery and flouting of statutory guidelines to conduct IVF procedures, but could possibly lead to unearthing of child trafficking and kidnapping conspiracy... [this] needs to be investigated since the possibility of the actual children of the complainant being kidnapped or trafficked cannot be ruled out at this stage."

As per the Action Taken Re-

port (ATR) submitted by the investigating officer, recorded in the court order, officials at SCI IVF Hospital claimed that the couple's own genetic material was unviable and they had signed a written consent form on May 14, 2025, agreeing to use anonymous donor embryos instead. Meenu denied: "... The timings in the consent form show a time when I was under the influence of anesthesia."

Rahul added, "I've spent the last five months studying the Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) Act. The consent form should have been formally registered. This one hasn't even been notarised." Another order passed on March 30 by Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Mohammad Ehtesham of Saket Court directed the police to file an FIR without delay.

The hospital filed a revision plea. For two months, the case hung in limbo. On June 5, Additional Sessions Judge Vishal Singh of Saket Court dismissed the hospital's revision plea. "... The Court has found a semblance of irregularity in records maintained by the revisionist hospital, leading to the possibility that allegations of the complainant couple could be correct... the complainants

could not be expected to furnish evidence in support of their allegations. The relevant evidences in possession and custody of the revisionist hospital and requires investigation by police."

Judge Singh noted that the couple alleged the hospital "created forged documents with their forged signatures to create the false impression that their own egg and sperm were not viable to create an embryo", pointing out fake certificate numbers on an insurance record for a purported donor. Police said the FIR was lodged last month against SCI hospital under sections including cheating and further investigation is underway.

On June 10, the Appropriate Authority for ART and Surrogacy under the ART and Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021, functioning under the office of the special secretary, health and family welfare department, Delhi government, issued a notice for a hearing on the matter on June 12.

Standing outside the Delhi Secretariat after the hearing Friday, Rahul said, "The ART department can't spare even three minutes to listen to our demands. We've been struggling to get answers for five months... I haven't been able to go to work for the past six months." The couple just want the truth. "The hospitals appear to care only about money and protecting their positions," fumed Rahul.

Meenu said, "Earn a living any way you choose, but don't make money off children..." However, they have not forsaken the twins.

The Indian Express reached out to doctors at the IVF hospital for comment but received no response.

• Skywatch



Forecast: June 16, 2026
Partly cloudy sky, spell of very light to light rain

MAX: 37-39
0.2°C below normal

MIN: 26-28
1.5°C below normal

• **Sunrise:** 5:24 AM (June 17)
• **Sunset:** 7:21 PM (June 16)
• **Moonrise:** 7:28 AM (June 17)
• **Moonset:** 8:59 PM (June 16)

• AQITracker



Anand Vihar
Poor
AQI: 258

Bawana
Moderate
AQI: 154



DTU
Moderate
AQI: 125

Jahangirpuri
Moderate
AQI: 180

● Good (0-50)
● Satisfactory (51-100)
● Moderate (101-200)
● Poor (201-300)
● Very Poor (301-400)
● Severe (401-500)

Ggn preps for monsoon with cleanliness drive

Abhimanyu Hazarika
Gurgaon, June 15

WITH RAIN routinely triggering flash floods at critical points in Gurgaon every monsoon, crippling the city's mobility, the Municipal Corporation of Gurgaon (MCG) and the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA) have rolled out extensive infrastructure and sanitation drives ahead of the rainy season. The twin-agency effort aims at mitigating chronic waterlogging across critical sectors that paralyse the city during heavy rainfall.

While the MCG announced a citywide deep cleaning and desilting campaign, the GMDA has planned special repair works for key arterial roads, including a major drainage and transit upgrade along the Sec-

tor 51/52 master dividing road, officials said.

Stretches like Narsinghpur along the Delhi-Jaipur Expressway (NH-48), Hero Honda Chowk, Rajiv Chowk, Subhash Chowk, and the Golf Course Extension Road are perennial hotspots.

At Narsinghpur and Hero Honda Chowk, natural topography forms a structural depression. When heavy rain occurs, massive surface run-off from the Aravalli foothills create additional burden on the main arterial drainage network, particularly the Badshahpur drain. This causes stormwater to flood service lanes and main carriageways. The GMDA has allotted special repair works along a 2.1-km stretch of the Sector 51/52 dividing master road, officials said.

Accused 'reced house' hours before fire killed three in Tughlakabad

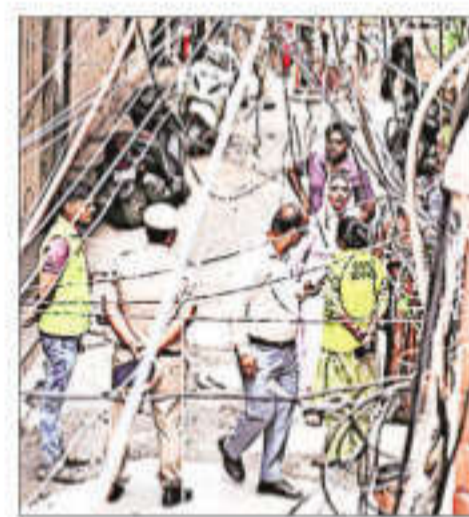
Express News Service
New Delhi, June 15

A MONETARY dispute, a recce, and a revenge — police said that these, together, allegedly claimed three lives in South-east Delhi's Tughlakabad Extension on the intervening night of June 12 and 13. According to the police, investigation revealed that a 17-year-old masked girl — who has now been apprehended — was allegedly roaming around the house trying to figure out the entry and exit points.

A 27-year-old woman accompanied the minor, said police. The woman told police she had lent Rs 50,000 to one Rakesh who lives on the fourth floor of the building and the amount he owed to her, including interest, stood at Rs 80,000. While the minor stood guard near the gate, the woman went to the fourth floor only to find Rakesh's partner who told her he was in Agra, police said.

"The woman wanted to know where Rakesh was. His partner told her that he had gone to Agra," said a police officer. Officers said they had also identified his electric scooter.

The accused woman, who was later arrested, hatched a plan. She asked the minor to come again at night and set Rakesh's two-wheeler ablaze, police said. "Her partner has 11 cases registered against him. She thought since Rakesh knew this, he would take things seriously and return the money he owed to her. But he allegedly refused and asked her to 'do whatever she could'," said a senior officer. Furious, the woman allegedly



At the site of the incident. FILE

wanted revenge.

"The woman's partner is involved in cases filed for charges of murder, attempted murder, assault, robbery, firing and under the Arms Act. One of her friends is also involved in five cases, including attempted murder, assault, firing and ones filed under the Arms Act," said another police officer.

The ground floor of the building was up in flames last week hours after the two women conducted their recce. The fire spread to two more floors. The 17-year-old, police said, was captured by CCTV cameras entering and stepping out of the building seconds before the fire. She had her face covered, they added.

The blaze trapped residents and triggered panic. While several residents were rescued, eight people, who had sustained injuries, were taken to AIIMS Trauma Centre and Safdarjung Hospital for treatment. However, three of them — Pan-kaj (28), his sister Soni (20), and their grandmother Sushila Devi (70) — succumbed to their injuries later.

• AFTER HIGH COURT STAYS TREE-REMOVAL SOP ISSUED LAST YEAR

Who can act when a tree becomes dangerous? Forest dept puts out order for agencies

Sophiya Mathew
New Delhi, June 15

WHO CAN act when a tree becomes dangerous? As Delhi sees recurring incidents of storm-related tree falls ahead of the monsoon season, the Forest department issued an order for various agencies — including civic bodies, discoms, police and other authorities — on June 11 following a High Court stay last month on the department's June 2025 tree-removal notification. At present, the department's emergency powers under the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, remain in operation.

Tree Officers on how Section 8 of the Act should be applied. It listed situations in which trees could be removed or pruned immediately and the Tree Officer informed later, including cases involving roads, drains, sewer lines, buildings, railway tracks, metro installations, dead trees and trees leaning precariously or vulnerable to falling during a storm.

The High Court, however, raised concern over its scope. In its order, the Court observed that the notification "seems to suggest that the respondents are permitted to cut the trees which come in the way of developmental work" and that it showed "there are no safeguards avail-

able and/or requirement to apply mind to seek alternatives before cutting of trees." The HC had said the notification ap-



The Capital has been witnessing recurring incidents of storm-related tree falls ahead of the monsoon. FILE

peared to be an "overreach" of earlier court orders.

But this does not mean that dangerous trees must remain

untouched during storms or emergencies. Section 8 of the Delhi Preservation of Trees Act bars felling or removal of trees without prior permission of the Tree Officer, but contains an emergency exception.

The provision says that if a tree is not immediately felled and there would be "grave danger to life or property or traffic," the landowner may take immediate action and report the fact to the Tree Officer within 24 hours. Under Section 9, any person who wants to fell, cut, remove or otherwise dispose of a tree must apply to the Tree Officer concerned.

The application has to include ownership documents, the number and kind of trees proposed to be cut, girth measurement at 1.85 metres from ground level, reasons for cutting, and a copy of the land record documents, showing the site and khasra numbers.

After receiving the application, the Tree Officer may conduct an inspection and inquiry. The officer can then grant permission fully, grant it partly, or refuse permission with reasons recorded in writing.

Section 9 also says permission may not be refused in certain cases, including where

the tree is dead, diseased, wind-fallen, dangerous to life or property, obstructing traffic, substantially damaged by fire, lightning, rain or other natural causes, or required in rural areas for bona fide domestic or agricultural use. The Tree Officer must decide within 60 days from receiving the application. If the officer does not communicate a decision within that period, permission under Section 8 is deemed to have been granted.

This means that where there is no immediate grave danger requiring emergency action under Section 8, agencies, RWAs and landowners can still secure permission under Section 9.

Priyank asks RSS to register; Bhagwat says nothing to hide

Express News Service
Bengaluru, June 15

KARNATAKA HOME Minister Priyank Kharge on Monday said he has written to RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat seeking details on the organisation's legal status, finances, office-bearers and tax compliance, escalating his demand that the century-old organisation register itself and disclose its operations.

Bhagwat hit back, saying Priyank's demand was politically motivated and accused the Karnataka government of attempting to create confusion among the public.

In a letter dated June 13, Priyank noted that the RSS claims to have over 60,000 shakhas and crores of swyamsevaks across India and abroad. "It is precisely because of this scale, influence and reach that the RSS must be held to the highest standards of transparency, accountability and constitutional compliance," he said.

The minister also cited the 2025-26 annual report of the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), saying that the RSS has "a significant footprint in Karnataka, with 4,127 daily shakhas, 1,389 weekly milans and 60 monthly mandalis".

Priyank noted that the organisation had reportedly conducted 2,194 Samajotsavas involving nearly 19.6 lakh participants and organised 562 route marches across the state, with over 2.21 lakh uniformed volunteers taking part.

"Taken together, these figures show a vast, disciplined and deeply embedded network operating across Karnataka through daily cadre-building, weekly and monthly outreach, mass public events and uniformed route marches," he said.

"Such an extensive organisational presence, especially when it involves regular public mobilisation, uniformed route

marches and large-scale social outreach, cannot be treated as a private or informal arrangement. It raises legitimate questions about legal status, accountability, financial transparency, public order, permissions, sources of funding and compliance with the Constitution and laws of India."

"We therefore request the RSS to depute its authorised office-bearers to explain the legal grounds on which an organisation of such magnitude continues to function with anonymity and without being formally registered as a legal entity or as a 'body of individuals' under the applicable laws," he said.

He also sought "the legal basis on which organisation activities are conducted without formal registration", "the constitutional and statutory framework under which it claims the right to operate at such scale without public accountability".

"The best tribute it (RSS) can pay to India in its 100th year is to register itself, disclose its activities and finances, pay all applicable taxes, and function as a transparent and accountable organisation within the framework of Indian law."

Asked about Priyank's letter, Bhagwat said he doesn't "need to respond".

"We are not secretive; we are working on open ground. We are calling people and telling them about us. This is politics, and all kinds of gimmicks are being tried. Let them do it. We are used to it. We faced all these things even 15 years after the Sangh's formation. If they don't ask questions, we feel something is amiss," he said during an event in Kerala.

"The Sangh started in British times and started in a public place.... Hindu Dharma is not registered, and many other entities are not registered," he said.

"For over 100 years, nobody told us to register."

PM to lead Yoga Day event in Kolkata

New Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the main event of the International Day of Yoga in Kolkata on June 21, Union Minister for Ayush Prataprao Jadhav said Monday. Addressing a press conference here, Jadhav said, "This year's main event of the International Day of Yoga will be held on Kolkata's historic Red Road under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi." PTI

CENTRAL UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR
Ganderbal J&K (UT) www.cukashmir.ac.in

ADMISSION EXTENSION NOTICE -2026
POSTGRADUATE (PG) PROGRAMMES

In continuation to the earlier admission notification vide no: CUKMIR/DOA/Admission-PG-05/2026/136 dated: 20-05-2026, candidates who have appeared in CUET-PG-2026 and are interested in seeking admission to any of the Postgraduate (PG) Programmes offered by the Central University of Kashmir for the academic session 2026-2027, are hereby informed that the last date of registration for admission has been extended till 23rd June, 2026 (11:55 PM). The other terms and conditions as mentioned in the previous notification shall remain the same. For detailed information regarding registration process & programmes offered, the candidates are advised to visit University website: www.cukashmir.ac.in
S/d Director (I/C)
Date: 11.06.2026
Directorate of Admissions

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, Katra (J&K)
Employment Notice

Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine Board, a statutory autonomous body invites applications from eligible and interested candidates for the various posts. The application form and detailed employment notice is available on Shrine Board's website www.maavaishnodevi.org.

Sd/-
(Satish Kumar Sharma), JKAS
Joint Chief Executive Officer

Adv. No.: 05/2026
Dated: 15.06.2026

ONGC ओएनजीसी **ONGC** **ONGC**

Regd. Office: Plot No. 5A-5B, Nelson Mandela Marg, Vasant Kunj, New Delhi-110070
CIN No. L74899DL1993GOI054155 | Website: www.ongcindia.com | Email: secretariat@ongc.co.in

NOTICE OF LOSS OF SHARE CERTIFICATE

NOTICE is hereby given that the equity Share Certificate(s) of the following shareholder(s) have been reported as lost/misplaced and they have applied for issuance of duplicate Share Certificate(s):

Name of Share Holder	Folio No.	No. of Shares	Certificate No.	Distinctive No.
B R Kumar	4622	1650	1303	354565-356214
		1650	476464	4278099625-4278101274
		1650	963431	8555681071-8555682720
		4950		

Any person(s) who has/have any claim in respect of the said certificate(s) can lodge such claim with the supporting documents with the Company within 7 days of the publication of this notice, after which no claim will be entertained by the Company. Further, public is hereby warned against purchasing or dealing in any way with the above-mentioned share certificate(s). Any person dealing with the above share certificate(s) shall be doing so, solely at his/her risk as to costs and consequences, the Company shall in no way be held responsible for such dealing(s).

For Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd.
Sd/-
(Shashi Bhushan Singh)
Company Secretary & Compliance Officer

New Delhi
15.06.2026

Pleas against trans law: SC stays all HC proceedings

New Delhi: The Supreme Court Monday stayed further proceedings before the high courts on petitions challenging the provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Act, 2026. A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justice V Mohana agreed to hear the Centre's petition seeking to consolidate and transfer all pending pleas challenging the Act from various high courts to the apex court.

Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, told the bench that the issue relates to constitutional validity of a central Act. "Issue notice," the SC said, adding, "further proceedings before the high courts shall remain stayed". On May 27, Mehta had mentioned the matter before the top court and sought an urgent listing of the transfer petitions. PTI

भारत सरकार GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
अंतरिक्ष विभाग DEPARTMENT OF SPACE
भारतीय अंतरिक्ष अनुसंधान संगठन INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION
सतीश धवन अंतरिक्ष केन्द्र शार SATISH DHAWAN SPACE CENTRE SHAR
श्रीहरिकोटा-524 124 SRIHARIKOTA-524 124
तिरुपति जिला (अ. प्र.) TIRUPATI DIST.(A.P)

विज्ञापन सं. एसडीएससी शार/आरएमटी/01/2026 दिनांक 16.06.2026
ADVERTISEMENT No. SDSC SHAR/RMT/01/2026 dated 16.06.2026

अध्यापकों के निम्न पदों के लिए एसडीएससी शार अखिल भारतीय अध्यापक आयोग द्वारा आमंत्रित किया है:-
SDSC SHAR invite online applications for the following posts of Teachers:-

पद का नाम Name of the post	विवरणों की सं. No. of Vacancies	वेतन लेवल Pay Level	आयु सीमा Age limit as on 07.07.2026
प्रशिक्षित स्नातक अध्यापक Trained Graduate Teacher (गणित, विज्ञान, तेलुगु, कार्य अनुभव शिक्षक) / (Maths, Science, Telugu, Work Experience Teacher)	04	लेवल Level 7 (₹44,900-₹1,42,400)	18-35 वर्ष Years
प्राथमिक अध्यापक/ Primary Teacher	06	लेवल Level 6 (₹ 35,400-₹1,12,400)	18-30 वर्ष Years

कृपया विस्तृत विज्ञापन के लिए निम्नलिखित वेबसाइट पर जाएं: / Please visit the following website for detailed advertisement: <https://www.shar.gov.in> OR <https://apps.shar.gov.in/>
आवेदन प्रालि की अंतिम तिथि / Last Date for Receipt of Applications :07.07.2026.
CBC 49109/11/0004/2627

Petronet LNG Limited

NOTICE INVITING TENDER (NIT)
FOR SELECTION OF CONTRACTOR FOR REPAIRING & TILING WORK OF 2 STV'S AT PHASE-II AIR HEATER (AH) STRUCTURE AT PETRONET LNG LIMITED, DAHEJ

Interested parties are requested to visit our website www.petronetlng.in for detailed eligibility criteria along with other necessary details for issuance of Tender document.

Note: PLL reserves the right not to issue the tender document and / or accept or reject any or all the bids at any stage of the process and/or modify the process without assigning any reasons on its sole discretion. No separate notification shall be issued in press. Bidders are requested to visit the website regularly to keep themselves updated.

Sr. Manager (C&P)
PETRONET LNG LIMITED
GIDC Industrial Estate, Plot No. 7/A, Dahej, Taluka Vagra,
Dist. Bharuch 392130, Dahej, Gujarat, Tel No: 02641-670232/233/235/231
E-mail id:- c&p_dahej@petronetlng.in, sumitkumar@petronetlng.in

TATA POWER
THE TATA POWER COMPANY LIMITED
Regd. Office: Bombay House, 24, Homi Mody Street, Mumbai 400 001.
Tel: 91 22 6665 8282. CIN: L28920MH1919PLC000567
Email: investorcomplaints@tatapower.com Website: www.tatapower.com

NOTICE TO SHAREHOLDERS

NOTICE is hereby given that the certificate(s) for the undermentioned securities of the Company has / have been lost / misplaced and the holder(s) of the said securities / applicant(s) has / have applied to the Company to issue duplicate certificate(s). Any person who has a claim in respect of the said securities should lodge such claim with the Company at its Registered Office within 15 days from this date, else the Company will proceed to issue duplicate certificate(s) without further intimation.

Sr. no.	Folio No.	Name of Shareholder(s)	Kind of securities and face value	No. of securities	Distinctive Number(s)
1.	H5B0079057	Bosco Maria Agnelo Henriques and Pravin Jude Henriques	Equity Shares of ₹1/- each	4,240	57796131-57800370

For The Tata Power Company Limited
Sd/-
Vispi S. Patel
Company Secretary
FCS 7021

Place: Mumbai
Date: June 15, 2026

CIDCO WE MAKE CITIES

LEASE OF 83 PLOTS FOR Residential (R), Commercial (C), Residential-Cum-Commercial (R+C), Storage/Warehouse and Warehousing use IN VARIOUS NODES OF NAVI MUMBAI.

E-TENDER CUM E-AUCTION PROCESS

Scheme no. MM/SCH-51/2026-27

CIDCO invites application through e-TENDER cum e-AUCTION process for Lease of 83 Nos. of Plots Residential (R), Commercial (C), Residential-Cum-Commercial (R+C), and Storage/Warehouse and Warehousing use at Ghansoli, Koparkhairane, Dronagiri, Ulwe, Kharghar, Taloja, Kamothe, Kalamboli, New Panvel (W), New Panvel (E) and Pushpak Nagar Nodes of Navi Mumbai from eligible applicants. The detailed information of the scheme including the time is available on the website:

<https://eauction.cidcoindia.com>

Salient features of the scheme

- Residential (R), Commercial (C), Residential-Cum-Commercial (R+C), Storage/Warehouse and Warehousing plots are available under Scheme no. 51
- Plots are located at prime locations in Ghansoli, Koparkhairane, Dronagiri, Ulwe, Kharghar, Taloja, Kamothe, Kalamboli, New Panvel (W), New Panvel (E) and Pushpak Nagar nodes of Navi Mumbai.
- Largest Plot Area- 13,874.37 Sqm, Smallest Plot Area- 57.67 Sqm
- The nodes are well equipped with all infrastructure facilities and greater connectivity
- All the procedures will be carried out through the online and transparent e-auction cum e-tender process.

Time Schedule

- Payment for document fee for close bid will start on **22.06.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** and will continue till **13.07.2026 at 23.59 hrs.**
- Payment of EMD fee for close bid will start on **22.06.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** and will continue till **13.07.2026 at 23.59 hrs.**
- Submission of closed bids will start on **22.06.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** and will end on **13.07.2026 at 23.59 hrs.**
- Payment of document fee for e-auction will start on **22.06.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** and will continue till **14.07.2026 at 12.00 hrs.**
- Payment of EMD for e-auction will start on **22.06.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** and will continue till **14.07.2026 at 12.00 hrs.**
- The online e-auction will start on **14.07.2026 at 11.00 hrs.** and will continue till **14.07.2026 at 18.00 hrs.**
- The result will be announced on **15.07.2026 at 15.00 hrs.**

For details, please contact the office of **Marketing Manager (Commercial)**, 3rd Floor, Raigad Bhavan, CBD Belapur, Navi Mumbai- 400614

Marketing Manager (Commercial)

CIN-U99999 MH 1970 SGC-014574 www.cidco.maharashtra.gov.in CIDCO/PR/096/2026-27

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Appointment of Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Jammu Applications are invited for the post of Vice-Chancellor of Central University of Jammu

The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

- A person possessing the highest level of competence, integrity, morals and institutional commitment.
- A distinguished academician, with a minimum of 10 years' experience as Professor in a University or 10 years' experience in reputed research and/or academic administrative organization with proof of having demonstrated academic leadership.
- Preferably not more than 65 years of age as on the closing date of receipt of applications of this advertisement.

Salary and Service Conditions

- The post carries a pay of Rs. 2,10,000/- (Fixed) per month with Special Allowance of Rs. 11,250/- and other usual allowances.
- The terms and conditions of the services will be those as set forth in the Act, Statutes and Ordinances of the University.

Procedure for appointment

- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a committee constituted under the provisions of Act of the University.
- The advertisement is available on the websites <https://dohe-education.gov.in> and <https://www.cujammu.ac.in>
- Candidates are required to "APPLY ONLINE ONLY" on the Ministry of Education SAMARTH portal as per the link given below:
<https://vcrec.samarth.ac.in/index.php/>
- The above link will be active from 16.06.2026, 10:00 Hours to 15.07.2026, 17:00 Hours.

CBC 21201/11/0006/2627

GOVERNMENT OF N.C.T. OF DELHI
DELHI FIRE SERVICE HEADQUARTERS
CONNAUGHT PLACE, NEW DELHI-110001

Public Notice

Kind attention: All owners/occupiers of following Categories of the building

Please be informed that the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi have enacted Delhi Fire Service Act, 2007 (Delhi Act 2 of 2009) and Delhi Fire Service Rules 2010 w.e.f. 01.07.2010. In pursuance to the said Act and Rules, every owner/occupier of premises / building falling under the category defined under Rule 27 are required to provide fire prevention and fire safety measures as per National Building Construction Standards-2026 (Part-F) as prescribed under Rule 33. Further, they shall apply to Principal Director, Delhi Fire Service for issuance of "Fire Safety Certificate" as per provision contained in Rule 35. The following classes of occupancies for the purposes of sub-section (1) of section 25 of the Act are required to obtain "Fire Safety Certificate" from Delhi Fire Service:

- Residential buildings (other than hotels and guest houses) having height more than 15 meters or comprised of Five or more stories, including mezzanine/stilt floor above ground level.
- Hotels and guest houses building having height more than 12 meters or comprised of four or more stories, including mezzanine/stilt floor above ground level.
- Educational buildings having height more than 9 meters or comprised of three or more stories, including mezzanine/stilt floor above ground level.
- Institutional buildings having height more than 9 meters or comprised of three or more stories, including mezzanine/stilt floor above ground level.
- All Assembly buildings.
- Business buildings having height more than 15 meters or comprised of five or more stories, including mezzanine/stilt floor above ground level.
- Mercantile buildings having height more than 9 meters or comprised of three or more stories, including mezzanine/stilt floor above ground level.
- Industrial buildings having covered area on all stories more than 250 square meters.
- Storage buildings having covered area on all stories more than 250 square meters.
- All Hazardous buildings having covered area on all stories more than 100 square meters.
- Underground Structures comprising of two or more Levels.

Further the "Fire Safety Certificate" issued under Rule 35, unless sooner cancelled, shall be valid for a period of 5 years for residential buildings (other than hotels) and 3 years for non-residential building including hotels from the date of issue. The buildings which are not having Fire Safety Certificate from this department, are hereby requested to submit an application for obtaining Fire Safety Certificate for their respective occupancy. The application alongwith sanctioned/as built drawings through concerned building sanctioned authority in scale, are required to be forwarded to this department. In case your Fire Safety Certificate has expired, you can apply for renewal on the online portal for renewal of Fire Safety Certificate of this department.

DIAL: 101/112 IN CASE OF FIRE
Issued in the interest of Public Safety, by Principal Director, Delhi Fire Service
WE SERVE TOSAVE

DIP/Shabdarth/Classified/0110/26-27

Principal Director
Delhi Fire Service



TMC REBELS CITE GOA VERDICT, CRITICS POINT AT SENA RULING

TMC rebel MPs at disqualification risk? Legal opinions are divided

Manoj C G & Damini Nath
New Delhi, June 15

A DAY after 20 rebel Trinamool Congress (TMC) Lok Sabha MPs announced their merger with the little-known Nationalist Citizens Party of India (NCPI) and met Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla seeking a separate seating arrangement in the House, legal opinion is divided on whether the MPs' move falls in the realm of defection and will consequently attract disqualification under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.

Those in the rebel camp believe they will be able to stave off disqualification since more than two-thirds of the MPs (20 of 28) have merged with another party. They also cite a 2022 verdict of the Goa Bench of the Bombay High Court in the Goa defection case. The court had upheld the Goa Assembly Speaker's order dismissing two petitions seeking disqualification of 12 MLAs — 10 from the Congress and two from the Maharashtra Gomantak Party (MGP) — who had switched over to the BJP in 2019.

