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AIR INDIA PLANE CRASH; 241 DEAD, 1 SURVIVOR

Flight hits medical college, 5 dead, several injured

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

In one of the worst air tragedies, an Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner (VT-ANB), from Ahmedabad to London airport, crashed shortly into a residential area near the Ahmedabad airport minutes after take-off at 1.38 pm on Thursday afternoon, with 242 people on board, including two pilots and 10 cabin crew members. One person has miraculously survived, while 241 of his co-passengers are feared dead.

BJP's Vijay Rupani (68) a former Chief Minister of Gujarat (from 2016 to 2021) was among passengers killed in the crash. Of them, 169 Indians, 53 British nationals, seven Portuguese and one Canadian national were on board.

The plane was headed to London Gatwick airport in the UK, Air India said, when it crashed in a civilian area near the airport. Shortly after take-off, the Air Traffic Control (ATC) received a MAYDAY call. However, the ATC said that it received no response even after repeated attempts were made to get in touch. A MAYDAY call is given in cases of extreme emergency when the aircraft faces immediate danger.

"As per ATC, aircraft departed from Ahmadabad at 1339 IST (0809 UTC) from runway 23. It gave a MAYDAY Call to ATC, but thereafter no response was given by the aircraft to the calls made by ATC. Immediately after departure from Runway 23, fell on ground outside the airport perimeter. Heavy black smoke was seen coming from the accident site," the DGCA said in a statement.

The aircraft entered a slow descent shortly after taking off, with its landing gear still extended before exploding into a huge fireball upon impact. The crash took place in a residential area, which could mean a higher death toll. The twin-engine plane had reached an altitude of 625 feet or 190.5 metres at a speed of 174 knots, according to data from Flightradar24.

As the plane plunged at a rate of 475 feet per minute from 625 feet, the pilots had less than a minute to react before it eventually crashed and exploded near the Ahmedabad airport upon impact with a building in a residential area.

The plane slammed into a hostel for doctors of BJ Medical College in Ahmedabad's Meghaninagar area killing five students, sparking a massive fire and widespread panic in the locality. Visuals from the crash site show debris had pierced through the wall of a dining hall of the hostel, with food still visible on some of the plates. Visuals showed charred wreckage of the plane, thick smoke rising from the site and emergency personnel at work. Some videos also showed injured taken to hospitals.

The plane was under the command of Captain Sumeet Sabharwal along with First Officer Clive Kundar, with a combined flying experience of 9,300 hours while Captain Sabharwal had 8,200 hours of flying experience; his co-pilot had 1,100 hours under his belt. The flight was heavily fuelled for the long-haul journey, adding to the intensity of the explosion and fire that followed the crash. The Boeing 787 Dreamliner is one of the most advanced jets in service and experts say it has a generally strong safety record, with no previous fatal accidents. US aircraft maker Boeing on Thursday said the company is in contact with Air India after one of the airline's Boeing 787-8 planes on way to Gatwick (London) crashed immediately after taking off from Ahmedabad airport.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to Home Minister Amit Shah and Civil Aviation Minister Rammohan Naidu about the crash. The PM asked the two ministers to go to Ahmedabad and ensure all possible assistance is extended to those affected. Earlier, Shah also spoke to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel following the crash.

Combo of images shows the site and aftermath of an Air India plane crash near Ahmedabad airport on Thursday PTI

> The crash a heart-rending disaster, the nation stands with the affected people in this hour of indescribable grief
> — DROUPADI MURMU, PRESIDENT

> The tragedy in Ahmedabad has stunned and saddened us. It is heartbreaking beyond words
> — NARENDRA MODI, PRIME MINISTER

> Our special prayers and deepest possible sympathy are with the families and friends of all those affected by this appallingly tragic incident across so many nations, as they await news of their loved ones
> — KING CHARLES

> Devastated to learn of the Ahmedabad plane crash with 242 passengers on board, including one Canadian
> — MARK CARNEY, CANADIAN PM

> Deeply saddened by the tragic accident and commended the 'souls of the deceased to the mercy of the Almighty'
> —POPE LEO XIV

HM orders inquiry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Ahmedabad

Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday that the temperature in the Air India plane that crashed in Ahmedabad was so high due to burning fuel that there was no chance to save anyone. Shah said a detailed inquiry has been ordered.

"There was 1.25 lakh litre of fuel inside the plane and it caught heat so it was impossible to save anyone," Shah told reporters. The entire nation is in deep shock following the tragedy, he told reporters. Shah also expressed condolences to relatives of those killed in the accident.

"The number of those killed will be officially released by the authorities after DNA test and identification," Shah said. "The process of collecting DNA samples from bodies is over. Forensic Science Laboratory and National Forensic Sciences University in Gujarat will conduct DNA tests," he said.

Survivor recounts 30 seconds

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Ahmedabad/New Delhi

Vishwash Kumar Ramesh the lone survivor of the Air India plane crash

In a tragic plane crash accident where no one was expected to survive, one man did. Vishwash Kumar Ramesh, a 40-year-old British national, emerged as the sole known survivor of the Air India flight AI-171 that crashed in Ahmedabad on Thursday afternoon, minutes after take-off.

Currently admitted at the Civil Hospital in Asarwa, Vishwash is being treated for multiple injuries to his chest, eyes and feet. Lying on a hospital bed, he recounted the terrifying moment the Boeing 787 Dreamliner went down. "Thirty seconds after take-off, there was a loud noise and then the plane crashed. It all happened so quickly," he said, still clutching his boarding pass.

Vishwash, who has been living in London for the last 20 years, had travelled to India for a short visit with his brother Ajay Kumar Ramesh, 45. The two had recently visited Diu and were heading back to the UK on the same flight. "My brother was sitting in a different row. I haven't been able to find him. Please help me," he said. Recalling the crash, Vishwash said he lost consciousness for a brief moment. "When I got up, there were bodies all around me. I was scared.

I stood up and ran. There were pieces of the plane scattered everywhere," he said. "Someone held me and put me in an ambulance. That's how I reached the hospital."

According to officials, Vishwash was seated in 11A — a window seat in the first row of the Economy class cabin, located just ahead of the aircraft's wings. The seat position may have played a role in his survival. A senior police officer confirmed, "The police found one survivor in seat 11A. He was brought to the hospital and is currently under treatment. The number of casualties is still being verified."

Flight AI-171, with 232 passengers and 10 crew members, was en route to London when it lost altitude shortly after take-off and crashed into the residential quarters of BJ Medical College doctors in Meghaninagar, close to the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. Eyewitnesses said the aircraft crashed into five-storey buildings, causing major damage and fires.

So far, authorities have not confirmed the exact number of fatalities, but several residents in the affected buildings were also reportedly injured.

Fire, smoke billows; charred bodies scattered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Ahmedabad/New Delhi

A London-bound Air India plane crashes moments after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport PTI

There was a layer of thick smoke in the air. When we came here, dead bodies and debris from the crashed aircraft were scattered all over." These chilling words from an eyewitness describe the horrifying scene that unfolded in Ahmedabad's Meghaninagar area on Thursday afternoon after an Air India plane bound for London crashed into a residential complex.

The Boeing 787 Dreamliner, Flight AI-171, had taken off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport with 242 passengers and crew on board. Minutes later, it lost altitude and slammed into the residential quarters of BJ Medical College doctors, leaving no hope of survival for those onboard and injuring several people on the ground.

What followed was a scene of chaos and disbelief.

"I was at home having lunch when I heard a massive sound. The windows rattled. At first, I thought it was a gas explosion. But when I looked outside, I saw black smoke rising, thick and fast," said Harshit, a medical student living in the quarters. "I rushed out and saw that the building next to mine had been hit. It was the one where many of our resident doctors stay. My friend who was inside is now in the hospital."

According to Haresh Shah, who lives nearby, the aircraft appeared to be flying abnormally low before the crash. "The plane was descending rapidly. In just seconds, it crashed into the top floors of the doctors' buildings. The impact was so strong that several apartments caught fire. People started screaming. Some were stuck inside. It was terrifying."

Another eyewitness, who works in an office just 200 metres away, described how quickly the situation escalated. "As soon as I stepped out, I heard a loud bang. Within seconds, the area was filled with smoke and panic. People were running, not knowing what had happened. When I reached the spot, I saw broken wings, burning vehicles and bodies lying around. It was a complete devastation."

Local residents and shopkeepers were among the first to rush to help, even before emergency services arrived. They tried to douse small fires, pulled injured people out of burning flats and used cloth to shield the wounded from smoke.

"There were several five-storey buildings in the compound and many of them caught fire," said Shah. "Cars in the parking lot were burning. People were trying to break open doors and windows to rescue others trapped inside. It was like something from a war zone."

BJP MLA Darshna Vaghela, whose office is close to the crash site, was among the first public officials to reach the scene. "I heard the explosion and ran out immediately. Smoke and fire were everywhere.

Locals were already rescuing people from the debris. Many doctors were injured and taken to nearby hospitals. The scale of destruction is heartbreaking."

Rescue teams, including the fire department, NDRF and medical emergency services, reached shortly after but had to navigate burning debris and unstable structures.

Operations to retrieve remains and assess structural safety of the buildings are still ongoing.

₹One cr compensation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Mumbai

Hours after the tragic plane crash, Tata Group announced ₹1 crore compensation for the families of each victim. "We are deeply anguished by the tragic event involving Air India Flight 171. No words can adequately express the grief we feel at this moment," said Tata Sons Chairman N Chandrasekaran said in a statement. "Tata Group will provide ₹1 crore to the families of each person who has lost their life in this tragedy."

In addition to the compensation, the group has pledged to bear the full medical expenses of all those injured in the crash. The company will also extend support towards rebuilding the doctors' hostel at BJ Medical College, which was severely damaged in the accident. The aircraft had crashed into the hostel building while medical students were having lunch in the mess, triggering panic and casualties among residents.

The company will also extend support towards rebuilding the doctors' hostel at BJ Medical College

"We will provide support in the rebuilding of BJ Medical College's hostel and remain steadfast in standing with the affected families and communities during this unimaginable time," the statement added. The Tata Group, which owns Air India, has reiterated its commitment to assist the victims' families and aid the affected community during this difficult period.

Difficult day for Air India: CEO Wilson

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson on Thursday expressed "deep sorrow" at the crashing of the airline's Boeing 787-8 aircraft with 242 people on board, saying this is a "difficult day" for all at Air India.

The London-bound flight crashed soon after takeoff from Ahmedabad airport on Thursday afternoon.

Wilson, in a video statement, also said that the airline is actively working with the authorities on all emergency response efforts.

"The first and most importantly, I would like to express our deep sorrow about this event. This is a difficult day for all of us here in India. And it's now focused entirely on the needs of our passengers, crew members, their families, and loved ones," Wilson said.

He said that while there would be many questions at this stage, he will not be able to answer all of them.

"But I do want to share the information we have at this time. Here, India flight AI-171 operated with a Boeing 787-8 aircraft to London-Gatwick has been involved in an accident after takeoff," Wilson said.

The aircraft crashed in a crowded residential area minutes after taking off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport. Many people were feared killed.

Experts points bird hit as possible cause

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Ahmedabad

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

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

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

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

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

Former Gujarat CM Rupani amongst dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Ahmedabad

Former Gujarat Chief Minister Vijay Rupani who died after an Air India aircraft carrying him and 241 others crashed in Ahmedabad

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

"This is a very sad incident. My heart goes out to the victims and their families. We have lost two-time former chief minister Vijay Rupani in the crash, which is very sad news for the BJP family," Paatil, the Union Jal Shakti Minister and chief of the party's state unit, told reporters.

Rupani, 68, was CM for two terms from August 7, 2016 to September 11, 2021, after winning the Gujarat Legislative Assembly elections from Rajkot West seat. He was presently the BJP's in charge for Punjab.

Munda attacks Congress on terrorism, calls it a 'Shok Sandesh Party'

PNS : DALTONGANJ

Former chief minister and former union minister Arjun Munda presented the 11 year report card of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi but in the midst of the counts of achievements, the astute politician made a scathing attack on the Congress party.

Munda dubbed Congress as a 'shok sandesh' party when in power and when there was a terror strike in the country. The Congress never fought with terrorism as it believed in sending condolence messages only to the victims of the terrorism, he said.

"The Congress pedalled too soft towards the issue of terrorism and showed no sense of urgency to combat it. There were 53 such terrorist's violence in India when the Congress was at the helm of affairs," charged Munda.

Arjun Munda was in Daltonganj on Thursday as part of the BJP's countrywide campaign for highlighting the 11 years' rule of Narendra Modi.

"There was a Batla House attack. Here a dedicated and brave police officer M C Sharma was martyred. Then Sonia Gandhi had no word of sympathy for the bereaved family of the martyred police officer," reiterated Munda.

The 26/11 tragedy had no pain or sorrow for the Congress, he tried to stretch his point. In contrast to this the Indian Government led by Narendra Modi is giving salutary lessons to the terrorists and those who sponsor it.

Munda summed up the Operation Sindoor counting how 9 terror hubs and 11 air bases of Pakistan were destroyed. He read out of the prepared text describing how Narendra Modi played a vital role in the G 20 summit.

Asked as to whether this 11 year rule of Narendra Modi, the country or Modi had any regret of not doing anything for India and the countrymen to which Munda looked 'pondering for a second' before he gave a very diplomatic answer saying "Progression is a continuous process. India is progressing fast."

He spoke about Modi's foreign policy as highly strategic and far sighted in every sense. He didn't refer to any claim to contain the Chinese aggression.

Munda was however very sparing of the Hemant Soren government when he said "I haven't come here to pick holes in the governance of this present dispensation."

He didn't stop here when he added further, "If I say anything adverse about this government of the state right now I will be accused of levering the politics."

Munda was accompanied by two MPs Vishnu Dayal Ram and Kali Charan Singh, MLA Alok Chourasia, district president Amit Tiwary, senior leader Manoj Singh and others.

'Rubaroo' programme at BSL highlights women empowerment

PNS : BOKARO

Bokaro Steel Plant (BSL) organized an interactive session titled "Rubaroo" for its women officers at Bokaro Niwas, in the presence of Director In-Charge Birendra Kumar Tiwari. Centered on the theme "Empowering Oneself through Choice, Ambition, Growth, and Career", the programme saw participation from around 60 women officers.

The event began with a short film on Dr. G. Madhavi Latha, a renowned geotechnical engineer and professor at IISc Bangalore, highlighting her role in the Chenab Bridge project and the challenges she overcame.

Addressing the participants, Tiwari said that women are playing a vital role in nation-building and are fully capable of meeting tough challenges, including in the steel sector. He encouraged them to continue breaking barriers, focus on self-development, embrace best practices, and stay updated with advancements in digitalization and AI.

The interactive session saw active participation from officers, who shared their thoughts on empowerment and growth. The programme was coordinated by Preeti Kumari, Senior Manager, Learning and Development.

Laxmi Das, Chief General Manager (Technical), and Neeta Ba, Chief General Manager (HR – L&D), were also present and extended their support to the initiative.

PM Modi's 11-year tenure transformed India across all fronts: Marandi

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

BJP State President and Leader of Opposition Babulal Marandi on Thursday lauded the achievements of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government over the past 11 years, asserting that India has undergone a "historic transformation" under his leadership. Speaking at a press conference held at Chamber Bhawan, Bistupur, Marandi said the Modi-led government has delivered on all major fronts—security, development, good governance, and poor welfare.

"From battling terrorism to strengthening the economy and uplifting the poor, the Modi government has brought visible change," Marandi declared, crediting the government's flagship initiatives like 'Make in India, Digital India, Swachh Bharat, and Jal Jeevan Mission for India's rise to the fourth-largest global power.

Marandi emphasized that over ?34 lakh crore were transferred directly to beneficiaries through DBT, significantly reducing corruption. Under Swachh Bharat, 11.72 crore toilets were built, while Jal Jeevan Mission reached 11.82 crore rural homes. He also highlighted the government's focus on women's empowerment with 30 crore Mudra loans to women and a 28% rise in their participation in higher education. The decision to provide 33% reservation to women in legislative bodies was termed "historic."

The Ayushman Bharat scheme, providing health insurance to 50 crore Indians, was another major achievement, he said, alongside the construction of 18.5 lakh houses under PM Awas Yojana in Jharkhand.

Marandi also credited the Modi government with restoring the spiritual fabric of the nation through massive redevelopment of temple sites like Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, Mahakal Lok, Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, and Kedarnath Dham.

"Yoga has gained global recognition, and India is now manufacturing over 60% of its defense equipment," he said, pointing to the export of weapons like BrahMos and Akash missiles and praising infrastructure marvels like the Chenab Bridge and new airports that have doubled in number.

Referring to internal security, Marandi said, "Before 2014, terror attacks were routine, but surgical and air strikes after Pulwama and Uri changed the narrative. Insurgency has dropped by 70% in 11 years, and Jharkhand is seeing a decline in Maoist fear."

He criticized the Hemant Soren-led Jharkhand government for poor healthcare management, citing crises in Hazaribagh, Godda, and Jamshedpur. "There is a severe lack of oxygen, doctors, and medical equipment," he said.

Marandi also accused the state of neglecting central directives on deporting illegal intruders and condemned the Chief Minister's remarks comparing farmers to MS Dhoni. "Such comparisons are childish. Dhoni has resources; real farmers need government support in technology, irrigation, and seeds," he stated.

Concluding the press conference, Marandi said, "While India is moving in the right direction under PM Modi's leadership, Jharkhand urgently needs a change in government to truly benefit from real development and efficient governance."

He announced that on June 24, BJP will stage a major protest at every block level across Jharkhand against local-level corruption and misgovernance.

Empowering Rural Women: Mushroom cultivation transforms lives in villages around Adani Power Plant in Godda

PNS : GODDA

In the quiet villages of Motia, Dumaria, Patwa, Baksara, and Rangania nestled close to the Adani Power Plant in Godda, something extraordinary is sprouting, not just in the soil, but in the lives of rural women. Thanks to the sustained efforts of the Adani Foundation's CSR initiatives, women in these villages are turning into successful agri-entrepreneurs through mushroom cultivation.

It was started as a modest training initiative and has now become a full-fledged movement led by local women, who have formed Self-Help Groups (SHGs) to cultivate mushrooms. It started with oyster mushroom in winters, now cultivating milky mushrooms during scorching summers, even when temperatures cross 40°C.

From Training to Transformation

The Adani Foundation, as part of its skill development and livelihood promotion efforts, identified mushroom farming as a sustainable and low-investment opportunity for local women. Through structured training sessions, the Foundation educated them on the entire value chain, right from compost preparation, spawning, temperature and humidity control, to packaging and marketing. In just a few seasons, these women, most of whom had no prior experience in farming mushrooms, have turned into skilled cultivators. Encouraged by their success, the groups are now experimenting with paddy straw mushroom, further diversifying their production.

One of the inspiring faces of this transformation is Priyanka Devi, a resident of Patwa village. Once limited to domestic responsibilities, Priyanka now associated with farmers producer Organization (FPO) and a role model in her community.

Vinita, proudly shows the rows of mushroom beds in her small but efficient cultivation shed. Priyanka started with just two bags of oyster mushroom spawn. Today, her group handles over 100 cultivation bags per season and earns consistent income. On average, each member of her group earns between ?2,000 to ?5,000 per month, depending on the yield and season.

Impact on Community

The transformation has brought in not only financial stability but also social empowerment. Many of these women are now contributing to their household expenses, sending their children to school, and gaining confidence to speak in village meetings. Encouraged by their success, the Adani Foundation is now exploring market linkages to ensure that these products reach urban markets, thereby improving profitability.

This initiative is emerging as a model of sustainable rural development that combines women empowerment, modern agriculture, and grassroots entrepreneurship. With minimal investment and high returns, mushroom cultivation has the potential to change the economic landscape of villages around the power plant. As the spores of opportunity continue to bloom, Priyanka Devi and many like her are proving that with the right support, even the most underutilized corners of Jharkhand can thrive prosperity.