The crossover was projected as a merger of the legislature parties of the Congress and the MGP as they constituted two-thirds of the respective strength of those two parties. The Congress had 15 MLAs in the House. At the Centre of the debate then and now is Paragraph 4 of Tenth Schedule which says disqualification will not apply if the original political party merges with another party and at least two-thirds of the members of the legislature party agree to such a merger. The clause, "disqualification not to apply in case of merger", states, "A member of a House



Rebel TMC MPs at the residence of Union Minister Bhopender Yadav in New Delhi on Sunday. PTI

shall not be disqualified... where his original political party merges with another political party and he claims that he and any other members of his original political party... have become members of such other party or, as the case may be, of a new political party formed by such merger; or have not accepted the merger and opted to function as a separate group...

It adds that "merger of the original political party... shall be deemed to have taken place if, and only if, not less than two-thirds of the members of the legislature party concerned have agreed to such merger".

In the Goa case, the High Court said, "Parliament in its own wisdom has incorporated a deeming fiction under sub-paragraph (2) of paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule to the Constitution, which protects a member of a House from being disquali-

ified... provided at least two-thirds members of the legislature party agree to merge with another political party," the court said. "... As long as Parliament has determined the threshold of morality of at least two-thirds members of the legislature party agreeing for merger, the courts have nothing else to go by, except the legislative wisdom of Parliament to determine such a threshold of political morality in that context."

Chakshu Roy, head of legislative and civic engagement at PRS Legislative Research said the Constitution specifies the requirement for MPs to merge and evade disqualification. "However, in the past both in Parliament and state legislatures, the presiding officers have approved the merger of two-third legislators of one party into another. When contested, the High Court of Bombay has allowed such

mergers to take place. In the absence of the apex court deciding the issue, there is no judicial finality on the merger provisions of the anti-defection law," he said.

Those who believe the TMC MPs will face disqualification argue that the Tenth Schedule contemplates a "twin test" for arriving at a conclusion regarding the merger of the original party. In this case, "the legislature party has merged, not the TMC. Under Paragraph 4 of the Tenth Schedule, the merger has to be of the party. And therefore, they are liable to be disqualified as MPs," said Rajya Sabha MP and Senior Advocate Kapil Sibal.

"Secondly, ours is a party-based Constitution. It is the symbol of the party that helps you become a MLA or MP. Now, if the legislative party merges, they don't take the symbol of the party. So now they (the TMC MPs) will be shown as having been elected from the symbol of

a party, which is a regional party and which I believe has not even been allotted a symbol. So, they will be represented as MPs with reference to the symbol of a party from whose symbol they did not get elected. It is per se illegal," he said.

Former Lok Sabha secretary-general P D Achary concurred with Sibal, emphasising that the Tenth Schedule recognises the centrality of political parties.

"The purpose of the law was to prevent disqualification of those MPs whose parties have merged," Achary said, underlining that it was clear that the merger had to be of the political party, not the legislature party. "All decisions of the Supreme Court on this have endorsed this," he added.

Achary believes the 2023 Supreme Court verdict in the Shiv Sena split case (Subhash Desai vs Principal Secretary, Governor of Maharashtra) made it clear that a legislature party cannot act independently of the political party. The Supreme Court said in its judgment that it was the political party and not the legislature party that appoints the Whip and issues directions to vote in a particular manner.

The immediate fate of the TMC rebel MPs lies in the hands of the Speaker. In April, seven of the 10 Rajya Sabha MPs of the AAP — constituting two-thirds of the party's strength in the Upper House — crossed over to the BJP. They had called it a merger.

Days later, the Rajya Sabha Secretariat updated the party-wise list of members in the House, counting the AAP members with the BJP, indicating that Chairman and C P Radhakrishnan has accepted the merger.



West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari at an event at KMC headquarters in Kolkata on Monday. EXPRESS

Kolkata civic body polls to be held by December 7: CM

Sweety Kumari
Kolkata, June 15

CHIEF MINISTER Suwendu Adhikari on Monday announced that elections to the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) would be held by December 7 this year, signalling the BJP government's intent to restore an elected civic board days after dissolving the TMC-controlled body following Mayor Firdah Hakim's resignation.

The announcement came during the launch of "Swachhatake Swagat", a city-wide cleanliness drive undertaken ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to Kolkata later this month for an International Yoga Day event at Red Road.

"There was an impasse in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation after the mayor's resignation. So the government gave three days to constitute a new board. Since they could not form it, the government dissolved the board and appointed an administrator. By December 7, through elections, the civic body will be handed over to elected representatives. In a democracy, the people have the

last word. Giving respect and dignity to the people is the responsibility of any elected government. The government is in favour of conducting the election only after carrying out delimitation of wards," Adhikari said.

Recently, Firdah Hakim resigned from the post of KMC Mayor. Although the board's tenure was until December this year, it was dissolved due to the Mayor's resignation, following which the Municipal Affairs and Urban Development Department appointed Municipal Commissioner Smita Pandey as the Administrator.

The KMC elections were scheduled for April-May 2020. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, it was not possible to conduct the polls back then. Following the 2021 Assembly elections, the KMC polls were held in December where TMC formed the municipal board by winning 137 out of 144 wards.

In view of the upcoming monsoons, Adhikari also urged everyone to cooperate with the civic officials and police.

Adhikari also accused the previous TMC government of not executing the Namami Gange project.

Fresh Salvo

THE POLITICAL storm over alleged misappropriation of donation funds at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya is all set to reach the Capital on Tuesday as the Congress has called a press conference to raise the issue. As the SIT, constituted by the UP government, began its probe on Monday, there were murmurs within the AICC that it was time the party broke its silence on the issue. UP Congress president Ajay Rai and MLA Aradhana Misra are headed to Delhi to address the press conference at the party's Akbar Road office. Sources said they will try to corner the government both in Lucknow and Delhi over the sensitive issue just months before polls in UP.

Poll Position

THE UP Congress unit is trying to expand its footprint in the state as it prepares for seat-sharing talks with the Samajwadi Party ahead of the Assembly polls next year. The party, it is learnt, is trying to induct a high-profile farmer leader from western Uttar Pradesh who had played an instrumental role in the protests against the three farm laws that were later withdrawn by the Centre. According to sources, a senior Congress MP on Monday met the farmer leader to discuss the party's plan for him. A decision from the leader is still awaited, the sources said.

Savoury Ride

TRAVELLING ABOARD the Delhi Metro on Monday, senior Delhi Minister Ashish Sood found common ground with commuters over their favourite street food — samosa. Sood, who holds Home, Education and Power portfolios among others, spent considerable time in the Metro between Delhi Secretariat and Janakpuri West stations as part of the city government's Metro Monday initiative, in line with PM Narendra Modi's call to use public transport. During the journey, Sood asked the fellow commuters about their favourite Delhi street food. As some of them mentioned samosa, the minister's smile widened and he admitted it was his weakness too. Sood seemed visibly delighted while alighting the Metro, perhaps happy sharing the ride with fellow samosa lovers.

4 BJP state units get poll-ready: 'Asked to work hard to sustain Bengal momentum'

Liz Mathew
New Delhi, June 15

THE BJP has instructed its state units in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Goa to step up their poll preparations if the Assembly elections are advanced to avoid a scheduling clash with the Census enumeration exercise scheduled for February 2027, sources have said. In Manipur, the fifth state scheduled to go to the polls early next year, escalating tension has prompted the BJP leadership to keep a close watch on the situation.

"Politically, we are keen to go to the polls while the momentum gained from the recent West Bengal elections remains intact. State units have been asked to work hard to sustain this momentum," said a senior party leader. A large section of the BJP attributes the landslide victory in West Bengal to Hindu consolidation and believes the same factor could significantly in-



BJP president Nitin Nabin

fluence the party's prospects in UP and Uttarakhand.

Sources said the core groups in all the poll-bound states had been asked to expedite their electoral preparedness. While BJP sources in UP, Goa, and Punjab indicated that the elections could be advanced by a few weeks to avoid the logistical challenges of the Census — the manpower involved in both exercises is largely the same — the Uttarakhand BJP is learnt to be in favour of the polls being advanced even further.

The second phase of the Cen-

sus exercise, in which socio-economic, educational and fertility data will be collected for inclusion in the caste census, is scheduled to begin across the country in February.

BJP sources said the Congress, which will be a key player in all these states except UP, "has received a shot in the arm from developments in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka" and if the polls are advanced the Opposition party would not have much time to prepare for these elections and that would work to the BJP's advantage.

"Developments in the South have boosted Congress's morale, and it is now in a better position to forge alliances and contest elections. The BJP leadership does not want to underestimate any (potential) challenge," the leader added.

The Congress-led UDF registered a spectacular victory in Kerala, while in Tamil Nadu, the party joined hands with the Jo-

seph Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) to form the government. In Karnataka, Congress ensured a smooth transition of power, replacing Siddaramaiah with D. K. Shivakumar as Chief Minister.

Last week, AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal suggested at a party programme in Punjab that the polls could be advanced and held as early as November this year. The BJP leadership is generally not in favour of advancing elections, given its setback after the 2004 polls held ahead of schedule. During a meeting with the Punjab unit's core group last week, a senior leader ruled out any major shift in the schedule, a source said.

"Still, there could be an advancement of a few weeks... The central leadership has asked the party to fast-track its preparedness with the goal of winning. We have been asked to be ready for elections," a Punjab BJP leader said.

Nabin, Shah and Nadda meet at Rajnath residence

New Delhi: Amid speculation about a reshuffle in the BJP's central team, senior leaders of the party including Union minister Amit Shah held a meeting on Monday at the residence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

According to sources, BJP president Nitin Nabin, Union minister J P Nadda, national general secretary (organisation) B L Santhosh and RSS pointman for the party Arun Kumar were also present at the meeting.

It is learnt that Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also attended the meeting, which lasted for more than four hours.

While there was no official word from the BJP, the party sources said the meeting discussed a range of issues, including rejig of the central team of the party.

The BJP's new central team under Nabin, who took charge in January, is expected to be announced this month. ENS

Bangladesh PM adviser 'stopped' in Delhi; Dhaka summons Indian envoy

Press Trust of India
Dhaka, June 15

BANGLADESH ON Monday summoned India's Deputy High Commissioner and conveyed its "deep disappointment" over an incident involving an adviser of the Prime Minister at the Delhi airport, according to media reports here.

Dr Zahed Ur Rahman, the Prime Minister's Adviser on Policy and Strategy Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting, was stopped by immigration authorities at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi on Sunday evening when his name was reportedly flagged during a routine security check, state-run BSS news agency reported.

Citing a foreign ministry official, the news agency said that the ministry summoned Indian Deputy High Commissioner Pawan Badhe and ex-

pressed its "deep disappointment" over the incident.

Badhe arrived at the foreign office in the afternoon when he was handed over the protest letter. Foreign Ministry spokesman Shahidul Karim said.

Earlier, Foreign Minister Dr Khalilur Rahman said that the government was taking appropriate steps regarding the matter.

"It is an unexpected incident, unfortunate, too," he told reporters.

Citing diplomatic sources, the Prothom Alo newspaper reported that Zahed, who was travelling to India to attend the 28th Meeting of the Committee of Senior Officials of the Indian Ocean Rim Association, was questioned by immigration authorities and kept waiting for about two and a half hours after his name was reportedly flagged during the security check.

Will TMC, NCP merge back into Cong? Pawar's idea finds new life as Opp shrinks



THE NEERAJ CHOWDHURY COLUMN
WEEKLY INSIGHT INTO WHAT'S CHANGING IN NATIONAL POLITICS — AND WHY

WHILE CAMPAIGNING for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Sharad Pawar prophesied that within a couple of years "several regional parties will associate more closely with the Congress, or they may look at the option of merging with the Congress".

He uttered these words in a late-night interview in Satara. When I asked him about his own party, the Nationalist Congress Party (Sharadchandra Pawar), Pawar said he did not see any difference between it and the Congress.

The interview gained traction, coming as it did from Pawar, who is not given to speaking off the cuff. His words are measured and his timing

carefully chosen — and were clearly meant to be a trial balloon to assess the Congress's reaction. With the NCP having split a year earlier and the larger group gravitating to his (now deceased) nephew Ajit Pawar, the senior Pawar may have hoped to retrieve the situation in the polls due in the state and also explore the possibility of a larger national role.

Several months later, I asked someone who had spoken to Pawar about what had come of the idea he had floated. The answer was short: there was no response from the Congress.

The Congress chose not to build on the momentum its 99 Lok Sabha seats generated. This might have happened had it reached out to Pawar and, through him, to other regional satraps for closer coordination. Would that have altered the outcomes in Haryana, Maharashtra, and the Delhi Assembly polls which gave the BJP a new lease of life? The Congress leadership obviously could not overcome its long-held war-

iness of Pawar, who first broke away from the party in 1978 — later to rejoin it in 1986 — and then again in 1999 on Sonia Gandhi's foreign origins to float the NCP.

And now, exactly two years later, Pawar's prediction has received a fresh lease of life. The regional parties are a weakened lot and the BJP is expanding its footprint rapidly. In a new-found assertiveness, the ruling party is going all out to acquire a two-thirds majority in Parliament by encouraging splits in Opposition parties.

The once-invincible Mamata Banerjee was not only defeated in West Bengal, but her party is unravelling with a stunning rapidity, with two-thirds of her MLAs and Lok Sabha MPs having moved away from her. The rebel group of 20 MPs that merged with a little-known party called NCPI ostensibly to avoid the axe of the anti-defection law falling on them has stated categorically that it will now be supporting the BJP-led NDA.



While Mamata Banerjee broke away from the Congress in 1998, Sharad Pawar went his separate way the following year. FILE

In the west, the Shiv Sena (UBT) is suddenly battling speculation of another split. Five of its nine Lok Sabha MPs did not show up for a meeting convened by Uddhav Thackeray on Sunday. There has been a restiveness in the NCP (SP) as several of its eight Lok Sabha MPs were hoping to reunite with Ajit Pawar's NCP, but Ajit dada's death in an air crash earlier this year stayed that process.

The BJP, which wants to push through the legislation on delimitation and operationalise the Women's Reservation Act, has reached out to the DMK that is miffed with the Congress for joining hands with actor Vijay's TVK. There are indications that the BJP is holding quiet consultations with the DMK leadership and reworking the delimitation Bills to bring around the Dravidian party, which has 22 Lok

Sabha MPs.

Concerned about these developments, the Congress on June 8 convened a meeting of the INDIA bloc after two years. Though Mamata had been cool to the idea of the Opposition alliance, this time she was seen warmly embracing Sonia Gandhi.

Then suddenly there was a buzz that Mamata and Pawar might merge their now-truncated parties with the Congress. Though the Congress and TMC spokespersons denied the reports, former Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot spoke of the need for a "ghar wapsi" by all those who were once a part of the Congress. Shiv Sena (UBT)'s Sanjay Raut, considered close to Pawar, spoke in a similar vein. Pawar's nephew and NCP leader Rohit Pawar did not rule it out, saying a merger "is definitely possible at the right time".

Questions remain

Attractive though the idea is — and a "ghar wapsi" will cre-

ate its own psychological impact — how feasible is it? And how workable will it be for the prodigal sons and daughters who left home to chart out their own course to return home and be welcomed with open arms? For it is always easier to break (leave a party), but that much more difficult to mend (return to the fold) and forget the old grievances and humiliations.

Can Mamata or Pawar re-join Rahul Gandhi? Technically speaking, they will work under the party president, the more senior Mallikarjun Kharge. Will they be given a free hand in their respective states? More importantly, how will their workers who have exchanged vitriolic attacks against each other in recent years accept each other readily?

Apart from Mamata, who broke away from the Congress in 1998, and Pawar, who split the following year, in Andhra Pradesh, there is Y S Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress which parted company with the Congress in 2010 after the

death of his father and CM of united Andhra Pradesh Y S Rajasekhara Reddy. Also, there are sections of one Janata Dal or another that share the Congress DNA. This is not the case with the Shiv Sena, the Aam Aadmi Party, the Samajwadi Party, or the Rashtriya Janata Dal; the politics of the last two groups having been shaped more by the socialists of yesteryears.

Merger or not, it may be easier to forge a "closer association" between the regional parties and the Congress that Pawar spoke of in Satara, looking at a seat-by-seat alliance. Whether Mamata goes back to the Congress will depend on whether, and how quickly, she starts to evoke sympathy at the popular level for the way she has been treated by her party colleagues at her lowest moment. And if and how she can turn it to her advantage.

(Neeraj Chowdhury, Contributing Editor, The Indian Express, has covered the last 11 Lok Sabha elections. She is the author of How Prime Ministers Decide.)

After 2 failed bids, ISRO to try PSLV launch again soon

Anonna Dutt
New Delhi, June 15

AFTER BACK-TO-BACK failure of its workhorse launch vehicle, the ISRO is likely to attempt another PSLV launch soon.

"As for PSLV, we are planning by the end of June or beginning of July," said Union Science Minister Dr Jitendra Singh on Monday, on the sidelines of an event to celebrate 12 years of the PM Narendra Modi-led government.

The space agency has not conducted any launches since its last PSLV failed to put the earth observation satellite, EOS-N1, in orbit in January this year. Earlier, in May 2025, the launch vehicle failed to put earth observation satellite EOS-09 in orbit. Both the rockets failed in their third stage.

According to officials in the know of the matter, the flights failed due to certain components that were not manufactured by ISRO. For future flights, the vendor for the components have been changed, they said. While the report of the failure assessment committee has not been made public, the space agency has maintained that the two flights failed due to separate faults.

Apart from the launch of PSLV, the first orbital launch by the private company Skyroot is also expected soon.

When asked about the space agency's calendar, Singh said that the focus would be on the country's human spaceflight mission Gaganyaan.

MODI, FICO INK PACTS ON LABOUR MIGRATION, DEFENCE, DIGITAL TECH AMONG OTHERS

India and Slovakia elevate bilateral ties to 'comprehensive partnership'

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, June 15

INDIA AND Slovakia elevated their bilateral ties to "comprehensive partnership", and signed pacts on labour migration, defence, digital technologies, higher education and research, quantum communication and student exchange programme with IIT Delhi after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's meeting with his Slovak counterpart Robert Fico on Monday.

The comprehensive partnership aims to take bilateral relations to a new level, strengthen existing cooperation mechanisms and explore new avenues for deepening cooperation, both bilaterally and multilaterally, the joint statement said.

After meeting PM Fico in Slovakia's capital Bratislava, Modi said, "India and Slovakia are also moving forward in close coordination on the global stage. We agree that all disputes and tensions should be resolved peacefully. We will continue to work together with all partners in this direction." This was a reference to the Russia-Ukraine war, which has been ongoing in Slovakia's neighbourhood for more than four years now.

The two sides also established a joint working group in counter-terrorism and a consular dialogue. Modi's visit is the first by an Indian PM to Slovakia since its independence in 1993.

"Today, the Prime Minister (Fico) and I held detailed discussions on giving new direction and fresh momentum to our cooperation. The progress achieved in our bilateral trade and economic cooperation is a source of satisfaction for us. However, our potential is immense, and our aspirations are even greater. Automobiles, railways, advanced manufacturing, and green technologies are areas of particular interest to us... we have taken several significant decisions today — leveraging our respective strengths — for the welfare of the people of both nations," Modi said.

Expressing gratitude to Slovakia for its support in finalising the India-EU FTA, PM Modi said: "We will work towards its early implementation so that industries, startups and traders in both countries can derive maximum benefit from it."



Slovak President Peter Pellegrini presents The Order of the White Double Cross (1st Class), the highest state honour of Slovakia, to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Bratislava on Monday. ANI

On defence cooperation, he said, "It is a testament to our deep mutual trust and strategic convergence. I am pleased that we signed a Letter of Intent in this vital sector today. This will impart new momentum to joint development, joint production and collaboration between our defence industries." Many Indian companies in the recent past have signed pacts with Slovak defence companies for joint manufacture in the fields of artillery and armoured systems.

On terrorism, the joint statement said the two leaders "unequivocally condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and strongly condemned the heinous terrorist attack perpetrated in Pahalgam, J&K, on April 22, 2025... they called for concerted international efforts to combat terrorism in a... sustained manner".

The statement said the two leaders agreed to enhance cooperation in the energy sector with a view to promote "energy security, sustainability and resilience through diversification of energy sources, including nuclear energy and geothermal power". They expressed their intent to deepen collaboration through joint research, exchange of expertise and capacity-building initiatives in areas of mutual interest. This is especially relevant amid the current situation in West Asia, which has led to an energy crisis in the world.

The two sides also agreed to explore avenues to significantly enhance bilateral trade and two-way investment across sectors such as "automotive, electronics and other advanced manufacturing industries", leveraging "Slovakia's well-developed industrial ecosystem" and India's scale, innovation ecosystem and technological capabilities.

On migration of Indians, the joint statement said the leaders expressed support for orderly, safe and legal mobility of skilled professionals. "They took note of the Comprehensive Framework of Cooperation on Mobility agreed between India and the European Union in January 2026. They welcomed the signing of the MoU on Cooperation in the field of labour migration to facilitate mobility and promote the exchange of information... The two sides also agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a Social Security Agreement, which would contribute to safeguarding the welfare and social protection of working professionals engaged in mobility between India and Slovakia."

• OUTCOMES OF PM MODI'S VISIT

- MoU on cooperation in the field of labour migration
- Letter of Intent promoting cooperation in the defence field
- MoU on digital technologies
- MoU on cooperation in the field of higher education and research
- MoU on audio-visual creation
- Establishment of first-ever ICCR Chair in AI at Technical University of Kosice
- MoU between National Institute of Naturopathy, Pune, Ministry of Ayush, and Slovak Health Spa Piestany
- Agreement between IIT Delhi and Slovak Technical University for student exchange programmes, scholarships, research collaboration
- Tourism cooperation between association of tour operators
- Agreement on scientific cooperation between INSA and the Slovak Academy of Sciences
- MoU in the field of quantum communication and critical infrastructure protection

• BRIEFLY



Smoke billows from the building where a fire broke out inside a pub in Mysuru on Monday. PTI

KARNATAKA

Nepal national among two killed in Mysuru pub fire, 11 injured

TWO PEOPLE were killed and 11 people were injured in a major fire at a pub in Mysuru on Monday. The police identified the deceased as Sahin, 26, from Darjeeling, West Bengal; and Prakash, 24, from Nepal. DCP (Law and Order) Harshan Priyamvada, who visited the pub, Fox Den, at Kanakadasa Nagar on Outer Ring Road, said a short circuit might have caused the fire. According to the police, the fire department received a call about the incident at around 3.15 pm. Fire department officials used a ladder to rescue 15 people. After dousing the fire, they found the bodies of the two men, who worked at the pub. "There were flammable materials like wood and furniture. The fire spread rapidly due to it," Priyamvada said. ENS

Hyderabad Metro: Revanth demands NoC

The Telangana government is ready to take up Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase-II work without Centre's assistance, CM A Revanth Reddy said Monday. Reddy said that the state would take up the work on 100% equity without the Centre's share, and demanded that the Union government issue a No Objection Certificate (NoC) to the state for taking up the expansion work. Addressing a press conference, the CM said that he met PM Narendra Modi and Union Ministers Manohar Lal and Ashwini Vaishnaw several times, and urged them to sanction the expansion project that was already delayed for years. ENS

UP minister's kin critically injured by kite 'manjha'

A TEENAGED nephew of Uttar Pradesh Minister Sanjay Gangwar sustained serious injuries on Monday morning after a nylon string, commonly known as Chinese manjha, entangled around his neck when he was driving a scooter on a flyover in Bareilly. The victim, Adityaveer Singh Gangwar (15), is a resident of neighbouring Pilibhit district. His mother, a railway official, is posted in Bareilly, it is learnt. Bareilly Superintendent of Police (City) Manush Pareek said the incident occurred when Adityaveer, a Class 8 student, was heading to a stadium with a friend at around 7.30 am. ENS

Mumbai concert deaths: Reports confirm Ecstasy

Manish Kumar Pathak
Mumbai, June 15

THE TOXICOLOGY reports of two management students who died after falling ill during a music concert at NESCO in Goregaon in April have confirmed the presence of MDMA (Ecstasy) in their bodies, corroborating investigators' suspicion that the women had consumed the party drug, police sources said.

Investigators have also uncovered an alleged international supply chain through which the contraband was smuggled into India from the United States, concealed inside paint containers.

The Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) has submitted its toxicology reports confirming MDMA in samples collected from the deceased students. The Vanrai police, yet to file a chargesheet, found that the contraband was allegedly sourced from the US through courier services. According to investigators, the ecstasy pills were wrapped in rubber or plastic and hidden inside paint

Investigators have also uncovered an alleged supply chain through which the contraband was smuggled into India from the US

containers to avoid detection during transit.

Police officers familiar with narcotics investigations said drug traffickers often conceal contraband within legitimate consignments to evade law enforcement.

"If ecstasy pills are packed in small rubber balls and hidden inside paint containers, it is difficult to identify them during routine screening. Drug syndicates have also been known to conceal narcotics inside chocolate boxes, with packets wrapped in colours similar to actual chocolates. During X-ray screening, such consignments can appear similar to genuine products, making them difficult to differentiate," a senior officer said.



Sanchita Ugale starred in the series Kumkum Bhagya

TV actor found dead at Palghar home, suicide suspected

Express News Service
Mumbai, May 15

ACTOR SANCHITA Ugale, 22, known for her role in the television series *Kumkum Bhagya*, allegedly died by suicide at her residence in Nalasopara in Maharashtra's Palghar district on Sunday. Police said no suicide note was found from the spot.

According to police, the incident occurred around 7 pm on Sunday when her parents had stepped out and Ugale was alone at home. When her father returned, he found the door locked from inside. The family subsequently broke open the door and found her hanging from a ceiling fan. She was immediately rushed to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared her dead on arrival.

A police team reached the spot and carried out a panchnama but found nothing suspicious at the scene, said an officer. Police have registered an Accidental Death Report (ADR) and launched an investigation to ascertain the circumstances that led to the incident.

TRIALS UNDERWAY TO STUDY EFFICACY OF CERVAVAC

Serum's HPV vaccine to be included in immunisation programme after 2027

Anonna Dutt
New Delhi, June 15

THE HPV vaccine developed by the Serum Institute of India, with support from the Department of Biotechnology, is likely to be included in the national vaccination drive after 2027 — once the results of the trials to see the efficacy of its single dose become available.

Dr Rajesh Gokhale, Secretary, Department of Biotechnology, said: "Cervavac is a two-dose vaccine because of which it was not initially launched. The single-dose will come in (to the national programme) after it has been clinically tested." The study is currently underway with the results expected next year, he said.

While the cost of Cervavac for the government is not known, it costs around Rs 2,000 in the market.

The Health Ministry rolled out the HPV vaccination campaign for 14-year-old girls earlier this year using MSD's (Merck Sharp & Dohme's) Gardasil, which already has data to show that a single dose is as efficacious as two doses in this age group.

"A retrospective study can also be conducted (a study where people, who have missed one dose of vaccination, are selected from the population and



Centre rolled out the HPV vaccination campaign for 14-year-old girls earlier this year

their outcomes compared to those who have received the complete two doses) but the current study will take about a year," said Dr Gokhale.

Union Minister of Science and Technology Jitendra Singh said the current study to test the effectiveness of one dose of the SII vaccine against one dose of MSD vaccine is a better way to do it "for more credibility, especially when it comes to human lives".

Persistent HPV infection is known to cause nearly 85% of all cervical cancers, the second most common cancer among women, affecting nearly 1.25 lakh women and killing 75,000 each year. HPV vaccination against the four most common strains known to cause cervical cancer has been shown to prevent most infections and thereby cancers.