Artist Simma Dhaliwal to compose score for Hindi stage play

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

City-based Simma Dhaliwal, a young composer and singer, is set to contribute the musical score to the upcoming Hindi stage play Sallery Creditd while simultaneously preparing the release of his Punjabi single Nishani. Both projects mark a continued effort by Dhaliwal to bridge the emotional depth of theatre with the mainstream appeal of regional music.

Born on 14 August 2001, Dhaliwal began his creative journey through theatre, composing background scores for several productions while still in his teens. His early work includes contributions to plays such as Loona, Nil Darpan, Odakalu Bimba, Ashadh Ka Ek Din, and Don Special. These experiences, he says, shaped his sensitivity toward emotional tone and narrative rhythm. "Theatre taught me how to listen to characters, to silence, and to subtext," he said in a conversation about his creative influences.

In 2022, Dhaliwal released his first independent Punjabi single Canada Wali, which he both composed and performed. He also appeared in the accompanying music video, introducing a visual style influenced by his background in editing and filmmaking. The track was followed by a series of self-produced releases including Gangster, Yaad, Surma, Sip Sip, Heer Ranjha, and Akhan Vich Kajal.

Rather than focusing on formulaic or commercial themes, his music has often incorporated personal experiences and emotional storytelling.

Discussing the evolving dynamics of the Punjabi music industry, Dhaliwal noted the increasing importance of authenticity in audience engagement. "There's been a shift," he said. "Listeners are looking for songs that say something real.

Earlier, there was a lot of repetition around certain themes. Now, emotion and sincerity resonate more—especially through platforms like Instagram Reels, where unexpected tracks can find wide reach overnight."

His upcoming single Nishani reflects this direction. Slated for release later this year, the track explores themes of memory and personal loss through a stripped-down, melodic arrangement. Dhaliwal describes it as "a musical letter," aiming to highlight the lyrical weight of the song rather than relying on layered production.

Parallel to this, Sallery Creditd the Hindi play for which he is composing the full score deals with issues of financial precarity, gender roles, and social silence in rural Indian households. Scheduled to premiere in Madhya Pradesh, the production is expected to use music not as background, but as a narrative layer that intensifies emotional moments and transitions.

"It's a challenging project," Dhaliwal acknowledged. "The subject matter is sensitive, and the music needs to support that without overwhelming it."

Medicant Hospital sets benchmark in advanced Radiology services

PNS : BOKARO

Medicant Hospital is fast emerging as a center of excellence in advanced diagnostic and interventional radiology in eastern India. Spearheaded by renowned radiologist Dr. Rahul Raj, the hospital has significantly expanded its radiology services with state-of-the-art technology and expert-led procedures.

The radiology department has successfully performed over 10 whole-body DWIBS scans—a breakthrough imaging technique for early detection of cancer and complex pathologies. It is one of the few centers in the country offering this high-precision modality. Additionally, the hospital has enhanced cardiac care with coronary CT angiography, enabling early and accurate diagnosis of coronary artery disease.

Dr. Raj and his team have also advanced image-guided interventions such as nephrostomy, pigtail catheter insertion, FNAC, and biopsies, ensuring minimally invasive and safer treatment options for patients. The successful introduction of fetal MRI marks another milestone, placing Medicant Hospital among the limited facilities in India equipped for complex prenatal imaging.

Looking ahead, the hospital is preparing to roll out cardiac MRI and PTBD (Percutaneous Transhepatic Biliary Drainage)—critical procedures that will further elevate its diagnostic and therapeutic capabilities. With continuous innovation and patient-centric care, Medicant Hospital Bokaro is redefining the future of radiology in the region.

Crisis Reveals Character: Nestlé CMD inspires XLRI students with leadership lessons

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

In a memorable session held on June 10 under XLRI Jamshedpur's prestigious CXO Series, Suresh Narayanan, Chairman and Managing Director of Nestlé India, addressed students on the theme "Leadership in Times of Crisis", drawing powerful lessons from the 2015 Maggi controversy. "Crisis doesn't build character—it reveals it," he remarked, setting the tone for an insightful masterclass that delved into real-world leadership under pressure.

Recounting the turbulent period when Nestlé faced a nationwide ban on its flagship product, Maggi noodles, Narayanan outlined a clear crisis management framework focused on clarity, fact-based decision-making, and defined accountability. Emphasizing the importance of integrity, he urged students to lead with empathy and logic rather than panic or emotion.

The session resonated deeply with attendees, many of whom saw Maggi as more than a product—an emotional part of their childhood. A symbolic moment came when Narayanan removed his shoes before the ceremonial lamp-lighting, reflecting humility and leaving a lasting impression on the audience. XLRI thanked Narayanan for sharing his lived experience and reinforcing the institution's commitment to nurturing leaders who are grounded in ethics, empathy, and purpose.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND SOCIETY

BY ASHOK KUMAR SINHA

Technology is changing our society day by day. Things which were in the science fiction realm 25-30 years ago have now become commonplace.

Remember the science fiction TV Serial Star Trek in the 80s. It showed communication between astronauts on a mobile phone type device, which also showed videos. Now it has become commonplace.

Remember telephonic communications 40 years back. Talking to someone in another country involved extremely high prices and a lot of time to connect. Now we can talk literally free and without any delay for hours anywhere in the world.

These examples were just to set the frame for the drastic changes brought about by technology in our day to day lives.

The latest new kid on the block is Artificial Intelligence, which is revolutionizing society as no other technology has ever done.

Artificial intelligence has mimicked the human brain and has far surpassed it in almost all things. This may seem like a controversial statement. But it is the truth!

Below are some examples :

The air defense systems of many advanced Countries is by and large unmanned. Once air defense radars have detected a launch of a missile from an enemy country it reacts based on the algorithms of its software and takes defensive measures in a few seconds. It acts and reacts much faster than a human could.

A sophisticated cyber strike could destroy infrastructure in a few seconds much before a human can defend it. Only AI can detect and react fast enough to stop it.

Most stock trades today are managed by computer algorithms that can process more data in a second than a human can process in a year. And react much faster than a human can blink. Some traders in the US have filed lawsuits against trading with the use of computer algorithms since it unfairly discriminates against human traders who cannot react fast enough to compete.

Use of artificial intelligence in medicine is equally path breaking. In a recent experiment a computer algorithm was correctly able to diagnose lung cancer cases in 90% cases while human doctors had a correct diagnosis in 50% cases.

In 2011 a pharmacy opened in San Francisco was manned by a single robot. In one year it managed 2 million prescriptions without making a single mistake while human pharmacists erred in 1.7% of all prescriptions.

In February 2015 an AI program developed by Google Deepmind learned by itself how to play 49 Atari games. It then played all of them much better than humans, using strategies which never occurred to human players.

The future of AI is already here. In May 2014 Deep Knowledge , a Hong Kong venture capital firm dealing with regenerative medicine, appointed an AI algorithm named VITAL to its board. Like other 5 board members, VITAL gets to vote whether or not the firm invests in a particular company, based on massive amounts of data which it processes.

It was earlier thought that the arts were beyond the ken of artificial intelligence. It is not so. David Cook is a musicology professor in the US. He created an AI program named EMI which specialized in composing music in the style of various classical musicians. In one day, EMI composed 5000 chorales in the style of the legend Sebastian Bach. When critics said that the music had no soul, David Cook organized a showdown where there were nine pieces of music, 3 composed by himself, 3 by EMI and three by the legendary Sebastian Batch. After this a large audience of music buffs were asked to identify which piece was by whom. Amazingly, the audience was not able to differentiate between the music composed by EMI , and that by Bach.

In light of the above here are the areas in which AI is going to have a massive impact in the coming times;

1 Economic impact

Job transformation; AI will automate routine tasks leading to job displacement in many sectors.

Technologists and experts in artificial intelligence will be the most sought after jobs.

Productivity boost; all economic activities will be much more efficient decision making will be better and faster based on data without any human biases

2 Health care

AI algorithms are already aiding in the customization of treatment plans based on individual patient data improving outcomes and reducing costs

Diagnostics will improve. AI Technologies will enhance diagnostic accuracy enabling early detection of diseases through tools like imaging analysis and predictive analytics

3 Education

AI can tailor educational experiences to individual needs, helping to identify strengths and weaknesses and adapt curricula accordingly

4 Transportation

Self driving vehicles and smart transportation systems with smart urban planning will reduce traffic accidents and improve efficiency in logistics

5 Social interaction

Enhanced communication

AI driven tools like Chatbots and translation services can facilitate global communication and support

The integration of AI into society offers immense opportunities for advancements. Collaborative efforts among technologists, policymakers and communities will be essential to shape a future where AI serves the common good while minimizing risks.

THE WRITER IS FORMER DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE, JHARKHAND.

The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE, 13 , 2025

Guv, CM, Sanjay Seth mourn demise of plane crash victims

PNS : RANCHI

Jharkhand Governor Santosh Gangwar, CM Hemant Soren, Union Ministers Annapurna Devi, Sanjay Seth and other leaders have expressed grief over the plane crash in Ahmedabad.

Governor Santosh Gangwar posted on social media and wrote, "The news of the horrific plane crash in Ahmedabad, Gujarat is extremely sad and heartbreaking. I express my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased and pray to God to give them the strength to bear this grief. In this difficult time, we are all with the bereaved families and wish for the speedy recovery of the injured."

At the same time, CM Hemant Soren also expressed grief over the accident. He wrote, "I am

shocked by the extremely heartbreaking incident of the plane crash in Ahmedabad, Gujarat. My deepest condolences to the people who died in the accident and their families. May Marang Buru protect everyone."

At the same time, Union Minister Annapurna Devi, who reached Dhanbad, has also expressed her deep condolences on the plane crash in Ahmedabad. Minister Annapurna Devi said, "We express our condolences to

the dead and injured in the plane crash in Ahmedabad. There were about 242 passengers on the plane. Many passengers have died and many have been injured. Former Gujarat Chief Minister Rupani was also on board the plane. Rescue operations are underway after the accident. Relief work is also underway by the government. May God give strength to the families of those who died in the accident. Work is being done to take the injured to the hospital by creating a green corridor."

At the same time, Leader of Opposition and BJP State President Babulal Marandi called the accident a tragedy. He wrote, "The horrific tragedy that happened in Ahmedabad today has shaken us all. Our prayers are with the affected families in this difficult time.

We pray to God that the injured recover as soon as possible and the families who have lost their loved ones get the strength to bear this unbearable grief." Former CM Raghuvar Das said, "I got the shocking news of the plane crash in Ahmedabad. Many people have been killed in it. I pray to Baba Baidyanath for peace of the souls of the dead and speedy recovery of the injured."

An Air India Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner carrying 242 passengers crashed minutes after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport this afternoon. The airline, in a statement, said flight AI 171, operating from Ahmedabad to London was "involved in an incident". The plane crashed into a hostel for doctors of a medical college at 1:30 pm, officials said. At least one passenger has survived the crash.

According to officials, the pilot sent a mayday call, and then there was no response after that to repeated calls from the air traffic controller. Visuals from the crash site showed a thick plume of grey smoke rising from the ground. At least two dozen ambulances have arrived, and some have taken the injured people to a nearby hospital. The police have diverted traffic from the area.

Governor motivates students at felicitation ceremony

Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar presents a certificate to a student during Pratibha Samman Samaroh in Ranchi on Thursday. Agriculture Minister Shilpi Neha Tirkey, Rural Development Minister Deepika Pandey Singh and others were also present on the occasion. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar today attended felicitation ceremony for meritorious students organised by a Hindi daily at Guru Nanak Higher Secondary School, Ranchi and honoured the students who performed exceptionally well in the board exams.

Congratulating the students who performed excellently in class 10th and 12th, he said that the success of these children is a matter of pride and inspiration not only for their families but also for the entire state of Jharkhand. The Governor said that true talent is measured not only by the marks obtained in the examination but also by the ability to bring positive change in the society. He called upon the students to not consider education only as a means of employment but to make it a medium of responsibility towards the society and the nation.

On this occasion, the Governor also said that many students are achieving top positions despite difficult circumstances, which is a pleasant sign for the society. But even today many meritorious students are deprived of education only due to lack of resources. In such a situation, it is the collective responsibility of all of us to give them an opportunity to move forward. He called upon capable citizens to set a positive example by taking responsibility for the education of the children of their domestic workers, which will inspire change in the society.

Expressing concern over the higher education system of the state, the Governor said that the state of Jharkhand is still lagging behind at the national level in the field of higher education. We all have to make concerted efforts to improve it. It is the responsibility of all of us to make higher education qualitative. The Governor told the students to never compromise on their dreams. Difficulties will come, but do not be afraid of them. This struggle will become the ladder to future success. He wished all the students for their bright future.

11 years of Modi Govt unmatched: Raghubar Das

Former Chief Minister Raghubar Das addresses party workers on the completion of 11 years of the NDA Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in Hazaribagh on Thursday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

On completion of 11 years of the Modi government, Jharkhand BJP is organizing programmes at the district level in which the top leaders of the party are sharing the information of the tenure of the Central Government with the public through press conferences. In this series, a program was also organized in Hazaribagh under the leadership of BJP leader Raghubar Das.

Former Chief Minister of Jharkhand and former Governor of Odisha and BJP leader Raghubar Das gave information about the development works of the Narendra Modi government. He said that 11 years of BJP are unmatched. The Modi government has done development work in all areas. Whether it is security or agriculture, Modi's plans have been implemented in every field. The result of this is that the country is in the next generation in the list of developing countries.

Raghubar Das has congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on completion of 11 years of tenure on behalf of the people of Jharkhand. He also said that it is a golden opportunity to keep an account of the development work of the Modi government.

11 years have been the awakening year of the country, it is the era of cultural renaissance, the only objective of every scheme was to benefit the common people. The central government's scheme has brought positive changes in daily life. A new era has begun in which not only dreams have been given wings but those dreams have also been fulfilled.

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has set a new journey of development of service, good governance and poor welfare in the Amrit Kaal of developed India. At the center of every scheme of the Modi government has been the spirit of public welfare and making the life of the common citizen easier as well as giving new dimensions to the country at the global level. The double engine government gave five medical colleges to Jharkhand in 11 years. One of which is Hazaribagh Medical College. Three medical colleges have been completed. Medical colleges could not be built in Koderma and Chaibasa due to the red tape of the government. A 500-bed hospital is being prepared in all the medical colleges. AIIMS has been built by the central government in Deoghar. Jharkhand Legislative Assembly, Jharkhand High Court got a new building.

In the last 11 years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, the government secured the border, strengthened the economy and made technology accessible to the people. By destroying Pakistan's terrorist bases and airbases through Operation Sindoor, India has shown that now Modi's new India does not talk about peace but eliminates terrorism by entering the country. Prime Minister Modi also gave a clear and strict message to Pakistan that terrorism, water and trade cannot go together.

He said that with indigenous technologies like S-400 missile defense system, 'Brahmos, Akash missile, INS Vikrant, Tejas and Prachand attack helicopter, India is not only emerging as a self-reliant defense power but is also exporting defense equipment today. Today India's defense export has increased 34 times to reach 23,622 crores.

This is the result of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strategic foresight and diplomatic preparation. During the crisis period, the Modi government proved that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government is committed to the safety of Indians not only within the borders but all over the world.

Yellow alert issued as Monsoon advances steadily across Jharkhand

PNS : JAMSHEDPUR

The city is bracing for turbulent weather conditions over the next 72 hours as the Ranchi Meteorological Centre has issued a yellow alert, signalling the intensification of Monsoon activity across Jharkhand. The forecast warns of thunderstorms and lightning accompanied by gusty surface winds reaching speeds of 40–50 kmph, likely to affect isolated parts of the state, including Jamshedpur and surrounding districts.

The alert comes amid the active advancement of the Southwest Monsoon, with weather scientists attributing the unstable atmospheric conditions to multiple cyclonic circulations influencing the region.

According to the latest bulletin from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), an upper air cyclonic circulation has developed over north Chhattisgarh and its adjoining areas, roughly 0.9 km above mean sea level. This system is expected to enhance convective activity, leading to scattered showers and isolated heavy rainfall in eastern Jharkhand. Additionally, another significant cyclonic circulation—initially spotted over the northwest Bay of Bengal—has since moved inland, now hovering over north Odisha and nearby regions. This system is vertically extensive, stretching between 1.5 km and 5.8 km above mean sea level, and is tilting southwards with height—a meteorological signature indicating active monsoon dynamics.

In a promising development for farmers and residents awaiting seasonal rains, the Northern Limit of Monsoon (NLM) has further advanced. As per IMD data, the NLM now runs along the following coordinates: 17.0°N/55°E ? 17.5°N/60°E ? 18°N/65°E ? 18.5°N/70°E ? Mumbai ? Ahilyanagar ? Adilabad ? Bhawanipatna ? Puri ? Sandhead Island ? 23.5°N/89.5°E ? Balurghat ? 30°N/85°E.

This extensive path shows that monsoon winds are gradually pushing northward, and with the current cyclonic circulations aiding moisture convergence, widespread rainfall across Jharkhand seems imminent in the coming days.

The district administration has urged citizens to stay indoors during thunderstorm events, avoid sheltering under trees, and keep away from electrical appliances. Rural areas and agricultural workers are being advised to exercise caution during early morning and evening hours, which are considered most vulnerable for lightning strikes.

The Jamshedpur Notified Area Committee (JNAC) has reportedly initiated preventive checks on drainage systems to avoid waterlogging in low-lying areas. Municipal workers have been instructed to keep pumps ready and stormwater drains clear in anticipation of heavy downpours.

Tower Car inaugurated at RRD

PNS : RANCHI

Divisional Railway Manager Jasmeet Singh Bindra and Chief Electrical Distribution Engineer, South Eastern Railway Headquarters, Sunil Sahu inaugurated a new diesel electric tower car at Hatia Railway Station and flagged it off on Thursday. Works like repair, maintenance, inspection and patrolling of overhead equipment (OHE) are done on electrified railway sections through the tower car. This high quality tower car is equipped with all the latest facilities. It has two engines of 340 HP, traction alternator, power rectifier, traction motor, auxiliary alternator, motor switch and other equipment. Since this tower car has two engines, if one engine fails, the tower car can be operated temporarily with the help of another engine. This new tower car also has the facility of online stagger check, which makes it easier to detect faults in OHE. This eight-wheeled tower car can run at a higher speed than the four-wheeled conventional tower cars. Its maximum speed is 110 kmph, which will make it possible to reach the breakdown site in less time. Apart from this, a high capacity soundless generator set, cameras for inspection of overhead equipment, cabins for repair and investigation, two cabins for officers and staff and a small kitchen have also been arranged in this tower car. On the occasion of inauguration of this new diesel electric tower car, Additional Divisional Railway Manager Hemraj Meena, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) Anand Lawrence, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager cum Chief Public Relations Officer Shuchi Singh, Senior Divisional Operations Manager Vinod Kumar and other officers and employees were present at Hatia station.

DMD, NABARD, TO VISIT JHARKHAND

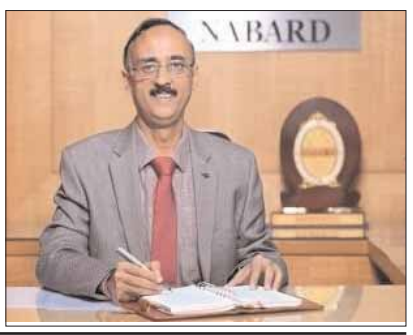
PNS : RANCHI

The National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), Jharkhand Regional Office, is proud to host Dr. Ajay Kumar Sood, Deputy Managing Director, during his official visit to Jharkhand on 16th and 17th June 2025.

During his visit, Dr. Sood is scheduled to meet with senior bureaucrats, top executives from the banking sector, and key stakeholders from the development ecosystem. His itinerary includes field visits to flagship NABARD-supported projects, including the visit to JIVA natural farming initiative in Ramgarh district, which is promoting sustainable agriculture and enhancing livelihoods through community-led projects.