With an estimated 1.15 crore girls turning 14 each year, the country has enough vaccines for the campaign at present. The GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation) has provided around 2.6 crore doses to India, which should be enough for the current as well as next year, after which Serum's Cervavac may be inducted.

There is an ongoing study — undertaken by ICMR in three of its institutes — that will follow 504 girls who have received one dose of either Serum's Cervavac or MSD's Gardasil for a period of two years. The two vaccines will be compared by testing the levels of antibodies that persist against the two most common strains of HPV (16 and 18) in girls given both the vaccines. If the levels are similar, Cervavac will be considered to be equally efficacious.

The National Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (NTAGI) — a body of experts that suggests the government about inclusion of various vaccines into national programmes — had recommended HPV vaccination in 2017 and 2022. The body had recommended the inclusion of the indigenously developed vaccine as a two-dose regimen, to tide over studies on the one-dose vaccine.

CORPORATOR'S PROPERTY RAZED

Accused in murder of Unnao priest killed in encounter

Bhupendra Pandey
Lucknow, June 15

A MAN wanted in connection with the murder of a priest last week was killed in an alleged encounter by Unnao Police early Monday morning.

Police said Israyil alias Ijrail had a reward of Rs 1 lakh announced on his arrest.

Following the murder, the Unnao administration also demolished an 'ahaata' (walled sitting area) owned by local corporator Ateeq Khan, whose role in the murder is under probe.

The administration claimed the land belonged to the village panchayat and was grabbed by Ateeq. "His role (in the murder) is also being probed, though he is not among the named accused," Unnao SP Jai Prakash Singh told *The Indian Express*.

He said besides Israyil, four more men were named in the murder case: Mohammad Shafi, Shanu, Ajay Gautam alias Lalli and Yameen. "We had arrested

Shafi, Lalli and Yameen the same day of the killing while Shanu and Israyil were absconding," he added.

According to police, the case relates to the killing of priest Milan Das on June 9 in Purvi Tola village. SP Singh said that the victim was constructing a Shiva temple on his land, located next to the "ahaata" owned by Ateeq. Police said Ateeq used to assist Das in the construction. The SP said Das regularly visited the ahaata along with Ateeq and others, and there was no prior dispute between them.

On June 9, as usual, accused Ajay Gautam alias Lalli allegedly picked up Das on his motorcycle and brought him to the ahaata, where Israyil and others were already present.

But a sudden argument broke out between Israyil and Das, which escalated into a physical altercation. During the scuffle, Israyil allegedly picked up a knife lying nearby and stabbed Das repeatedly.

'Conspiracy to link party leader to Ankita Bhandari case': BJP's ex-MLA held

Aiswarya Raj
Dehradun, June 15

FORMER BJP MLA Suresh Rathore has been arrested by Dehradun police for allegedly conspiring to falsely implicate senior BJP leader Dushyant Gautam in the Ankita Bhandari murder case, police said.

On January 5, Dushyant Kumar Gautam, national general secretary of the BJP and the party's Uttarakhand in-charge, submitted a written complaint at Dehradun's Dalanwala police station. He alleged that Rathore (66), the former MLA from Jwalapur constituency in Haridwar, and actress Urmila Sanawar, who claims to be Rathore's wife, in collusion with certain political parties, entered into a criminal conspiracy to create and circulate fabricated audio and video clips with the intention of maligning the complainant, his party, and other senior

office-bearers. Ankita Bhandari was a 19-year-old receptionist at Vantara resort in Rishikesh, who was killed on September 18, 2022, by its manager, Pulkit Arya, the son of former BJP leader Vinod Arya, barely 20 days after she joined the resort.

In December, Sanawar shared an audio clip of an alleged conversation with Rathore to insinuate that Gautam was linked to the case.

Gautam had alleged that the accused posted and disseminated false audio and video recordings on social media, attempting to disturb public peace, provoke unrest, and incite disorder and riots.

In January, Gautam, who is also the former SC Morcha president, had moved the Delhi High Court, accusing Sanawar, Rathore, and Opposition parties of defaming him.

From modest MP home, topper's mantra: 'Count targets, not hours'

Anand Mohan J
Bhopal, June 15

THE SHELF above Chandni Vishwakarma's head is crowded. Two school bags hang beneath it, and a handful of trophies occupy one corner. In the small two-room house in Bhopal's Bhim Nagar settlement, there isn't much space to spare.

This is where Madhya Pradesh's Class 12 commerce topper lives.

When the results were declared this year, neighbours began pouring into the narrow lane outside her home. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav, driving an electric scooter, turned up in person to congratulate the young woman

on her achievement. Her dreams are just starting — the 17-year-old now wants to clear the National Defence Academy examination and join the Army.

"I want to become a lieutenant and serve the country," Chandani said.

After each paper in the board examinations, Chandni would come home and work out how many marks she thought she had lost. By the time the results were declared, she had already run the numbers several times. When the state's highest commerce score — 494 out of 500 — was confirmed, she wasn't off the mark.

The same precision ran through her preparation.



Madhya Pradesh CM Mohan Yadav recently visited Chandni Vishwakarma at her home to congratulate her

Chandni did not measure study time in hours. She measured it in targets.

"I never focused on how many hours I studied. I only focused on completing targets. If a

target was completed in eight hours or ten hours, it didn't matter," she said.

"I faced many ups and downs, but I had written down my aims. I decided that no matter what happened, I would achieve them," she said.

Chandni's father, Ram Bhuvan Vishwakarma, works in Bhopal's furniture market as a carpenter. Her mother, Bimla, works at a school and cooks in homes. The family of four lives in the two-room house in Bhim Nagar, near the Vidhan Sabha.

When books were needed, the family had to think carefully before buying them. Often, Chandni borrowed them from others rather than add to her parents' expenses. Getting to

school — a 45-minute journey each way by auto and bus — was followed by coaching, and only then by study at home. She found she concentrated best when her parents had left for work, and the house was empty.

Her teachers helped with fees. At home, her mother worked to keep the financial anxiety out of Chandni's view. "Salary was less, and there were many financial difficulties," said Bimla. "But we never let Chandni feel it. We both managed together so that her studies would not be interrupted."

Asked what she would tell students who come after her, she said, "Be consistent from the first day. Hard work pays off on the last day."

Akal Takht declares Mann 'Guru Dokhi', AAP rejects charge

Akal Takht says forensic reports prove 'sacrilege' video authentic; doesn't establish identity of person in clip: AAP

Kamaldeep Singh Brar
Amritsar, June 15

THE FIVE-MEMBER jathedar-led panel of Akal Takht Monday declared Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann a "Guru Dokhi" (anti-Guru) and "Panth Virodhi" (anti-community) over an alleged sacrilege video after forensic reports commissioned by the Akal Takht concluded that the viral clip was authentic and not AI-generated.

However, Mann has consistently denied being the person seen in the video and earlier described the clip as fake and AI-generated. The AAP Monday reiterated that the forensic reports cited by the Akal Takht did not establish the identity of the individual seen in the footage and accused the SAD and the Badal family of politicising Sikh institutions.

AAP Punjab media in-charge Baltej Pannu said, "While the forensic report may state that the video itself is authentic, it does not establish who the individual is in the video. Therefore, declaring someone guilty on that basis raises serious questions."

Addressing a meeting of Sikh bodies convened at Akal Takht, Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj said forensic analysis by two recognised laboratories had found the viral video — which allegedly shows a man resembling Mann committing sacrilege — to be authentic, untampered and not generated using AI.

"Ultimately, the conclusion from both labs is that this video is authentic," the Jathedar told the gathering, describing the



Jathedar Giani Kuldeep Singh Gargajj pronounces the religious verdict against CM Bhagwant Mann from the Akal Takht premises in the Golden Temple complex, Amritsar, Monday. RANA SIMRANJIT SINGH

laboratories as government-recognised and experienced forensic units. He said the reports explicitly stated the footage had "not been tampered with" and was "not AI", adding that the video appeared "entirely natural, just like sitting in a natural environment where shadows fall".

The controversy dates back to January 15 when the Akal Takht summoned Mann to appear before its secretariat over statements he had made about Guru Ki Golak and over the objectionable video. At the time, the Akal Takht issued a strong rebuke, claiming the chief minister's remarks reflected an "anti-Sikh mentality" and had hurt Sikh sentiments.

Addressing questions about the credibility of the forensic examination, Gargajj said, "These are the same labs whose reports brought down a CM in Manipur."

Responding to the development, AAP Punjab media in-charge Baltej Pannu accused

the Shiromani Akali Dal and the Badal family of using Sikh institutions for political purposes and rejected the allegations against Mann. He said the forensic reports cited by the Akal Takht did not establish the identity of the person seen in the video and raised more questions than answers.

Pannu said Akal Takht is the highest temporal seat of the Sikhs and "belongs to the entire Panth, not to any political party or family". He alleged that the institution was being drawn into a political battle and said the Jathedar should not act as a "political pawn".

He further alleged that the SAD was attempting to regain political relevance after electoral setbacks and questioned the moral authority of its leaders, citing the 2015 sacrilege incidents and the Kotkapura and Behbal Kalan firing cases.

Pannu also accused the Opposition of being unable to accept the Mann government's anti-sacrilege legislation.

2 Rajasthan men who ran a fake NEET re-exam paper racket via Telegram held

Express News Service
Ahmedabad, June 15

THE CYBERCRIME branch of the Ahmedabad city police Monday arrested two men from Rajasthan for allegedly running a racket that defrauded medical aspirants and their parents via Telegram by allegedly claiming to have the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) [NEET UG] re-examination question paper and offering to sell it to them.

The police clarified that the duo did not possess any leaked documents. "No material related to NEET or any other examination was recovered from their possession," said a police statement.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) will conduct the retest of NEET UG 2026, the entrance examination for students aspiring to pursue undergraduate medical courses, on June 21, following the cancellation of the initial May 3 exam due to a paper leak.

According to the police, the scammers set up targeted Telegram channels to circulate misleading advertisements. Once students or parents contacted, they allegedly demanded upfront payments via online payment platforms, QR codes, and compromised bank accounts under the pretext of providing confidential exam papers.

The scam came to light during routine cyber patrolling, prompting the police to register a case under Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) sections 318(4) [cheating], 319(2) [cheating by personation], 54 (abatement), and Section 66(D) of the Information Technology Act (cheating by personation by using computer resource).

The police identified the arrested accused as Sumer Singh Bharatlal Meena, 24, a resident of Jaipur with an ITI diploma in Electronics; and Akash Pappulal Meena, 22, a resident of Kota with a BA degree in English and Hindi.

Technical analysis reveals



Sumer Singh Bharatlal Meena and Akash Pappulal Meena were arrested Monday. EXPRESS

they had created a prominent channel named 'Raghav_singh_neet' alongside seven other channels, which they handed over to a Telegram operator using the moniker 'Private Mafia', the police added.

Cyber racket, Telegram channels

The police said in a statement, "The accused had created various Telegram channels and Telegram IDs and circulated posts, messages, and advertisements falsely claiming that they possessed and could provide the re-NEET examination question paper. They also lured students preparing for the examination and their parents by offering various false and misleading assurances related to the exam."

"Thereafter, under the pretext of providing the examination question paper and other confidential information, the accused obtained money from students and their parents. Investigation has revealed that the accused were using Telegram channels to carry out financial fraud by disseminating false information and misleading advertisements, thereby cheating students and their parents," they added.

Further investigation re-

vealed that the accused were allegedly involved in various investment-related activities through Telegram channels, Telegram IDs, and other social media platforms. They allegedly used channels and groups such as "Trade With Karol" and "PANKAJ BHARDWAJ" to entice individuals to invest money by promising high returns and substantial profits.

The police discovered that 12 complaints from various states were linked to six of the accused's bank accounts, which were allegedly used to process criminal proceeds. Transactions worth around Rs 1.5 crore were allegedly conducted through these accounts.

The investigation revealed that roughly 1,000 mobile numbers and Telegram channels were contacted within the past month. The accused created around 44 different websites that facilitated gaming, betting, gambling, and cyber fraud activities.

Cockroach Janta Party founder slapped during Jaipur protest

Hamza Khan
Jaipur, June 15

COCKROACH JANTA Party's founding president Abhijeet Dipke was allegedly slapped and assaulted while entering the protest site in Jaipur on Monday, with the police arresting five persons for the assault.

During the party's maiden protest at Shaheed Smarak in Jaipur, Dipke was lifted upon his arrival by supporters who were carrying him on their shoulders to the stage. However, just as Dipke entered the ground and was waving at the crowd, 5-6 persons allegedly started slapping and assaulting him.

On the stage, he said, "I was assaulted while I was entering. No matter how many times we're attacked, we don't have to raise our hand, only the weak raise their hand." He requested his supporters to set the accused free. "Leave those who raised their hands on me. Don't beat them up, it is my request. Let them attack us, we will not raise our hands. I can get beaten up ten times more, but no one should raise their hands."

He said that he won't be silenced and even when he was



Abhijeet Dipke was allegedly slapped in Jaipur, Monday. ROHIT JAIN PARAS

returning to India from America, he was ready to go to jail, telling his supporters that "Our protest will be peaceful."

"We will continue to raise our voices peacefully. I am a follower of Gandhi and Ambedkar, and I will keep fighting this battle with peace and love," he said on X.

CJP spokesperson Ashutosh Ranka said that "The people who attacked Dipke all belong to a national party. Their faces have been identified. All of these miscreants will be exposed."

Rajarshi Raj Varma, Deputy Commissioner of Police (South), Jaipur, said that, "some individuals slapped CJP

founder Abhijeet Dipke and attempted to disrupt the atmosphere. A scuffle and altercation occurred at the protest site, prompting the police force present at the site to take immediate action and arrest five individuals under Section 170 of the BNSS. Further legal action will be ensured after a written report is made by the affected parties."

The five have been identified as Rohit Sharma, 25; Rakesh Gurjar, 30; Ajay Sharma, 25; Kuldeep Singh Shekhawat, 27; and Niket, 28. Another person, Bewesh Adhikari from Sikim, who has been participating in CJP protests, was also allegedly assaulted.

NTA admits 'initial shortfalls' after NEET portal breach, ups security

Express News Service
Ahmedabad, June 15

THE NATIONAL Testing Agency (NTA) Monday acknowledged security gaps in the NEET UG-2026 portal, following a cyber breach in which an accused allegedly accessed hundreds of candidates' accounts and attempted to divert refund amounts into his own bank account.

Akash Jain, the newly appointed NTA Joint Director, attempted to reassure students that the administration is taking significant action against those

involved in the NEET paper leak and increasing security measures in the wake of the cyber breach.

"A two-step security feature has been added. We have enabled OTP for mobile phones and are trying to make it Aadhaar-enabled system. Our job was to refund the amount to the students. We had initial shortfalls in the system, but with this investigation now, we have learned and strengthened it."

Jain's remarks came during a press briefing with Ahmedabad Joint Commissioner of Police Sharad Singhal, to address

public anxieties following the recent cancellation of the NEET-UG due to paper leaks and to announce the arrest of a suspect who was allegedly siphoning off students' exam fee refunds directly from the NTA portal.

"Everything has certain imperfections. A thing cannot be perfect. People may use loopholes. The system we are fighting against, those working against us, they are using technology to such an extent that they remain far ahead of us in technology because they want to commit crimes, and we want to stop it," said Jain.

Rahul takes train to Kota tomorrow, set to launch series of education campaigns

Manoj CG
New Delhi, June 15

A TRAIN journey from Delhi to Rajasthan's Kota this week to launch a campaign on issues plaguing the education sector, interactions with students in several cities, and a plan to raise education-related issues in the Monsoon Session of Parliament. Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi is set to embark on a new campaign against the BJP government in the coming weeks and months centred on education.

As the Cockroach Janta Party holds street protests seeking the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over NEET paper leaks, the main Opposition party on Monday firmed up plans to launch a campaign by Gandhi in a big way to ensure that the anti-government space on a bread-and-butter issue such as education is not ceded to what it believes are "non-political" groupings.

Gandhi held a lengthy meeting with leaders of the Youth Congress and student wing NSUI on Monday, sources said. The party believes the LOP should, while talking about paper leak and "failure of NTA", flag broader issues such as "expensive fees, mental health of students, collapse of government colleges and schools, exam centralisation and saffronisation of education" and offer solutions to expand the scope of the campaign. Earlier this month, Gandhi met student Sarthak Siddhant, who revealed alleged irregularities in the CBSE's tendering process for selection of vendor for the online marking system for Class 12 exams.

On Wednesday, Gandhi will board the Jan Shatabdi Express from Delhi's Hazrat Nizamuddin station to travel to Kota, a popular coaching hub, where he



Rahul Gandhi is expected to chat with students aboard the train to Kota on Wednesday

will address a rally in the evening. The Congress wants students to board the train from various stops on the way and speak to Gandhi about issues afflicting the education sector.

Congress sources said the party's surveys had shown there is massive resonance on education issues in the 18 to 30 age group and the party is keen to focus on those issues. In the past, Gandhi has targeted the government on issues such as "irregularities in SIR, vote theft, capture of institutions, crony capitalism," but those have not had much purchase in the electoral arena. Sources said the LOP believes education is an issue that touches every household.

The party has already announced that Gandhi will hold student conventions in Kota, Prayagraj, Patna and Delhi to "highlight hardships" faced by youths because of "paper leaks, rising examination costs and the government's failure to ensure a fair and transparent recruitment and education system." Sources said it was decided Monday to expand the campaign.

"Every paper leak, every cancelled examination, every incomplete recruitment process is not just a failure of the system; it is an attack on the dreams of millions of young people," Gandhi said in a social media post.

Khan 'SIR' INSTITUTE ATTACK CASE Rival coaching centre's director Anand gets bail, alleges conspiracy

Express News Service
Patna, June 15

A PATNA court on Monday granted bail to Raushan Anand, director of Gyan Bindu Coaching Institute, in connection with the June 2 violence and vandalism outside Khan Global Studies (KGS) in Patna's Musallahpur Haat area. KGS is run by Faisal Khan, popularly called Khan Sir.

Anand was arrested on June 3. His earlier bail application was declined by a lower court on June 9, which took into account the claims of an organised attack on the institute, injury report on a security guard and his criminal antecedents.

In the fresh hearing, a sessions court granted him bail, allowing his release from Beur Jail. Following his release, Anand spoke to reporters at his institute and made several allegations against Khan and the Patna police. He alleged that there was a conspiracy against him and that he was being "pressured" while in jail for a "compromise". He also linked



Roshan Anand talks to the press upon his release on Monday

the death of his brother, Prince Yadav, to the case. Prince, who was also an accused in the June 2 incident, was found dead in a hotel in eastern Nepal on Sunday. Anand demanded a CBI probe into Prince's death and sought a fresh postmortem examination in Bihar through a high-level committee.

The case in which Anand was arrested arises from an FIR lodged by KGS manager Kanhaiya Kumar Singh, which alleged that on the night of June 2, a group of 15-20 persons pelted stones at the institute premises, assaulted security guard Chun Chun, damaged property, and threatened to "blow up the insti-

tute within two days". The FIR named Anand, Prince and others.

The controversy widened after videos surfaced allegedly showing two KGS security guards firing outside the institute following the violence. The guards were arrested after investigators said they claimed to have opened fire on Khan's instructions. A separate FIR was also registered against Khan, the two guards and others under provisions relating to attempt to murder and the Arms Act.

Khan has denied wrongdoing through his lawyers, and secured interim protection from arrest from a Patna court until June 20. As the legal battle intensifies, Anand said he would continue to pursue the matter through lawful means. "I have faith in the judiciary and in the double-engine government. We will fight and seek justice," he said before leaving to attend his brother's last rites. Meanwhile, in a letter to Bihar CM, Tejashwi Yadav has sought a CBI probe into the case.

'India, Sweden not competing with one another, we actually can complete one another'

INDIA AND Europe do not share a buyer-seller relationship but one of collaboration, says Swedish Ambassador to India Jan Thesleff. In an interview with Divya A. Thesleff talks about what brings India and Europe together in the present geopolitical context, Indo-Swedish joint defence production plans in Jhajar and the role that the present India can play in the current world scenario. Edited excerpts:

Sweden was part of PM Narendra Modi's recent four-nation Europe visit. What is your assessment of the 20 hours that PM Modi spent in Sweden?

Personally speaking, that visit is the highlight of my time in India. But more importantly, it's a highlight when it comes to our relations, which date back more than 75 years. So much has happened, so much is evolving in India, and in my country, for good and for bad in the world. It was really time to have this visit to upgrade our relations to a

strategic partnership. India has many partnerships around the world, but if you look at the partnership that we concluded with India in Gothenburg, it's among the most comprehensive. There was a need for a closer political dialogue with the changing situation in the world, in our neighbourhood, in your neighbourhood. So there was an urgency.

What are the key deliverables for both sides from PM Modi's visit?

Now we not only have a strategic partnership, but a joint action plan. And that goes over five pages, and has a timeline. We have agreed what we should achieve, how, and when. And that is very important. For instance, in the economic field, we will double everything we do. But we will also double what we do in terms of exchanges of researchers, in scientific innovation exchange, and in the number of Indians coming to us. Today, we have 88,000 Indians with us, almost 1% of our

population. Indians are the biggest immigrant group in Sweden. And we have set out to double all these exchanges. With the FTA, and the changing dynamics in the world, I am convinced we will achieve that. This will happen before 2030.

An important pillar of India-Sweden ties now is defence cooperation. Rather than a buyer-seller relation, it is about co-production and joint ventures. What are the tangible outcomes in that zone?

We have moved far beyond that time when we sent goods to one another. Yes, we still send some goods to one another, but it's much more complicated, involving global supply chains. When I visited an IKEA store in India a few months ago, the blueberry jam stocked there came from Punjab.

When it comes to defence, we are at the forefront in India among foreign countries in defence co-production. As we speak, we are establishing

EXPRESS interview



JAN THESLEFF SWEDISH AMBASSADOR TO INDIA

through the Swedish company Saab, a manufacturing plant in Haryana. It is 100% foreign-owned, and will manufacture the Carl-Gustaf rifle. India has been the biggest buyer of these rifles since the 1970s. So the rifles produced by the Swedish company in Jhajar will cater for the Indian market. And perhaps, beyond that. We will see the first products coming in 2027.

PM Modi's visit happened at a time when India and

Europe are coming together, and have a lot to discuss owing to geopolitical realities. What were the discussions on dealing with global supply chain disruptions?

We are at a point in time where no one is really immune to what happens elsewhere. We have in our neighbourhood, the aggression by Russia on Ukraine going on for four years now. And now we have seen since a little bit more than 100 days, how West Asia is also involved in armed conflict. These things might be far away geographically but they do influence us.

How do you move goods when the seas are no longer open and safe? All this is felt by us, felt by you and felt by the consumers. So a need was felt for a closer coordination, exchange of views, better understanding for the realities of one another.

What also came up in all the meetings is that India, Sweden and Europe are proponents of a rule-based world order.

Chaos, disruptions will not serve us. Three words that came up during the visit were complementarity, predictability and trust.

After the India-EU FTA negotiations concluded in January, there have been greater political engagements between India and EU. What is bringing them closer?

India and Europe were already heading in that direction, but political realities have speeded things up. Because of the situation of the past year, the wars, the tariff issues, the supply chain disruptions... The security situation in Europe and in West Asia was on the agenda.

Were there discussions about how and what role India could play because it is talking to all the sides in both wars that you mentioned?

There was definitely a Swedish recognition that India

has stepped out on the world stage under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi by hosting big events like G20 and now BRICS. We see an India that is more vocal, more present everywhere. Importantly, India has the credibility of being a democracy. What came out in many of the talks were generally that Europe, EU, Sweden and India are also an alliance of democracies, which is something that binds us together.

You say India is now everywhere. As we saw in the joint statement, Sweden lent its support to UN reform.

Sweden lent its support — not for the first time — to UN reforms and India getting a permanent place on a reformed UNSC. There is a recognition of India's rightful place on the world stage.

In this time when we are talking of semiconductors and critical minerals, how would the two countries

collaborate on that front?

In the joint statement, mining is one of the issues that has been highlighted. Sweden possesses unique mining technologies, which will also help India and others to access rare earth minerals. Sweden is one of the top countries when it comes to mining, and also when it comes to the technologies. So there would be collaborations.

In the present context, what do you think makes India indispensable for Europe?

It's the complementarity aspect that we spoke about earlier. We are not competing with one another, we actually can complete one another. When it comes to research, cutting-edge technology, more and more European companies, including from Sweden, are moving part of their research and development to India. The mere scale of India gives access to talent that smaller countries cannot offer. Talent is always related to numbers.

US-Iran MoU: The elusive quest for 'New Middle East'

Disputes over interpretation will begin as soon as the text is released. Implementation will be harder, possibility of breakdown is real. In any case, a profound transition is underway



C RAJA MOHAN

FOR ALL the political turmoil around it, the memorandum of understanding between the United States and Iran, announced by US President Donald Trump on Sunday, could mark an important turning point in the geopolitics of the Middle East. For India, any movement towards defusing the conflict, that threatens to upend its economic stability, is enormously welcome — from the interest of its diaspora to the imperatives of its energy security.

The text of the MoU isn't public yet but it has already triggered strong opposition in Israel, considerable criticism in Washington, and some dissent in Tehran. The resistance in all three capitals suggests that both the US and Iran have made significant concessions to make the agreement possible.

As with any complex negotiation between long-standing adversaries, disputes over interpretation will begin as soon as the text is released. The internal questioning of the agreement will get sharper. The implementation will be even harder and the possibility of breakdown remains real.

Yet the significance of the agreement cannot be dismissed. As US Vice President JD Vance, who is expected to sign the MoU in Geneva on Friday, recently argued, it has the "potential to remake the region and lead to lasting peace". That may be an overstatement. But there is little doubt that the agreement seeks to redefine relations between Washington and Tehran, which have been locked in confrontation since Iran's Islamic Revolution of 1979.

The idea of a "new Middle East" has been an elusive one. The Oslo peace process in the 1990s, the American invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Arab Spring of 2011, and the Abraham Accords of 2020 were all presented as decisive turning points. Yet each produced outcomes very different from those originally envisaged.

Could it be different this time? The rise of new economic power centres in the Gulf, the accumulation of extraordinary wealth, growing indigenous military capabilities, and the exhaustion produced by decades of conflict are reshaping the Middle East landscape.

To be sure, this is not the first US-Iran agreement. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) of 2015, negotiated under US President Barack Obama, fo-



An artwork on the US-Iran peace deal in Mumbai on Monday. ANI

cus primarily on Iran's nuclear programme in exchange for sanctions relief.

The nuclear issue remains central to the current negotiations. But the new MoU appears to go well beyond the nuclear question. It seeks to establish a broader framework for managing US-Iran tensions, reducing the risk of military confrontation, and creating the basis for a more stable regional order. It would also involve phased sanctions relief and support for Iran's economic reconstruction after years of sanctions and the destruction caused by the wars of 2025-26.

The ambition is impressive. The more expansive the agenda, the harder it becomes to negotiate and implement.

Sceptics argue that meaningful change in the Middle East is impossible. Others welcome change but doubt that the region's entrenched rivalries can be overcome. Yet change is the one constant in international politics, and the Middle East is not immune to that fundamental law. The real question is about the nature of change that is now underway.

One important factor is the shifting mood in the US. Across the political spectrum, there is growing fatigue with America's long military involvement in the Middle East. The demand for ending America's "forever wars" now comes from both the left and the right. Equally striking is the growing willingness in Washington to question long-standing assumptions about US policy towards Israel. While Trump has had to walk back his rhetorical bombast before and during the war with Iran, he has also reaffirmed the US role as the principal external force shaping the geopolitics of the region. As in Gaza, so in the Gulf.

Iran, meanwhile, confronts a different reality. If Iranian expansion and regional influence were among the defining stories of the last two decades, the wars of 2025-26

have exposed the costs of that strategy. The economy remains under severe strain. Several regional partners have been weakened by conflict. The risks of direct confrontation with Israel and the United States have become increasingly evident.

Iran has demonstrated significant missile capabilities and shown its ability to threaten critical maritime routes in the Gulf. But you can't live on deterrence alone. Missile cities that Tehran built under its mountains are not the means for Iran's national reconstruction.

Israel remains deeply sceptical of any accommodation between Washington and Tehran. For much of the past decade, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has promoted his own vision of a "New Middle East", one built around the containment of Iran and, more recently, the prospect of regime change in Tehran. That project no longer appears to command the same support in Washington. At the same time, growing political divisions within Israel raise questions about the future direction of its own regional strategy.

The Gulf states have also moved away from the assumptions that framed their response to the JCPOA as "American appeasement" of Iran. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates now place a premium on stability and economic transformation. The recent conflict demonstrated how vulnerable their wealth is to war and violence. They have as much interest in de-escalation as Iran does.

For decades, the Middle East has been trapped in recurring cycles of war, proxy conflict, and diplomatic breakdown. The current negotiations suggest that many regional and external powers are searching for a different framework — one based less on permanent confrontation and more on managing rivalries.

Whether such a framework can endure is another matter. Deep distrust between Washington and Tehran remains. Israeli concerns will not disappear. Conflicts in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen continue to generate instability.

It may therefore be premature to proclaim the arrival of a new Middle East. But it is not premature to recognise that the old order has been badly shaken. Whatever emerges from the current diplomacy, the region is already in the midst of a profound transition. As the region enters a new phase, India needs to shift from a risk-averse policy to an active role in stabilising regional politics in the Middle East, on its own as well as in coalition with partner nations.

(The writer is a contributing editor on international affairs for The Indian Express)

JCPOA: Another Iran deal a decade ago, the concessions it secured

Shubhajit Roy
New Delhi, June 15

MONDAY'S FRAMEWORK for a peace deal between the United States and Iran has invited comparisons with the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, which, although signed under different circumstances, tested the limits of their cooperation.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was signed between Iran and major powers in 2015. It went into effect in January 2016 and put restrictions on Iran's civilian nuclear enrichment programme.

The nuclear option

Five permanent members of the UN Security Council (the US, UK, France, China and Russia) and Germany — collectively "the P5+1" — conducted negotiations with Iran, along with the EU.

An initiative led by then US President Barack Obama, the deal took two years of back-and-forth. It had the approval of the late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani, considered reformist and moderate.

Essentially, Iran was to dismantle its nuclear programme and allow international inspections and verification of its commitments. In exchange, it would receive some relief from crippling economic sanctions.

The Obama administration said that Iran needed two key elements to construct a bomb: "Enough highly enriched uranium to produce enough material to construct a uranium bomb and tens of thousands of centrifuges." Iran agreed not to produce highly enriched uranium and plutonium. The deal also mandated that its Fordow, Natanz, and Arak facilities pursue only medical and industrial research.

At that time, Iran had a uranium stockpile capable of creating 8 to 10 nuclear bombs. As per JCPOA, Iran was to reduce its stockpile of uranium by 98%, and keep its level of enrichment at 3.67% — significantly below the level needed for a bomb.

The third way Iran could build a nuclear weapon was by using weapons-grade plutonium. "The only site where Iran could accomplish this is the Arak reactor, a heavy-water nuclear reactor... under this deal, the Arak reactor will be redesigned so it cannot produce any weapons-grade plutonium," the Obama administration had said.

Mutual benefit

Iran agreed to implement a protocol

that would allow inspectors from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog, unfettered access to its facilities and potentially to undeclared sites. The IAEA issued quarterly reports to its board of governors and the UNSC on Iran's implementation.

A body known as the Joint Commission, which included representatives of all parties, monitored implementation.

"What if they try to build a nuclear program in secret? That's why this deal is so important... Iran has committed to extraordinary and robust monitoring, verification, and inspection... (IAEA) will also be verifying that no fissile material is covertly carted off to a secret location to build a bomb. And if IAEA inspectors become aware of a suspicious location, Iran has agreed to implement the Additional Protocol to their IAEA Safeguards Agreement, which will allow inspectors to access and inspect any site they deem suspicious," the US said.

Citing experts, the US think tank Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), noted that the deal could have prevented Iran from getting nuclear weapons for over a decade: "Many of the JCPOA's restrictions on Iran's nuclear program have expiration dates. For example, after ten years (from January 2016), centrifuge restrictions would be lifted... Some of the deal's opponents faulted these so-called sunset provisions, saying they would only delay Iran building a bomb while sanctions relief would allow it to underwrite terrorism in the region."

In exchange, the EU, UN, and US all committed to lifting their nuclear-related sanctions on Iran. They also agreed to lift the UN ban on Iran's transfer of conventional weapons and ballistic missiles if Iran only engaged in civilian nuclear activity.

The P5+1 wanted to cap Iran's nuclear programme to the point that if Iran decided to pursue a nuclear weapon, it would take at least one year. CFR said, "U.S. intelligence officials had estimated that, in the absence of an agreement, Iran could produce enough nuclear material for a weapon in a few months."

In early 2016, the IAEA certified that Iran had met its initial pledges. The US and European nations also unfroze about \$100 billion worth of Iranian assets. However, Trump withdrew from the deal in 2018, calling it "one of the most incompetently drawn deals I've ever seen", effectively ending the agreement.

For strengthened Iran, a 60-day window of opportunity, a test of resolve



EXPERT EXPLAINS

BASHIR ALI ABBAS

SENIOR RESEARCH ASSOCIATE, COUNCIL FOR STRATEGIC AND DEFENSE RESEARCH

BETWEEN THE announcement of the United States and Iran memorandum of understanding and its signing and implementation, lies a four-day shadow.

The full text of the memorandum is to be published after Friday, but the draft is believed to include clauses that Iran would immediately open the Strait of Hormuz to all commercial vessels while the US Navy would remove its blockade within 30 days of the MoU's signing; that the US (and re-

gional allies) would release \$24 billion in Iranian frozen assets, not impose new sanctions on Iran until a final agreement, waive oil sanctions temporarily, and negotiate a reconstruction and development plan (reportedly worth \$300 billion) for Iran within 60 days of the MoU; that the US would militarily withdraw from areas surrounding Iran; and that Iran would never acquire nuclear weapons and maintain status quo on its nuclear programme (no further enrichment) pending a final agreement within 60 days of the MoU's signing.

Deferring the nuclear question

Prior to the war, the US had two principal instruments of leverage, apart from being the overwhelmingly superior conventional and nuclear force. The first was the historic advantage of comprehensive and targeted sanctions forcing Iran out of the global economic order, and the second, more recent, advantage was the severe damage caused to Iran's nuclear facilities in Natanz, Isfahan, and Fordow

Litmus test

• The MoU's 60-day verification period is a greater litmus test for crisis termination than the now-deferred comprehensive nuclear deal. This is especially as there is marked precedent for Iran's acceptance of and adherence to nuclear concessions, from the JCPOA to its continued negotiations till just before the war began.

• There is no precedent, however, for Iran's geopolitical leverage in Hormuz.

during Operation Midnight Hammer (June 2025), which also dislocated Iran's stockpile of 60% enriched uranium.

This pro-US imbalance has been diluted by Iran's gains in the form of its control over the Strait of Hormuz and its ability to threaten regional military and energy infrastructure of US allies.

Iran's reasons

Iranian hardline constituencies have lived through and acquiesced to Iranian concessions on the nuclear question during Ali Khamenei's lifetime. However, in the post-February 28 period, both common Iranians as well as regime hardliners witnessed the dramatic rise of Iranian strategic non-nuclear leverage over Western (including Israel) and Arab powers for the first time, beyond Iran's traditional Axis of Resistance.

This further means that unlike the familiarity of accepting nuclear concessions with Ali Khamenei's blessings, accepting new concessions on a new form of

leverage, under a new Supreme Leader who remains out of public view, is more challenging.

This does not mean that hardline resistance will disable a MoU backed by Mojtaba Khamenei; the Leader's decision remains supreme. However, the hardline networks seeking to convince the Leader of more stringent positions (as was also common during the senior Khamenei's Leadership) have more breathing space if Iran is seen as conceding a hard-earned position.

So why has Iran agreed to the MoU? For three main reasons, among others.

First, the US/Israeli war has served as a test of the historic, near perpetually imminent, threat of American military action against Iran. Past US Presidents refraining from such action also meant that its effectiveness could not be doubted/tested. That Trump has spent this card and failed allows Tehran to capitalise on a window of opportunity and redouble efforts towards a long-term

nuclear deal.

Second, preliminary terms for urgent economic relief and the removal of the US Navy blockade unarguably present a concession from Washington, as does the unfreezing of Iranian funds (which US Vice President JD Vance had said would not happen until a deal was reached, on June 12). Losing this window of American concessions is seemingly not in Tehran's interest, especially as Iran has (thus far) succeeded in keeping both its missile programme as well as its support for the Axis out of the MoU.

Third, Tehran's responses to Israeli attacks on Lebanon prove that Iran's geographic advantages and its missile/drone stockpile allow it to return to pre-MoU conditions whenever it deems American/Israeli actions as breaching terms. Theoretically, given that the MoU places no limit on Iranian drone capabilities or missile, Iran's commitments exist only on paper and are subject to US adherence to MoU terms.

• POLICY

'Discount on top of dues': Issues in Telangana's liquor sales

Nikhila Henry
Hyderabad, June 15

GLOBAL LIQUOR companies have collectively accused the Telangana government of not paying them dues of over Rs 3,700 crore over months, and then introducing a policy for discounts on new payments it is supposed to make.

The companies are represented by bodies including the Brewers Association of India (BAI), the International Spirits and Wines Association of India (ISWAI), and the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC), which represent about 80% of the total liquor, beer and wines sold

in the country.

The Telangana government, meanwhile, is "ready to clear the pending payment" and "we are working on a solution", Principal Secretary, Excise, Raghunandan Rao, told *The Indian Express*.

What is the controversy surrounding liquor sales in Telangana?

Telangana is India's biggest beer-consuming state by volume. Here, liquor companies supply only to state-run depots, under the Telangana State Beverages Corporation, which then sells to retailers. This makes the com-

panies rely on the state government for payments.

According to the brewers, the payments from December 2025 to April 2026, amounting to Rs 3,700 crore, are pending. Moreover, the state government has introduced a new method of payment starting June 1.

Under this method, the state government will pay the companies within 15 days of delivery of liquor, but will deduct an early payment cash discount of 2 to 2.75%. This new system has already kicked in even before the clearing of pending dues, the brewers representing alcohol giants Diageo, Pernod Ricard, Heineken and Carls-

berg said in a joint statement.

"Old outstanding (payments) may remain unpaid turning into bad debt over time thus creating massive financial burden and risk for the industry," the groups said, adding not paying old dues first was "fraught with non-compliance" with accounting standards.

What does the Telangana government say?

The Telangana government said that the new payment policy allows early payments to be made at a slightly lower rate. "This is an early payment discount. We are ready to pay on the day of delivery too on a first come first

serve basis. That is, those who supply on the earliest date will be paid first compared with those who deliver at a later date," Rao said.

The companies, in their statement said that the government is acting unilaterally. But Rao claimed, "This is not a unilateral decision. It is based on a pre-signed contract that exists between each of the companies involved and the Telangana state government."

On pending dues, the state government is "ready for any discussion" so there is no problem regarding liquor sales in the state. "There is no impasse at the moment. We are ready to clear the dues," Raghunandan Rao said.

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In West Asia pause, questions for India, especially about its place at the table

IWRITE this from Srinagar on the eve of Muharram. Black flags wave in the summer wind through neighbourhoods in parts of the city. On the boulevard that overlooks the Dal Lake there towers a billboard-sized portrait of Iranian leaders staring down upon us. It is an unsettling backdrop against which to meditate upon the American-Iranian blueprint for peace being stitched. A deal that troubles rather than reassures.

US President Donald Trump can claim victory, as he has already done. And he deserves to: Purely on the basis of this day alone. The guns may fall silent. Markets will stabilise. Oil shipments through the Gulf will no longer navigate minefields. That is laudable. But the foundational faultlines that set up this crisis — Iran's ambitions and proxies in the region, Israel's vulnerabilities and security obsessions, the Gulf's volatility and Trump's hubris — remain exactly as they were yesterday. What has been bought by this breathing space is time, masquerading as victory.

While this deal breaks a war, it doesn't settle the numerous questions that led to it. Lebanon remains on a wire. Hezbollah's future is still up for grabs. Israel has said it needs the freedom to operate. And the nuclear issue isn't solved, it's been kicked under the table — a 60-day delay where there should have been a resolution. A ceasefire suspends all these concerns. It doesn't answer any of them. And it can't prevent other nations from

drawing their own conclusions about deterrence and nuclear weapons and their utility.

We, in India, should feel deeply concerned. For more than two decades, New Delhi has invested in Washington — emotionally, politically and strategically — on the belief that when push came to shove America would remember just how significant that equity was and what it said about India's stake at the highest table. Today it did not. Indian sailors lay vulnerable. Indian lives were risked and lost as the fight expanded. Indian commerce was throttled at a time when our economy depends more than most upon its engines running; the livelihoods of millions of Indians we cherish in the Gulf teetered on a knife's edge. None of that registered in the fevered pitch of Trump's social-media worldview when it sat down to negotiate a pause. Instead, America dialled Islamabad. The very same deep state that has managed four decades of terror at India's border was delivered centrality in American decision-making without the slightest pause for how that upgrade would be perceived in New Delhi. Adversaries are blind. America is India's friend. But a friend who doesn't notice you are in the room anymore will hurt far worse than an adversary eventually. Because weakness invites aggression. Indifference allows it to flourish, free from question.

We have insulated ourselves comfortably to Pakistan being a



AMITABH MATTOO

failing state — failing, bankrupt, falling behind us as we steam past. The Iran crisis explodes that delusion of Pakistani irrelevance. For a nation that has bet its survival on fostering chaos is becoming today the interlocutor every foreign ministry is desperate to cultivate. This is not a momentary embarrassment for India. It is a serious long-term threat that demands our attention.

Which is why the hard questions will be the ones India will have to ask about itself. India has often prided itself on the ability to have multiple friendships across every spectrum: To talk to Tehran and Tel Aviv, to Riyadh and Washington, all at the same time, without apology or conditionality. "Strategic autonomy" was never a slogan. It was the art of keeping your options open when the world rarely favours India's preferences. Somewhere along the line, we started to mistake friendship with one group of countries as increasing our leverage with others. If anything, the Iran crisis should teach us the exact opposite: Proximity is not leverage, access is not influence, and the visibility that you or others have does not translate into strength if the country that needs to heed that visibility is not also willing to use it.

And should we misjudge this moment, the price we will pay for it only increases. West Asia was where we bought our oil from not too long ago. It hosts one of the largest Indian diaspora popula-

tions on Earth. It represents a large source of our external remittances. Our strategic gateway to energy. The route through which the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor will realise its potential. When turbulence hits West Asia, it doesn't rock the ship we sail upon. It impacts our balance of payments, our diaspora in the Gulf, our fuel prices and our influence in an Asian century that is being transformed as we speak.

And that is what makes Muharram far more poignant than the mourning on display. Hussain lost at Karbala. He was surrounded. He was denied water. He died a brutal death on that field. Yazid won. But history remembers the lesson Karbala taught us: Hussain dared to fight and live a defeat so righteous that its memory outlasted every Caliph who came after him. Iran, over 14 centuries now, has internalised that lesson and passed it down to generations since: He who holds advantage today may not win the battle of tomorrow.

Celebrated victories have a tendency to turn bitter over time. The bigger history of this crisis has thus still to be written. Let us hope the more valuable gift the Iran-US deal leaves India is the questions it forces us to ask ourselves about our illusions, about our place at the table and about a world that will give us nothing that we haven't already secured for ourselves.

The writer is dean SIS, JNU and former member NSAB

Proximity is not leverage, access is not influence and the visibility that you or others have does not translate into strength if the country that needs to heed that visibility is not also willing to use it

A 12-year story of peace and progress in Bastar



VISHNU DEO SAI

THE PERIOD under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought major changes in India. The country has made significant progress in security, roads, electricity, housing, digital services, and welfare schemes, in a golden period for India's security and development. Strong leadership has helped the country move forward with confidence.

For Chhattisgarh, this was a significant change. Bastar and other tribal areas earlier faced Naxalite violence, poor roads, and lack of basic facilities. Today, the situation is improving, with better security, roads, and welfare schemes bringing hope.

A decade ago, India faced terrorism and Left-Wing Extremism. The government took strong steps to overcome these challenges. The removal of Article 370 strengthened national unity. Efforts against Naxalism reduced violence, including in Bastar, and development started reaching neglected regions.

In Bastar, under Niyad Nellanar Yojana, the benefits of 43 schemes from 17 departments reach 525 villages near security camps. These camps are being converted into Veer Shaheed Gundadhur Seva Deras for better service delivery.

Central government schemes have played a major role in the past 12 years. Under PM Awas Yojana, 2.43 lakh urban houses have been approved and 2.16 lakh completed in Chhattisgarh. PM Janman Yojana supports Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups with housing, roads, healthcare, and education. The Dharti Aaba campaign improves Anganwadi centres, schools, and local services in tribal villages.

Under the Swasthya Bastar campaign, 36 lakh people have been screened, 4.96 lakh examined, and 5,600 referred. Through Mahatari Vandan Yojana, 69 lakh women receive Rs 1,000 monthly, with over Rs 17,500 crore transferred.

PM-KISAN supports farmers. Krishak Unnati Yojana saw the procurement of 14.1 million metric tons of paddy in kharif marketing year 2025-26 with a Rs 33,431 crore support price and Rs 10,324 crore input assistance.

Under PM Surya Ghar, 61,000 homes have rooftop solar systems, reducing costs

and promoting clean energy. A single-window system improves ease of doing business and the investment climate.

The Bastar Olympics and Bastar Pandum promote tribal culture. Chitrakote is being developed as a major tourist site, creating jobs. Direct benefit transfers have ensured that money reaches beneficiaries without delay or leakage. Mobile connectivity and internet access in remote villages have helped people access government services more easily.

Bastar is also witnessing social and economic change through self-help groups, forest-based livelihood, and cooperative models. Minor forest produce collection and value addition are increasing income for tribal families.

Digital agriculture initiatives like Agri-Stack and Farmer Registry are improving transparency and reducing delays in subsidy delivery. Farmers are now able to access crop insurance, MSP benefits and soil health information more efficiently.

Skill development programmes are preparing youth for national and global opportunities. Training in new-age sectors such as IT and AI is helping young people become job-ready.

Better roads, electrification and drinking water supply are ensuring that basic needs are met in previously remote villages. Government schemes are reducing inequality between urban and rural areas.

The combined impact of central and state initiatives is visible in every sector of Bastar, which is emerging as a model of transformation. There is trust in governance, active participation by citizens and growing opportunities for the future. As India progresses towards Viksit Bharat 2047, Chhattisgarh remains committed to ensuring that the benefits of development reach every citizen.

The transformation of Bastar shows how focussed governance and welfare delivery can change lives in even the most difficult regions, creating a safer and more hopeful future for all. This progress is a result of sustained efforts, strong leadership, people-centric policies, and coordinated implementation across levels of governance.

The writer is Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh

The combined impact of central and state initiatives is visible in every sector of Bastar, which is emerging as a model of transformation. There is trust in governance, active participation by citizens and growing opportunities for the future

The joke wasn't funny. Neither was the response



POOJA PILLAI

GIRL MEETS boy gets biryani gets sexually assaulted. That is the pithiest summation of a recent rape "joke" gone viral. It has resulted in widespread condemnation, calls for deplatforming the comedian who hosted it and the firing of the man who narrated the purported incident. The life cycle of this rape joke may be one of the shortest in history, perhaps because now, in 2026, you can't turn the violation of consent into a punchline without facing a backlash. The glass-half-full-ers among us draw some comfort from this — the man who described sexually assaulting a woman paid, the comedian who encouraged his vile joke paid.

Which would leave the more troubling truth largely unexamined: That even in 2026, it is entirely possible to unironically narrate for an audience an incident about sexually assaulting a woman because you bought her biryani and therefore believed that she "owed" you sex. That the audience you perform this for then applauds your "wit". And the comedian who finds this "peak Gurgaon content" hilarious shares the joy with millions.

But as the tide rises, so it falls, and already there are murmurs about an overcorrection. Should the teller of the rape joke have lost his job over the incident? In a video message, his employer spoke about conducting an internal investigation into the man's behaviour at work and finding nothing incriminating, yet deciding to let him go because "what happened outside the workplace has now affected the workplace". He ends his message with the hope that "we never become a society that believes that people cannot learn, reflect, apologise or change."

It is a fair plea, but one that should not allow acknowledgement of nuance to be mistaken for absolution. Perhaps it is fair to assume that the Gurugram man is entirely respectful of boundaries and that he exaggerated the details of the encounter for effect, but the fact that he appears to have not even registered that what he was describing was sexual assault is what makes this assumption hard to swallow. Even harder to swallow is the part played by the comedian — let's call him by his name, Pranit More. He praised the troubling performance, and proceeded to share it online and profit from it. Even if the original performance could be written off as a "lapse of judgement" — an excuse that More deploys in his apology video — what is to be made of the deliberateness with which an influential figure pushed the joke online?

In the meantime, another controversy linked to More's show has begun to brew, this one related to some off-colour jokes about cadavers made by a medical student at Mumbai's King Edward Memorial college. The "disrespectful" remarks triggered an avalanche of complaint against her, with the student herself eventually apologising and the college sending her on forced leave. Combined with the incident of the rape joke, it may be tempting to draw a lesson about what you say when there is a camera in the room (and there are always cameras in the room these days). But that would only be half a lesson, and one that risks subsuming a more distressing reality: That a man made a rape joke and another man amplified it and neither of them paused at the horror of what they had done.

The writer is senior assistant editor, The Indian Express. pooja.pillai@expressindia.com

Even harder to swallow is the part played by the comedian — let's call him by his name, Pranit More. He praised the troubling performance, and proceeded to share it online and profit from it

Dancing Girl, meet modest imagination

WHAT DOES the Dancing Girl of Mohenjo-daro — the 4,500-year-old bronze artefact on display at Delhi's National Museum — denote? The refinement of the Harappan civilisation, of course; its sophisticated knowledge of metallurgy. But also, the NCERT now seems to insist, immodesty. The inaugural Class IX art education textbook features an image of the figurine with its bare torso covered with a sheath, ostensibly to make it age-appropriate. The Dancing Girl has featured in NCERT's history textbooks for over 25 years before this. The move is remarkable not just for its prudishness but for what it reveals about pedagogical philosophy: That students must be protected from complexity, ambiguity, and the full texture of their own civilisation.

In recent years, through successive revisions, textbooks have been streamlined, historical emphases reordered and contentious subjects pared back. NCERT has cited a need for rationalisation of syllabi, and what its director D P Saklani said in 2024, justifying the deletion of the Gujarat riots and the violence after the Babri Masjid demolition from the Class XII Political Science textbook: "To create positive citizens, not violent and depressed individuals." The altered Dancing Girl belongs to the same sensibility. Instead of trusting students to understand context — that artistic nudity in an archaeological artefact is neither scandalous nor unusual — it removes the possibility of the encounter altogether. This sits uneasily with the NEP's ambition of fostering critical thinking; Education that aspires to cultivate independence of thought must make room for knowledge and context, not smoothen out every faultline, conflict and contradiction.

The impulse is also striking for what it communicates about women and their place in public life. At a time when more women than ever before are entering universities, workplaces, politics, and other public institutions, wearing their individuality in thought and attire, claiming spaces that often remain unequal or unwelcoming, the decision to cover up one of the most celebrated examples of ancient South Asian art sends an unfortunate message. The Dancing Girl has been significant not because it conforms to a blindfolded standard of modesty but because it embodies poise, confidence and unmistakable presence. If the task of education is to equip young people to engage with the world as it is, then NCERT would do better to trust both students, and women — both contemporary and millennia old — with a little more agency.

Elon Musk's wealth defies gravity, & reality

SIX YEARS ago, a study by a financial services company predicted that the world would have its first trillionaire by 2026. Based on the fact that his net worth had grown 34 per cent in the previous five years, it predicted that the title would go to Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. Last week proved the study right on one count and wrong on the other. The world did, indeed, get its first trillionaire this year. It was not, however, Bezos but former Trump BFF Elon Musk, who crossed that threshold thanks to the blockbuster IPO of his aerospace and AI company, SpaceX.

What does it mean to have the kind of money where the only entities that are richer than oneself are 21 countries and a dozen corporations? A trillion dollars in the abstract is hard to picture. In 2020, when Bezos was still the world's richest man, a viral TikTok sought to explain the scope of his wealth in grains of rice: If one grain of rice represented \$100,000, Bezos — then valued at \$200 billion — was worth 2,000,000 grains of rice (about 54 kg). Musk's current net worth would thus amount to 10 million grains.

What else could a trillion dollars buy? Maybe 666 Burj Khalifas or 10,000 Gulfstream G700 jets or 200 Buckingham Palaces. Of course, Musk's wealth has fluctuated in the past; he lost over \$100 billion in 2023 when Tesla stocks slumped. But when one's personal fortune is linked to the business of defying gravity, even the loss of \$100 billion seems but a minor glitch.

40 YEARS AGO

June 16, 1986



Centre on Punjab-Haryana

THE CENTRAL Government may take a unilateral decision regarding the areas to be transferred to Haryana in lieu of Chandigarh if there is no response from Punjab, according to well-informed sources. Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi is expected to review the situation. The Punjab Finance Minister, Balwant Singh, during his meeting with the Home Minister, Buta Singh, had said that Punjab was prepared to give 45,000 acres of land identified by the Venkataramiah Commission to Haryana.

Five killed in Punjab

FIVE PEOPLE, including a terrorist, were killed while the police arrested three hard-

core extremists during the last 24 hours in Punjab. According to official reports, one terrorist, Swaran Singh, was killed in an encounter with the police at Chak Bhure village under the Dharamkot police station in Ferozepur district. The district police chief, R S Chalia, said that Swaran Singh was a proclaimed offender involved in several cases of shooting and robbery.

Sikh extremists held in Lahore

SIX CANADA-based Sikh extremists involved in an attack on four Indian diplomats have been arrested and remanded to judicial custody in Lahore cantonment jail, according to the Pakistan authorities. Police have registered a case against the six under Sections 506 (criminal intimidation), 148

(rioting armed with deadly weapons) and 149 of the Pakistan Penal Code (common object). Reports suggest that the Pakistan authorities took action against the culprits nearly two days after the lodging of the first information report by the Indian diplomats.