With a PhD in Agricultural Economics from the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) and a distinguished career in agricultural development and rural banking, Dr. Sood has served across various Indian states. He has significantly contributed to rural and agricultural infrastructure development, strengthening grassroots financial institutions, and supporting inclusive growth. Prior to his tenure in NABARD, he served as a Scientist at the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

His visit underscores NABARD's unwavering commitment to fostering sustainable rural development in Jharkhand and is expected to further strengthen collaboration between NABARD, the State Government, and financial institutions.



Guv appreciates works for education and awareness in tribal areas

PNS : RANCHI

Governor Santosh Kumar Gangwar, while appreciating the work being done by Hari Vanvasi Vikas Samiti, Jharkhand, affiliated to Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra, Jharkhand, for education, culture and social awakening in tribal areas in a program organized at Raj Bhavan today, said that promotion of education in tribal areas has always been a big challenge. Despite the geographical location of remote villages, limited resources, social hesitation and economic constraints, if any organization selflessly lights the lamp of education, then it not only builds a school, but also shapes the future, self-confidence and social direction.

The Governor expressed happiness that the Samiti is currently running 80 Saraswati Shishu Vidya Mandirs in 6 blocks of 11 districts of the state, which include 26 high schools and 54 primary and middle schools. More than 17,500 students from 1951 villages are studying in these schools. Describing the educational achievements of these schools as extremely inspiring, he said that out of 1266 students who appeared in the matriculation examination this year, 28 students have scored more than 90%, while 68 students have scored more than 85% marks. He described Bharti Kumari and Sumant Singh of Simdega becoming district toppers, Anuj Kumar Sahu securing fourth position in the district and Soni Kumari of Gumla securing fifth position in the district as a strong expression of tribal talent.

The Governor specially mentioned Sohan Yadav, a former student of Tapkara Vidyalaya, and said that his contribution as a scientist in ISRO in historical missions like Chandrayaan-2 and Chandrayaan-3 proves that if given opportunity and guidance, tribal children can also make the nation proud, there is no dearth of talent in them. He appreciated the contribution being made in the preparation of competitive examinations like Union Public Service Commission and State Public Service Commission through the free Nirman Coaching Center run by the committee. He also said that Vanvasi Kalyan Kendra is not limited to only schools, but is also working in important areas like social upliftment, village development, health, culture, nationalism and leadership development, which is highly commendable. On this occasion, the Governor flagged off two new school buses provided by Suman Ramesh Tulsyanyani Trust, Mumbai for Vivekanand Vidyalaya, Lachragarh (Simdega). He said that these buses are not just a means of transport, but a symbol of the journey of education, progress and social change.

Fake currency racket in Ranchi busted, 1 held

Ranchi SSP Chandan Kumar Sinha alongwith senior officials during a press conference at his office in Ranchi on Thursday. PNS

PNS : RANCHI

Ranchi Police have arrested a person, busted a large business of fake notes and recovered 37 fake notes of Rs 500 denomination from him. The police team formed on the instructions of SSP Chandan Kumar Sinha took this action. The name of the arrested person is Subhash Prasad.

The police got this success after an application given by a person named Jamal. Jamal told the police that a boy had come to his mobile shop in Sudha Complex. Who bought a mobile of 3500 rupees and gave seven fake notes of 500 rupees in payment.

When Jamal looked at the notes carefully, he came to know that all the notes were fake and the serial number of many notes was of the same series. He immediately informed the other shopkeepers and questioned the teenager.

During the interrogation, Kishore said that his father is kept with Subhash Prasad, at his house in Kalinagar police station Namkum, more similar fake notes. Based on this information, the police team immediately raided Subhash Prasad's house in Kalinagar.

During the search, the police recovered 29 fake notes of 500 value from under the bed of Subhash Prasad, in these notes, many serial numbers were the same, which made it clear that the recovered notes were fake.

Police have arrested Subhash Prasad and detailed inquiries are being done in relation to the fake notes recovered from him. The SSP revealed the whole matter during a press conference in its office on Thursday. The police are now trying to find other members of the network of this fake note and its source.

The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

10 from Rajasthan among victims of crash

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

At least 10 Rajasthan natives, four from Udaipur and five of a family from Banswara district, were among those onboard the Air India flight AI-171 that crashed shortly after takeoff from Ahmedabad airport Thursday afternoon, officials said.

The aircraft, which was headed to London, crashed around 1.40 pm, just two minutes after takeoff, near the airport boundary wall adjacent to the Air Customs Cargo office, sending thick plumes of smoke across the area.

The flight had departed from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport at 1.38 pm with 242 passengers and crew members onboard.

Among the passengers were Shubh and Shagun Modi, the son and daughter of marble trader Sanjeev Modi from Udaipur. The siblings, both

Rescue operation underway after an Air India plane crashed in Meghaninagar area, near Ahmedabad airport on Thursday PTI

MBA graduates, were involved in their father's business and were travelling to London for leisure, officials said.

District Collector Namit Mehta visited their house in Saheli Nagar to meet the family. "Chief Minister Bhajanlal Sharma has spoken to the family of the victims and assured them of all possible assistance," Mehta told reporters.

Another passenger, Vardichand Menaria, a native of Rundeda village in Vallabhnagar, Udaipur district, was also on board. He had recently returned from London and was travelling back along with his associate Prakash Menaria of Rohida village. Both worked in the culinary sector in the UK. Khushboo Rajpurohit, a woman from Araba (Balotra) in Barmer district, was one of the passengers on the ill-fated flight. Dr Kaumi Vyas and Dr Pratik Joshi, and their three children, Miraya Joshi, Pradyut Joshi, and Nakul Joshi of Banswara, were in the plane that crashed.

Pradyut and Nakul were twins. Kaumi Vyas, who worked at a private hospital, shared a picture on social media of the family as they sat on the plane – the couple smiling and the three children in the frame behind sitting in another row, facing the camera.

In the wake of the crash, the Rajasthan BJP postponed all its programmes and meetings till further notice.

The ministers were slated to visit all state districts over three days from today and publicise the 11 years' work of the Narendra Modi government.

Sharma, who expressed his grief at the crash deaths, deferred a programme to be held in Banswara on Friday under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural).

"The news of the Air India flight crash in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, is extremely sad and worrying. I pray to God for the well-being and safety of all the passengers and crew members in this unfortunate incident," he said.

Leader of Opposition Tikaram Jully posted on X, "The news of Air India plane crashing after hitting a wall during takeoff in Ahmedabad is extremely worrying and sad. I pray to God that all the 242 passengers and airline staff on board the plane are completely safe and sound."

Former chief minister Ashok Gehlot, who was attending a public meeting in Pratapgarh when the news broke, cancelled the event. "Thousands who had gathered prayed for the souls of those who lost their lives and the recovery of the injured. We cancelled the ongoing event and all future programmes in Pratapgarh and Banswara," he said.

AI crash: Manipur's Nganthoi still missing

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Imphal

Kongbrailatpam Nganthoi Sharma's worst fear came true on Thursday as the London-bound flight on which she was a cabin crew member, crashed in Ahmedabad, even though her family clings to hope as her mobile phone is still switched on and is receiving signals but nobody is responding to their repeated calls.

Twenty-year-old Nganthoi, who was a cabin crew member for the last three years, was among the 242 people onboard Air India Flight AI 171, which crashed minutes after take-off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad in the afternoon.

Many casualties are feared but the fate of the cabin crew member from Manipur's Thoubal district was not yet known as the authorities did not release a list of fatalities till the filing of this report.

"We called her up several times after receiving the news but nobody picked up the calls. The internet on her phone is also still on. However, we stopped calling her around 6 pm fearing it would drain the battery," K Khenjita, a relative of Nganthoi, said.

A cousin of the cabin crew member said her last message before take-off was, "I'm going to London. In a few minutes, we'll take off. We may not be able to talk for a while."

Wails pierced the air in Awang Leikai in Thoubal as the news of the crash reached the Sharma residence. "We were devastated upon hearing the news... I was very close to her. Today, I can't help but remember what she had said earlier. She had said she was very scared of plane crash and did not know what she would do in such a scenario," Nganthoi's cousin said.

"Nganthoi was recruited by Air India during a recruitment call in Imphal three years back. She had applied for the job just to try her luck as she was studying an undergraduate course at that time. She got selected and was based in Mumbai," she added.

The family members said they contacted aviation authorities to know about her condition but did not receive any update.

She said that Nganthoi's mobile phone rang when they called her

20-year-old Nganthoi, who was a cabin crew member was among the 242 people onboard Air India Flight AI 171, which crashed minutes after take-off from Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel International Airport in Ahmedabad

She also expressed frustration over the spread of fake news about her death on social media without any confirmation.

"We are desperately trying to get news about her but fake news about her death is spreading like wildfire. Her photos and videos are being widely shared. It is really hurting us all as we are trying to balance our emotional trauma along with the challenge to get news," she said.

Kerala nurse Ranjitha among Air India plane crash victims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Pathanamthitta (Kerala)

Ranjitha Gopakumar, a 39-year-old nurse from Kerala, was among the victims of a tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

A mother of two, Ranjitha had returned to India from the UK just four days earlier to complete formalities related to her government job, hoping to rejoin service after a stint abroad.

She had come home to Pullad, her native village in this south Kerala district, full of hope — to finalise plans for a new house, and to move her children and elderly mother into a safer, more stable life. But what was meant to be a short trip filled with purpose and promise ended in heartbreak.

Ranjitha had taken the first available ticket to return abroad, boarding the flig from Chennai to Ahmedabad. It was a connecting journey back to the UK, where she had been working after a brief period in Salalah, Oman.

Just four days after arriving home, she left again — this time, unknowingly, on her final journey. "She was happy and hopeful when she left," said a close relative. "There were so many plans. So many dreams," he said.

Ranjitha had worked as a nurse in the Kerala government health service but had taken leave to pursue opportunities overseas, hoping to secure a better life for her children — 15-year-old Indhuchoodan, a 10th-standard student, and 12-year-old Etheka, who is in seventh standard.

After her father passed away some years ago, Ranjitha had taken on the full responsibility of raising her children with the help of her mother,Thulassykuttiyamma.

On the day of the crash, Ranjitha was on her way back to the UK to collect her release certificate from the UK hospital and resume work.

But fate struck cruelly. The aircraft crashed shortly after take-off, bursting into flames.

The news left the village of Pullad in mourning. Neighbours, friends and relatives have been visiting the family home in silence, offering condolences that feel too small for the scale of the loss.

She is survived by her mother, two children and two brothers.

TIMELINE OF MAJOR AIR CRASHES IN INDIA'S HISTORY

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

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

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

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

PM hails 11 years of digital revolution in governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday his Government in its 11 years has brought innumerable benefits for people by leveraging the power of technology.

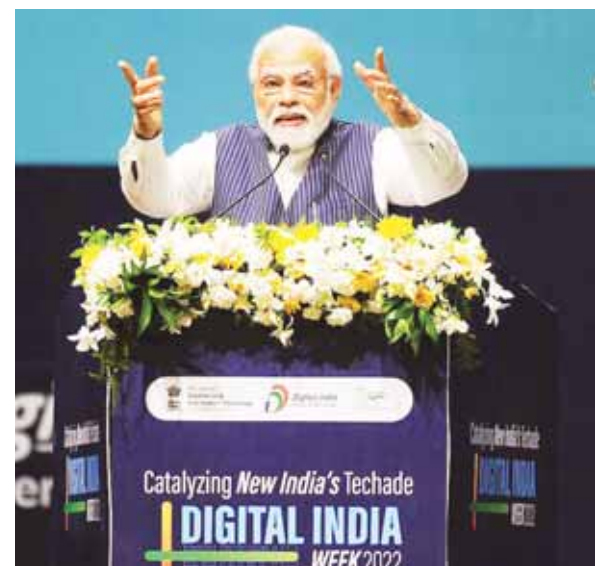
"Powered by the youth of India, we are making remarkable progress in innovation and application of technology. It is also strengthening our efforts to become self-reliant and a global tech powerhouse," he said on social media.

The Prime Minister said the use of technology has greatly boosted service delivery and transparency.

Furthermore, technology has become a means of empowering the lives of the poorest of poor, he added.

A thread of posts from a Government handle and highlighted by Modi said India ensured transparency at scale through direct benefit transfer (DBT), noting that over ₹44 lakh crores were credited to beneficiaries of over 322 schemes regulated by 56 ministries.

Over ₹3.48 lakh crores were saved by cutting out leakages, it added.



From digital deserts to a data-driven democracy — India's tech journey over the last 11 years is nothing short of revolutionary, another thread said.

Under Modi's leadership, India has transformed into a hub of digital innovation, tech-led governance and global trust.

From manufacturing to space tech, from digital payments to rural connectivity — the change is visible, impactful and lasting, it said

It added, "But this is not just about devices and platforms. It's about seamless governance, citizen empowerment, and building a tech-first Viksit Bharat."

From the surge of UPI into becoming India's "financial heartbeat", it noted that the country is also the world's cheapest mobile data providers, fuelling digital inclusion.

With over 94 crore broadband connections and 120 crore telephone subscribers, tele-density has soared from 75 per cent in 2014 to 85 per cent in 2025. ISRO's incredible feat of launching 393 foreign satellites showcases our capability, it said. One of the posts said, "11 years ago, a silent digital revolution began — reshaping how India connects, governs and grows. Under PM Narendra Modi's visionary leadership, the Digital India initiative has turned technology into a tool for empowerment — bridging gaps, unlocking opportunities and making governance more accessible and transparent for every citizen."

It added, "From internet access in remote villages to real-time digital payments leading the world, this transformation is not just about numbers — it's about people, progress and possibility."

Technological initiatives ensured that every rupee reaches the targeted beneficiary, with DBT seeing a 90 fold rise in 10 years, transforming welfare delivery with speed and transparency.

It highlighted digital marketplace for Government procurement, passport delivery service, roll out of Cowin platform for vaccination against coronavirus and Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission for health insurance among other measures powered by tech in delivering benefits and services to citizens. Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Modi Government has democratised the use of technology and harnessed its power for the business sector, making Bharat a leading digital economy in the world in the last 11 years. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government completed 11 years on June 9.

"The Modi Government democratised the use of technology and harnessed its power for the business sector, making Bharat a leading digital economy in the world in the #11YearsOfDigitalIndia," Shah wrote on social media.

The home minister said whether it is healthcare, education, trade or commerce, PM Modi has transformed every sector of the economy and society through the digital revolution.

According to an official statement, over the past 11 years, India has made remarkable progress in its journey towards becoming a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy.

The digital economy, which contributed 11.74 per cent to the national income in 2022-23, is projected to grow to 13.42 per cent by 2024-25, driven by advancements in artificial intelligence, cloud computing and digital infrastructure, the statement said.

Bollywood celebrities share grief over Ahmedabad plane crash

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

Actors Akshay Kumar, Alia Bhatt, Vicky Kaushal and filmmaker Karan Johar on Thursday expressed shock and offered prayers for the safety and well-being of all those aboard the Air India plane that crashed near a locality close to Ahmedabad airport.

"Shocked and speechless at the Air India crash. Only prayers at this time," Akshay posted on social media platform. Akshay was to attend a promotional event for Telugu movie "Kannappa" with co-star Vishnu Manchu on Friday in Indore (MP) but it has been cancelled in the wake of the tragedy. The team has also decided to defer the trailer launch by a day.

Salman Khan's scheduled appearance at an event for the Indian Supercross Racing League on Thursday was also called off after the plane crash.

Actor Allu Arjun said he was heartbroken by the tragic crash. "My deepest condolences to the families of the victims. May their

People gather at the site after an AI plane crashed moments after taking off from the airport in Ahmedabad on Thursday PTI

souls rest in peace. Truly heart-wrenching," he added. Alia posted on her Instagram Stories, "This is devastating! My heart aches for all the passengers and crew, thoughts and prayers with everyone on board and their loved ones." Actor Kareena Kapoor Khan said she was gutted by the news of the plane crash. "Praying for everyone aboard. The passengers, crew and their families. No words for the sorrow this brings," Kareena wrote on social media.

"Heartbreaking to hear about the plane crash in Ahmedabad. Praying for miracles for lives to be saved and for the injured to heal. May those who lost their lives rest in peace, and may their loved ones find strength in this dark hour," wrote actor Manoj Bajpayee. Vicky also called the news of the plane crash "devastating".

"Making my heart sink reading about 242 persons on board. Praying for everyone's safety and recovery," he added.

Karan Johar wrote, "Devastating news about the ill fated AIR INDIA flight .... information of lives lost and injured is still coming in... am praying for all onboard... my thoughts and prayers for the families and loved ones of the passengers onboard."

Actor Sunny Deol said he was praying with all his heart for survivors. "May they be found and receive the care they need. May those who lost their lives rest in peace, and may their families find strength in this unimaginable time," he wrote. Ishaan Khatter said he was "disturbed" to hear about the crash.

"Prayers go out to all those affected," he added. Sara Ali Khan said, "Sending strength and prayers to all those affected by the plane crash in Ahmedabad today."

Riteish Deshmukh said he was "heartbroken and in shock after hearing about the tragic plane crash". "My heart goes out to all the passengers, their families, and everyone affected on the ground. Holding them all in my thoughts and prayers during this incredibly difficult time," he added.

Actor Parineeti Chopra posted, "Can't imagine the pain of the family members of the ill fated Air India flight today. Praying for God to give them strength during this time."

Actors Randeep Hooda and Sonu Sood also shared condolences on social media. "Heartbreaking to hear about the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad. My thoughts and prayers are with all those affected. Hoping for survivors and strength for the rescue teams. May the departed rest in peace, and may their families find the strength to endure this immense loss, Randeep said.

Sonu wrote, "Prayers for Air India flight that crashed in Ahmedabad after take off to London."

Actor-politician Kangana Ranaut said, "The news of the Ahmedabad plane crash is extremely tragic and painful. I pray to God for everyone's safety, may God provide strength to all affected families in this hour of crisis."

BJP, Congress condemn attack on Tagore's home in Bangladesh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

The BJP and Congress on Thursday condemned the interim Government in Bangladesh over the vandalisation of Rabindranath Tagore's ancestral home in that country and called for global denunciation of the incident targeting the legacy of the iconic Indian personality. A mob attacked and vandalised the ancestral home of Nobel laureate Tagore in Bangladesh's Sirajganj district on Tuesday.

BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra cited media reports to say that Jamaat-e-Islami and Hefazat-e-Islam were behind the attack, noting that Tagore is an iconic symbol of Bengal, and Indian culture and civilisation. He also slammed West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for not raising the issue, alleging that she saw infiltrators from the neighbouring Bangladesh as a vote bank and has opted to keep quiet for political reasons. "She is driven by vote bank politics. We are driven by cultural politics," he told reporters.

The interim Government headed by Muhammad Yunus has not taken any action, and its conduct has not been appropriate, Patra said. He appealed to the world community to come together against it, adding that his party believes in inclusivity. "We are giving a global call to all the countries which value morality, civilisational thoughts, creativity and culture. They should all come together to denounce what has happened in Bangladesh," he said. Patra said Tagore created many of memorable works in this ancestral home, known as Kachharibari and is recognised by the Government there as a museum.

The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

Islam fastest-growing religion in world, says Pew Report

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Hindus are the fourth-largest religious category, after Christians, Muslims and religiously unaffiliated people. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, with the Muslim population growing by 347 million in 10 years between 2010 and 2020. Christianity is the second fastest rising religion, followed by 'nones' or people with no religious affiliation.

According to 'Global Religious Landscape' report, by the Pew Research Center, the number of Hindus worldwide grew 12 per cent from 2010 to 2020, rising from a little less than 1.1 billion to nearly 1.2 billion. Since non-Hindus grew at about the same rate, Hindus remained stable as a percentage or share of the global population.

The report mainly focuses on seven categories: Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, people who belong to other religions, and those who are religiously unaffiliated. "Over the decade from 2010 to 2020, the number (or count) of Hindus grew most quickly in the Middle East-NorthAfrica region, to 3.2 million (up 62 per cent). In North America, the Hindu population rose to 3.6 million (up 55 per cent).

In these regions, Hindus grew at a faster rate than the non-Hindu population and growth was primarily driven by migrants moving to wealthy countries — such as the United States and the United ArabEmirates — for economic opportunities. Europe also saw a considerable increase,to 2.2 million (up 30 per cent)," it said. As a share of regional populations, Hindus grew modestly in the Asia-Pacific region (up 0.4 points) and in NorthAmerica (up 0.3 percentage points).

Hindus made up roughly one-quarter of the total population of Asia and the Pacific at the end of the decade. As of 2020, the Asia-Pacific region continues to be home to the vast majority of the world's Hindus (99 per cent).

The Remaining Hindus live mostly in North America or the Middle East-North Africaregion, where they make up 0.3 per cent in each region. There was a subtle shift in the geographic concentration of Hindus between 2010 and 2020.

The report said the share of the world's Hindus living in Asia and the Pacific fell slightly (down 0.2 points), while the percentage of Hindus residing in North America and the MiddleEast-North Africa region inched up, each by 0.1 point.

According to 'Global Religious Landscape' report, by the Pew Research Center, the number of Hindus worldwide grew 12 per cent from 2010 to 2020

India — the birthplace ofHinduism — has more Hindu residents than any other country, with 95 per cent (or 1.1billion) of the global Hindu population. As of 2020, Hindus make up a majority in two countries, India (79 per cent) and Nepal (81 per cent).

They are a religious minority ineight of the 1o countries with the largest numbers of Hindus. Outside the Asia-Pacific region, the US has the largest number of Hindus (3.0 million), followed by the United Kingdom (1.1 million) and the UAE (1.1 million). Aside from India and Nepal, the only other country in which Hindus are the largest group is Mauritius, where 48 per cent of the population is Hindu. However, Mauritius' Hindu population of 620,000 isn't enough to make the list of the 10 countries with the most Hindus.

The share of the population identifying as Hindu did not increase or decrease substantially (by at least 5percentage points) in any country or territory. The Asia-Pacific region is home to 99 per cent of the global Hindu population, with around 95 per cent of all Hindus Living in India.

Hindus are the largest religious group in India, Nepal andMauritius. Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the world, with the Muslim population growing by 347 million in 10years between 2010 and 2020. Christianity is the second fastest rising religion,followed by 'nones' or people with no religious affiliation.

The report says the rise in the number of Muslims is more than all other religions combined, and the shares of the Muslim population globally rose by 1.8 percentage points to 25.6 per cent.Christianity, the world's biggest religious group, comes second. The number of Christians rose by 122million, reaching 2.3 billion. However, as a share of the world's population, they fell 1.8 percentage points to 28.8 per cent — placing second to Islam, the report says.

This is primarily due to the growth of the non-Christianpopulation and those who left the faith. Most former Christians no longer identify with any religion, but some now identify with a different religion,the survey reveals.

The decline in Christianity has been recorded in Europe, North America, the Americas, Australia, and New Zealand, according to Pew. The Jewish population grew by around six per cent in those 10 years — from 14 million to 15 million people, the report said.

As of 2020, 45.9 per cent of Jews lived in Israel — the highest Jewish population in any country. This was followed by 41.2 per cent in NorthAmerica. According to the report, Buddhists Are the only major religious group that had fewer numbers in 2020 than a decade earlier. The number of Buddhists in the world dropped by 0.8 per cent.

Srimanta Sankardeva Award given to Dr Sonal Mansingh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya presenting Srimanta Sankardeva Award 2023 to renowned classical dancer Dr Sonal Mansingh in Guwahati. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and other eminent dignitaries were also present at the event PIONEER PHOTO

In a grand celebration of art, culture and spiritual heritage, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya conferred Srimanta Sankardeva Award 2023 on Padma Vibhushan Dr Sonal Mansingh, one of India's most distinguished classical dancers, at a ceremonial event held at Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra on Thursday in the presence of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal and other eminent dignitaries.

In his address, Governor Acharya paid rich tributes to Srimanta Sankardeva, describing him a spiritual luminary and cultural reformer who transcended regional boundaries to become a national symbol of unity, harmony and inclusiveness.

"Srimanta Sankardeva was not just a saint of Assam or the Northeast; he was a symbol of India's collective cultural consciousness," said the Governor.

Highlighting the saint's legacy, Governor Acharya spoke on Sankardeva's role in advancing Neo-Vaishnavism or Ek Sarana Naam Dharma which promoted social equality and broke down caste hierarchies through devotion, art, music, drama and philosophical thought.

He further said that Mahapurush Srimnata Sankardeva's contributions such as Borgeet, Ankiya Naat and his translations of the Bhagavata Purana-continue to shape Assam's cultural identity.

The Governor also lauded the efforts of the Government of Assam in preserving and promoting the legacy of Srimanta Sankardeva through initiatives like the development of Batadrava Than, Patbausi Satra, Sankardeva Kalakshetra and the institution of the Srimanta Sankardeva Chair in various educational institutions across the state and the country.

Conferring the award on Dr Sonal Mansingh, the Governor recognised her lifelong dedication to Indian classical dance, cultural advocacy, and social reform.

"This award is not just a tribute to her persona, but recognition of her relentless service in upholding and modernising the spirit of Indian heritage," he said.

Dr Mansingh, a doyen of Bharatanatyam and Odissi, has spent decades championing Indian traditions through performance, education and policymaking.

BJP leader urges J and K LG to drop Urdu requirement for Naib Tehsildar exam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Jammu

In a significant development, Sunil Sharma, Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly and senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader, met with Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha in Srinagar on Thursday to address concerns over the mandatory requirement of Urdu language proficiency for the Naib Tehsildar examination.

Accompanied by Sat Paul Sharma, President of the BJP Jammu and Kashmir Unit, the LoP urged the Lieutenant Governor to make the working knowledge of Urdu non-mandatory for the recruitment process, citing issues of fairness and regional disparity.

The Jammu and Kashmir Services Selection Board (JKSSB) issued a notification on June 9, 2025, for the recruitment of 75 Naib Tehsildar posts in the Revenue Department, sparking controversy by designating Urdu as a compulsory subject for aspirants.

This requirement has triggered widespread unrest, particularly in the Jammu region, where candidates have argued that it creates an unfair barrier, given that Hindi and Dogri are more commonly spoken and taught in the region's educational institutions.

During the meeting at Raj Bhawan in Srinagar, Sunil Sharma emphasized that mandating proficiency in Urdu, one of the five official languages of the Jammu and Kashmir Union Territory (UT), undermines constitutional principles of equal opportunity and administrative impartiality.

"In Jammu, languages like Hindi and Dogri are primarily spoken and taught in schools and colleges, whereas Urdu remains an optional subject," Sharma stated in a letter addressed to the Lieutenant Governor, a copy of which was also sent to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah.

He argued that the Urdu requirement constitutes a "gross injustice" to aspirants from the Jammu Division, potentially exacerbating regional disparities and discrimination.

In addition to seeking the removal of the Urdu requirement, Sharma and Sat Paul Sharma urged the Lieutenant Governor to ensure that government documents and procedures are translated into all five official languages of the

J and K UT—Hindi, Urdu, Dogri, Kashmiri and English.

This move, they argued, would promote inclusivity and accessibility for all residents of the Union Territory, aligning with the principles of equitable governance.

Robert Vadra ready to appear before ED, no intention to avoid summons: Lawyer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's husband Robert Vadra has no intention of avoiding summons and is ready to appear before the Enforcement Directorate (ED) anytime before or after his travel abroad later this month, his lawyer Suman Khaitan said on Thursday.

The assertion came two days after Vadra failed to appear before the ED after he skipped the agency's summons on June 10 for questioning in a money laundering case linked to UK-based alleged arms consultant Sanjay Bhandari.

Vadra, Wayanad MP's husband, was summoned by the probe agency to record his statement in the case on June 10 but could not appear as he had flu-like symptoms on June 9 and undertook a COVID test according to the health protocol, his lawyer said.

He said Vadra was ready to record his statement virtually but the agency did not accept the plea and wanted his physical presence to do the needful.

"My client Robert Vadra has been made aware of certain media reports that erroneously suggest that my Client has been avoiding ED summons. My client would like to bring the true facts to your attention and would like to state unequivocally that such media reports are completely untrue.

"Vadra has complied with all the ED summons, demands for information and documentation for the last ten years. He has repeatedly affirmed and demonstrated his full cooperation with the authorities and will continue his full cooperation as a law-abiding citizen of India," Khaitan said in a statement.

He said Vadra received a summons to appear before the ED on June 10 in respect of a case in which he has already appeared before the agency on multiple occasions dating back to 2019 when he also filed voluminous documents.

"On 09.06.2025, he came down with flu-like symptoms and was advised to take a COVID-19 test. This is in keeping with the current practice being followed by many institutions including the PMO. Consequently, he informed the ED that he would not be able to attend proceedings in person on 10.06.2025.

"He also informed the ED that as a law-abiding citizen who is keen on clearing his name, he is happy to attend the proceedings in person as soon as he is medically cleared to do so. He also volunteered to attend proceedings virtually if the ED thought it necessary to carry them out immediately," Vadra's lawyer said.

The lawyer said Vadra is scheduled to travel abroad later this month to attend his daughter's college graduation ceremony. "He (Vadra) is perfectly happy to attend proceedings at any other time before or after the trip just as he has already done several times," his counsel said.

Khaitan also claimed that he has also recently submitted voluminous documents and answered all the questions asked by ED in the past.

"Any attempt to suggest that Mr. Vadra's attendance of his daughter's graduation ceremony is some sort of ruse to avoid attending any proceedings is completely untrue, unacceptable and without any basis in fact. This is especially clear from the fact that all foreign travels by Mr. Vadra, are always with prior notice to and knowledge of ED and with the prior permission of the Court.

"It is a matter of record with ED that Mr. Vadra has regularly and repeatedly appeared before the ED whenever summoned and there is no basis or reason to even think that Mr Vadra will ever try to give any untrue reason while asking for time to appear before ED," his lawyer asserted.

Assam will deport 'foreigners' even if their names feature in NRC: Himanta

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has said that the State Government's current policy is to push back foreigners even if their names are found in the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

The way the NRC was carried out in Assam leaves a lot of scope for doubt, and it cannot be the only document for determining a person's citizenship, Sarma said.

The NRC, an official record of bonafide Indian citizens living in Assam, was updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court and released on August 31, 2019, leaving out more than 19 lakh applicants. However, it has not been notified by the Registrar General of India, leaving the controversial document without any official validity.

'Many people had entered their names in the NRC by using unfair means. So we have adopted the policy of pushing back (foreigners) if the authorities are absolutely convinced that the persons concerned are foreigners,' the CM said on the sidelines of a programme in Darrang on Wednesday.

A large number of people have been picked up from across Assam since last month on suspicion of being doubtful citizens, as part of a nationwide drive, and many of them were pushed back to Bangladesh. Some of them returned after the neighbouring nation refused to accept them as their citizens.

'Personally, I am not convinced that the presence of a name in the NRC alone is enough to determine that someone is not an illegal migrant,' he said.

Asked whether a section of officials did not carry out the NRC exercise with due diligence, Sarma said that is a possibility.

Sarma alleged that social activist and author Harsh Mander had camped in Assam for two years, and sent some youths from the state to America and England for education and encouraged them to manipulate the NRC.

"These matters came to my knowledge after I became the chief minister,' he said.

Sarma, speaking on detection and deportation of foreigners, during a special assembly session on June 9, had said the state government will implement the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, for the purpose, which allows the district commissioners to declare illegal immigrants and evict them.

Terror funding case: Delhi HC denies bail to Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Thursday refused to grant bail to Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Ahmad Shah in a terror funding case, observing the possibility of him carrying out similar unlawful activities and influencing witnesses couldn't be ruled out.

A bench of Justices Navin Chawla and Shalinder Kaur said the Constitution of India provides for a right to freedom of speech and expression, but it also places reasonable restrictions such as public order, decency, morality or incitement to an offence.

"This right cannot be misused under the garb of carrying out rallies wherein, a person uses inflammatory speeches or instigates the public to commit unlawful activities, detrimental to the interest and integrity of the country," the bench said.

The high court, therefore, dismissed Shah's appeal against the trial court's July 7, 2023 order refusing bail.

Shah was arrested by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on June 4, 2019.

The high court also rejected Shah's alternate prayer seeking "house arrest" given the serious nature of charges.

In 2017, the NIA registered a case against 12 persons for allegations of conspiracy for raising and collecting funds for causing disruption by way of pelting stones, damaging public property and conspiring to wage war against the government of India.

Shah was alleged to have played a "substantial role" in facilitating a separatist or militant movement in Jammu and Kashmir by inciting and instigating the general public to sloganeer in support of the secession of the J&K; paying tribute to the family of slain terrorists or militants by eulogising them as "martyrs"; receiving money through hawala transactions and raising funds through the LoC trade, which were allegedly used to fuel subversive and militant activities in J&K.

The high court observed he was the chairman of the unlawful organisation Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDPF).

The bench examined a table elaborating on the 24 pending cases against Shah, indicating his involvement in a number of criminal cases of a similar nature and relating to conspiring for the secession of J&K from the union territory of India. These cases reflect extensive preparations and coordinated action undertaken in furtherance of that objective, it added.

Opposing Shah's bail, the NIA counsel said the investigating agency had unearthed and collated substantial incriminating evidence against him and found that he played an active part in a deep-rooted conspiracy related to secessionist and terrorist activities in the J&K.

Shah's counsel argued at the time when his client was alleged to have been involved in various activities, his organisation hadn't been declared unlawful and that he was not involved in any illegal activity. The court, however, found no merit in the plea.

In case Shah was involved in unlawful activities, the high court said, the same couldn't be termed as lawful only because the organisation he was heading was at the time, was not declared an unlawful association.

Over five lakh people to participate in International Yoga Day, says Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

More than five lakh people are likely to perform yoga with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who will lead the Common Yoga Protocol (CYP) in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, on International Day of Yoga on June 21, Ayush Minister Prataprao Jadhav said on Thursday. The Government, at the same time, will hold Yoga Sangam sessions at over one lakh locations across the country, making it one of the largest synchronised yoga exercises in history, Jadhav said.

"As we enter the 11th year, IDY 2025 is not just a commemoration, it is a collective call to scale up our efforts and deepen yoga's reach across all segments of society," Jadhav said. Jadhav made the remarks at the curtain raiser for the event at the National Media Centre here. He said this year's theme, 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health', aligns with the global health vision presented during India's G20 presidency and reflects the Indian ethos of 'Sarve Santu Niramaya' — May all be free from disease. "When the United Nations General Assembly adopted 21st June as the International Day of Yoga in 2014, following the visionary call of our Prime Minister Narendra Modi," the minister said.

Congress asks Government to share SC report on allegations against Justice Varma

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Congress has asked the Government to share with it the report of a Supreme Court-appointed committee that probed graft allegations against Justice Yashwant Varma so that it can firm up its stand on the issue of his impeachment before the Monsoon session of Parliament, party sources said on Thursday.

The Government, however, is yet to respond, the sources said. Several burnt sacks containing cash were allegedly discovered at Justice Varma's residence in Delhi after a fire broke out there in March, when he was a Delhi High Court judge.

Though the judge, who was later transferred to the Allahabad High Court, has claimed ignorance about the cash, the Supreme Court-appointed committee indicted him after speaking to a number of witnesses and recording his statement. Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju has initiated discussions with all political parties to bring an impeachment motion against Justice Varma in Parliament's Monsoon session, starting from July 21.

The Congress sources said the party has asked Rijiju to share the report of the committee so that it can firm up its stand on the issue of impeachment. The minister is yet to get back to the Congress, they said.

Several burnt sacks containing cash were allegedly discovered at Justice Varma's residence in Delhi after a fire broke out there in March, when he was a Delhi High Court judge

Last week, Rijiju underlined the government's resolve to take all political parties on board in moving the impeachment motion against Justice Varma, saying corruption in the judiciary cannot be approached through a "political prism".

He said the government wants the exercise to be a "collaborative effort".

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

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

Rijiju, however, has said the present case is "slightly different" as an in-house committee formed by former CJI Sanjiv Khanna has already submitted its report.

"So what is to be done in this matter, we will take a call," he said earlier. The minister had said the process has to be followed, but how to "integrate the inquiry already conducted" needs to be decided.

Following the Supreme Court's in-house inquiry, former CJI Sanjeev Khanna is believed to have prodded Varma to resign but he dug in his heels. The SC has since transferred him to his parent cadre, the Allahabad High Court, where he has not been assigned any judicial work.

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Editor's TAKE

Falling Fertility Rate: Crisis or course correction

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

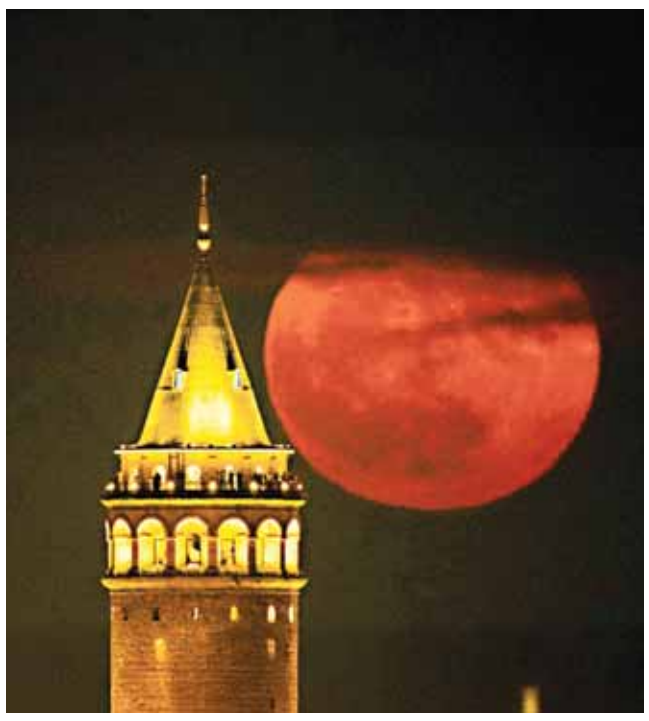
India, with concerns about overpopulation, now faces a very different demographic dilemma — one marked not by too many births, but by too few. According to the UNFPA's State of World Population 2025 report, India's total fertility rate has dropped to 1.9, slipping below the replacement level of 2.1.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

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

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

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

PIC TALK



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

Trump takes aim at Ivy League

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

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

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

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

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

KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Silent Revolution in Justice Delivery

SECOND Opinion

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

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

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

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

VIPUL YADAV

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Letters to the Editor

California on the brink

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

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

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

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

RS NARULA | PATIALA

One nation one temperature!