Curfew in Allahabad

INDEFINITE CURFEW was imposed in five police station areas of Allahabad after night-long clashes between two groups of people in which four persons were killed and more than 50 injured. A police party which was making searches for illicit arms and explosives was subjected to firing from house tops in one locality. The situation continues to be tense and intense patrolling has been going on in the riot-hit areas.

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Only fraternity can bridge communal divide, douse flames of hate



ASHOK LAVASA

A DAY after the Citizens for Fraternity (CFF) held their first meeting to discuss ways to douse the spreading communal fire in our society, I saw a photo in the newspapers of the first responders during the rescue necessitated by the deadly fire in Hauz Rani. Their names: Mohammad Afzal, Wasim Raja, Mohammad Shoaib, Amir Khan. Others named in an *Indian Express* report were Mansoor, Israr Khan, and the man who stood out amid this tragedy, Riyazuddin Mansuri and his son Armaan, who spread mattresses on the road for those trapped inside the building to jump to their safety.

There were also 10 policemen — Kartar, Deepak, Vikram, Dinesh, Rampal, Sandeep, Hargyan, Premchand, Jitendra, and Raviranjan — who helped victims out of the blaze unmindful of the injuries they themselves suffered because they didn't wait to get into a safer gear that would minimise their risk. The police are a much-abused lot in our system, and the fellow citizens who saved many lives belong to a community that feels victimised in its own country.

The CFF is a new effort to address an old problem. Set up as a result of a dialogue between prominent Muslim citizens with Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) *sarsanghchalak* Mohan Bhagwat and senior office-bearers, it is an attempt at finding ways to bridge the growing communal divide in India that has demoralised the minorities. Perhaps the need to communicate was inspired by Bashir Badr, who passed away recently, who said, “*main chup raha to aur ghalat-fahmiyan baDhin, vohi suna hai us ne jo main ne kaha nahin* (Because of my silence, our misunderstanding grew, He even heard that which I never said).”

The CFF meeting was attended by citizens belonging to different communities, the president of the Indira Gandhi National



ILLUSTRATION: C.R. SASIKUMAR

Centre for the Arts and the *akhil bharatiya sampark adhikari* of the RSS.

The focus of the dialogue was fraternity. It was argued that while liberty and equality were fundamental rights supported by enabling legislation, fraternity required a serious, sincere and subtle approach to provide a healing touch without scraping old wounds. It was emphasised that liberty and equality were justiciable but fraternity would come about only when there was a deeper understanding of each other's way of life, belief system, scriptures and culture.

The pity is that the need to discuss this remains as acute today as it did eight decades ago, when fraternity and communal harmony were debated in the Constituent Assembly.

On August 15, 1947, Gandhi didn't watch the flag hoisting in Delhi; he chose to be in Kolkata, staying in riot-torn areas “spreading mattresses” to subdue the communal conflagration. For him, communal harmony was an article of faith as he believed the true measure of a civilised nation's commitment to fraternity lay in how secure its smallest or

Ambedkar defined fraternity as 'a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians' and warned that without this psychological solidarity, the structural rights of liberty and equality would be 'no deeper than coats of paint'

most vulnerable communities felt.

B.R. Ambedkar introduced fraternity into the draft of the Preamble as he thought this was a core political necessity for a deeply divided society. Addressing the Assembly on November 25, 1949, he warned that political democracy would collapse if India failed to establish a social democracy. For him, liberty, equality, and fraternity were inseparable principles as they formed “a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy. Liberty cannot be divorced from equality, equality cannot be divorced from liberty. Nor can liberty and equality be divorced from fraternity. Without equality, liberty would produce the supremacy of the few over the many. Equality without liberty would kill individual initiative. Without fraternity, liberty and equality could not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them.”

Ambedkar defined fraternity as “a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians” and warned that without this psychological solidarity, the structural rights of liberty and equality would be “no deeper

than coats of paint”. He wasn't alone in underscoring this as many others in the Assembly emphasised that while the Constitution could map out organs of the state, it couldn't legislate affection. It was widely acknowledged that fraternity was the emotional glue required to hold a diverse, multi-religious, and economically unequal India together and that it represented a moral principle that must be lived daily.

The Constituent Assembly exhaustively debated fraternity and communal harmony as this reflected the real anxiety during the Constitution-making process between 1946 and 1950. Instead of talking about harmony as an abstract moral concept, the Assembly under the leadership of Nehru and Vallabhbhai Patel, the chairman of the Advisory Committee on Minorities, voted to abolish separate electorates for minorities and dropped political reservation based on religion entirely, choosing to protect minorities instead through cultural and educational rights (Articles 29 and 30), allowing them to preserve their distinct languages, scripts, and institutions without separating them politically.

It is an understanding of this distinct script and scriptures that the CFF aims to promote by taking this movement to the states and districts. It is encouraging that the push comes from the RSS. It will be interesting to see how many “mattresses” the RSS throws to cushion the impact of the vitriolic speech of those in power. Will it publicly support the action of “Mohammed” Deepak who defended an elderly Muslim shopkeeper from a right-wing mob in Kotdwar, and suffered near-ostracisation, leading to a near-collapse of his business? The RSS, the “world's biggest NGO”, would do well, in furtherance of its avowed commitment to nation-building, to actively participate with the CFF and similar organisations to build a society based on the values of “fraternity, awareness, dialogue, respect, justice, and integration”.

Let us heed the poet of love, Bashir Badr: “*dushmani ka safar ik qadam do qadam, tum bhi thak jaoge ham bhi thak jaenge*” (Even a step or two in the journey of enmity will exhaust both of us.)”

The writer is a former election commissioner

At G7 meet, India can be the voice of developing countries



AJAI MALHOTRA

A FRANCE'S invitation, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will join world leaders for the G7 Summit at Evian-les-Bains to discuss issues shaping economic power, technological advantage and development. The G7 is no longer the dominant body it was in the mid-1970s; the rise of emerging economies and the 2008 financial crisis changed that. Yet, it remains influential in setting standards and shaping financial flows, though far less cohesive today. Differences over trade, climate finance, industrial subsidies, energy policy and ties with Russia are evident, especially between the US and others. Evian will involve negotiations as well as coordination amongst G7 members. For India, that creates greater scope for issue-based partnerships.

Bilaterals, especially between PM Modi and US President Donald Trump, will attract intense attention. While leaders will discuss hotspots like West Asia and Ukraine, France has deliberately placed economic imbalances and the risks of fragmentation in the global economy at the centre of the agenda, which will focus on economic security, artificial intelligence, the energy transition, climate finance and development.

As one of the largest economies, a growing energy market and technology hub, India is affected by and increasingly central to these debates. It will bring to the table concerns shared by many emerging and developing economies.

India and G7 interests converge on critical minerals. Securing lithium, cobalt, nickel and rare earth supplies is central to the energy transition and advanced manufacturing. India's efforts complement those of G7 economies to reduce supply-chain dependence on China for clean energy and defence technologies. Its market size and processing capacity make it an important node in emerging mineral partnerships.

Artificial intelligence raises questions of governance, standards, safety and technological leadership. It is also becoming an energy issue since data centres and advanced computing drive electricity demand. India's experience with digital infrastructure gives it a credible voice in shaping the debate.

Energy security is another central theme. The clean energy transition is rewriting investment and industrial policy worldwide, yet hydrocarbons still underpin growth. India embodies this duality. It has expanded renewable deployment at scale with its fuel choices guided by affordability and security of supply, not geopolitical pressures. A major energy consumer, India can speak with authority from experience.

On economic security, India's interest lies in resilience that broadens options rather than narrows them. Security pursued through exclusion produces the fragmentation it seeks to prevent. Advanced economies are resorting to forced trade: The selective use of leverage, sanctions and coercion to influence with whom, and sometimes at what price, other countries trade. The result is a growing gap between the free-trade principles they once professed and the market-distorting policies they practise.

Turning to development, much of the Global South faces rising debt obligations and widening financing gaps. Reform of multilateral development banks remains a pressing concern.

On climate finance, developed countries agreed at Baku in 2024 to mobilise at least \$300 billion annually by 2035. Even that falls well short of what is needed, while much arrives as loans, not grants. What developing countries lack is not commitment to climate action but the resources to do so. Climate finance has long been part of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities. India must recall that principled position while sharing its experience in matching climate ambition with overriding development priorities.

A related concern is the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) that now taxes steel, aluminium, cement and fertiliser imports according to emissions embedded in their production. Its impact falls disproportionately on developing-country producers, including India, whose industries remain coal-dependent because the finance and technologies for a faster transition are unavailable. Presented as climate policy, CBAM operates as a trade barrier protecting EU industries. Climate transition cannot be advanced by taxing countries the developed world has committed to help. There is something perverse about first underfunding the green transition and then taxing those unable to afford it.

Standards, frameworks and partnerships being discussed at Evian on technology, supply chains and critical minerals will shape the global environment. India's interest lies in influencing these debates before outcomes harden into practices that affect the wider world. The G7 Summit participation, months before it hosts the BRICS Summit, reflects multilateral engagement without exclusive alignment.

India should approach Evian as a participant helping shape outcomes. Few countries today can engage comfortably with advanced and developing economies while carrying influence with both. In a world where today's discussions become tomorrow's rules, it is far better to help write them than to inherit them.

The writer is a former diplomat

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Sailors' deaths

THE DEATH of three Indian sailors on MT *Settebello* demands more than diplomatic regret (‘Make it clear: Indian sailors are not collateral damage’, *IE*, June 15). India rightly summoned the US chargé d'affaires, yet Washington's omission of the deaths from its official readout and its insistence that vessels obey US orders jar with maritime law and basic empathy. With 3.08 lakh Indians at sea, neutral crews cannot be treated as acceptable costs. New Delhi must press for a transparent inquiry, clear rules of engagement, and compensation, while also pushing to reopen the Strait of Hormuz. Strategic ties with the US matter, but red lines on the safety of Indian citizens must be non-negotiable.

K Chidanand Kumar, Kollam

THE ATTACK on the oil tanker may not have been intended to damage India's reputation (‘Make it clear: Indian sailors are not collateral damage’, *IE*, June 15). Rather, it appears to be an assertion of dominance in the Strait of Hormuz, which remains a choke-point capable of influencing the regional balance of power and an important bargaining tool. Nevertheless, India should register its protest on every possible platform and press the US to provide adequate compensation to the families of the deceased sailors.

Devendra Awasthi, Lucknow

Knowledge systems

THE ARTICLE by Rohan Manoj rightly questions the binary of “Western” versus “Indian” knowledge systems (‘Focus on knowledge, not whose system it is’, *IE*, June 15). Ayurveda, traditional architecture, and indigenous agricultural practices were not inferior; they were simply documented differently. Universities would do well to integrate cross-disciplinary courses that study these traditions on their own epistemic terms, rather than validating them through the framework of modern science. Knowledge should be judged by its utility and rigour, not by its geographic origin or the politics attached to it.

K Sakunthala, Coimbatore



KAUSHIK DAS GUPTA

LAST WEEK, an interim report of a Supreme Court-appointed panel engaged with an issue of grave concern in the country's educational landscape. Earlier this year, the Court had observed that student suicide cases had doubled over the last decade. It constituted a National Task Force headed by a former judge, Justice Ravindra Bhat, to study the causes, review institutional mechanisms and recommend a framework to prevent the loss of young lives. The Task Force's report is significant because it argues that the suicides are not individual acts of despair, but symptoms of deeper institutional and structural deficits in India's higher education system. The goal, it rightly pointed out, “is to look at the reasons that compelled a student to take this step”.

In recent years, institutions have framed student suicides as a mental-health issue, and some universities have set up counselling facilities. These are well-meaning initiatives. But as the SC panel noted, the broader challenge is to situate the crisis within a socio-economic perspective. That would require joining several dots — the almost universal recognition in the country of education as a gateway to social mobility; the increasing presence of students from marginalised communities, many of them first-generation learners, who do not always find an enabling milieu on campuses; the lack of diversity

Institutions usually attribute the deaths to personal difficulties or students' inability to cope with academic pressures. Rarely do they ask questions about the cultures of exclusion within campuses

among faculties; delayed scholarships; and the high rate of dropouts among SC, ST, and OBC communities.

After Independence, reservation, scholarships, and the establishment of new institutions have enhanced access to spaces that once appeared forbidding to learners from historically disadvantaged communities. This is, no doubt, a triumph of democracy. However, in a deeply hierarchical society, admission to institutions does not *ipso facto* guarantee dignity or even equal opportunity. Subtle prejudices, language barriers, financial insecurity, and, at times, institutional hostility come together to create pressures that cannot be addressed by a traditional mental health-centred approach.

In recent years, reports of suicides involving Dalit and Adivasi students have triggered conversations. However, institutions usually attribute the deaths to personal difficulties or students' inability to cope with academic pressures. Rarely do they ask questions about the cultures of exclusion within campuses.

Almost every student enters university carrying the weight of aspirations. But learners from historically disadvantaged social groups often have to navigate unfamiliar environments without the cultural capital enjoyed by their more privileged peers. The task, therefore, is to frame inclusion in a broader way, beyond pa-

SC's message: Campus distress has social causes

ternalistic protection through facilities such as counselling, and instead create an environment in which every student can flourish without having to navigate social and economic impediments. The report points out that students frequently perceive institutional complaint systems as inaccessible, ineffective, or biased in favour of preserving institutional reputations.

Policymakers and institutions need to pay special attention to what the report describes as a “social mismatch” between the backgrounds of students and teachers. More than 65 per cent of the faculty in IITs, NITs, and private institutions are from non-SC, ST, and OBC communities. Report after report, including several published in this newspaper, has shone a light on the tardy progress in filling faculty vacancies in reserved categories. There is also a wealth of literature on how diverse faculty can help create conditions on campuses where differences are respected and vulnerability is met with support.

The central message that education planners need to draw from the SC's report is this: Equality, dignity, fraternity, and non-discrimination cannot remain abstract ideals; they must shape the lived experiences of students on campuses. When students from marginalised backgrounds encounter humiliation or exclusion, the country's democratic fabric is weakened.

The writer is senior associate editor, The Indian Express. kaushik.dasgupta@expressindia.com



ABHISHEK SHARMA

IN HIS article on the BJP's 46th anniversary (BJP's relevance owes to ideological clarity, *IE*, April 4), Ram Madhav talks of ideological clarity triumphing over decades of drift. The party, he argues, shed Gandhian socialism and found its true form in “cultural nationalism” and “integral humanism”. The broader public, he asserts, “seems to identify with this” vision. The lotus, he declares, has bloomed fully. But has it? And how?

The BJP's rise is not just the story of an ideology whose time has come. It is the story of a vacuum created by Congress's downfall, driven not by ideological defeat but by the erosion of generational memory and

BJP's rise is about filling a void, not just ideology

structural transformation. For nearly five decades after Independence, Congress drew legitimacy from a political imagination forged in the freedom struggle and sustained through nation-building endeavours. But memory often fades with the generation that carries it. For today's median voter, born in the 1980s, Congress is less the party that steered Independence and more the party of coalition compromises, scams, and a leadership speaking to an India that no longer exists. The 1991 reforms deepened this void in three ways: Generating corruption on an unprecedented scale; fuelling a hypercompetitive broadcast culture; and replacing the Nehruvian social contract with a market logic Congress could never fully own. Into this vacuum stepped the BJP. Cultural nationalism may have supplied its narrative, but it found resonance in a society experi-

encing political dislocation. The triumph was not of ideology alone, but of an ideology that organised anxieties and divisions.

Madhav credits L.K. Advani with steering the party in a “more definitive direction”. But his Rath Yatra was widely blamed for normalising polarisation. He grounds the party in Integral Humanism, a position challenged by the claim that it has rarely operated independently of Hindutva mobilisation.

Under Modi, Hindu cultural assertion braided with economic aspiration. The middle class could vote for growth; the lower

Cultural nationalism may have supplied the BJP's narrative, but it found resonance in a society experiencing political dislocation

middle class for Hindu identity; both could feel they were voting against corruption. But there remains a tension.

The CSDS 2024 survey found that 79 per cent of respondents, including nearly eight in 10 Hindus, believed India belongs to all religions. Only 11 per cent said India is a nation of Hindus. In the 2024 election, the BJP lost its majority. The INDIA bloc won 43 seats in Uttar Pradesh, and a Dalit Samajwadi candidate won Faizabad, the constituency where Ayodhya and the Ram Temple are located.

Madhav invokes Gandhi. But Gandhi's concept of religion was *sarva dharmasama bhava*, equal respect for all faiths. When he said religion must inform politics, he referred to a shared ethical core, not the assertion of one cultural identity as the state's organising principle.

The same voter who said that cultural nationalism will restore Hindu pride is the one who struggles with affordable healthcare and whose children face a job market where around 40 per cent of the unemployed are under 30. All this will impinge on offering cultural identity as compensation for material deprivation.

What is needed now is a redefinition of Viksit Bharat, one that measures development not in GDP alone but in how its gains are distributed across caste, community, gender, and the urban-rural divide. The lotus has bloomed, but no bloom is complete until its petals display variegation, until the pond it grows in is fed by fresh waters of inclusion. For that to happen, parties must reflect beyond their ideological walls.

The writer was at CSDS. Views are personal

PRELIMINARY DEAL COULD STILL COME APART AND NEGOTIATIONS ARE LIKELY TO BE COMPLEX, SAY EXPERTS

Art of the Deal: Strait, but with Twists

Iran n-stockpile, recovery of energy supply, Lebanon: Challenges loom

Jon Gambrell
& Elena Becatoros
Dubai, June 15

THE US and Iran reached an initial agreement Monday that would extend their shaky ceasefire and lead to the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, but significant challenges remain, including whether Israel will continue its offensive in Lebanon.

Details of the agreement were not immediately released, but it appeared it would not be implemented until it is signed, which mediator Pakistan said would happen Friday in Geneva. Until then, shipping will likely remain restricted in the strait.

Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz said Monday the country wouldn't withdraw from land seized in Lebanon, where Israel is fighting Hezbollah. A spokesman in PM Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Israel will continue to defend itself against any threat to its security. That alone could scupper the deal, since Iran has insisted any agreement to end the war include an end to fighting in Lebanon.

But the agreement also faces other major challenges. It gives just 60 days to decide what to do about Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium and its nuclear programme.

The closure of the strait — through which a fifth of the world's oil and natural gas passed before the war — and the blockade sent fuel prices skyrocketing, and its effects rippled through economies. It will likely take months before energy companies can resume operations to the point of meeting the world's demand, according to energy experts.

Iranian and US officials will hold preparatory meetings in Doha, Qatar, this week before the signing, said a diplomat with

● PRESSURE POINTS

● Whether Israel will continue its offensive in Lebanon. Israel's Defense Minister said the they wouldn't withdraw from land seized in Lebanon.

● Deal gives just 60 days to decide what to do about Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium, its n-programme.

● Strait of Hormuz won't open until deal is signed.

● Months before energy companies can resume operations, meet global demand.

Vance: No fund transfer to Iran for signing deal

US Vice President JD Vance said on Monday no funds would be released to Iran for signing an agreement and opening Hormuz and that the framework's text would be shared this week. In an interview on ABC, Vance said signing the MoU would not trigger release of frozen assets. "If we see Iranians making, for example, taking action to eliminate stockpile of enriched material, then yes, sanctions relief will follow. If we see Iranians taking action to allow the kind of verification regime we need to see to know they're not going to build a nuclear weapon, yes, sanctions relief will follow." **REUTERS**

direct knowledge of the talks.

The success of the deal rests at least partially on what happens between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Katz said Israel plans to stay "indefinitely" in land it holds in Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip.

Katz also threatened if Iran attacks Israel over its strikes in Lebanon, Israel will strike Iran with "great force." **AP**



A woman waves an Iranian flag in downtown Tehran on Monday after a memorandum of understanding was reached between Iran and US. **AP**

Our struggle is not over, says Netanyahu

Rami Ayyub
& Maayan Lubell
Jerusalem, June 15

WITH THE US and Iran reaching a memorandum of understanding aiming to end the war, Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that Israel has been saved from "annihilation" "but our struggle is not over, we will continue to thwart threats in the region."

As US President Donald Trump seeks to extricate himself from the war, Netanyahu said, "Sometimes Trump and I do not see eye to eye, we are partners, often we agree and sometimes we disagree."

On Lebanon, he said, "We will remain in 'buffer zone' as long as we need to, we will maintain freedom of action to thwart attacks."

Netanyahu bet that his joint war alongside Donald Trump would topple Iran's clerical rulers and bolster himself ahead of elections at home,

Two Israeli officials said Tel Aviv was caught by surprise last week when Trump first said a deal was close. They acknowledged Israel has had little success in influencing the talks.

as the architect of a US-Israeli alliance that would reshape the Middle East.

Instead, Israel's longest-serving PM is on a collision course with Trump, with both men's goals unmet and Israeli military operations tied down in Lebanon. For now, Israeli officials have been cautious in public for fear of angering their most important ally, known for being prickly towards critics.

But in private conversations, the frustration is clear. The preliminary agreement is "terrible for Israel," said a senior Israeli official. "And there is no one in Israeli leadership who views it otherwise, from the PM to the chief of staff."

Washington says that over the next 60 days, when a cease-

fire is in place, it will negotiate full terms that will address US and Israeli concerns, especially over Iran's nuclear programme.

But Israeli officials told Reuters they thought the negotiating period was likely to be extended, tying Israel's hands from taking military action, while its concerns remain unresolved. Netanyahu and Trump have clashed over Israel's refusal to constrain its pursuit of Hezbollah in Lebanon, where a cessation of hostilities is a key Iranian demand. The deal would reopen Hormuz, leaving the fate of Iran's nuclear programme to be resolved during a 60-day negotiation period. Two other issues that both leaders declared as justifications for the war at its outset — curbing Iran's missile pro-

Hezbollah welcomes MoU

Hezbollah on Monday welcomed the MoU between the US and Iran, saying it had resulted in a comprehensive ceasefire across all fronts, including Lebanon. In a written statement, the group warned Israel it would not accept any attacks that violate Lebanon's sovereignty or targeted its people. It said Lebanon's inclusion in agreement reflected Iran's commitment to ending the war. **REUTERS**

gramme and ending its support for regional armed groups — are not thought to be on the agenda during those talks.

Three Israeli officials said Israel sees it as likely the 60-day pact will be extended to 90 days. Two other Israeli officials said Israel was caught by surprise last week when Trump first said a deal was close. They acknowledged Israel has had little success in influencing talks. **REUTERS**

WHAT THE U.S. AND IRAN HAVE AGREED TO

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN

● Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif said both sides had declared an immediate and permanent end of all military operations.

● All sides have said the MoU will be signed in Switzerland on Friday. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the memorandum would then be published.

● Iran and the US have both said Hormuz would start to reopen and the US blockade on Iranian ports start to lift after signing.

● Both sides have said negotiations on more difficult further areas of dispute — notably Iran's nuclear issue and US sanctions on Iran — will be conducted over the next 60 days.

STRAIT OF HORMUZ & BLOCKADE OF IRAN PORTS

● US President Donald Trump said the Strait of Hormuz would be reopened Friday and he had ordered a lifting of the blockade on Iranian ports.

● A senior Iranian official said the strait would be reopened "to all commercial vessels" once the MoU is signed.

● Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported that under the MoU, marine traffic through the strait would be regulated by Iran in coordination with Oman.

IRAN'S N-PROGRAMME

● Both sides have said Iran agrees it will neither produce nor acquire nuclear weapons — a promise Tehran has been making repeatedly for decades.

● The senior Iranian official said pending a final agreement Iran would freeze its nuclear activity, refraining from further uranium enrichment or the expansion of nuclear facilities.

● The senior official said the US had agreed Iran could dilute its stockpile of highly enriched uranium inside Iran under a future comprehensive agreement.

● Trump said Saturday there was no urgency to extract Iran's nuclear stockpile and that the US would retrieve it "when all is calm".

● Trump said there would be a strong inspections regime for Iran under any deal, but didn't give specifics. **REUTERS**

● US Senator Lindsey Graham said any final deal on Iran's n-programme would have to be reviewed, approved by Congress.

SANCTIONS AND FINANCIAL IMPACT

● The senior Iranian official said the US had agreed not to impose any new sanctions on Iran until a final deal was reached.

● They added the US would waive oil sanctions on Iran for a specified period and that after final agreement all US & UN sanctions would be lifted to an agreed timetable.

● The senior Iran official said the US had agreed to release \$25 bn of Iran's frozen assets, including via direct cash transfers, cooperation among regional countries, and financial credit lines.

● Washington, in coordination with regional allies, would prepare a reconstruction & development plan for Iran, to be negotiated & agreed with Tehran in 60 days, they added.

● Trump said Iran would not be provided with cash but that sanctions could potentially be lifted.

● Pain point Hormuz



SOURCE: MARINE TRAFFIC

LEBANON

● Sharif said the immediate and permanent end of all military operations would include Lebanon.

● Secretariat of Iran Supreme National Security Council said military ops would stop permanently Monday night including in Lebanon.

● Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said there must be a complete halt to Israeli attacks against Lebanon.

● Israel Defence Minister Israel Katz said [the Israeli military would remain in security zones it has captured in Lebanon, Syria and Gaza and that PM Benjamin Netanyahu had made this clear to Trump. **REUTERS**

WORLD LOOKS FORWARD TO PEACE AND STABILITY

"We are clear that toll-free freedom of navigation must now be restored in the Strait of Hormuz... Iran must never have a nuclear weapon." **KEIR STARMER, BRITISH PM**

"This agreement must allow for the urgent and unconditional reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, which the international mission established with the UK is ready to support." **EMMANUEL MACRON, FRENCH PRESIDENT**

"Italy, as in the past, is ready to support the diplomatic process for a comprehensive agreement. We are ready... to contribute to an international naval presence to accompany the full reopening of the Strait of Hormuz." **GIORGIA MELONI, ITALIAN PM**

"Continued restraint and constructive engagement will be essential to... secure a lasting agreement." **ANTHONY ALBANESE, AUSTRALIAN PM**

"... An important development for peace and tranquility in our region, and I welcome it with satisfaction... I underscore the need to avoid rhetoric." **TAYYIP ERDOGAN, TURKISH PRESIDENT**

"This (agreement) can pave the way towards a reinvigorated global economy and a more secure Middle East. It is crucial to implement it with determination." **FRIEDRICH MERZ, GERMAN CHANCELLOR**

"Priority now is swift, full implementation (of agreement) by all parties... Freedom of navigation must be restored toll-free. This is essential for regional stability and the global economy." **URSULA VON DER LEYEN, EUROPEAN COMMISSION PRESIDENT**

"Japan strongly hopes free, safe navigation through the Strait of Hormuz will be ensured in practice." **SANAE TAKAICHI, JAPAN PM**

Deal will lead to lot of success for world: Trump at G7



US President Donald Trump and French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of G7 Summit in Evian on Monday. **AP**

Associated Press
Evian-Les-Bains, June 15

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump started his visit to the G7 Summit on Monday by hailing his agreement aimed at ending the war with Iran as a potential breakthrough for global security.

At a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron, Trump declared it was promising — albeit not a guarantee — that the US was finally turning the page in its relationship with longtime adversary Iran. "I think a lot of great things are going to happen in the Middle East right now, and very importantly the oil (price) is plummeting and the stock market is shooting up like a rocket today," Trump said. He added, "The

Iran deal is going to bring a lot of success to the world."