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

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

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

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Decline in micro financing

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

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

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

AG RAJMOHAN | ANANTAPUR

INDIA REACHES OUT TO THE WORLD AND MAKES A POINT

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

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

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

BICHU MUTTATHARA | PUNE

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

The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

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

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

FIRST Column

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

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

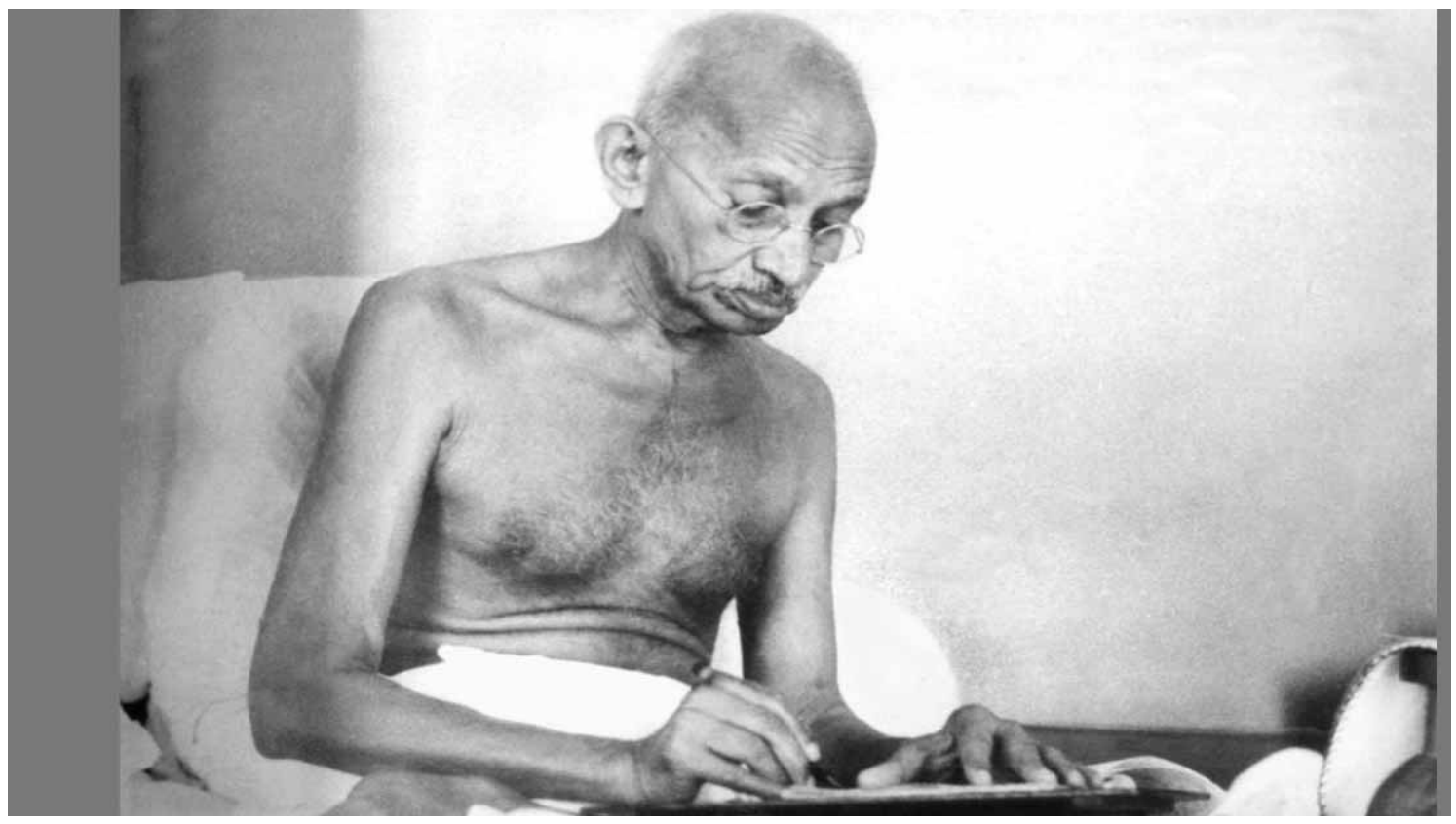
His activism in South Africa spanned over two decades (1893-1914). During this period, he developed and refined his unique philosophy of non-violent resistance, which he termed "Satyagraha" (truth-force). He organised mass protests, boycotts, and civil disobedience campaigns against discriminatory laws,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

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

RAJDEEP PATHAK

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

RAJESH KUMAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRASHANTO BAGCHI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

World leaders express condolences to plane crash's families

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Moscow/Brussels/Male

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney were among scores of world leaders who offered condolences to the people of India in wake of the plane crash in Ahmedabad on Thursday.

A London-bound Air India plane carrying 242 passengers and crew crashed in a residential area in Ahmedabad minutes after taking off. Many people are feared killed.

There were 169 Indians, 53 British, one Canadian and seven Portuguese nationals onboard apart from 12 crew members.

President Putin offered condolences to Indian President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi and expressed "deepest condolences," over the plane crash, the Kremlin said.

"Please convey my sympathy and support to the families of those killed and my wishes for a swift recovery to those injured in the crash," TASS said, quoting Putin's message.

Canada's Prime Minister Mark Carney said he is "devastated" to learn about the crash that had one Canadian national among those on board.

"My thoughts are with the loved ones of everyone on board. Canada's transportation officials are in close contact with counterparts and I am receiving regular updates as the response to this tragedy unfolds," Carney said in a post on X. Minister of Foreign Affairs Anita Anand too called it the "distressing news" as "devastating."

"Canada is in close contact with our international partners. My thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those who have been lost in this tragedy," she said in a post on X. UN Secretary General Guterres said he is "deeply saddened" by the Air India crash and, in a post on X, offered "heartfelt condolences" to the families and loved ones of all affected.

"Heartbreaking news from India with the tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad. My deepest condolences to the families and loved ones grieving this terrible loss. We share your pain. Dear @narendramodi, Europe stands in solidarity with you and the people of India in this moment of sorrow," European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said in a post on X.

Debris of the Air India plane that crashed moments after taking off from the airport in Ahmedabad on Thursday PTI

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy described it as "horrible news" and offered deepest condolences to Modi and the entire people of India.

"Our thoughts are with all victims' relatives and close ones in India, the UK, Portugal, and Canada. We share your shock and grief on this tragic day. We all pray for as many lives to be saved as possible and wish a speedy recovery to those injured," he posted on X.

Ukraine's Foreign Affairs Minister Andrii Sybiha too offered condolences to "friendly India, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar," and said in a post on X, "With great sadness, we in Ukraine learned of the tragic crash of an Air India passenger plane in Ahmedabad. Our hearts go out to all victims' families in India, the UK, Portugal, and Canada. We wish the injured a speedy recovery."

US Secretary Of State Marco Rubio too expressed condolences, saying Washington continues to monitor developments and stands with the emergency responders working to help those impacted.

"Heartbroken to hear the news of a tragic plane crash in Ahmedabad, India. My prayers are with all who lost their loved ones in this horrible incident," Rubio said in a post on X. German Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said he is following the "shocking images" of the Air India flight crashing in Ahmedabad and said in a post on X: "As we are only learning the details, my thoughts and heartfelt prayers are with our friends in #India and everyone currently hoping for their loved ones."

Expressing his "profound sadness" at the tragic crash, Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu said in a post on X, "At this difficult time, the government and people of #Maldives stand in solidarity with the people and the Government of India."

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake said he is "deeply saddened" by the tragic crash and offered "heartfelt condolences to the families of all those affected onboard."

House to vote on Trump's request to cut funding for NPR, PBS

The headquarters for National Public Radio (NPR) PTI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Washington

House Republicans are moving to cut about $9.4 billion in spending already approved by Congress as President Donald Trump's administration looks to follow through on work by the Department of Government Efficiency when it was overseen by Elon Musk.

The package to be voted on Thursday targets foreign aid programs and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which provides money for National Public Radio and the Public Broadcasting Service, as well as thousands of public radio and television stations around the country. Republicans are characterising the spending as wasteful and unnecessary, but Democrats say the rescissions are hurting the United States' standing in the world.

"Cruelty is the point," Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said of the proposed spending cuts.

The Trump administration is employing a tool rarely used in recent years that allows the president to transmit a request to Congress to cancel previously appropriated funds. That triggers a 45-day clock in which the funds are frozen pending congressional action. If Congress fails to act within that period, then the spending stands.

The benefit for the administration of a formal rescissions request is that passage requires only a simple majority in the 100-member Senate instead of the 60 votes usually required to get spending bills through that chamber. So, if they stay united, Republicans will be able to pass the measure without any Democratic votes. The administration is likening the first rescissions package to a test case and says more could be on the way if Congress goes along.

Republicans, sensitive to concerns that Trump's sweeping tax and immigration bill would increase future federal deficits, are anxious to demonstrate spending discipline, though the cuts in the package amount to just a sliver of the spending approved by Congress each year. They are betting the cuts prove popular with constituents who align with Trump's "America first" ideology as well as those who view NPR and PBS as having a liberal bias.

In all, the package contains 21 proposed rescissions. Approval would claw back about $900 million from $10 billion that Congress has approved for global health programs. That includes cancelling $500 million for activities related to infectious diseases and child and maternal health and another $400 million to address the global HIV epidemic. The Trump administration is also looking to cancel $800 million, or a quarter of the amount Congress approved, for a program that provides emergency shelter, water and sanitation and family reunification for those forced to flee their own country.

About 45 per cent of the savings sought by the White House would come from two programs designed to boost the economies, democratic institutions and civil societies in developing countries.

The Republican president has also asked lawmakers to rescind nearly $1.1 billion from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, which represents the full amount it's slated to receive during the next two budget years. About two-thirds of the money gets distributed to more than 1,500 locally owned public radio and television stations. Nearly half of those stations serve rural areas of the country.

The association representing local public television stations warns that many of them would be forced to close if the Republican measure passes. Those stations provide emergency alerts, free educational programming and high school sports coverage and highlight hometown heroes. Advocacy groups that serve the world's poorest people are also sounding the alarm and urging lawmakers to vote no.

Russia targets Ukraine with new attacks, 3 killed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kyiv

Russian forces have pummelled Ukraine with drones and other weapons, killing three people and injuring scores of others despite international pressure to accept a ceasefire, officials said Thursday. According to the Ukrainian air force, Russia launched a barrage of 63 drones and decoys at Ukraine overnight. It said that air defences destroyed 28 drones while another 21 were jammed.

Ukraine's police said two people were killed and six were injured over the past 24 hours in the eastern Donetsk region, the focus of the Russian offensive. One person was killed and 14 others were also injured in the southern Kherson region, which is partly occupied by Russian forces, police said.

The head of the Kharkiv region, Oleh Syniehubov, said that 15 people, including four children, were injured by Russian drone attacks overnight. Kharkiv city mayor Ihor Terekhov said Russian drones targeted residential districts, educational facilities, kindergartens and other civilian infrastructure.

"Kharkiv is holding on. People are alive. And that is the most important thing," Terekhov said.

The Russian military has launched waves of drones and missiles in recent days, with a record bombardment of almost 500 drones on Monday and a wave of 315 drones and seven missiles overnight on Tuesday. The recent escalation in aerial attacks has come alongside a renewed Russian battlefield push along eastern and northeastern parts of the more than 1,000-kilometre front line.

While Russian missile and drone barrage have struck regions all across Ukraine, regions along the front line have faced daily Russian attacks with short-range exploding drones and glide bombs. Ukraine hit back with drone raids.

Russia's Defence Ministry said that air defences downed 52 Ukrainian drones early Thursday, including 41 over the Belgorod region that borders Ukraine. Regional Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov said three people were injured by Ukrainian attacks Thursday.

The attacks have continued despite discussions of a potential ceasefire in the war. During their June 2 talks in Istanbul, Russian and Ukrainian negotiators traded memorandums containing sharply divergent conditions that both sides see as nonstarters, making any quick deal unlikely. Speaking at a meeting of leaders of southeast European countries in Odesa, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged the European Union to toughen its latest package of sanctions against Russia. He argued that lowering the cap on the price of Russian oil from $60 to $45 as the bloc has proposed isn't enough.

"Real peace comes with a $30 cap — that's the level that will truly change thinking in Moscow," Zelenskyy said.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius arrived in Kyiv Thursday on an unannounced visit, noting that the stepped-up Russian attacks on Ukraine send a message from Moscow that it has "no interest in a peaceful solution at present," according to German news agency.

Pistorius said his visit underlines that the new German Government continues to stand by Ukraine.

"Of course this will also be about how the support of Germany and other Europeans will look in future — what we can do, for example, in the area of industrial cooperation, but also other support," he said.

Jaishankar meets French President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Paris

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday met President Emmanuel Macron here and thanked him for France's strong message of support in the fight against terrorism.

Jaishankar is on a visit to Europe to boost bilateral ties and reaffirm India's policy of zero-tolerance against terrorism, especially in the wake of April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

"Honoured to call on President @EmmanuelMacron of France. Conveyed greetings of PM @narendramodi. Thanked him for France's strong message of support in the fight against terrorism," Jaishankar said in a post on X after the meeting.

"Our discussions reflected the trust, comfort and ambition of our Strategic Partnership," he added.

Jaishankar was in Brussels on Wednesday where he met top European Union leaders and discussed ways to further strengthen the EU-India strategic partnership. The April 22 Pahalgam terror attack that claimed 26 lives prompted India to carry out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on May 7.

UN nuclear watchdog finds Iran not complying with obligations

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Vienna

The UN nuclear watchdog's board of governors on Thursday formally found that Iran isn't complying with its nuclear obligations for the first time in 20 years, a move that could lead to further tensions and set in motion an effort to restore United Nations sanctions on Tehran later this year.

Iran reacted immediately, saying it will establish a new enrichment facility "in a secure location" and that "other measures are also being planned." "The Islamic Republic of Iran has no choice but to respond to this political resolution," the Iranian Foreign Ministry and the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran said in a joint statement.

Nineteen countries on the International Atomic Energy Agency's board, which represents the agency's member nations, voted for the resolution, according to diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the outcome of the closed-doors vote.

Russia, China and Burkina Faso opposed it, 11 abstained and two did not vote. In the draft resolution seen by The Associated Press, the board of governors renews a call on Iran to provide answers "without delay" in a long-running investigation into uranium traces found at several locations that Tehran has failed to declare as nuclear sites.

Western officials suspect that the uranium traces could provide evidence that Iran had a secret nuclear weapons program until 2003. The resolution was put forward by France, the UK, Germany and the US. Iran under pressure as Trump warns of possible airstrikes

Speaking to Iranian state television after the vote, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran said that his agency immediately informed the IAEA of "specific and effective" actions Tehran would take.

Hamas says it killed 12 Israeli-backed fighters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Cairo

A unit of the Hamas-run police force said it killed 12 members of an Israeli-backed militia after detaining them early Thursday in the Gaza Strip. Hours earlier, an Israel-supported aid group said Hamas attacked a bus carrying its Palestinian workers, killing at least five of them.

The militia, led by Yasser Abu Shabab, said its fighters had attacked Hamas and killed five militants but made no mention of its own casualties. It also accused Hamas of detaining and killing aid workers. It was not immediately possible to verify the competing claims or confirm the identities of those killed.

The Israeli military circulated the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation 's statement on its social media accounts but declined to provide its own account of what happened.

Aid initiative already marred by controversy and violence

The aid group's operations in Gaza have already been marred by controversy and violence since they began last month, with scores of people killed in near-daily shootings as crowds headed toward the food distribution sites inside Israeli military zones. Witnesses have blamed the Israeli military, which has acknowledged firing only warning shots near people it said approached its forces in a suspicious manner.

Smoke rises to the sky following an Israeli strike in the Gaza Strip PTI

Earlier this week, witnesses also said Abu Shabab militiamen had opened fire on people en route to a GHF aid hub, killing and wounding many.

The United Nations and major aid groups have rejected the Israeli and US-backed initiative, accusing them of militarising humanitarian aid at a time when experts say Gaza is at risk of famine because of Israel's blockade and renewed military campaign.

Last week, Israel acknowledged it is supporting armed groups of Palestinians in what it says is a move to counter Hamas. Abu Shabab's militia, which calls itself the Popular Forces, says it is guarding the food distribution points set up by the Israeli-and US-backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation in southern Gaza. Aid workers say it has a long history of looting UN trucks.

GHF has denied working with the Abu Shabab group.

They were aid workers

In a statement released early Thursday, the foundation said Hamas had attacked a bus carrying more than two dozen "local Palestinians working side-by-side with the US GHF team to deliver critical aid" near the southern city of Khan Younis.

"We condemn this heinous and deliberate attack in the strongest possible terms," it said. "These were aid workers. Humanitarians. Fathers, brothers, sons, and friends, who were risking their lives everyday to help others."

It did not identify the men or say whether they were armed at the time.

Israel and the United States say the new system is needed to prevent Hamas from siphoning off aid from the long-standing UN-run system, which is capable of delivering food, fuel and other humanitarian aid to all parts of Gaza.

UN officials deny there has been any systematic diversion of aid by Hamas, but say they have struggled to deliver it because of Israeli restrictions and the breakdown of law and order in Gaza.

Netanyahu survives attempt to dissolve parliament

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Government survived an attempt to dissolve parliament early Thursday morning, with most of his ultra-Orthodox coalition partners joining him in voting against a bill that would have forced them to register for military service while the country is at war.

The vote was the most serious challenge to Netanyahu's government since Hamas' October 7, 2023, attack, the biggest security failure in Israel's history and the trigger for the ongoing war in Gaza.

The bill's failure means that no other bill to dissolve Knesset can be submitted for at least six months, shoring up Netanyahu's embattled coalition. The ultra-Orthodox parties are furious that the Government has failed to pass a law exempting their community from mandatory military service. The issue has long divided the Jewish Israeli public, especially during the 20-month war in the Gaza Strip.

Israel's opposition had hoped that the public anger over the exemptions would help topple the government. But just two of the 18 ultra-Orthodox members of the Knesset, Israel's parliament, supported the bill to dissolve.

Most agreed to vote against the bill after Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee Chairman Yuli Edelstein said he and the ultra-Orthodox parties had reached an understanding on the basis of a new draft law, which they will continue discussing over the coming week.

Military service is mandatory for most Jews in Israel, but the politically powerful ultra-Orthodox, who make up roughly 13 per cent of Israeli society, have traditionally received exemptions if they are studying full-time in religious seminaries. The ultra-Orthodox, also known as Haredim, or "God-fearing" in Hebrew, say that integrating into the army threatens their traditional way of life.

Each year, roughly 13,000 ultra-Orthodox men reach the conscription age of 18, but less than 10 per cent enlist, according to parliament's State Control Committee.

DEATH TOLL IN SOUTH AFRICA FLOODS RISES TO 57

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Cape Town

The death toll in floods in one of South Africa's poorest provinces rose to 57 on Thursday as a top official said rescue attempts had been "paralysed" by a lack of resources.

Rescue teams are still working through debris and floodwater to find missing people after heavy rain caused a river to burst its banks in the predawn hours of Tuesday. Floods hit the nearby town of Mthatha and surrounding areas, sweeping away victims along with parts of their houses and cars.

Oscar Mabuyane, the premier of Eastern Cape province, said the floods struck while many people were asleep. The water was 3-4 metres high when it flowed out of a river and into nearby communities, he added. "It's a terrible situation," Mabuyane told state TV broadcaster SABC. "It happened at the wrong time."

Mabuyane said local authorities struggled to launch an effective rescue effort as the disaster happened in what he described as a region lacking resources.

He said the largely rural Eastern Cape province in southeastern South Africa, which is home to around 7.2 million people, only has one rescue helicopter. It came to Mthatha from the city of Gqeberha, more than 500 km away.

He also said the region does not have any specialist rescue divers or K-9 dog units, meaning they had to be called in from elsewhere to help with the search. "When things like this happen, we are always found wanting," said Mabuyane. "We are paralysed." People were stranded on rooftops and in trees. Rescue teams on Wednesday brought bodies out of the water in blue body bags. Witnesses said many people had taken refuge on the tops of buildings or in trees and some were heard calling for help for hours. Provincial government officials previously said they believed people were still missing but did not give an exact number. There was no immediate update on Thursday whether authorities believed all those who were not accounted for had been found.

The death toll rose to 57, according to Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs Minister Velenkosini Hlabisa, who led a national government delegation to the province to visit the scene.

"This is a real disaster and a catastrophe when we have so many people dying," Hlabisa said. He added that part of the problem was that many people in the area were living on a flood plain close to the river.

The missing had included four high school students who were swept away when their bus was caught up in the floods on its way to school early Tuesday morning. Authorities did not immediately say if those four children were among the latest bodies retrieved.

Six students who were on the bus had already been confirmed dead, along with the driver and another adult. Three other students were rescued after clinging onto trees and calling out for help, according to the provincial government.

The floods hit the province after an extreme cold front brought heavy rain, strong winds and snow to parts of eastern and southern South Africa. The floods centred on Mthatha and its surrounding district, which is around 430 km south of the east coast city of Durban. Forecasters had warned about the damaging weather last week.

Officials said at least 58 schools and 20 hospitals in the Eastern Cape were damaged, while hundreds of families were left homeless after their houses were submerged or washed away. Critical infrastructure including roads and bridges was also badly damaged, Mabuyane said.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said that he would travel to the Eastern Cape on Friday "to see exactly how our people are suffering there and see how we can console the families".

Ramaphosa announced earlier in the week that he had activated the National Disaster Management Centre to help local authorities in the Eastern Cape.

Some opposition political parties criticised the government, with the far-left Economic Freedom Fighters party saying the tragedy was a result of "government neglect" in parts of the Eastern Cape.

About 500 guard troops are trained on immigration raids

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Washington

About 500 of the National Guard troops deployed to the Los Angeles protests have been trained to accompany agents on immigration operations, the commander in charge said on Wednesday. And while some troops have already gone on such missions, he said it is too early to say if that will continue even after the protests die down.

Maj Gen Scott Sherman, speaking in an interview with The Associated Press and ABC, also warned that he expects the protest situation will escalate. "We are expecting a ramp up," he said, noting that protests across the nation are being planned and discussed now. "I'm focused right here in LA, what's going on right here. But you know, I think we're very concerned."

Sherman, commander of Task Force 51 that is overseeing the more than 4,000 Guard troops and 700 Marines deployed, initially said that National Guard troops had already temporarily detained some civilians. He later said he was incorrect, and that he had based his comments on photos and footage he had seen that turned out to not be a representation of Guard members in Los Angeles.

He said that as of Wednesday, none of the troops has detained a protester. But he said they have gone through days of training and are prepared to do so if needed. Close to 2,000 of the Guard members have either been out protecting federal facilities or personnel already are ready to move out, and the Marines will wrap up their training and are expected to be on the streets of Los Angeles as early as Thursday evening, Sherman said.

The decision to have the soldiers provide security on the raids moves troops closer than ever before to carrying out law enforcement actions such as deportations, as President Donald Trump has promised as part of his immigration crackdown.

Active-duty forces are prohibited by law from conducting law enforcement. Sherman said all of the Guard troops and Marines are going through several days of training on civil unrest and crowd control so they know exactly what they can and cannot do.

As an example, Sherman said if Guard members see someone trying to assault a civilian or a law enforcement officer, they are allowed to grab them and hold onto them. Then they would quickly turn them over to law enforcement, who would handcuff the person or arrest them.

More than 20 people detained on first night of curfew in downtown LA

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Los Angeles

Police detained more than 20 people, mostly on curfew violations, on the first night of restrictions in downtown Los Angeles and used crowd-control projectiles to break up hundreds of protesters demonstrating against President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown, officials said Wednesday.

But there were fewer clashes between police and demonstrators than on previous nights, and by daybreak, the downtown streets were bustling with residents walking dogs and commuters clutching coffee cups.

Officials said the curfew was necessary to stop vandalism and theft by agitators after five days of protests, which have mostly been concentrated downtown. Demonstrations have also spread to other cities nationwide, including Dallas and Austin in Texas, and Chicago and New York, where thousands rallied and more arrests were made.

The LA curfew, which is expected to last several days, covers a 1-square-mile (2.5-square-kilometre) section that includes an area where protests have occurred since Friday in the sprawling city of 4 million. The city of Los Angeles encompasses roughly 500 square miles (1,295 square kilometres).

The tensions in LA and elsewhere emerged as immigration authorities seek to dramatically increase the number of daily arrests across the country.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said the raids spread fear across the city at the behest of the White House.

"We started off by hearing the administration wanted to go after violent felons, gang members, drug dealers," she told a news conference. "But when you raid Home Depots and workplaces, when you tear parents and children apart, and when you run armored caravans through our streets, you're not trying to keep anyone safe. You're trying to cause fear and panic."

Some 2,000 National Guard soldiers are in the city, and about half of them have been protecting federal buildings and agents, said Army Maj. Gen. Scott Sherman, head of Task Force 51, which is overseeing the deployment of National Guard and Marines to Los Angeles.

About 700 Marines will soon join the Guard troops, but they are still undergoing training and will not be mobilised on Wednesday, Sherman said. Another 2,000 Guard troops should be on the streets by Thursday, he said.

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom has accused Trump of drawing a "military dragnet" across the nation's second-largest city with his escalating use of the National Guard, which Trump activated, along with the Marines, over the objections of city and state leaders.

Newsom asked a court to put an emergency stop to the military helping federal immigration agents. The assistance includes some guardsmen now standing protectively around agents as they carry out arrests.

A judge set a hearing for Thursday, giving the administration several days to continue its activities.

The change moves the military closer to engaging in law enforcement actions such as deportations, as Trump has promised as part of his immigration crackdown. The Guard has the authority to temporarily detain people who attack officers, but any arrests would be made by law enforcement.

The president posted on the Truth Social platform that the city "would be burning to the ground" if he had not sent in the military. Meanwhile in New York City, police said they took 86 people into custody during protests in lower Manhattan that lasted into Wednesday morning. Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said the vast majority of demonstrators were peaceful.

A 66-year-old woman in Chicago was injured when she was struck by a car during downtown protests Tuesday evening, police said. Video showed a car speeding down a street where people were protesting.

In Texas, where police in Austin used chemical irritants to disperse several hundred demonstrators Monday, Republican Gov. Greg Abbott's office said Texas National Guard troops were "on standby" in areas where demonstrations are planned. Guard members were sent to San Antonio, but Police Chief William McManus said he had not been told how many troops were deployed or their role ahead of planned protests Wednesday night and Saturday.

Authorities announce arrests in protests

Two people accused of throwing Molotov cocktails at police during the LA protests over the weekend face charges that could bring up to 10 years in prison, the Justice Department announced Wednesday. No one was injured by the devices.

One of the suspects is a US citizen, and the other overstayed a tourist visa and was in the US illegally, authorities said. "We are looking at hundreds of people," US Attorney Bill Essayli said. "If you took part in these riots and were looking to cause trouble, we will come looking for you."

Trump, Newsom locked in a war of words

Trump has called the protesters "animals" and "a foreign enemy" and described Los Angeles in dire terms that the governor says is nowhere close to the truth.

Newsom called Trump's actions the start of an "assault" on democracy.

"California may be first, but it clearly will not end here. Other states are next," he said.

The protests began Friday after federal immigration raids arrested dozens of workers in Los Angeles.

Protesters blocked a major freeway and set cars on fire over the weekend, and police responded with tear gas, rubber bullets and flash-bang grenades.

Thousands of people have peacefully rallied outside City Hall and hundreds more protested outside a federal complex that includes a detention center where some immigrants are being held following workplace raids.

सार्वजनिक सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरे मुव्वकिल लक्ष्मीदेवी पत्नी श्री राजकुमार, निवासी-सी- 50-ए, गली नंबर- 11, अंबेडकर विहार, जौहरीपुर, दिल्ली-110094 की निवासी हूं। मैं अपने पुत्र अमित कुमार को उसके आचरण के चलते अपनी समस्त चल-अंचल संपत्ति से बेदखल करती हूं। मेरी मुव्वकिल की अपने बेटे अमित कुमार को अपनी चल-अचल संपत्ति से बेदखल करती है। भविष्य में अमित कुमार से मेरी मुव्वकिल का कोई लेना देना नहीं होगा। भविष्य में अमित कुमार से कोई भी व्यक्ति किसी भी प्रकार का लेने देन करता है, तो उसके लिए वह खुद जिम्मेदार होगा।
ARUN RAGHAV (Advocate) Ch. No. G-220, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110032

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is to inform to the public at large that Dhoom Singh had acquired Plot area measuring 400 sq. yds, Khasra No. 389, situated at Village Chauna, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, Distt. Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. vide Sale Deed dt 12.05.1983 executed by Lakhhi, further Mr. Dhom Singh died intestate leaving behind Roopwati, Babu, Vijay Pal, Harender, Jagwati & Brahmpal as his only Legal Heirs of Late Mr. Dhoom Singh.

OR

Any person / firm / institution / company having any claim or right in respect of the said Property by way of inheritance, share, sale, agreement, lease, license, gift, possession, legal heirs, partners or encumbrance howsoever or otherwise is hereby required to intimate in writing to the undersigned within 07 days from the date of publication of this notice of his/her/their share or claim, if any, with all supporting documents at below mentioned address. After expiration of notice period, the claims, if any, of such person shall be treated null and void and also treated as waived and not binding on our client.
Ajay Kumar Giri (Advocate) H No. 26/161, Basement, Vikram Vihar, Lajpat Nagar 4, New Delhi 110024

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Notice

Applications are invited by Shri Guru Teg Bahadur College, Sathiala on plain Paper from the parties interested to take building for bank on lease with Carpet Area of 500 feet (Ground Floor) with in 21 Days from the date of Publication of this Advertisement for more details, terms and conditions, visit www.gndu.ac.in-Tenders
Registrar
2426/12/2025-26/95
Dated CHD :- 12/06/2025

PUBLIC NOTICE

That my client Mr. Biswajeet Mukherjee, S/o Late Sh. Abhoy Kumar Mukherjee, R/o D-18, Ground Floor, Sector 8, Dwarka has discovered a will executed by Mrs. Manjushree Chakraborty (since deceased) by which she has bequeath certain property in his favour. In case, if any one has any objection in this regard or has any other will of Late Mrs. Manjushree Chakraborty, he/she may raise such objection(s) to the undersigned within 15 days of this publication. **(Bipul Kumar Mishra) Advocate, Yes Offices, B-06, LGF, Plot no. 37, Below Indusind bank, Kaushambi, Ghaziabad, U.P. -201010 Email:- bipulmishra2003@yahoo.com**

PRAYER TO VIRGIN MARY
(never known to fail)

O most beautiful flower of Mount Carmel fruit vine, splendours, of heaven. Blessed Mother of the Son of God, Immaculate Virgin Assist me in this my necessity. O star of the Sea help me and show me herein you are my Mother. O Holy Mary, Mother of God, Queen of Heaven and Earth. I humbly beseech you from the beseech you from the bottom of my heart to succour me in this necessity. (make your request) There are none that can withstand your power. O show me my Mother, O show me herein you are my Mother. O Mary conceived without sin pray for us who have recourse to thee (3 times) Sweet Mother I place this cause in your hand (3 times). Thank you for your mercy towards me and my lived ones. Amen. The prayer must be said for three days and after that the request will be granted and the prayer must be published.

मध्यप्रदेश पुलिस आवास एवं अधोसंरचना विकास निगम
कार्यालय परियोजना यंत्री, इन्दौर संभाग क्र. 1, जी-13
प्रथम तल, एम.आई.जी. कॉलोनी, क्रिश्चियन एमीनेंट स्कूल के पीछे, इंदौर
निविदा सूचना क्र. 01/2025-26
मध्यप्रदेश पुलिस आवास एवं अधोसंरचना विकास निगम, इन्दौर संभाग क्र. 1, इन्दौर द्वारा पुलिस आयुक्त कार्यालय भवन का निर्माण कार्य, ए.बी. रोड़, इन्दौर, अनुमानित लागत रु. 24.81 करोड़ हेतु निविदा (क्र. 2025_MPPHC_430290) आमंत्रित की गई है।
निविदा प्रपत्र ऑन-लाइन दिनांक 02.07.25 को 17:00 बजे तक खरीदे व प्रस्तुत किये जा सकते हैं। विस्तृत निविदा सूचना एवं अन्य विवरण Portal : https://www.mptenders.gov.in पर देखे जा सकते हैं।
दूरभाष : 9425601536
म.प्र. माध्यम/120594/2025 परियोजना यंत्री

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
Ref: i) Tender Notice No. 05/2025-26 dated 17.04.2025
ii) Tender No. 15245006A due on 14.07.2025
In reference to above tender, the due date has been extended from 13.06.2025 to 14.07.2025.
All other terms & conditions remain unchanged. The Corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in
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टीडीएस सिटी, गाजियाबाद। E-Mail- ed2@upsida.co.in
निविदा सूचना
एतद् द्वारा सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण के औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों में विद्युत विकास कार्य हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिषदों/नगर निकायों में पंजीकृत फर्मों/ठेकेदारों से पूर्णकालीन मुहरबंद निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती है।

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य की धरोहर रा./लाख में
1.	Design, fabrication, supply and installation of flage type service QR code signage board at different IA. UPSIDA Ghaziabad (IA. Sikandra A, Sikandra B, Sikandra C, Mathura site A, Mathura site B, EPIP Agra, Foundary Nagar, Kosi Kotwan, Kosi Kalan.)	8.14

निविदा दिनांक 13.06.2025 को 11:00 बजे से दिनांक 03.07.2025 को 17:00 बजे तक खण्डीय कार्यालय से प्राप्त की जा सकती है, जिसे दिनांक 04.07.2025 को 11:00 बजे या इसके पश्चात् खोला जायेगा। निविदादाताओं द्वारा समस्त शपथ पत्रों एवं अन्य प्रपत्रों की मूल प्रतियाँ निविदा खोलने के बाद 03 कार्यदिवस में पंजीकृत डाक/व्यक्तिगत रुप से कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है।
नोटः 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओ में समस्त कर सहित दरें अंकित करें, अलग से मात्र जी0एस0टी0 देय होगा। 2. निविदादाता Eligibility Criteria के अनुसार समस्त प्रपत्र उपलब्ध कराने अनिवार्य होगा। निविदा से सम्बन्धित अधिक जानकारी हेतु श्री प्रवेश गिरी, प्रबन्धक (वि0), दूरभाष नं0 9927030700 पर सम्पर्क कर सकते है। वरिष्ठ प्रबन्धक, उ0प्र0रा0औ0वि0प्रा0, गाजियाबाद

PUBLIC NOTICE

WHEREAS, MVN Infrastructure Projects LLP is in the process of undertaking development of a Mix Land Use Colony (30% Residential and 70% Commercial Under TOD Policy dated 09.02.2016) in Sector-37-D, Gurugram Manesar Urban Complex, Gurugram, Haryana over an area measuring 6.775 acres in the revenue estate of Village-Harsaru in accordance with the provision of License No. 59 of 2024 dated 07.06.2024, granted by Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh.
AND WHEREAS, several individuals have made bookings/entered into purchase agreement for allotment of Commercial Shop & Offices/Residential Apartment/Property in the said Mix Land Use Colony (hereinafter referred as allottees)
AND WHEREAS, in the building plans earlier approved for the said Mix Land Use Colony. It is now proposed to be revised.
AND WHEREAS, the office of Director, Town & Country Planning, Haryana, Chandigarh has required seeking of objections/suggestions against the revision of building plan as a pre-condition for allowing such revision in the Building Plan.
Accordingly, vide this Public Notice, objections are hereby invited from any of the allottees in the said colony on the proposed revision of the Building Plan of the said colony. A copy of the earlier approved building plan (Phase-I) vide Memo No. ZP-1994/JD(RA)/2023/30759 Dated 01/10/2024 & the building plan (Phase-II & III) now proposed to be revised vide Memo No. ZP-1994-Vol.II/JD(RA)/2025/21957 Dated 12/06/2025 is available for perusal on Our website (www.mvn.in). The said building plan can also be perused at the site office of Sector-37-D, Dwarka Expressway, Gurugram as well as in the office of Senior Town Planner (P), HSVP Complex, Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana.
Any allottee having any objection in on revised Building Plan, may file his objection in the office of Senior Town Planner (P), HSVP Complex, Sector-14, Gurugram, Haryana and in the office of the undersigned within thirty (30) days of publication of this notice, failing which it shall be assumed that there are no objections to the proposed revision in the building plan.
Sanjeev Sharma, Director
For MVN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS LLP
UF-14, Upper Ground, Commercial Complex, MVN Athens, Sector-5, Damdama Dhaula Road, Sohna-122103, Gurugram
Phone no. 9821396549, Website: www.mvn.in
Place: Gurugram
Date : 13.06.2025

SBI STATE BANK OF INDIA
Home Loan Centre, A-1/24, JANAKPURI, NEW DELHI-110058. E-MAIL: racpc.janakpuri@sbi.co.in
PUBLIC NOTICE

This is notified for the information that the lost of a crucial document - **(1)** GPA dated 02.03.2000 in favour of **Sh. Rajinder Kumar S/o Sh. Sant Lal** registered as Document No.13170 in Book No.IV, Vol. No.6895 dated 02.03.2000 in the office of Sub-Registrar-II, New Delhi. **(2)** GPA dated 03.05.2000 in favour of **Sh. R. S. Nair S/o Sh. K. G. Kurup & Smt. Radhika W/o Sh. R.S. Nair** registered as Document No.16687 in Book No.IV, Vol. No.7728 dated 03.05.2001 in the Office of Sub-Registrar-II, New Delhi. **(3)** Conveyance Deed Dated 09.06.2006, executed by the President of India through DDA in respect of DDA Jants Flat No.JG-III/150C, Second Floor, Vikas Puri, New Delhi in favour of **Sh. R.S. Nair S/o Sh. K. G. Kurup & Smt. Radhika W/o Sh. R. S. Nair** registered as Document No.13127 in Book No.I, Vol. No.2087 dated 09.06.2006 in the office of Sub-Registrar-VII, New Delhi. **(4)** Agreement to sell and Purchase dated 04.02.2016 in favour of **Sh. Gireesh Appukuttan S/o Sh. P. K. Appukuttan & Smt. RejeniGowrikutty W/o Sh. Gireesh Appukuttan** in respect of DDA Janta Flat No.JG-III/150C, Second Floor, Vikas Puri, New Delhi. **(5)** Sale Deed dated 07.03.2016 in favour of **Sh. Gireesh Appukuttan S/o Sh. P.K. Appukuttan & Smt. Rejeni Gowrikutty W/o Sh. Gireesh Appukuttan** in respect of DDA Janta Flat No.JG-III/150C, Second Floor, Vikas Puri, New Delhi registered as Document No.3537 in Book No.I, Vol. No.1198 dated 07.03.2016 in the office of Sub-Registrar SR IIB Janakpuri, New Delhi. Unfortunately, above said property document has been misplaced from bank custody.
It is therefore informed to public at large that who so ever find the same should contact the undersigned within seven days from publication of this notice. After expiry of seven days requisite steps will be taken by the Bank for reconstruction of above said documents.
Date: 12.06.2025
Sd/- (Branch Head), State Bank of India, Home Loan Centre, A-1/24, Janakpuri, New Delhi

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Ruby W/o Shri Suresh Chand R/o House No. 33/141, Trilok Puri Delhi-110091 Have Changed My Name Ruby To Priya For All Future Purposes.
PD(2229)A

I, Vikas Kumar Gupta S/o Vinod Kumar Gupta R/o H.No. 176, vill Govindpuri P.O Machhra Meerut UP, pin 250106 have changed my name from Vikas Kumar S/o Vinod Kumar to Vikas Kumar Gupta S/o Vinod Kumar Gupta for all future purposes.
PD(2230)C

I, Rajender Singh, Father of JC-472537H Sub Nernder Singh Chauhan R/o- Vill- Vijay Laxmi Vihar Colony, PO- Gola Ka Mandir, Teh- Morar, Gwalior, M.P.- 474005, have changed my name from Rajender Singh to Rajendra Singh, vide affidavit dated 12/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(2231)C

I, Geeta, Mother of JC-472537H Sub Nernder Singh Chauhan R/o- Vill- Vijay Laxmi Vihar Colony, PO- Gola Ka Mandir, Teh- Morar, Gwalior, M.P.- 474005, have changed my name from Geeta to Geeta Devi, vide affidavit dated 12/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(2232)C

I, Ram Rati, Mother of JC-473570M Nb/Sub Naresh Kumar R/o- VPO- Siwara, Teh- Bawani Khera, Dist.- Bhiwani, Haryana- 127032 have changed my name from Ram Rati to Ramrati Devi, vide affidavit dated 12/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(2233)C

I, Kumari Priyanka Rao W/o- No.16012223M Hav Praveen Rao R/o- Vill- Parsauni Makundha, PO- Parsauni Khurd, Dist- Kushinagar, U.P.- 274402, have changed my name from Kumari Priyanka Rao to Priyanka Rao, vide affidavit dated 12/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(2234)C

I, hitherto known as Latika Chakraborty D/o- Murli Manohar R/o WZ – 21, Pankha Road, Vashishth Park, Nangal Raya, Delhi- 110046, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Latika for all purposes.
PD(2235)C

I, Vijayalaksmi Palani Samy, spouse of JC-701303N Sub Maj Palani Samy J, Unit- Army Hospital R&R Delhi Cantt-110010, have changed my name from Vijayalaksmi Palani Samy to Vijayalakshmi P, vide affidavit dated 12/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(2236)C

I, Doli Devi, legally wedded spouse of No. JC-706036F Rank- Sub Name- Bhupendra Singh Unit- Army Hospital R & R, Delhi Cantt- 110010, That I have changed my name from Doli Devi to Doli vide affidavit dated 12/06/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.
PD(2237)C

APPENDIX IV-A
[UNDER RULE 8(6)OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES, 2002]
2nd E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTY

2nd E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Property under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ('the said Act') read with provision to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 ('the said Rules').
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Co- Borrower (s) that below described immovable property mortgaged/charged in favor of Akasa Finance Limited (Formerly Known as Pooja Finelease Ltd) [Secured Creditor], the possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of the Secured Creditor Akasa Finance Limited (Formerly Known as Pooja Finelease Ltd), will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever is there Basis" on the date and time specified herein below, for the recovery of the amount due to the Secured Creditor from the Borrower(s) and the Co- Borrower (s). The Reserve Price and the earnest money deposit of the immovable property ("Mortgaged Property") is mentioned herein below.