Sealing an agreement before jetting off to the summit might change the dynamic of the gathering for Trump. He had friction with Macron, British PM Keir Starmer, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and Italian PM Giorgia Meloni over failing to consult them before the decision to go to war.

Congratulating Trump, Macron said, "It's a very important matter for the peace of the whole world." Trump has pushed back on the four European leaders — members of the NATO alliance — for their lack of support for the US in the conflict. He's expected to discuss with leaders the demining of the Strait of Hormuz — quickly clearing them will be

crucial to regaining confidence of vessels. Macron Monday said France was ready to deploy within days assets, including mine-clearing vessels, to help.

Macron has invited leaders of three nations that aren't part of the G7 — Egypt, Qatar and the UAE — to take part in a session on the Middle East Tuesday, when Iran is likely to be a focus.

In another development, before heading to the summit, Trump told the *New York Post* he's warned Macron the US will "have no choice" but to slap 100% tariffs on French wines unless Paris removes digital tax on US tech firms — a threat that dates to his first administration. Macron said Monday it's not "for the US to decide what European or French law should be."

Social media ban for under-16s will give them back childhood: UK PM

More strict than in Australia, includes gaming platform, infinite scrolling

Paul Sandle & Sarah Young
London, June 15

British PM Keir Starmer said on Monday he would ban social media sites for under-16s and impose restrictions on gaming and live-streaming platforms, in a fightback against big tech that goes further than any other country.

The sweeping changes will "give kids their childhood back", Starmer said, outlining measures against Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram and other platforms, as well as gaming sites that allow strangers to contact children. "It is clear to me a full ban is the right choice," he said. "It will make a huge difference, it will



UK PM Keir Starmer at Downing Street on Monday. **AP**

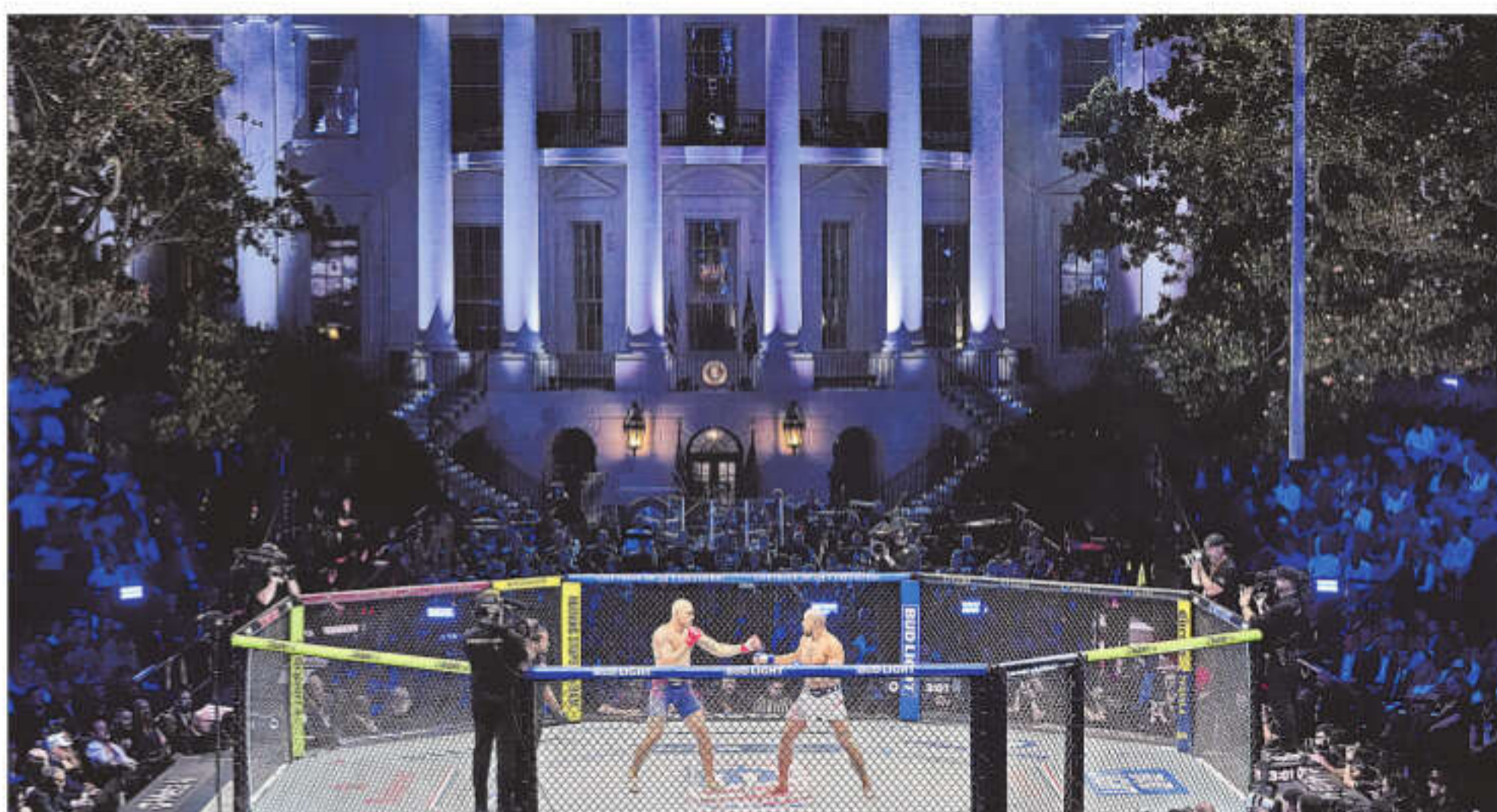
make our children safer, it will make our children happier, it will give them more time, more security, more freedom to grow up, more opportunity."

However some experts doubted whether a blanket ban would be effective, and Starmer acknowledged it would be diffi-

cult to fully enforce such restrictions. Britain will go further than Australia — the first to ban social media for children — with controls on gaming platforms and possibility of overnight curfews and curbs on infinite scrolling for under-18s. YouTube, Facebook and X will be covered, the government said, but messaging services such as WhatsApp and Signal will not be.

"World-leading blocks" on livestreaming and strangers contacting children would also be imposed, Starmer said. "Is there a situation in the offline world where you would just let your child pair up with a stranger, an adult that you don't know anything about?" he said.

A ban could be in place next spring, he said, underpinned by existing powers and new regulations due by the end of the year. **REUTERS**



Alex Pereira (left) fights Ciryil Gane in a heavyweight title bout during UFC Freedom 250 on the South Lawn of the White House on Sunday. **AP**

Birthday 'bash-ing' at White House

Russian strike sets historic Ukraine cathedral ablaze

Kyiv: Firefighters and employees were cleaning up on Monday after what Ukraine said was a targeted Russian strike that caused serious damage to a nearly 1,000-year-old cathedral in Kyiv famed for its historic frescoes and silver artefacts.

The attack set fire to the roof of the Dormition Cathedral, the main cathedral of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra monastery complex. The iconostasis had not suffered any significant damage, said First Deputy Culture Minister Ivan Verbytskyi. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described the attack on the complex as "one of Russia's most serious crimes against Christian culture to date".

Russia denied striking the monastery and said it had been damaged by US-made Patriot air defence missile. **REUTERS**

TALKS COME AMID A LINGERING U.S. SECTION 301 PROBE ON INDIA'S INDUSTRIAL OVERCAPACITY

USTR heads to India on June 23 to give 'final touch' to trade deal

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, June 15

AFTER OVER a year of trade tensions between the US and India, United States Trade Representative (USTR) Jamieson Greer is headed to India to hold talks over two days with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal next week and give a final shape to the first tranche of the trade deal, Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal said on Monday.

"USTR, as of now, is scheduled to visit India. On 23-24th, he will be engaging with Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. Our expectation is that the discussion will be centred around giving final touches to the framework deal, which was discussed during the US team's visit in the first week of June, and also on the larger bilateral trade agreement being discussed between the two countries," Agarwal said.

This is the first instance when the US trade chief is expected to visit India since the negotiations for a trade deal began in February last year.

The US trade team to India for nearly half a dozen rounds of talks were headed by Brendan Lynch, Assistant United States Trade Representative for South and Central Asia.

However, Greer has been part of the trade delegation during negotiations with the EU and China. The talks come amid a lingering US Section 301 investigation on India's industrial overcapacity, which could result in additional tariffs on top of the 12.5% announced for the importation of goods produced using forced labour. Both these tariffs could come into effect next month and serve as the basis of a trade deal.

As India and the US inch closer to an agreement, trade data showed that bilateral trade is undergoing significant changes. While exports to the US in April and May surged by less than 1% to \$17.29 billion, imports registered a sharper jump by 19.40% to \$11.14 billion compared to April and May last year.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal pointed out that India has significantly increased



While exports to US in April and May surged by less than 1% to \$17.29 bn, imports logged a sharper jump by 19.40% to \$11.14 bn. REUTERS

energy imports. Trade data also shows that the bilateral trade gap between the two countries has been shrinking.

Meanwhile, the ongoing US trade investigation has been a concern for the industry and foreign investors.

Section 301 of the US Trade Act of 1974 gives Washington sweeping powers to not only impose tariffs but also the authority to impose non-tariff barriers,

which can restrict Indian exports to the US beyond goods.

Deborah Elms, Head of Trade Policy at Hinrich Foundation, has said the Section 301 could have a firmer legal standing and tariffs imposed could reach any level as long as the required procedures are followed. USTR started the investigation in March and has come out with the findings after the required duration. It has also al-

located time for public comments. "The courts, if asked to examine the use of Section 301, are likely to give the President wide deference as long as the required procedures are followed. Recall that the law provides maximum timelines, not any minimum. Past cases were often narrowly targeted. Future cases need not be so constrained. Tariffs may be part of any retaliatory package, set to any level, alongside a wide range of other actions to address the charge of unfair trade practices," Elms said.

Demands relating to market access for American agricultural products have been one of the biggest pressure points.

The India-US joint statement said that India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains, red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits, and additional products. **FULL REPORT ON**

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

FM: More measures to attract capital inflows on the anvil



"The withholding tax treatment which we offered, we think will be the first step towards drawing some capital back, although we have at the moment confined it only to bond market"

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN,
FINANCE MINISTER

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, June 15

INDIA WILL take more steps to spur foreign capital inflows, not stopping with the recent announcements made by the government and the RBI, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said Monday. "We will be doing more. We recognise we need more foreign capital to come in," she said at the Hero Mind Mine Summit in New Delhi.

On June 5, the government and RBI launched a coordinated, multi-pronged package to combat persistent foreign portfolio investor sell-offs, ease balance-of-payments (BoP) pressures, and stabilise the rupee.

Through an Ordinance, the government scrapped 20% withholding tax on interest income on government bonds and the 12.5% long-term capital gains (LTCG) tax on foreign bond holdings.

US-Iran peace deal: Markets, rupee rally as crude prices fall

Akash Mandal
Mumbai, June 15

THE INDIAN stock market and the rupee rallied on Monday, led by the announcement of a preliminary peace deal in West Asia between the US and Iran.

The deal, which is set to be signed on Friday, sent crude oil prices down 5% to below the \$84-a-barrel mark, aiding sentiment in both the forex and the stock markets. Other markets in Asia and Europe also gained after the announcement.

The BSE Sensex, which rallied by over 1,100 points in the mid-session ended the session up 736.38 points or 1% at 76,264.33. The National Stock Exchange's Nifty 50 index also closed 1% higher at 23,853.90. Both indices ended higher for the third straight session.

The stock market — having recovered most of its around 11% fall since the war began late February — is now down around 5% from the pre-war levels.

The fall in crude prices, combined with the suite of measures recently announced

"The withholding tax treatment which we offered, we think will be the first step towards drawing some capital back, although we have at the moment confined it only to the bond market. But certainly that is not the end of the story," Sitharaman said, hinting at measures aimed at boosting foreign investments in Indian equities as well.

FE reported earlier that the government internally discussed more than a dozen proposals to curb capital flight and address relatively low net FDI inflows, including a reduction in the long-term capital gains tax (LTCG) on equities. Additionally, to curb capital outflows, the government is also believed to be considering reducing the annual Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) limit from the current \$250,000 per individual. The limit could be temporarily halved, sources had said. FE

by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to attract foreign capital, helped the rupee gain 40 paise to end at 94.71, having hit a 5-week high during the session.

"This is a decisively positive setup for the rupee. Over the next one to two weeks, we expect it to strengthen towards 94, and a decisive break of that level would open the door to 93, and potentially 92.5, over the following 2-3 months. For now, 94 is the key level to watch," said Anindya Banerjee, head of commodity and currency research at Kotak Securities.

Most sectoral indices ended higher, with automobiles, banking and financial services, and oil and gas being among the top performers. Sectors such as aviation and real estate, which benefit from slower crude oil prices and lower interest rates, also gained.

The peace deal in West Asia, alongside the RBI's measures to attract foreign capital, is also expected to stem the persistent selling by foreign players in the last few months. **FULL REPORT ON**

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

Adani, US' Jabil to build AI data centre infra platform in India

Mumbai: Adani Group and Jabil Inc, a global leader in engineering, supply chain and manufacturing solutions, Monday announced the intent to form a strategic alliance to set up a vertically integrated AI and data centre infrastructure manufacturing platform in India.

The alliance integrates Jabil's six decades of advanced engineering, cross-industry manufacturing expertise, and proven hyperscale data centre solutions with Adani Group's infrastructure footprint, green energy portfolio, logistics network, and rapidly expanding domestic data centre operations. Adani group said in a statement.

This powerful combination will address the explosive local and global demand for AI-ready data centre hardware, it said. ENS

India's goods exports jump 18% in May; imports from US surge 54%

Ravi Dutta Mishra
New Delhi, June 15

INDIAN GOODS exports reported a sharp 18% jump in exports during May compared to last year, a six-month high, according to the trade data released by the Commerce and Industry on Monday. This comes in the backdrop of a steep decline of over 10% in the domestic currency during the last 12 months, and a partial recovery in exports to West Asia.

As per the data, the trade deficit also swelled to \$28.21 billion in May, up from \$22.56 billion last year, as goods exports surged by 18% to \$45.2 billion from \$38.3 billion in May 2025,

while imports also jumped by 20.62% to \$73.41 billion.

Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal, at a press briefing, said many of India's trade problems will be elevated if the peace deal between the US and Iran stands, adding that exports to West Asia in May this year have almost reached the level of last May despite disruptions in the region. Data also showed that exports to the UAE and Saudi Arabia in May jumped by 3.18% and 11.12%, respectively. Further, the figures showed that imports from the US registered a strong 54.43% in May to \$5.87 billion as India stepped up energy imports amid the war. However, exports to India's largest market went up

by less than 1%. Official data showed that key drivers of exports include electronic goods, up 11.62% to \$5.09 billion and petroleum products, up 54.89% to \$8.42 billion. However, exports of tea, tobacco, spices, cashew, marine products, leather and textiles recorded negative growth in May.

Gold imports during the first two months of this fiscal year surged 60% to \$9.04 billion. Oil imports in May rose 53.8% to \$22.67 billion due to high prices, which hovered at around \$100 per barrel in that month. These imports rose 16.5% to \$41.3 billion during April-May 2026-27. (With inputs from PTI)

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

CHINA CONTROLS 90% OF GLOBAL CRITICAL MINERAL PROCESSING

US trade advocacy body forms task force on India-US critical mineral cooperation

Pratyush Deep
New Delhi, June 15

DAYS AFTER India and the US signed a bilateral Critical Minerals Framework, the US-India Business Council (USIBC) formed a Critical Minerals Security Task Force aimed at deepening cooperation across critical mineral supply chains.

Cooperation between India and the US on critical minerals has gained impetus amid growing concerns over China's dominance on the supply chain which the latter often use as a leverage in trade disputes. Last year, Indian industry began

facing shortages of rare earth magnets when China launched a licensing regime, choking exports of rare earth elements during its trade war with the US.

While China controls 90% of global critical mineral processing, both India and the US are heavily dependent on their imports to meet their domestic demand. Highlighting overlapping interests of the two countries, USIBC said out of 30 minerals which India identifies as "critical", 26 overlap with the US priorities. These included rare earths, lithium, cobalt, nickel, graphite, gallium, tungsten, among others. The task force has

identified five priority areas for engagement: lithium refining and cathode active materials, recycling, feedstock corridors, synthetic graphite production for battery applications, and rare earth processing and magnet manufacturing.

Lithium refining is a key gap in India's battery supply chain, with the country currently possessing negligible refining capacity. As electric vehicle adoption is expected to accelerate in the coming years, building domestic capabilities in lithium refining and recycling is essential to reduce dependence on imports, particularly from China.

Meanwhile, rare earth permanent magnets are vital components for a range of sectors, like electric mobility, renewable energy, electronics, aerospace and defence. To strengthen domestic manufacturing in this segment, India has already announced a scheme to support 6,000 metric tonnes per annum of integrated REPM production capacity. On this front, the task force will focus on fostering technology partnerships, facilitating offtake commitments and integrating supply chains into shared end markets.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

LNG tanker Disha crosses Hormuz; 1st Indian ship to exit Persian Gulf in 2 mths

Sukalp Sharma
New Delhi, June 15

INDIAN LIQUEFIED natural gas (LNG) tanker Disha crossed the Strait of Hormuz on Monday amid the announcement that the US and Iran have reached a peace deal. Disha, which is operated and managed by state-owned Shipping Corporation of India (SCI), is the first Indian merchant vessel to cross the strait in nearly two months. It is carrying Qatari LNG for India.

As per the ship tracking data and industry watchers, it is also the first vessel to cross the strait since the announcement of the peace pact, which is expected to be inked later this week. Shipping sector insiders say the shippers are eyeing the developments with caution, and traffic through the strait has not really picked up despite the announcement that a US-Iran deal has been worked out. Experts said it could take weeks for traffic through the strait to meaningfully pick up, and only if they feel assured that the peace deal will hold, given the experience of the past three months.

Carrying LNG for India's largest LNG importer Petronet LNG, the Malta-flagged Disha had been stranded in the Persian Gulf for over three months amid the West Asia war.

With Disha crossing the strait, the number of Indian vessels in the Persian Gulf, which is to the west of the strait, now stands at 13. Since early March, a total of 10 Indian vessels — of which nine were also India-flagged — have crossed the narrow waterway.

"As we speak now, LNG carrier Disha, managed by a Shipping Corporation of India-led consortium, has safely transited the Strait of Hormuz, and she is carrying 62,370 metric tonnes

Sarvam raises \$234 mn in funding round from HCLTech, others

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, June 15

SOVEREIGN AI company Sarvam has raised \$234 million (about Rs 2,200 crore) at a post-money valuation of \$1.5 billion, the firm said on Monday.

HCLTech and Bessemer Venture Partners took part in the funding round, with continued support from existing investors Khosla Ventures and Peak XV Partners.

"Sarvam, India's full-stack sovereign AI company, has raised \$234 million in the first close of its \$300 million Series B at a post-money valuation of \$1.5 billion," the company said in a statement.

The investment will fund Sarvam's continued research on training its next frontier model for agentic, coding, and cybersecurity use-cases, as well as access to compute at scale to expand its forward-deployed motion across key verticals, the sovereign AI firm said.

HCLTech in a regulatory filing said that it will take a 10.46% stake in Sarvam for Rs 1,427.25 crore or about \$150 million.

• HORMUZ TRANSIT BY INDIAN SHIPS

CARRYING LNG for India's largest LNG importer Petronet LNG, the Malta-flagged Disha had been stranded in the Persian Gulf for over three months amid the war

WITH DISHA crossing the strait, the number of Indian vessels in the Persian Gulf, which is to the west of the Strait of Hormuz, now stands at 13

SINCE EARLY March, a total of 10 Indian vessels — of which nine were also India-flagged — have



crossed the narrow waterway that connects the Persian Gulf with Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea

of LNG cargo. The vessel is supposed to enter Dahej on coming to India, likely on the 18th (of June)," Shipping Ministry Director Opeesh Kumar Sharma said. He added that the Centre stands ready to bring back the Indian ships stranded in the Persian Gulf whenever the strait opens and it is deemed safe for sailing, but didn't go into details of the preparation. As per vessel tracking data from MarineTraffic, Disha crossed the strait with the Automatic Identification System transponder on, broadcasting its location continuously. Most vessels that have crossed the strait in recent weeks have done so by switching off their transponders, or going dark, to avoid detection.

While a few Indian ships made their way through the strait over a weeks-long period starting mid-March due to diplomatic efforts by the Centre, transits of Indian and India-bound vessels came to a standstill after the April 18 incident in which a couple of Indian ships were fired upon by Iranian forces as they attempted to cross the waterway. One vessel — Desh Garima — man-

aged to slip out on April 18. The US also started its own blockade of Iranian ports mid-March, which worsened the maritime security scenario in the region. Since then, a few tankers carrying LPG, LNG, and crude oil for India did transit the strait, none of them were India-flagged or owned by Indian firms.

Iran suddenly closed the strait on April 18 — within a day of announcing unimpeded vessel movements through the waterway — leading to confusion among vessels that had lined up to cross it. This incident, and subsequent similar ones with Iran and the US running their own blockades, further hit the already constrained vessel movements.

Among the Indian vessels that have crossed the strait since early March are eight LPG tankers, one crude oil tanker, and one LNG tanker — Disha. A couple of Indian tankers also exited the war zone in this period, but they didn't have to cross the strait as they were already in the Gulf of Oman. One of them was loading at the UAE's Fujairah port when the oil terminal there came under attack. **FULL REPORT ON**

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

• BRIEFLY

Bharti Airtel gets nod to raise stake in Airtel Africa

New Delhi: Bharti Airtel on Monday said it has received nod from around 100% of its shareholders to raise stake in Airtel Africa by 16.31% via a share-swap agreement worth Rs 28,220 crore. Post

transaction, its stake in Airtel Africa will rise to around 79% from current 62.73%. "Airtel Africa is central to our growth strategy and is well positioned to deliver robust performance with an increasing contribution to our consolidated revenues," Bharti Enterprises Founder and Chairman Sunil Bharti Mittal said. PTI

• MARKETS

NOTE: GOLD, SILVER RATES AS PER INDIA BULLION AND JEWELLERS ASSOCIATION DATA GOLD PER 10G, SILVER PER 1KG; CRUDE OIL (INDIAN BASKET) AS OF JUNE 12, 2026

Tender ID	Tender Description	Link for accessing the Tender Documents
313396	Supply of Casing and Tubings for oil and gas wells for drilling and production activities in Onshore blocks	• geltender.nprocure.com • https://www.gujarat-energy.com/ggl-current-tender/
313521	Sale of Emulsified Crude produced in Well-PK 1ST of Ingoli Field of Ahmedabad Block (CB-ONN-2000/1)	

Any revision, clarifications, corrigenda, addenda, notifications etc. related to this notice will be updated on the above referred websites only. Interested parties should regularly visit websites to keep themselves updated.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT & PANCHAYATI RAJ
(An Organisation of the Ministry of Rural Development, Govt. of India)
Rajendranagar, Hyderabad-500030

Recruitment of Chair Professor on 'Rural Labour' in honour of Late Shri S.R. Sankaran

NIRDPR invites applications for Chair Professor constituted in honour of Late Shri S.R. Sankaran, an eminent civil servant and acclaimed rural development administrator. The Chair Professor should be a person of National/International Eminence either from India or abroad who can guide and inspire research, consultations and also networks with academicians, administrators, political parties and civil society groups. He/she should possess qualifications normally required for a Senior Professor in a Central University.

Those who applied with reference to Advt. No.07/2024 & 18/2025 need not apply again.
For Job profile, online submission of application and other details please visit: <http://career.nirdpr.in/>
Last date for submission of online application is 15/07/2026.
Advt.No.08/2026
File No: SRSC/16/1
Assistant Director
Administration (Section-I)
Comp.no. 5100

Dr. Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University Govt of Uttar Pradesh
Advt No.-63/2026-27 Dated: 13-06.2026
Recruitment Notice
Dr. Shakuntala Misra National Rehabilitation University, Lucknow (Govt of Uttar Pradesh) invites applications for the faculty positions at the level of Professor/Associate Professor/Assistant Professor in BASLP and BPO.

Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Technology for Divyangjan UP
WALK IN INTERVIEW
Applications are invited for Guest faculty positions in various departments of B. Tech., Diploma, Project Assistant (ABVRC) and Sign Language Interpreter (Diploma) for academic session 2026-27.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(SEE SECTION 82(2) (ii) Cr.P.C./84 BNSS)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) Deepak @ Dilip S/o Mahesh R/o B-48, Jagdamba Market, Aman Vihar, Rohini, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 29/2021, PS Nangloi, Delhi and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) Deepak @ Dilip can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) Deepak @ Dilip has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

UJVN Limited
Tender Time Extension Notice
RO No. 505 Tender Time Extension Notice Dated : 15/06/2026
The last date of submission and opening of tender specification no. 03/EE(M)/2026-27 invited by Executive Engineer (M), Tiloth, Uttarakashi is hereby extended :-
Last Date of submission of tender : 25.06.2026 till 16:00 hrs.
Due Date for opening of tender : 29.06.2026 at 16:00 hrs.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C./84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person namely 1.Rahul S/o Sumer 2.Suraj S/o Sumer R/o H.No. 67/94, Gali No. 3/3, Ishu Vihar, Mukundpur, Delhi (Address is same for both) have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 140/2025 U/s 109(1)/ 115(2)/ 351(2)/ 3(5) Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 25/27 Arms Act., has been registered at P.S. Shalimar Bagh, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, 1.Rahul 2.Suraj cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, 1.Rahul 2.Suraj has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
SEE SECTION 84 BHARTIYA NAGARIK SURKSHA SANHITA
Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused Person namely Rafiq @ Chote S/o Islam R/o C-118,JJ Colony Bawana, Delhi, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 65/2020 U/s 25/54/59 Arms Act., has been registered at PS: Bawana, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the Said, Rafiq @ Chote cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, Rafiq @ Chote has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C./ 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) Parkash @ Kallu, S/o: Late Om Parkash, R/o: Jhuggi No-D-508, R-Block, Jahangir Puri Opp. Metro APP, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No.: 07/2017, U/s: 356/370 IPC, P.S. Jahangir Puri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Parkash @ Kallu cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Parkash @ Kallu has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

UJVN LIMITED
e-TENDER NOTICE
Date: 15/06/2026
The office of Executive Engineer (Maintenance),Tiloth Power House Uttarakashi invites online bids from interested parties. Brief summary of tender is given below:
Tender No:04/EE(M)/2026-27
Name of work : Hiring of 01 no. non AC diesel vehicle.
Estimated cost : ₹ 5,06,520.00 (GST extra)

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person, namely, Shadab S/o Imran Husain R/o H.No.4, Gali No.5, Tilak Ka Makan, Near Chat Wala Mendir, Jagjeet Nager, Usmanpur, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No.: 372/2024, U/s: 317(2) BNS, registered at P.S.: Shahadra, Delhi, and the warrant has been returned writing upon that the said accused person, Shadab, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person, Shadab, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
SEE SECTION 84 BHARTIYA NAGARIK SURKSHA SANHITA
Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused Person namely Rafiq @ Chote S/o Islam R/o C-118,JJ Colony Bawana, Delhi, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under FIR No. 65/2020 U/s 25/54/59 Arms Act., has been registered at PS: Bawana, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the Said, Rafiq @ Chote cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, Rafiq @ Chote has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs
Office of the Custodian of Enemy Property for India
1st 11000-Floor, Shivaji Stadium, Connaught Place, New Delhi
E-AUCTION NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE ENEMY PROPERTIES(08/2026)
(Under Notification issued vide G.S.R. 258(E) dated 21st March, 2018 as amended)
Notice is hereby given for e-auction of 09 immovable enemy properties vested in the Custodian of Enemy Property for India through "Online Electronic Bidding" on MSTC India Ltd portal on "As is where is", "As is what is" and "Whatever there is" basis..