Name of Borrower/ Co-Borrower (s) / security provider/s	Description of Property	Date of Possession	Date of Demand Notice	Last Date for submission of BID/ EMD	Date & Time of E-Auction	Reserve Price (Rs)	Earnest Money Deposit (10%) (Rs.)	Amount Due as on 18.10. 2023
Shri Rajnish KarkiS/o Shri J.S. Karki (Borrower). Smt. Manisha Rajnish Karki W/o Shri Rajnish Karki (Co-Borrower)	Entire Ground Floor erected on L-1 /13, Hauz Khas Enclave, New Delhi-110016 admeasuring 625 sq. yards, by virtue of Registered Sale Deed having registration No. 3735 in book No. 1, Volume No. 9164	12.03. 2025	18.10. 2023	01.07. 2025	02.07. 2025 from 11 am onward till 4 pm	Rs. 9,50,00, 000 /- (Rupees Nine Crore Fifty Lakh Only)	Rs. 95,00, 000 /- (Rupees Ninety five Lakh Only)	Rs. 7,07,45,808/- (Rupees Seven Crore Seven Lakhs Forty Five Thousand Eight Hundred And Eight Only) as on 12.03.2025 Rs.7,60,63 ,276/- (Seven Crore sixty lakh sixty three thousand two hundred seventy six Only)

Terms and Conditions: -
- The Auction sale will be " Online E-Auction/ Bidding through Banks approved service provider M/s E-Procurement Technologies Ltd - Auction Tiger Mumbai Contact Persons Mr. Ramprasad (M)+91-09265562821/09265562818/09374519754/+91-6352490773(e-mail) /ramprasad@auctiontiger.net, Phone: 079-61200559, website: https://sarfaesi. auctiontiger.net
- Bidders are advised to go through the Bid Forms, Tender Document, detailed terms and conditions of auction sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the E-Auction sale proceedings.
- Bids shall be submitted through online procedure only in the prescribed formats with relevant details.

Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) shall be 10% of the Reserve Price Fixed and shall be deposited through RTGS/NEFT/FUND TRANSFER to credit of following account before submitting the bids online: -

Details	
Name of Bank & Branch	ICICI BANK LTD, MOTI NAGAR, DELHI
Name of Beneficiary	AKASA FINANCE LIMITED
Account No	036405003562
IFSC Code	ICIC0002356

- The bid price to be submitted shall be above the Reserve Price and the bidders shall improve their further offer in multiple of Rs.5,00,000/- (Rupees Five Lakh Only). The property will not be sold below the reserve price set by the Authorized Officer. The bid quoted below the reserve price shall be rejected and the EMD deposited shall be forfeited.
- The successful bidder shall have to pay 25 % of the purchase amount (including Earnest Money deposit of 10% paid as above) on the day of declaration of successful bidder or not later than next working day thereof, as the case may be. The Balance 75% of the purchase price shall have to be paid on or before the 15th day of confirmation of the sale by Secured Creditor or such extended period as may be agreed upon in writing between the purchaser and Secured Creditor, in any case not exceeding three months.
- The EMD of the unsuccessful bidder will be returned on the closure of the E-auction proceedings within 15 working days from the date of auction.
- The sale is subject to confirmation by Secured Creditor. If the Borrower/Guarantor pays the amount due to the Secured Creditor in full before date of execution sale deed, no sale will be concluded.
- Since the prospective tenderers are advised to do their own due diligence in this regard. The Authorized Officer shall not be held responsible for any charge, lien, encumbrance, property tax or any other dues to the Government or anybody in respect to the aforesaid mortgaged property.
- Inspection of the aforesaid mortgaged property can be done on 25 Jun 2025 from 11:00 am to 4:00 pm by the interested parties/ tenderer after seeking prior appointment with Authorized Officer. The Authorized Officer has the right to reject any tender/ tenders (for either of the property) without assigning any reasons thereof.
- There are certain minimum society dues are pending.
- On compliance of terms of sale, Authorized Officer shall issue 'Certificate of Sale' in favor of the successful purchaser. All expenses relating to stamp duty, registration charges, conveyance, VAT/GST etc. to be borne by the purchaser. The successful purchaser shall comply with the relevant provisions of Income Tax Act,1961 pertaining to tax deduction at source with regard to purchase of said immovable property.
- The sale is subject to the conditions prescribed in the said Act and the said Rules and the conditions mentioned above.
- For further details contact the Authorized officer on +91-97171-71117
- For detailed terms and conditions please refer to the Tender Document which may be provided from the authorized officer by email. (The contents whereof shall be treated as part of this notice).

The borrower/guarantor/mortgagor are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above along with up-to-date interest and ancillary expenses before the date of e-Auction failing which the said property will be auctioned/sold and the balance dues, if any, will be recovered with interest and cost.
Date:11.06.2025 For Akasa Finance Limited
Place: Delhi Authorised Officer

The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

India slips to 131st in Global Gender Gap Index

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
New Delhi

India has ranked 131 out of 148 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025, slipping two places from its position last year. With a parity score of just 64.1 per cent, India is among the lowest-ranked countries in South Asia, according to the report released on Thursday.

India ranked 129 last year out of 146 countries.

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

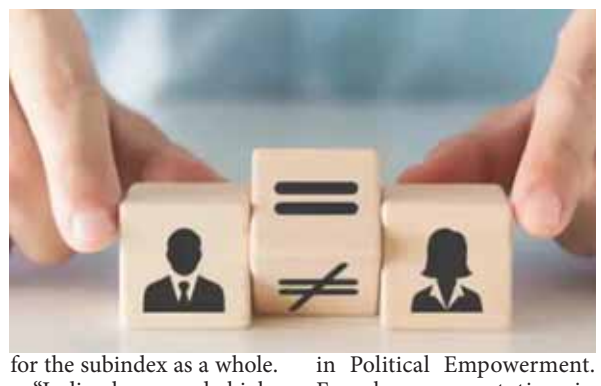
The Global Gender Gap Index measures gender parity across four key dimensions: Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.

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

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

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

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



for the subindex as a whole.

"India also records higher parity in health and survival, driven by improved scores in sex ratio at birth and in healthy life expectancy," it said. However, similar to other countries, parity in healthy life expectancy is obtained despite an overall reduction in the life expectancy of men and women, the report said.

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

Similarly, the share of women in ministerial roles falls from 6.5 per cent to 5.6 per cent, moving the indicator score (5.9 per cent) further away this year from its highest level (30 per cent in 2019), it said.

With notable gains in political empowerment and economic participation, Bangladesh emerged as the best performer in South Asia, jumping 75 ranks to rank 24 globally. Nepal ranked 125, Sri Lanka 130, Bhutan 119, Maldives 138 and Pakistan ranked at the bottom among all countries at 148. "In 2025, Southern Asia ranks 7th, with a gender parity score of 64.6 per cent. Of the seven economies that make up the regional block, only Bangladesh (24th, 77.5 per cent) places in the top 50," the report said.

In Economic Participation and Opportunity, the region scores 40.6 per cent. Over time, Southern Asia has increased its parity score for economic representation for senior workers (+9.1 percentage points) and for professional and technical workers (+17.2 percentage points).

However, the parity score in estimated earned income has dropped by -7.8 percentage points. In Educational Attainment, Southern Asia ranks sixth at 95.4 per cent. Economies show high levels of variance in literacy parity: in Nepal and Pakistan, the literacy parity score is below 75 per cent, while full parity is observed in the Maldives.

The Health and Survival score of Southern Asia is 95.5 per cent. Over time, sparse advances in healthy life expectancy (+0.9 percentage points) are countered by parity losses in the sex ratio at birth (-1 percentage point).

In Political Empowerment, Southern Asia places fourth with a score of 26.8 per cent. In 2006, the region had the highest baseline (2006) score of all regions, at 21.9 per cent. Since then, it has advanced political parity by 4.9 percentage points — and has been since outstripped by other regions.

World shares mixed as markets shrug at latest China-US trade deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Tokyo

World shares were trading mixed early Thursday after Wall Street's rally stalled, as investors appeared not to react much to the results of the latest round of China-US trade talks. Germany's DAX lost 0.7 per cent to 23,787.77 and the CAC 40 in Paris slipped 0.4 per cent to 7,744.41.

Britain's FTSE 100 was nearly unchanged at 8,863.07.

The futures for the S&P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average were down 0.3 per cent.

In Asian trading, Japan's Nikkei 225 lost 0.5 per cent to 38,216.06. Hong Kong's Hang Seng sank 0.5 per cent to 24,234.80, while the Shanghai Composite index edged 0.1 per cent lower to 3,404.66.

In South Korea, the Kospi gained 0.9 per cent to 2,933.44, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 edged 0.1 per cent higher to 8,604.50. Taiwan's Taiex lost 0.8 per cent.

On Wednesday, the S&P 500 fell 0.3 per cent to 6,022.24 for its first loss in four days. The Dow Jones Industrial Average was virtually unchanged at 42,865.77 after edging down by 1 point. The Nasdaq composite slipped 0.5 per cent to 3,400.30.

Several Big Tech stocks led the way lower, and a 1.9 per cent drop for Apple was the heaviest weight on the market. It's been listless this week after unveiling several modest upcoming changes to the software that runs its devices.

The action was stronger in the bond market, where Treasury yields eased after a report suggested President Donald Trump's tariffs are not pushing inflation much higher, at least not yet. US consumers had to pay prices for food, gasoline and other costs of living that were 2.4 per cent higher overall in May than a year earlier. That was up from April's 2.3 per cent inflation rate, but it wasn't as bad as the 2.5 per cent that Wall Street was expecting.

A fear has been that Trump's wide-ranging tariffs could ignite an acceleration in inflation, just when it had seemed to get nearly all the way back to the Federal Reserve's two per cent target from more than 9 per cent three summers ago. It hasn't happened, though economists warn it may take months more to feel the full effect of Trump's tariffs.

Trump said Wednesday that China will supply rare-earth minerals and magnets to the United States, while his government will allow Chinese students into US universities in a deal that still needs an agreement by him and by China's leader.

Trump also said that "President XI and I are going to work closely together to open up China to American Trade. This would be a great WIN for both countries!!!"

Investors are still hoping for a more sweeping trade deal that would ease tensions between the world's two largest economies.

Hopes for such deals between the United States and countries around the world have been one of the main reasons the S&P 500 has charged nearly all the way back to its all-time high after dropping roughly 20 per cent below a couple months ago. Without them, the fear is that Trump's high tariffs could drive the economy into a recession while pushing inflation higher. The S&P 500 is now sitting 2 per cent below its record.

Tesla swung between gains and losses before finishing with a rise of 0.1 per cent to continue its shaky run. It's been recovering much of its big losses taken last week after Elon Musk's relationship with Trump imploded, which in turn raised fears about a loss of business for the electric-vehicle company. Musk on Wednesday backed away from some of his earlier comments and said they went "too far."

Addressing non-tariff barriers key for India, EU trade pact: Goyal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Stockholm

Finding solutions to address non-tariff barriers would be important for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) and both sides are actively working on resolving these issues, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Thursday. He said the two sides are "pretty" close to finalising the talks for the proposed free trade pact.

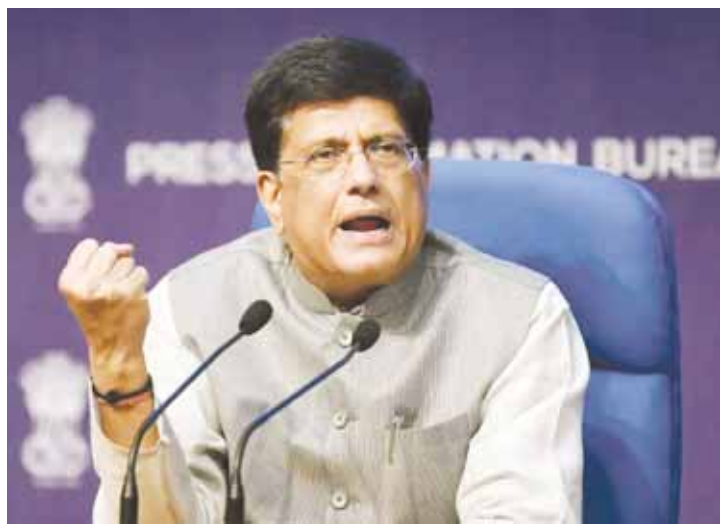
"Significant progress has been made. More than half the chapters are ready. In terms of content, I would say we are almost 90 per cent ready for market access. The important issues to be addressed are non-tariff barriers and how we will make it smoother, easier, and better to do business between the EU and India," Goyal told reporters here.

He added that both India and the EU are in active discussions to find solutions to make business smooth for companies of both sides.

"Unless countries recognise that over regulation and barriers to trade will be met with reciprocal action, everybody suffers. We are committed to deregulation, to finding solutions to the high cost of regulation, the non-tariff barriers that these regulations cause and the impediments to free trade. I am quite hopeful that we will find very robust solutions to this problem," the minister said.

He is here on an official visit to meet his Swedish counterpart and companies for promoting trade and investments between the two countries. Sweden is a member of the 27-nation EU bloc.

Key Indian exports that routinely face high barriers in the EU include — chillies, tea, Basmati rice, milk,



poultry, bovine meat, fish, chemicals products. Most non-tariff measures (NTMs) are domestic rules created by countries with an aim to protect human, animal or plant health and environment. NTM may be technical measures such as regulations, standards, testing, certification, preshipment inspection or non-technical measures like quotas, import licensing, subsidies, Government procurement restrictions.

When NTMs become arbitrary, beyond scientific justification, they create hurdles for trade and are called NTBs (non-tariff barriers).

India's exports are far below potential as they face NTBs in regions, including the EU, the US, China, Japan and Korea.

According to think tank GTRI, the EU has set MRL (minimum residual limit) for tricyclazole, a fungicide in rice, to 0.01 mg per kg as against the ten times higher limit earlier.

Similarly, the EU has set MRL for aflatoxins B1 level in chilies and other spices at 5 to 10 ppb (parts per billion). The minister said negotiations on services and rules or origin have started. To give an impetus to the ongoing talks for the FTA, EU Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security Maros Sefcovic is expected to visit New Delhi on June 28-29.

On the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), Goyal said this measure is "not good" as it is also a kind of a non-tariff barrier.

This carbon tax, if imposed, will do injustice to Indian industry, he said, adding that if the EU will take any such step, India will have to respond to that. FTA talks are happening in a good environment and it will not be good to impose carbon tax on Indian goods, he added.

"Our talks are going on the issue to find ways to deal with this," the minister said, adding that some good solutions will come out on this.

On February 28, PM Narendra Modi and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen agreed to seal a much-awaited free trade deal by this year amid rising concerns over US President Donald Trump's policy on tariffs. In June 2022, India and the 27-nation EU bloc resumed the negotiations after a gap of over eight years. It stalled in 2013 due to differences over the level of opening up of the markets.

India's bilateral trade in goods with the EU was $136.4 billion in 2024-25 (exports $75.75 billion, imports $60.65 billion), making it the largest trading partner of India for goods. The EU market accounts for about 17 per cent of India's total exports, while the EU's exports to India make up 9 per cent of its total exports.

'INDIA'S GOODS, SERVICES EXPORTS TO CROSS $900 BILLION IN 2025

Stockholm: India's goods and services exports during 2025-26 are expected to cross $900 billion despite the global economic uncertainties, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

Despite uncertainties due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Israel-Hamas war and the Red Sea crisis, the country's overall exports touched an all-time high of $825 billion in 2024-25 against $778 billion in 2023-24. "We have crossed $825 billion exports last year, we are surely to cross $900 billion this year in all this global turmoil," he has said here while addressing the Indian business delegation last night.

The minister is here on an official visit to meet his Swedish counterpart and companies for promoting trade and investments between the two countries. Apex exporters' body FIEO has projected that the country's overall goods and services exports are expected to grow by over 21 per cent year-on-year to $1 trillion during 2025-26.

India is open to mutually beneficial arrangements on implementing norms related quality standards with its trusted trading partners, Piyush Goyal said.

He said India is implementing QCOs (quality control orders) to promote manufacturing of quality goods in the country. The rules, standards, and process are the same for domestic as well imported goods and India does not discriminate between domestic manufacturers and foreign suppliers, he said, adding that equal treatment is given to companies of all the countries.

"But certainly there could be room to find innovative solutions so that it becomes easier for trusted partners who are producing good quality products to get pathways by which such approvals can become simpler. "We are open to suggestions. We are in dialogue with several nations on a mutual benefit basis and a mutual recognition basis, if other nations are willing to respect the high quality goods that India makes and allow us to do our own certification process. We are happy to allow our trusted partners to do the same," Goyal said.

However, he added that all such relationships will be based on mutual respect for each other's regulations.

The US and the EU, among others, have raised issues pertaining to these QCOs. The EU has sought simpler certification processes under these orders. QCOs are designed to prevent the import of substandard goods and ensure consumer access to high-quality products. The number of products under QCO coverage has witnessed a significant jump from 106 in 2014 to over 732 products by October 2024.

The move aligns with India's broader strategy to enhance domestic manufacturing standards while curbing the influx of low-quality imports.

'No MDR will be charged on UPI transactions'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

The Finance Ministry has said no Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) will be levied on transactions through Unified Payments Interface platforms. "Speculation and claims that the MDR will be charged on UPI transactions are completely false, baseless, and misleading," the ministry said in a post on X on Wednesday.

"Such baseless and sensation-creating speculations cause needless uncertainty, fear and suspicion among our citizens. The Government remains fully committed to promoting digital payments via UPI," it said. MDR is the cost paid by a merchant to a bank for accepting payment from their customers via digital means. The merchant discount rate is expressed in percentage of the transaction amount.

The ministry's clarification came following some reports that the government is planning to impose MDR on large-ticket UPI transactions.

Meanwhile, transactions through UPI touched a record high of ₹25.14 lakh crore in May, recording a growth of 5 per cent over the preceding month, according to data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI). The UPI transactions value was ₹23.94 lakh crore in April. In terms of volume, 1,867.7 crore transactions were done in May against 1,789.3 crore in the previous month.