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that the accused person Namely Sunil Kumar@Sonu S/o Suresh R/o H. No. 5803, Gali No. 15 Nabi Karim, Paharganj Central Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 494/2022, U/S. 379/411 IPC PS: Karol Bagh, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused Sunil Kumar@Sonu, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused Sunil Kumar@Sonu has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
(SEE SECTION 82(2) (ii) Cr.P.C)
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person(s) (1) Krishna Kumar S/o Shambhu Kapar R/o 5810, Gali No. 4, Block No. 4, Dev Nagar, Karol Bagh, Delhi, (2) Sushil Kumar S/o Late Ram Dev Kumar R/o 626, Tomar Colony, Gali No. 29, Sant Nagar Burari, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No./CC No. 426/2022, U/s 380/381/411/34 IPC, PS Prasad Nagar, New Delhi and it has been returned to a Warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said accused person(s) (1) Krishna Kumar (2) Sushil Kumar can not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person(s) (1) Krishna Kumar (2) Sushil Kumar has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 84 Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Durgesh Kumar Pandey, S/o.: Sh. Surender Pandey, R/o.: H.No. 906/08, Govind Puri, New Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in a case vide FIR No. 036734/2023 Dt. 26.11.2023 U/S 379/411/34 IPC registered at P.S. Sunlight Colony, South-East District, New Delhi and it has been returned on a warrant of arrest there upon issued stating that the said Durgesh Kumar Pandey could not be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that accused Durgesh Kumar Pandey is absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Helpline Nos. & Email:
E-auction Agency: 1. 9727700986, 2. 9990673698
Email roopn8@mstcindia.in
O/o CEPI, Lucknow: 1. 8127189431, 2. 9479654348
Email cepi.lkw@mha.gov.in

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 (2) (ii) Cr. P.C.
Whereas a complaint has been made before me that accused persons Namley JD Usman Ali S/o Nanna Miya R/o Vill. Ganiyabaili, Atrauli, Distt: Aligarh, UP, have committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence under Ex. CLR. No. 210/2025 U/s 12 DV Act., has been registered at P.S. Jafrabad, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest there upon issued that the said, JD Usman Ali cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said, JD Usman Ali has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.P.C.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused Santosh Rani, W/o Dinesh Kumar, R/o Plot No. B-1/7, 3rd Floor, BJRM Hospital, Jahangirpuri, Delhi has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in case FIR No. 77/2024, SCN No. 676/24, P.S. Jahangirpuri, Delhi and it has been returned to a warrant of arrest thereupon issued that the said Santosh Rani cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said Santosh Rani has absconded (or is concealing herself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

Bank of India
NOTICE FOR PUBLIC AUCTION OF PLEDGED GOLD ORNAMENTS/ARTICLES
It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, persons engaged in business of gold ornaments/articles and general public that inspite of repeated reminders/notices by the Bank the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank.
Notice is hereby published that if they fail to deposit all their dues in their respective gold loan accounts (including up-to-date interest and all costs, charges/ expenses) by 23.07.2026 (date), then from 10.00 AM to 2.00 P.M. of 24.07.2026 (date) their pledged gold ornaments/ articles will be put up for public auction in the branch premises. For this, Bank shall not be held responsible for any inconvenience or damage caused to the concerned borrowers and no allegation or representations will be entertained from any borrowers in this regard.

SANJAY GANDHI POST GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES
Raebareilly Road, Lucknow-226014
Recruitment Notice
Applications are invited in offline mode for the post of Associate Professor, College of Nursing, SGGPGIMS through direct recruitment.
Name of the Post & Pay Matrix (7th CPC)
Speciality
No. of post
Category
Essential Qualification and Experience
Age limit

KANPUR SMART CITY LIMITED
3rd Floor, Nagar Nigam Mukhyalaya, Motijheel, Kanpur - 208002
Phone +91-7007876185 e-mail : kselkanpur@gmail.com
NOTICE INVITING TENDER
The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Kanpur Smart City Ltd. (KSCL) Invites Tender for the below mentioned work under Smart City Mission:-

UTTARAKHAND POWER CORPORATION LTD.
(A Govt. of Uttarakhand Undertaking) (Corporate Identity No. U40109UR2001SGC025867/2358)
Victoria Cross Vijeta Gabar Singh Urja Bhawan, Kanwali Road, Dehradun-248001
E-mail ID : it@upcl.org, Website: www.upcl.org.in, Tel.: 0135-2763672-75, Ext : 263
Notice Inviting e-Tender
Tender No. 01/SE (SCADA & ERP) /UPCL/2026-27 dated: 15-06-2026
E-tender for "Appointment of an agency to assist UPCL in ERP SAP (S4-Hana) Enhancement/Activities"

NAGAR NIGAM SHAHJAHANPUR
Ref: 779/PRO/C.D./N.N.SPN/2026-27 Date: 15.06.2026
Procurement Tender Notice
Chief Engineer, Nagar Nigam Shahjahanpur invites percentage-rate bids on http://etender.up.nic.in from eligible bidders for the following package under the CM-GRID scheme.
Sr. No. Package No. Name of Road/Street (Works) Length of Street (K.M.) Estimated cost Excluding GST (Rs. Lakh) Construction Maintenance for 5 years Total Estimated cost of work (Rs. Lakh) Earnest Money Deposit (Rs. Lakh) Duration of Construction work (in months) Tender fees Including GST

SALUTE THE SOLDIER

BORDER SECURITY FORCE
Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Atul Ch. Hazarika on 06th June 1986, he sustained grievous injuries while fighting with militants on Ukhrul-Imphal road and succumbed to his injuries on 16th June 1986 at RIMS hospital Imphal.

CONSTABLE ASHOK KUMAR SINGH
Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Ashok Kumar Singh on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he sustained grievous bullet injuries while fighting with militants in area of Sakidafar, Srinagar, J&K and made ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty.

CONSTABLE MAHENDRA SINGH RANAWAT
Director General and all Ranks of Border Security Force remember its gallant Jawan Constable Mahendra Singh Ranawat on his Balidan Diwas. On this day, he made ultimate sacrifice while on operational duty in area of BOP Bharat, Siliguri, West Bengal.

CENTRAL RESERVE POLICE FORCE
DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Harka Bir Tamang of 39 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice after being hurt in IED blast by insurgents in Mizoram on 16 June 1968. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani Constable Harka Bir Tamang
DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Utam Singh Negi of 47 Bn, who made the supreme sacrifice while bravely combating militants during an area domination patrol in Srinagar, Jammu & Kashmir on 16 June 1993. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

Veer Balidani Constable Mustaq Ahmed
DG and all Ranks of #CRPF pay solemn tribute to Constable Mustaq Ahmed of 128 Bn, who was shot by militants in the intervening night of 14 and 15 June 2004 and succumbed to injuries on 16 June 2004. #CRPF salutes the braveheart and pledges never to let his sacrifice go in vain.

Government of Rajasthan (Department of Information Technology & Communication) IT Building, Yojana Bhawan Campus, Tilak Marg, C-Scheme, Jaipur-302005
Vacancy Notice
In continuation to the Vacancy Notice issued vide No. F5.502 (1442)/DoIT&C/2025-13096-8832250/DoIT/BSDC-299 dated 31.12.2025, applications are invited from willing and eligible candidates for filling up the following posts on deputation basis in the Rajasthan State Computer Security Incident Response Team (R-CSIRT), Jaipur, Rajasthan:

Table with 4 columns: S.N., Name of the Post, Pay Matrix Level, No. of Vacancy. Rows include Director and Technical Lead - Incident Response (IR).

The last date for submission of applications through email will be 30 days from the date of publication of this advertisement. Candidates who have already submitted their applications in response to the earlier Vacancy Notice dated 31.12.2025 need not apply again.

PROCLAMATION REQUIRING THE APPEARANCE OF ACCUSED PERSON
See Section 82 Cr.Pc.
Whereas complaint has been made before me that accused person, namely, Sahid Hussain@Ahmad Hussain, R/o H.No. A-20, Masjid Vali Gali, Hasi Enclave, Sultanpuri, Delhi, has committed (or is suspected to have committed) the offence in FIR No.: 212/2014, U/s: 285/379/411/120B/34 IPC, registered at P.S.: Ranhola, Delhi, and the warrant has been returned writing upon that the said accused person, Sahid Hussain@Ahmad Hussain, cannot be found and whereas it has been shown to my satisfaction that the said accused person, Sahid Hussain@Ahmad Hussain, has absconded (or is concealing himself to avoid the service of the said warrant).

By Order Sh. Ankit Karan Singh, Metropolitan Magistrate First Class-08, West Distt., Room No. 30, Tis Hazuri Court, Delhi

ADITYA BIRLA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office: Indian Rayon Compound, Varval, Gujarat - 362266 Branch Office: Unit No. 201, 202 & 205 To 209, 2ND Floor, Urbanac Business Park, Plot A-1A & A1-B, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow - 226010.

ADITYA BIRLA HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
[See Rule 8 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002] Possession Notice (For Immovable Property)
Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 had issued a demand notice dated 9-06-2023 calling upon the borrowers Govind Sharma, Anamika Sharma, Rohit Sharma, the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 7,68,118.95/- (Rupees Seven Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighteen and Ninety Five Paise Only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
All That Piece And Parcel Of Flat No. T-90, 3rd Floor, Admeasuring 707 And 44.91 Sq. Mtrs. (Carpet Area), Tower-E, Block-B, "Dream City Awas Yojna", Project Name "Singhal Dream City", Situated At Near Patholi Nahar, Jaipur Road, Near 100 M. Ring Road, Ladamada, Agra, Uttar Pradesh-282001, And Bounded As:- East: Other's Property, West: Other's Property, North: Other's Property, South: 24 M. Wide Zonal Road (Proposed) & Other's Property

Date: 11.06.2026
Place: AGRA
Authorised Officer Aditya Birla Housing Finance Limited

BANGALORE ELECTRICITY SUPPLY COMPANY LIMITED
(Wholly owned Government of Karnataka undertaking)
(CIN-U04010KA2002SGC030438)

REVISID NOTIFICATION INVITING TENDER (Through KPP Portal)
The calendar of Events published for the following works in the Newspapers Vijaya Karnataka and New Indian Express on 14.05.2026 is modified and detailed as under.

Table with 3 columns: Sl. No., Tender Enquiry No, Name of the Works. Includes details for KV feeder construction at KSRTC under the PM e-Bus Sewa Scheme.

Calendar of Events: 1) Availability of Bid documents: 18.06.2026 onwards. 2) Last date for submission of Bid queries: 29.06.2026 before 17:00 Hrs. 3) Pre-Bid Meeting: 30.06.2026 at 11:00 Hrs. Venue of Pre-Bid Meeting: O/o Chief General Manager (Ele), 4th Floor, Project Section, B Block, Corporate Office, BESCOM, K.R Circle, Bengaluru-560001. (4) Last date & Time for Bid Submission: 20.07.2026 at 15:00 Hrs. (5) Opening of Technical Bids: 21.07.2026 at 15:30 Hrs.

GOVERNMENT OF JHARKHAND
AGRICULTURE, ANIMAL HUSBANDRY & CO-OPERATIVE DEPARTMENT (CO-OPERATIVE DIVISION)
OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR, CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETIES JHARKHAND, RANCHI
INTEGRATED CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (I.C.D.P.) CELL, RANCHI

Short e-Tender Notice
Table with 8 columns: SL No., Tender Notice Number, Name of work, No Of Unit, Estimated Value of Work (in Rs), Cost Of BoQ (in Rs), Earnest Money (in Rs), Time Of Completion Of Work. Includes details for repairing work of 100 MT Capacity Godown at different MPSCs.

NORTH CENTRAL RAILWAY
E-Tender Notice No. : AGC-M-Eddy-Current-AGC-26 Date : 13.06.2026
E-TENDER NOTICE
Sr. DME (Chg.)/North Central Railway, Agra acting for and on behalf of the President of India invites "Open Tender" through on Line only (E-Tendering) for the following work:

राजस्थान स्टेट सीड्स कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड
अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा सूचना
राजस्थान स्टेट सीड्स कॉर्पोरेशन लिमिटेड के हिण्डोज, वांसवाड़ा, श्रीकरणपुर, सुमेरपुर, तबीजी एवं भीलवाड़ा इकाई कार्यालयों पर आवश्यक श्रमिक कार्यों हेतु वर्ष 2026-27 एवं 2027-28 के लिए पुनः अल्पकालीन ई-निविदा दिनांक 22.06.2026 तक आमंत्रित की जाती है।

State Police Complaint Authority, Haryana
Old PWD (B & R) Building, Sector-19 B, Chandigarh
Phone No. 0172-2772244, Mobile No. 7888338787
E-Mail Id: spca.haryana@nic.in. Website: spahry.nic.in

ADVERTISEMENT
The State Police Complaint Authority, Haryana invites applications from retired employees of the Central Govt., State Govt. or any Board, Corporation Company or other agency owned or controlled by the central or State Govt, for appointment against the temporary sanctioned post of 01 Assistant (Group 'C') post; as per the procedure approved by the Govt. of Haryana under GMDA Regulation 6, Sub Clause (ii) of 2018.

The Applicant should possess relevant experience for the post and should have served for a period of not less than 10 years. The applicant must have no charge sheet pending against him/her and should not be more than 63 years of age.

The applicant would be required to produce all relevant documents including, character-cum- service certificate, at the time of the interview.

Willing & eligible person may apply through the official email spca.haryana@nic.in or submit their applications off line at the office address: Chairperson, State Police Complaint Authority Haryana, Old PWD B&R Building, Sector 193, Chandigarh.

Application should reach the office by 26.06.2026
Sd- Chairperson SPCA, Haryana

GOVERNMENT OF HARYANA TENDER NOTICE
Table with 5 columns: Sl. No., NAME OF BOARD/CORP./AUTH, NAME OF WORK NOTICE TENDER, OPENING DATE CLOSING DATE (TIME), AMOUNT / EMD (APPROX.) IN RUPEES, WEBSITE OF THE BOARD CORP./AUTH, NODAL OFFICER/CONTACT DETAILS (EMAIL)

NORTHERN RAILWAY NOTICE FOR E-AUCTION
Senior Divisional Commercial Manager/Freight, Delhi Division, Northern Railway in terms of Railway Board letter no. 2022/TC(FM)/10/04 dated 13.06.2022, and Railway Board's letter no. 2024/RS(G)/7797 (E3471059) dated 13.08.2024, invites bids through e-Auction (www.irops.gov.in) for leasing of parcel space of SLR compartments and VPs (on round trip basis) for a period of three years as per detail and schedule given below:-

Table with 3 columns: S. No., Date & time of e-Auction, Assets to be auctioned. Lists various assets like 12212(R1), 12306(F1), etc.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-AUCTION NOTICE
No. : 7PUB/e-Auction/NIT-2026 Dated : 15.06.2026
The Sr. Divisional Commercial Manager/ G, Northern Railway, Delhi Division, New Delhi invites e-Auction through IREPS (https://irops.gov.in) for allotment of Misc contracts of NFR at following railway stations:

Table with 4 columns: E-Catalogue No., Type of Asset, Station, Date & Time for e-auction. Includes details for Digital Lockers at Stations.

Metro Railway, Kolkata
Tender Notice for e-tendering is invited by Principal Chief Engineer, Metro Railway, Kolkata for and on behalf of the President of India for the following work: Name of work: Zonal Contract for Up-keep of track and track bed of Both UP & DN Line from km 07714 to 12/02 between Central (EX) to Netaji Bhawan (EX) including 'Y' siding at Maidan of Metro Railway, Kolkata upto June 2028. Approx. Cost of Work: ₹ 2,19,48,900.78. Earnest Money: ₹ 4,39,000/-.

STATE FOREST RESEARCH INSTITUTE, POLIPATHAR, JABALPUR (M.P.)
WALK IN INTERVIEW
A Walk-in-interview will be held on 07.07.2026 for the purely temporary post of Research Associate-II (01) from 10:30 am onwards in the office of the undersigned for assisting in the research project. Suitable candidate may attend the interview with relevant certificate and mark sheets in original as well as one set of self attested photocopies. Proof of identity and one recent photograph. (Registration time 10:30 AM to 12:00 PM)

State Police Complaint Authority, Haryana
Old PWD (B & R) Building, Sector-19 B, Chandigarh
Phone No. 0172-2772244, Mobile No. 7888338787
E-Mail Id: spca.haryana@nic.in. Website: spahry.nic.in

NORTHERN RAILWAY CORRIGENDUM
Ref i) Tender No-02261951 due on Dated-15/06/2026 ii) Tender Notice no-03
(1) In reference to above tender due date has been extended from 15/06/26 to 29/06/26.
(2) In reference to above tender validity of offer from 60 days to 90 days.
(3) In reference to above tender payment terms has been revised.
All other terms and conditions remain unchanged.
The corrigendum has been published on website www.irops.gov.in. 2044/2026

क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड, सहारनपुर।
33/18, कपिल विहार, निकट विवेकमार्ग चौक, सहारनपुर 247001, उ०प्र०

खन पट्टा इकाई M/s TBRO S Farm Technologies, Proprietor-Shri Shakumari Naveen Plot No 14, Maytri shreepuram Towards Sanghi Temple, Pedda Amberpet, K.V. Rangareddy, YADADRI BHUVANAGIRI, TELANGANA, द्वारा गत नं- 119/1, 120/1, 192/1, 193/1, 225/4 (टैटल सीज परिया-14.90 हेक्टेयर), ग्राम- कावुवाला पहाड़ीपुर, तहसील-वेहट, जयपुर-सहारनपुर, उ०प्र० पर सैड/बजरी/बोल्डर (आरबीएम) हेतु खन कार्य किया जाना प्रस्तावित है। उक्त खन में जयपुर-सहारनपुर क्षेत्र की तहसील वेहट के अन्तर्गत गत नं-119/1, 120/1, 192/1, 193/1, 225/4 (टैटल सीज परिया-14.90 हेक्टेयर), ग्राम- कावुवाला पहाड़ीपुर, तहसील-वेहट, जयपुर-सहारनपुर, उ०प्र० पर सैड/बजरी/बोल्डर (आरबीएम) पर खन कार्य किया जाना प्रस्तावित है।

- 1. कार्यालय विभागाधिकारी, सहारनपुर।
2. क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, मध्य क्षेत्र वन एवं पर्यावरण मंत्रालय, भारत सरकार, पंचम लेन, केन्द्रीय नेशनल सेक्टर-एच, अलीगंज, लखनऊ।
3. उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड, टी-सी-12वी, धीमती खण्ड, गैमती नगर, लखनऊ।
4. कार्यालय उपजिलाधिकारी वेहट, सहारनपुर।
5. क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, उ०प्र० प्रदूषण नियंत्रण बोर्ड, 33/18 कपिल विहार, सहारनपुर।
6. कार्यालय उपायुक्त, जिला उद्योग एवं उद्यम प्रोत्साहन केन्द्र, सहारनपुर।
7. कार्यालय जिला पंचायत, सहारनपुर।

भारतीय विमानपत्तन आर्थिक विनियामक प्राधिकरण
Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA)
भारत सरकार/Government of India
3rd Floor, Udaan Bhawan, Safdarjung Airport, New Delhi - 110003, Ph.: 011-24695044

PUBLIC NOTICE
STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATION MEETING ON DETERMINATION OF TARIFF FOR THE AERONAUTICAL SERVICES FOR KEMPEGOWDA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, BENGALURU (BLR) FOR THE FOURTH CONTROL PERIOD (01.04.2026-31.03.2031)
Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA) has issued Consultation Paper No. 01/2026-27 on 12.06.2026 (which is available on AERA website at URL www.aera.gov.in) w.r.t the Tariff Determination for Aeronautical Services for Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (BLR) for the Fourth Control Period (01.04.2026-31.03.2031).

In accordance with the provision of Section 13(4) of the AERA Act, 2008, the various tariff proposals of the Authority contained in the Consultation Paper, are put forth for Stakeholders' Consultation. A Stakeholders Consultation Meeting in hybrid mode (Physical/Online) in this regard is scheduled on 29th June, 2026 (Monday) at 3:30 PM at: Stakeholders Room, 3rd Floor, Udaan Bhawan, Safdarjung Airport, New Delhi-110003
All stakeholders like Passengers/Passengers' Associations, General Public, Airport Operators, Airlines, Industry Associations/Bodies, Independent Service providers for Cargo, Ground Handling Fuel Farm etc., are requested to join the said meeting and give their valuable suggestions/comments/views on the aforesaid Consultation Paper on/off proposal of Kempegowda International Airport, Bengaluru (BLR).
Participants joining in person may send their confirmation to AERA by 26th June, 2026 with Name, email address, mobile number, vehicle number by email to director-ps@aera.gov.in and rajan.gupta@aera.gov.in. Online link will be shared on AERA website (https://aera.gov.in) before the Stakeholders meeting under Tab "News and Announcements".
Sd/- Secretary, AERA
CBC 03112/12/0005/2627

GOALSCORER THAT SENT IRAQ TO A FIRST WORLD CUP IN 40 YEARS

Hussain's ordeal: Father killed by Al-Qaeda, brother went missing



Sandip G
New Jersey, June 15

WHEN IRAQ'S plane landed at Chicago's O'Hare Airport last week, US immigration officers pulled Ayman Hussain aside and held him for seven hours. His mobile phone was inspected before he was granted entry. The team's photographer was waved through. The embers of what passed between both nations — the 2003 invasion, the years that followed — have not entirely cooled, whatever the diplomatic language now says. But Hussain, who will spearhead Iraq's attack against Norway on Tuesday,

joined his teammates at the hotel without strain. He has been used to worse.

He grew up in Al Safra, a rural village in the Hawija district of Kirkuk, waking to the sound of drones and bullets. His father, a soldier in the Iraqi Army, was shot dead by Al Qaeda militants when Hussain was twelve, killed while buying building materials for the house he was still building. Hussain told his mother and elder brother to flee. The brother refused. Shortly after, he was kidnapped, allegedly by ISIS. He never came back.

The house his father had started remained unfinished. "I loved football," Hussain told FIFA, "but my old dream was to get enough money to complete the construction of the house my father had begun to construct."

Eighteen years later, Hussain scored the goal that sent Iraq to

their first World Cup in forty years.

The journey to reach Chicago had already tested the limits of what a football squad could absorb. Iraq played 21 qualifying matches across 28 months, in Basra and Muscat, Jakarta and Monterrey.

They nearly missed the playoff final against Bolivia in northern Mexico because of the war with Iran. Commercial flights had stopped. A 25-hour road trip to Istanbul was considered and abandoned — the ministry judged the route too exposed to shelling. Instead they mapped a path through the desert to Jordan. Some players travelled 28 hours to reach Amman. There, missiles grounded them for 36 more. Eventually a flight to Lisbon, then Monterrey.

"We didn't worry," Hussain told *Al Jazeera*, "because we are used to bombings and bullets.



Ayman Hussain was detained for seven hours when he landed in Chicago. REUTERS

We have learnt that no good things happen without waiting and being patient."

They won in Monterrey. They are here.

Nearly half the squad — eleven of twenty-six — are immigrants, scattered across Malmö and Amsterdam, Liverpool and Warsaw. Their presence created a problem that coach Graham Arnold, an Australian, solved in a way no coaching manual would suggest. "About 80 per cent speak Arabic and that even affects on-field performance," Arnold said. "When I started, I played the best players to their positions and strengths but then I realised some couldn't speak the language so there was no communication." His solution: English-speaking players on the left side of the field, Arabic speakers on the right, with a centre-back and central midfielder who speak both bridging the gap. The team is literally divided by language and held together by it. Arnold spent eight months in

Baghdad despite his family's apprehensions, learning their culture and habits. He fined players for arriving late to training. When they turned up exhausted in Monterrey after the ordeal through Jordan and Lisbon, he told them: "You know what you have suffered, your families. Now, you do it for them and make them proud." He understood what he was asking. "The players went through a hell of a lot of stress," he said. "Forty-six million people on their shoulders. Every one of those games was heart-breaker or survival."

Ali Al-Hamadi, a forward whose goals will be central to Iraq's chances alongside Hussain's, was two years old when his family fled. His father, a lawyer previously jailed under Saddam Hussein, and his pregnant mother left Maysan in southeastern Iraq at the turn of the century.

They settled in Toxteth, Liverpool, where Al-Hamadi grew up in a rough neighbourhood, racially abused, drawn at times toward the wrong crowd. "I have had periods where I was hanging around with the wrong group of kids, staying out late, causing trouble," he told the BBC. "But I am quite proud to say that from within myself I realised that's not what I wanted to do."

Pitted against France, Norway and Senegal, Arnold has been measured about their chances of advancing. That is the sensible position. But the Lions of Mesopotamia did not travel this far — through deserts and missile attacks and seven hours at O'Hare — to be sensible. Hussain joined his teammates at the hotel without complaint. In Al Safra, the house his father never finished is still there. He has not forgotten it.

“There were doubts because of what I said at the previous World Cup, that I thought it would be difficult for me to play it again. But I started feeling good and I was taking things day by day... it all happened naturally.”

LIONEL MESSI ON RETURNING FOR ARGENTINA'S TITLE DEFENCE

Will the stars align for Leo again?

At 38, Messi could be slower than he was in Qatar, but he possesses the vision to see paths that others don't

Sandip G
New Jersey, June 15

THE PULL is irresistible; to win it, to win it again. If Lionel Messi had not lifted the World Cup in Qatar, he would have been just another celebrity guest in the corporate box. But success, unlike failure, lures into reliving the glorious yesterday once more, to kiss the bulbous crown again, to be ferried on the shoulders of his teammates again, or to cry so innocently again. Messi cannot leave his yesterdays behind, and so he is in the US to achieve a rare feat last achieved by Pele and friends in 1962.

Maybe, this is how he has planned his legacy. He has matched Diego Maradona, his idol and still the most loved footballer in his country, in winning the World Cup. Now, Messi wants to match Messi himself, composing a tribute act to himself.

He could spoil the perfect ending that Qatar had bestowed on him, he could turn out to be a parody of himself. He will turn 39 during the tournament. But Messi is not delusional that he just needs to turn up and the goals and assists would automatically arrive, or that he is in his peak physical shape.

All he knows is one truth;

that there is still fire raging within him, as powerfully as it was with his five previous participations; that even with the prowess of the muscle fading, he has the wits, the knowhow and belief that he could win games. The feet are as silken as always; the eyes are as sharp and the spirit impenetrable.

Still sharp

Those that smirk about his match-readiness after playing in a league of inferior quality shouldn't ignore his contributions with Argentina in the qualification passage as well as the COPA in 2024. Messi fired eight goals in the qualifying campaign, which the defending champions topped, winning 12 out of 18 matches and only losing four. He created three more. He has stacked a dozen goals and seven assists in 14 MLS games this season.

At this stage of his career, it is not where he plays, but how he does. He might not last the physical rigours of a full season in Europe, but can indisputably light up a tournament that needs sporadic bursts of inventiveness rather than sustained aggression. He could be slower than he was in Qatar, but he possesses the vision and intuition to see paths, angles and moves that others don't see. The men around him have to



Lionel Messi in a training session in Kansas City ahead of Argentina's opener against Algeria. AP

run harder, cover his spaces and mask his non-existent pressing.

All of these they do without complaints, or as a painful duty, but like repaying the debt to the inspiration he has been to them. Julian Alvarez, his forward colleague, had a picture of Messi beside Mother Mary; Lautaro Martinez has an autograph of Enzo Fernandez as a sprightly teenager when his idol announced his retirement after a doomed COPA tussle in 2016.

He then posted an emotional message on his Facebook

wall. "How are we, a bunch of nobodies who don't live with 1% of the pressure you do, 40 million people making ridiculous demands of perfection when we don't even know you, going to try to convince you? Do what you want but think about staying and enjoying it."

Perhaps, it helped Messi that most of his colleagues in Qatar were from a younger generation that didn't share the collective angst of losing the 2014 final; men that looked up to him and would resort to the extremes to make him happy. Messi, too, felt more comfort-

able manning them rather than those of similar vintage.

Whatever the outcome of the World Cup, another enthralling chapter in Messi's life is writing itself. The role would be much the same as it had been in Qatar, lurking in the shadows and pouncing at the ripest moment, producing trickery that no one imagines. His mere shadow would inspire his troops.

More Xavi

Manager Lionel Scaloni has tuned the team's game to ensure that no one is overbur-

dened. They don't press hard or circulate the ball endlessly. The moment they get the ball, they surge upfield with quick, sharp passing. Those could be long, short, square or diagonal. There will be runners around Messi, who veers to more central channels to conduct the game. In his latter years, he has been more Xavi, his Barca soulmate than himself, capturing the wondrous dexterity.

Perhaps, his lingering in the game originates from the discovery that there are more layers to his game than he had thought. That he is not finished yet. His demeanour would be fascinating.

In Qatar, the devil in the saint often surfaced, the rough edges trapped in his peaceful face. The line to Dutch forward Wout Weghorst would be remembered as the rudest line he had ever uttered on the field: "what you looking at, fool?"

Maybe, Messi wants to experience all these emotions again, to suspend his golden sunset again. And the irresistible pull remains; to win and win it again.

Germany cruise to 7-1 win over Curacao to get off to dream start



Kai Havertz scored twice. AP

Reuters
Houston, June 15

GERMANY BEGAN their World Cup campaign with a thumping 7-1 victory over debutants Curacao on Sunday in a match where history was made on several fronts and the one-sided result could not overshadow the occasion for the island nation.

Germany's Felix Nmecha scored the fastest goal of the tournament so far after six minutes and Nico Schlotterbeck, Kai Havertz (two), Jamal Musiala, Nathaniel Brown and Deniz Undav also netted in an easy outing for Julian Nagelsmann's side.

But the biggest cheer from the 68,021 crowd came for Livano Comenencia's 21st-minute equaliser for Curacao to score their first goal at a World Cup as they became the smallest nation by population size and area to play at the global finals.

Curacao's sizeable support enjoyed their historic day out under Dick Advocaat, who became the oldest coach in World Cup history at the age of 78, and cheered to the end on an occasion perhaps most believed would never come.

{ STATEMENT, ON AND OFF PITCH }

Japan announce ambition with comeback

Mihir Vasavda
Mumbai, June 15

DAICHI KAMADA did not know much about the goal. By the time the ball brushed his forehead in the 88th minute and looped beyond Bart Verbruggen, he was already surrounded by teammates, substitutes and a pocket of supporters who sensed they had witnessed something larger than a late equaliser.

He spent more than a decade in Germany, building his reputation at Eintracht Frankfurt, helping the club win the Europa League in 2022 and becoming one of the first Japanese attacking midfielders to thrive in a major European league as a creator rather than simply a hard-working runner. In many ways, his journey mirrors modern Japanese football itself: understated, intelligent and increasingly impossible to ignore.

On Sunday night in Dallas, Kamada provided the final touch as Japan twice came from behind to earn a thrilling 2-2 draw against the Netherlands in one of the most compelling matches of the World Cup's opening week.

The contest was a meeting between two ambitious nations seeking new ground. The Ne-



Daichi Kamada (R) scored the late equaliser in the 2-2 draw. AP

etherlands are still chasing the title that has eluded them despite three appearances in the final. Japan, meanwhile, have become Asia's standard-bearers. By the final whistle, both had offered evidence they could go deep into this tournament.

For 45 minutes, however, caution trumped ambition.

The Netherlands controlled possession but resisted the urge to overcommit, wary of Japan's pace in transition. Japan remained compact and disciplined, preferring patience over adventure. The clearest moments belonged to the Dutch, and the busiest player on the

field was goalkeeper Zion Suzuki. Born in the United States to a Ghanaian father and Japanese mother, Suzuki has long been regarded as one of Asia's brightest goalkeeping prospects. Against a Dutch side boasting Virgil van Dijk, Micky van de Ven and Cody Gakpo, he repeatedly justified that reputation. He denied Donyell Malen, and commanded his area whenever orange shirts converged around the box.

The breakthrough arrived six minutes after the restart. A Ryan Gravenberch delivery found Van Dijk, whose powerful finish finally broke Japanese resistance. It felt like an inevitable reward for Dutch pressure. Yet Japan have long since stopped following other people's scripts.

Just six minutes later, Keito Nakamura exploited a rare lapse in the Dutch defence to restore parity. The equaliser injected belief into the Japanese side. But, for a spell, Japan looked vulnerable. The Dutch pressed higher, moved the ball with greater urgency and began to find space behind Japan's defensive line. It felt like a team remembering how good they were.

In the 64th minute, Crysencio Summerville curled a

superb effort beyond Suzuki to restore their advantage. The finish appeared decisive. Koeman's side looked stronger physically, more comfortable in possession and increasingly likely to see out the contest. Japan kept coming.

Without injured captain Wataru Endo, they pressed and probed with the confidence of a side that has spent recent years defeating established powers and shedding any lingering inferiority complex. The Dutch backline, so composed for much of the evening, found itself being asked uncomfortable new questions. Their reward arrived two minutes from time.

A corner was swung into a crowded penalty area. Substitute Koki Ogawa rose highest and powered a header across goal. As the ball flashed through a sea of bodies, it appeared destined to drift harmlessly beyond the far post. Then came the slightest intervention. Kamada, stationed near the goalmouth, glanced the ball with his forehead, altering its path just enough to take it beyond Verbruggen. The Netherlands had led twice and failed to win. Japan had fallen behind twice and refused to lose.

Cleaning is on the school curriculum: No surprise that Samurai Blue fans tidy up

Nihal Koshie
New Delhi, June 15

SHORTLY AFTER Japan's 2-2 draw against the Netherlands, a familiar sight unfolded at AT&T Stadium in Texas: Japanese fans cleaning up trash, putting it into blue bags they had carried in. The football world first witnessed the Samurai Blue supporters leaving stadiums spotless at France 1998, Japan's maiden World Cup appearance. For those in Japan, it was no surprise. Cleanliness is not just a habit ingrained in their culture.

"In the Japanese system, cleaning begins at elementary school when the kids are six to seven years old. They will clean the classroom and the lobbies with brooms and wipes. They will serve food. Cleaning is linked to discipline and responsibility. When these kids go to university, this culture continues. This is what you are seeing at the World Cup. The brain is wired to do the cleaning," said Dr. Randeep Rakwal, a professor at the Tsukuba International Academy of Sport Studies (TIAS), who was



Japan fans cleaning up after Sunday's match in Dallas. AP

brought up in Daryaganj in Delhi and has lived in Japan for over three decades.

Tokyo University's official curriculum includes cleaning activities that fall within the non-cognitive category, skills considered as important as academic ones.

Haruka Takeda, a social scientist studying mental health in para athletes, points to a philosophy the Japanese carry even when they leave their shores. *Kita toki yorimo kirei ni suru*, or leave the place cleaner than when you arrived. "Many Japanese people are

familiar with this idea from a young age. Children are taught to clean classrooms and public spaces themselves, so cleaning is not seen as someone else's responsibility but as something everyone contributes to. For many Japanese football fans, cleaning the stadium after a match is a way of showing respect for the venue, appreciation to the host country, and consideration for the people who will use the space next," said Takeda, a student at TIAS.

The practice extends well beyond schools. In the community where Rakwal has lived for 25 years in Yatabe, residents gather once every two months to clean. "It's *Soji Shimasu*' or I will clean. To clear the lanes of overgrown grass, fallen leaves, the odd cigarette stub," Rakwal said. Japan is an aging society, and for elderly residents who can no longer participate, neighbours clean on their behalf. "If my wife says I have to join the cleaning if she is not there, I will plan my schedule and give the community cleaning priority," he said.

It extends to businesses, too. White and blue-collar workers

clean the area outside their company premises as a matter of course. "Every shop, company, business will do the cleaning. There is a Toyota showroom in my area," Rakwal said. "They will be in their official dress, cleaning the surroundings."

Rakwal traces the roots of this national discipline and cleanliness to a single moment. When Tokyo became the first Asian city to host the Olympics in 1964, the capital was transformed as a symbol of post-war Japan: gleaming buildings, cleaned waterways, and the first bullet train unveiled ten days before the opening ceremony. Omotenashi, selfless hospitality, became non-negotiable.

"Cleanliness started with the 1964 Olympics," he said. "It was a directive that foreigners were coming, so Japan must be clean. Before the Olympics, Japan had a garbage problem. Tokyo Bay was contaminated. You couldn't even fish. Then they cleaned up everything."

In Dallas on Sunday night, the blue bags were doing the same work, in a different country, for the same reason.

Vozinha's story:
From journeyman
career to World
Cup spotlight

Express News Service
New Delhi, June 15

THE STARTING line-up on Cape Verde's debut at the FIFA World Cup reads normal until the goalkeeper's name comes up. It says 'Vozinha'. It is the nickname of the 40-year-old custodian Josimar Jose Evora Dia, which he has used throughout his career. In Portuguese, it means 'little voice' (voz means voice and inha is little).

The nickname proved to be apt on the biggest night for Cape Verde in football as the 40-year-old veteran as he shouted and screamed for the 90 minutes and made seven big saves to put 2010 World Champions and one of the tournament favourites Spain at bay.

Vozinha, who was born in Cape Verde, got the nickname because of his grandparents. "The nickname is because of my grandparents. I grew up with them as my father was in the military and my mother was working," Vozinha told FIFA in an interview.

While the nickname shouldn't have traveled beyond his island, when he arrived in Angola to play for Progresso, he decided to keep the nickname.

"Nobody in Cape Verde knew me by that name. But I didn't like it at first, it drove me crazy. But when I arrived in Angola, there was another goalkeeper named Josimar. So I said, 'I'm not going to put Josimar II on my shirt.' And if everyone knew me as Vozinha in Cape Verde, that's what was going to stick," he added.

Nine clubs

Vozinha has been a journeyman for his career and has played for nine clubs across five countries currently plying his trade at the second division Portuguese club Chaves.

Growing up on the Sao Vicente, Vozinha was beaten up a lot by the older boys but his rebellious nature meant that he kept taking the hits. "In my neighborhood, the boys were much older. And I always played in the street, getting beaten up a lot. Well, I was also very good with my feet, I was competitive and rebellious, I didn't like to lose. I took a lot of hits," he told FIFA.

On Monday with seven saves against one of the favourites in the tournament and keeping the likes of Pedri, Gavi, Ferran Torres, and Lamine Yamal on bay, Vozinha showed that he can take a few hits.

It (Vozinha) is the nickname of the 40-year-old custodian Josimar Jose Evora Dia, which he has used throughout his career. In Portuguese, it means 'little voice'

FIFA WORLD CUP

CAPE CALM AND CARRY ON

40-year-old goalkeeper Vozinha keeps Spanish strikes at bay as Cape Verde hold favourites to a goalless draw in the biggest upset so far

Shashank Nair
New Delhi, June 15

CABOVERDE, second smallest in size, third smallest in population, etched their name in World Cup history, holding the current European champions, Spain, to a timeless 0-0 draw that reinvigorated the magic of a World Cup. The result was as razor-thin as could be expected – Cabo Verde's keeper Vozinha made seven crucial saves, and Spain threw the kitchen sink at the end. But the debutants held on stoutly and produced what will go down as one of the biggest results of a World Cup.

When a 48-team tournament was announced, many believed there would be a watering down of sorts. That the quality of matches would diminish when lower-ranked teams matched up against established giants. Germany put seven past Curacao, and the fears that had been raised throughout the lead-up to the World Cup seemed valid.

Cabo Verde proved just how rich football is for opening itself up to an excess of countries. For ninety unexpected, unpredictable minutes, they kept the team many have tipped to go ahead and win it all, out of their crosshairs. Cabo Verde's outstanding first half was built on pragmatism and an ironclad defensive structure. Spain came to break down the tiny archipelagic nation and was instead met with the fiercest of resistance.

De la Fuente's initial tactics did not help. The Spaniards stretched their team wide and rotated the ball in the early minutes, but their wastefulness was worrisome. A Spanish

team that comes with its pick of choice midfielders, made no attempts to go through the middle of the Atlanta stadium, even though it took them less than sixty seconds from the first whistle to camp ten of their eleven players deep into Cabo Verde's half.

Mikel Oyarzabal, de la Fuente's striker of choice, managed to get his first touch in the 30th minute of the game. Moving the ball centrally became an option only in the last minutes of the first half, and when they did, Spain instantly transformed.

Their first real chance belatedly came from a move through the middle of the park. Ballon d'Or winner Rodri dinked a delightful chip onto newly-minted Real Madrid left-back Marc Cucurella. The Spaniard immediately put a straight ball onto the path of Ferran Torres, who volleyed the ball onto the bar. Oyarzabal met the rebound from the bar, but his looping header was tipped away by Vozinha. Torres was handed another chance minutes later – it would be yet another pass from Cucurella, and this time it was Gavi, who stepped over the ball and allowed Torres a shot, but the left-footed curler was easily handled by Vozinha.

Spain, tipped to be the champions of the World in North America, had only found their feet against the islanders as the first half came to a close. They ended the half with 16 pointless crosses.

Both Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, key to de la Fuente's direct attacking philosophy, were still nursing their end-of-season injuries and



Cape Verde goalie Vozinha makes a save. (Above) The island nation's players celebrate after holding Spain to a 0-0 draw. AP

watched on from the substitutes bench as the Spaniards missed the incisiveness that their first-choice wingers brought to the pitch. Spain's control over the game grew as the second half began, but the story remained the same.

Chances were few and far, and steadily their impatience grew, and the outlet became shots from outside the box. Then de la Fuente brought Lamine Yamal, Mikel Merino and Dani Olma. This was going to be it. Except that the steel of Bub-

Number Plate

27

● Number of shots Spain had on Cape Verde goal, seven of them on target. All of them were thwarted by goalkeeper Vozinha.

ista's Boys withstood the might of the near-strength European champions. There would be chances – Olmo almost assisted in the 86th minute, but a match-saving block from Kevin Pina denied and frustrated Oyarzabal's attempt. Yamal, dangerous since he came on, was harried and doubled in all of his thirty minutes. The Barcelona winger gave the Blue Sharks some nerves from the moment he came on, but that game-unlocking moment never arrived.

Based off the coast of Western Africa, Cabo Verde's path to Atlanta was laid on some tense defensive displays. Five out of five home wins in Praia – and not a single goal conceded – they were the shining stars of the ten teams Africa have sent to the Americas. The country that has the best finish of reaching the quarterfinals of the African Cup of Nations, punched up right as far as the World Cup and then stood toe-to-toe against the consensus favourites to win it all.

For Spain, this result is nothing but a blow. Matches against Uruguay and Saudi Arabia are still to come, but the draw will rankle like a loss. The tournament format keeps Spain safe, but a blunt attack will concern Luis de la Fuente far more than the dropped points. Argentina smarted from their loss to Saudi Arabia in Qatar and then found their spark against Mexico before winning it all.

Spain will have to regroup and now have the tiresome task of having to figure it all out.

{ SIDELINES }



Zion Suzuki made three key saves vs the Netherlands. AP

Japan goalie Suzuki taking on World Cup — and racism

GOALKEEPER ZION Suzuki played a key part in Japan's fighting 2-2 draw against Netherlands, with three saves off Dutch striker Donyell Malen in the first half. Born in Newark, New Jersey to a Ghanaian father and Japanese mother, the 23-year-old Suzuki moved to Urawa in Japan as a child and is one of many players at this World Cup representing other countries after being born in the USA. During the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar in January 2024, Suzuki became the target of a torrent of racist abuse on social media following Japan's shocking 1-2 defeat to Iraq, the latter's first victory over Japan in 42 years. An error from Suzuki allowed the opening goal,

and the response from a section of Japanese social media went far beyond sporting criticism. The flood of abuse in Japanese and other languages targeted his skin colour and mixed heritage directly. It was not even the first time at that tournament. He had already been forced to turn off comments on his Instagram page after racist abuse followed Japan's earlier 4-2 win against Vietnam. Nor was the Asian Cup an isolated incident. Back in 2021, Suzuki had said he received racist messages almost every day. This time, Suzuki said: "I know I am being criticised, but I would like people to stop writing racist things. I will not let this break me." ENS

FIFA urged to remove match official



FIFA'S DISCRIMINATION monitor at the World Cup called Monday for a video review official to be removed for appearing to make a hand gesture resembling a white supremacist sign. When the official broadcast of Germany's opening game against Curacao on Sunday cut pre-game

to show the team of video review analysts, Shaun Evans from Australia made an "OK" symbol with his right hand in front of his right leg. Though the game was played in Houston, video officials work in Dallas at the World Cup broadcast center. In 2019, the gesture - with thumb and forefinger touched in a circle and other fingers outstretched - was designated a hate symbol by the New York-based Anti-Defamation League. "Advice from our experts is that the gesture used clearly resembles an upside down OK" hand symbol used as a white power symbol in global far-right circles," said the Fare network. AP

Tunisia fire coach Lamouchi after 5-1 loss

TUNISIA FIRED head coach Sabri Lamouchi on Monday after a tame defeat in its first World Cup game. The Tunisian Football Federation announced his dismissal on its Instagram account. Written in Arabic, the statement was translated by Google. "An agreement has been officially reached to dismiss coach Sabri Lamouchi," the statement read. "Plans are underway to appoint Mondher Kebaier as the national team coach (on an interim basis) to complete the World Cup group-stage matches." Sweden routed Tunisia 5-1 in Sunday's Group F opener in Guadalupe, Mexico. REUTERS

Why stars, led by Vinicius Jr, are wearing pink shoes

Express News Service
Chandigarh, June 15

IN MOST of the 2026 FIFA World Cup matches played so far, a majority of players have been seen sporting boots in pink or shades of pink, produced by major manufacturers such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, New Balance and Skechers. This includes the likes of Brazil mainstays Vinicius Junior, Bruno Guimaraes and Raphinha, and Mexican goal-scorer Raul Jimenez.

The manufacturers have often preferred understated black and white designs. But for the latest iteration of the quadrennial extravaganza, their emphasis is on standing out from the clutter via bold, vibrant colours. The boots, then, contrast

from the pitch's green and are highly visible.

A Nike staffer shared with *The Athletic* the idea behind the pink shoes and what has led to the colour emerging as the top choice for footballers at this edition. "The way we approached it was focusing on what are some of the brightest colours, what are those colours that are really amplifying confidence, and pink is one of those colours," said Odinga Nimako, a senior executive at Nike's global football footwear team. "What we always hear from our consumers and athletes is that when you wear a colour like pink, which is so loud and bright, you need to be really good to wear these colours as well. At the same time, there has also been a level of accept-



Brazil's Vinicius, Bruno and Raphinha are a few players who are wearing pink boots. AP

ance with pink that makes it not too niche for people. It speaks to a broad audience."

Brazil have a primarily yellow kit for this World Cup, and teams like South Africa are also playing in yellow. Other kits range from red to white, and only Belgium have a dash of

pink. The Red Devils were seen training in their dark red kits with pink shoes at their base in Seattle last week.

Nimako also spoke about how the colour pink stands out against the kit colours at this World Cup, as well as its visibility on the green grass of the football pitch. "Our intent was really to make sure that the boot stood out against the kit," Nimako said. "In every tournament we can take a slightly different approach. We have seen approaches in the past where we actually want to be a little bit more integrated."

"At this tournament, knowing the magnitude, we really wanted to make it pop. Pink really helps bring it out against the green grass on the pitch, whether you are in the stands

or watching on TV, making sure that visibility is there. That is definitely something that we looked at. For this World Cup moment, we really wanted to focus on that visual impact."

Argentine legend Lionel Messi, however, will be wearing white and light blue Adidas boots with gold accents to match Argentina's kit this time. Portugal superstar Cristiano Ronaldo will play in special all-gold boots to be released by Nike prior to his team's opening match against the Democratic Republic of the Congo on Tuesday. "The fact that he is playing his sixth World Cup, we wanted to celebrate the legacy he has set and the way he continues to add to his legacy. And there is no better colour than gold to help do that," said Nimako.

● ILL-TEMPERED CLASH

Sooryavanshi dragged into a spat as India A lose

Express News Service
Chennai, June 15

THE HEAT and fire of losing a game in international cricket, singled Indian teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi after he got dragged into an acrimonious spat post India A's defeat to Sri Lanka A.

Indian duo of Suryansh Shedge and Vaibhav Sooryavanshi were seen provoked by the Sri Lankan fielding pack after losing the Tri Nation A game. After a verbal spat, Lankan Vishen Halambage seemed to taunt and charge towards Shedge, while another jostled with him. Sooryavanshi was then seen pushing Halambage back with his left hand, before Niroshan Dickwell intervened to pull them apart. Amidst fiery scenes, the Super Over saw India score 9 and lose by 7 runs, with a target of 17.

Fading light and tensed scenes after a couple of controversial calls from the umpires, had preceded Sri Lanka A pulling off a thrilling win as India managed 2, 0, 1, 2, 4, 0, after Sooryavanshi swung and missed a yorker from Kugathas Mathulan.

In the Super Over after

scores tied at 265, India's frustrations had merit, but not their confrontation with the umpires and Sri Lankans. The first was for a wide delivery when Sahan Arachchige had moved across and an Arshad Khan yorker missed the leg-stump by a whisker. Then came what was supposed to be the last delivery.

Avishka Fernando had ended up skying a high full-toss, which was referred to the third umpire. With the height-tracker not available, under the available evidence it was deemed above waist-high – which was contentious, but India had left the field already. Emotions ran high, but 17 runs was too steep to chase for Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Shedge.

With the 50-over game ending in a tie, the umpires hesitated to proceed with a Super Over, citing the fading light, which left India incensed. But once Sri Lanka agreed, and the drama went on as they put on 16 runs before India fell seven short of the score. For India to go through to the final, they now need Afghanistan to lose both their remaining fixtures.

This was a game that India had no business to drag till the Super Over, given how their



Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Suryansh Shedge were seen provoked by Sri Lanka A players during the Tri Nation A game. SCREENGRAB

top-order collapsed again. Instead, thanks to some ordinary cricket from both sides, the game tilted back and forth with none ready to pounce on the opportunities to close it out. Once Suryansh Shedge (72 off 66) – the find of the series – and Vipraj Nigam (51 off 49) led a commendable fight back and lifted them to 265 from a teetering 143/7, India were back in the game.

However, after Sri Lanka's top three got them off to a flying start, India once again appeared listless with the ball, turning to part-timers in the

powerplay. Once the field spread out through the spinners, India made a strong comeback, with Sadeera Samarawickrama (93) fighting the lone battle. In the last two overs, pacers Yash Thakur and Arshad Khan bowled a series of yorkers to deny Sri Lanka a win.

Not even half-way into their innings, Sooryavanshi, Prabhsimran Singh, Tilak Varma, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Ayush Badoni were all back in the pavilion. All casualties of soft dismissals.

While the big names have searched for consistency on the

trip, Shedge has stood out. When the 23-year-old walked out in the 25th over, India were collapsing with Sri Lanka spinners, in particular leg-spinner Vijaykhanth Vijaykhanth's variations hard to pick.

But Shedge seamlessly settled in and though Anukul Roy departed a little later, in Vipraj he found a steady partner. The two during the course of their 104-run stand for the eighth wicket, did what was precisely needed on the surface. Defending 265, India didn't take wickets early with the new ball as Sri Lanka innings began with 10 runs added as penalty thanks to Nigam venturing on to dangerous areas of the pitch while running. With runs against new ball being key, Niroshan Dickwell, Fernando and Vishen Halambage gave the hosts a rapid start before India pulled them back with constant strikes.

BRIEF SCORES: India A 265 in 49.2 ovs (Suryansh Shedge 72, Vipraj Nigam 51; Vijaykhanth Vijaykhanth 3/26, Mohamed Shyraz 3/33) tied with **Sri Lanka A** 265/9 in 50 ovs (Sadeera Samarawickrama 93; Ayush Badoni 2/45); **Super Over: SL A** 16/0 bt **Ind A** 9/0

● BRIEFLY



Hockey: Deepika scores brace as India rally to beat USA 3-2

THE INDIAN women's hockey team staged a remarkable comeback to clinch a 3-2 win over the USA in its opening Pool A match of the FIH Nations Cup. Deepika netted a brace while Navneet Kaur also scored. Ashley Sessa and Madeleine Zimmer were on the score-sheet for the USA. The USA got off to a great start and opened the scoring through Ashley. They doubled their advantage just three minutes later when Madeleine Zimmer

(7') converted a penalty. In the second quarter, drag-flick specialist Deepika (17') successfully converted a penalty corner to reduce the deficit and bring India back into the game. Deepika (24') stepped up once again and successfully converted another penalty corner to level the score at 2-2. Navneet (28') converted a penalty corner to hand India the lead for the first time in the match, ensuring the team entered the break with a 3-2 advantage. PTI

Neeraj to make comeback at Doha DL

DOUBLE OLYMPIC medalist Neeraj Chopra will start his season at the upcoming Doha Diamond League on June 19, hoping to make the cut for the CWG. This will put rest to the uncertainties around his comeback. The 2020 Tokyo Olympic medalist hasn't competed since finishing eighth at the World Athletics Championships in Tokyo last year. Chopra suffered a back injury in Tokyo and was recovering from the same, delaying his comeback. ENS

Deepak, Poonam progress in Boxing WC


DEEPAK AND Poonam emerged as the lone Indian winners in the Boxing World Cup (Stage 2) while seven others suffered defeats. Poonam (54kg) registered a convincing 5-0 victory over Uzbekistan's Aziza Yokubova. Deepak beat Bayramdurdu Nurmuhammedov at 70kg. PTI


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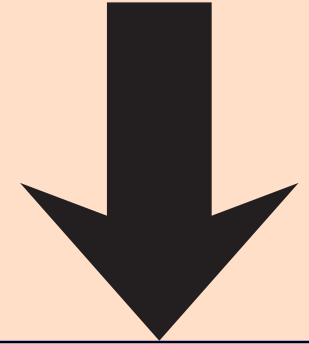
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