200 electric car makers to participate in IESW 2025

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
New Delhi

Over 200 domestic passenger car manufacturers and international electric vehicle players are expected to participate in the upcoming India Energy Storage Week (IESW), scheduled for next month. Industry body India Energy Storage Alliance (IESA) is hosting the 11th edition of IESW from July 8 to July 10, at the Yashobhoomi Convention and Expo Centre in New Delhi, a statement said.

IESW 2025 is projected to attract over 200 domestic passenger car manufacturers and international electric vehicle (EV) makers to bolster India's vision of becoming a global manufacturing hub, according to the statement.

India is making significant strides in positioning itself as one of the world's largest electric three-wheelers (e-3W) markets. In a remarkably short period, it has become a major player in the electric two-wheeler (e-2W) market. This achievement has been fuelled by transformative government policies such as the PLI Auto, PLI ACC, FAME, and PM e-Drive, which focus on stimulating both demand and supply and establishing an EV ecosystem in the country, it added.

According to Fortune Business Insights, the Indian electric vehicle market is projected to reach $ 117.78 billion by 2032 at a CAGR of 22.4 per cent. Amid these developments, the Government's EV Manufacturing Guidelines under SPMEPCI are commendable, said IESA. The upcoming IESW 2025 aligns with this ambitious goal.

CIABC urges Maharashtra Government to reconsider steep hike in excise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
Mumbai/New Delhi

Expressing grave concern over steep increase in Excise Duty on Indian Made Foreign Liquor (IMFL) by up to 50 per cent by the Maharashtra Government, the Confederation of Indian Alcoholic Beverage Companies (CIABC) has urged the State Government to rethink and reconsider such a huge hike as it could trigger serious consequences.

The CIABC has urged the State Government to immediately hold deliberations with all stakeholders "to arrive at a balanced, data-driven, and sustainable course of action that protects both revenue interests and the long-term viability of the IMFL sector in Maharashtra".

Stating that the CIABC has already written to the Maharashtra Government urging to start a consultative process with all stakeholders before releasing any final gazette notification, Anant S Iyer, Director General of the apex body of the Indian Alcoholic Beverage Industry, underlined that this steep hike in excise is projected to push Maximum Retail Prices (MRPs) up by as much as 85 per cent, a step that could severely disrupt the market, erode the competitiveness of national brands, and jeopardise the availability of legitimate alcoholic beverages in Maharashtra.

"Such an unprecedented escalation in duties poses a serious deterrence to consumer access of established and reputed brands, compelling a shift toward lower-category products. This poses a serious threat to the stability of the IMFL industry in the State such a move will have a far-reaching adverse impact," Iyer said in a statement.

Pointing out that steep hike in excise duty will lead a steep and abrupt increase in MRPs (maximum retail price), Iyer said it will destabilise consumer accessibility and purchasing power, particularly within the mass-market segment which caters to the common man. This will lead to a significant drop in legal sales volumes, overlooking the interest of industry and its substantial investment in the state. It will also endanger the employment of people engaged in the entire value chain from farm to consumer.

Iyer warned that higher MRPs often create a vacuum filled by illegal operators. Past experiences show that pricing arbitrage fosters regional imbalances, encouraging the spread of illicit and unsafe liquor and counterfeits of popular brands-posing a major public health risk and leading to further revenue leakage.

Noting that this move will also result in increased stock dumping from neighbouring states, the CIABC DG said Maharashtra shares borders with states that are porous. These states have similar brands which have lower MRPs for IMFL. Any additional price escalation will trigger large-scale dumping (exfiltration) from these states, resulting in illicit inflows that damage legitimate trade and erode the State's tax base.

Maharashtra has always ensured minimal impact of such occurrences by ensuring competitive pricing vide neighbouring states till now.

The IMFL industry contributes approximately 60 per cent of the total Excise Revenue of the State. Furthermore, the Excise Duty collected from a single case of IMFL is equivalent to that from four cases of beer, underscoring the critical importance of this category. Duty increase on IMFL, without corresponding changes for a category such as beer will create an uneven playing field and distort category dynamics leading to possible adverse impact on revenue.

CIABC has highlighted to the Maharashtra government that while the intent behind the proposed hike may be to enhance revenue collections by ₹14,000 crore, the actual outcome may be contrary- driven by declining sales, rising illicit trade, and border leakages. The long-term impact could be deeply detrimental, not only for industry and employment, but also for public safety and overall State revenues.

Sensex, Nifty tumble one per cent on weak global trends, geopolitical tensions

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■
Mumbai

Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tanked one per cent on Thursday, in tandem with weak global market trends amid growing tensions in the Middle East.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 823.16 points or 1 per cent to settle at 81,691.98. During the day, it plunged 991.98 points or 1.20 per cent to 81,523.16.

The broader NSE Nifty tumbled 253.20 points or 1.01 per cent to 24,888.20. Fresh foreign fund outflows also dented investors' sentiment, traders said. From the Sensex firms, Tata Motors, Titan, Eternal, Power Grid, Tata Steel, Larsen & Toubro, Mahindra & Mahindra and Hindustan Unilever were among the biggest laggards.

Bajaj Finserv, Asian Paints and Tech Mahindra were the gainers.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi and Shanghai's SSE Composite index settled in the positive territory, while

Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended lower. Equity markets in Europe were trading in the negative territory. US markets ended lower on Wednesday.

"Consolidation in domestic markets is evolving into a broad-based trend, now extending to large-cap stocks. Valuation concerns and rising oil prices — driven by Middle East tensions — are fuelling risk aversion among investors.

"Adding to the uncertainty, the US is considering unilateral tariff hikes on several key trading partners, with a decision expected within the next one to two weeks, ahead of an early July deadline," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said. Meanwhile, a London-bound Air India plane carrying 242 passengers and crew crashed in a residential area minutes after taking off from the Ahmedabad airport on Thursday afternoon. Many people were feared killed.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹446.31 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

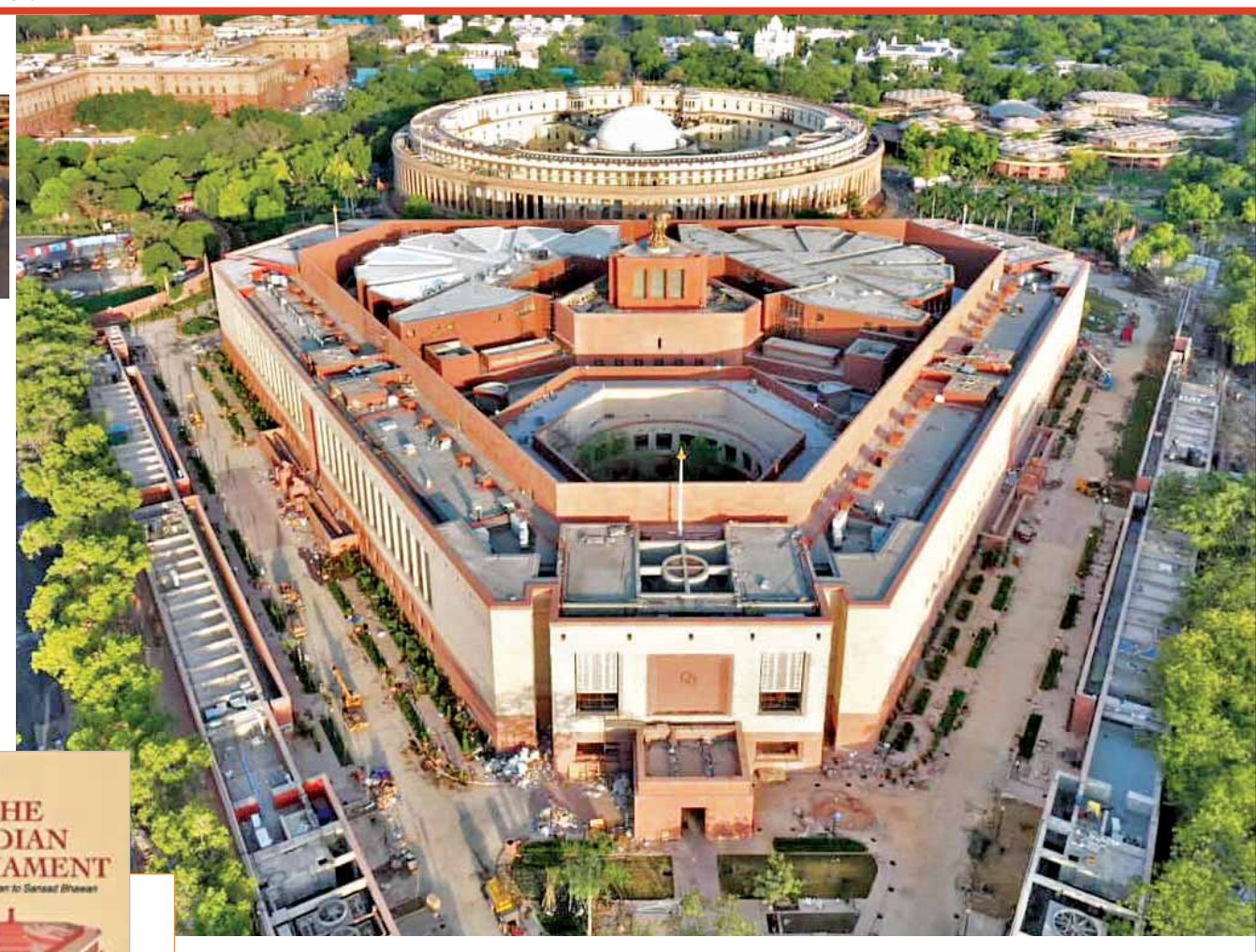
Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said, "A host of factors triggered a massive slump in local benchmarks, as investors exited stocks at will weighed down by weak global sentiment coupled with the possibility of Israel attacking Iran and renewed tariff threat by US President Donald Trump".

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.43 per cent to $68.77 a barrel.

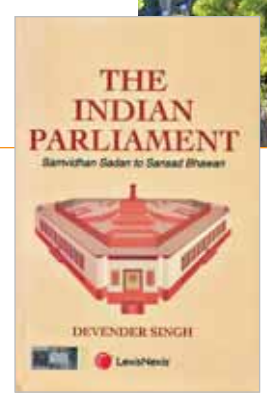
The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

FROM VEDIC TIMES TO MODERN CHALLENGES

This book offers a thorough examination of India's Parliament, exploring its history, functions and the urgent need for reform, says GYANESHWAR DAYAL



SINGH'S USE OF ANECDOTAL NARRATIVES ALONGSIDE LEGAL AND PROCEDURAL REFERENCES MAKES THE TEXT ENGAGING WITHOUT DILUTING ITS ANALYTICAL DEPTH. IT'S A TIMELY AND INDISPENSABLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCOURSE ON PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY IN INDIA AND BEYOND



ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: The Indian Parliament
Author: Devender Singh
Publisher: LexisNexis
Price: ₹956/-

The Indian Parliament — Samvidhan Sadan to Sansad Bhawan — is the first and much-awaited book after the construction of the new Parliament building. Published by LexisNexis, the book sets out the great many procedural and policy changes in the Indian parliamentary landscape, apart from showcasing the hoary republican heritage of India and the powers, functions, and procedures of the Indian Parliament. A compendium of intimately connected and allied scholarly essays, it sets out the historical background of the introduction of a separate Rail Budget in 1925 and its eventual merger with the Annual Budget in 2017 and the presentation of a single consolidated Budget to Parliament in terms of Article 112 of the Constitution.

The book comprises full-fledged chapters on the great republican heritage of India beginning from the Vedic times; the evolution, framing, and the working of the Constitution of India; powers and functions of Parliament; legislative and budgetary processes; devices of accountability including Questions; Committee system and how it works; legislature-judiciary interface; role of political parties and opposition in a democracy; elections and electoral systems obtaining in the world and their relative merits and demerits; role of C&AG as supreme audit institution of the country; democratic disquiet and the future of democracy and allied aspects of parliamentary democracy not to be found in a single book elsewhere. The chief merit of the book is that it's not only a fine blend of constitutional precepts, parliamentary practices as obtaining but it also documents the systemic flaws and failings and throws open questions for wider and deeper reflections on how to safeguard and strengthen our democracy.

The chapter on the Making of the Constitution is so refreshing as it quotes the founding fathers from the Constituent Assembly, bringing out tellingly the views and voices of the founding fathers as though one is seated in the gallery of the Constituent Assembly. The chapters on the budgetary process, on parliamentary questions, and on various devices that allow members to raise issues are particularly noteworthy.

Mr Singh brings out the finer nuances of the working of Indian Parliament, the duties of its functionaries, its interface with other constitutional bodies and the Fourth Estate, and the role they can play in strengthening our democratic edifice. The author describes the intricacies of democratic institutions, the dynamics of parliamentary Government, the public perception of Parliament, the intermittent democratic disquiet, and the future of democracy itself.

The book contains far-reaching suggestive measures and underscores the dire need for Parliament to innovate and change drastically the format of debate from the repetitive rambling speeches to better articulate the aspirations of the people and to redress their problems.

The author makes a well-considered suggestion for the introduction of PM's Question Hour (PMQ) once a week, which will "act as a safety valve, allow members to raise issues of urgent public concern and allow the Prime Minister to explain Government policies and counter criticism". Besides, the introduction of PMQ will soothe the ruffled feathers and pacify the irate tempers and preempt the tendency to frequently disturb or rock proceedings. The author makes out a case for drastic procedural innovations so that Parliament has a more contemporary look and emerges as an effective forum of debate and accountability. The case for Parliamentary reforms is "exceptional so as to guard against putrefaction and decay".

Another remarkable aspect of the book is that the author captures in his lucid, highly readable text, traversing history, procedure, precedents, methods, and even anecdotal accounts, giving the reader an excellent up-to-date reference manual on what Parliament stands for, and how it functions. One who has had a ring-side view of the working of Parliament for almost four decades, the author expresses deep worry over the general fall and decline in parliamentary ethos and suggests radical innovative measures to make Parliament the supreme institution of accountability.

One could not agree more that "Parliament is not a mere structure of bricks and mortar, but the supreme representative, deliberative and legislative institution of the nation." Parliament can perform its multifarious functions if Parliament meets regularly and holds informed and well-structured discussions with a view to securing accountability of the executive. The founding fathers of our republic preferred accountability of the executive to the legislature over stability of the executive. Government may fall or perish but as long as it holds the reins of power, Government must remain accountable. Accountability is about instilling or reinforcing an ethos of legal compliance and efficient practices tempered by the consideration of fostering a sense of responsibility, transparency, and good governance, which is at the heart of Parliamentary oversight and scrutiny. The author fondly hopes that the new Sansad Bhavan would become the sanctum sanctorum of our democracy if there are well-structured discussions, regular periodic meetings at least for a hundred days in a year, and if new innovative procedural measures like the introduction of PM's Question Time and other radical measures are introduced.

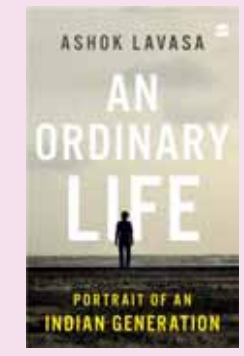
A functionally robust Parliament can secure accountability and good governance. This thematic range of the book is expansive yet coherent. The book maintains structural symmetry and analytical continuity throughout, making it a powerful reference manual as well as a critical scholarly text. The deep concern over declining parliamentary ethos is sharply insightful.

The concern is not merely nostalgic but a call for redemptive action. The deteriorating quality of debate, disruptions of Question Hour, and the growing friction between Members and Presiding Officers are all symptoms of a deeper malaise, which must be arrested erelong. The critique is balanced by optimism — a belief that procedural reforms, technological integration, and a reinvigorated political culture can, and must, reclaim the exalted image of Parliament as the axis of our parliamentary democratic system.

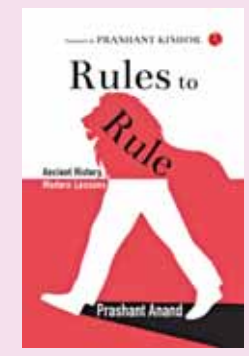
COMPREHENSIVE INSIGHT

Written in a perspicuous yet elevated academic style, the book is both informative and pedagogically sound. The author's meticulous understanding of this complex institution with a succinct and exact writing style, "leaves very little unsaid without succumbing to verbosity or a daunting excess of pages." The book will serve as a ready textbook not only to students, academia, journalists and legislators but also to the passionate champions of Parliamentary democracy who wish to sharpen their own argument skills and enhance their knowledge of democratic governance.

JUNE READS



Book: An Ordinary Life
Author: Ashok Lavasa
Publisher: HarperCollins
Price: ₹499

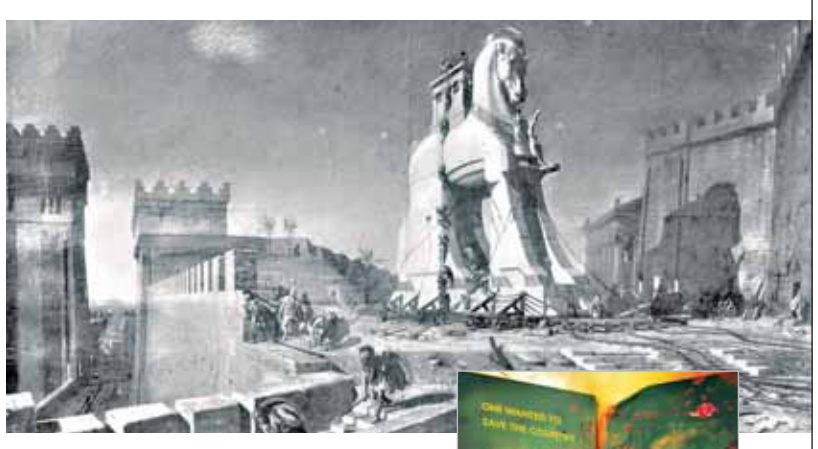


Book: Rules to Rules
Author: Prashant Anand
Publisher: Rupa
Price: ₹295

Book: The Lost Soul of the Joukhoorei
Author: Rashmi Narzary
Publisher: Om
Price: ₹250

Book: Mrs Happily Single
Author: Shubha Sarma
Publisher: Niyogi Books
Price: ₹595

Inside the Lion's Den



BY SAKSHI PRIYA

A syringe, a jungle floor and an enemy unmasked, **The Trojan Horse** opens with a jolt and never lets up. Sanjukta Nandy and Rupali Sebastian pull readers straight into a dangerous, emotional, and high-stakes mission where nothing is predictable and trust is earned in blood.

At the centre is Special Agent Isha Srivastava, part of STF19. Her assignment is clear, bring down LalTara, a powerful criminal network dealing in arms and narcotics, headed by the terrifying Bishen Rao. This mission carries the weight of a personal history. Years ago, her father, also an agent, crossed Rao and paid with his life. Isha's journey is driven by loss, anger, and a fierce need to finish what he started.

And then comes Sangha, Rao's most trusted aide. Cold, calculating and battle-hardened, she appears as the enemy. But when the two women cross paths, a long-buried truth is revealed. They are bound by blood, victims of a past neither of them chose. Sangha's decision to defect and assist Isha brings vulnerability, mistrust and unexpected humanity to their unlikely partnership.

Isha's plan, known as the Trojan Horse, is an undercover operation designed to bring down the empire from within. Every step they take into Rao's jungle stronghold brings fresh danger and deeper truths. The looming threat of RED, a secret weapon capable of global catastrophe, raises the stakes far beyond personal vendettas.

ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: The Trojan Horse
Author: Sanjukta Nandy
Publisher: Rupa
Price: ₹395/-

What makes this story stand out is how real the characters feel. Isha is not a flawless hero; she is brave, broken, calculating and hopeful, all at once. Sangha, too, is a product of her choices and scars. Together, they are constantly navigating trust, doubt, and their own sense of justice. The forest breathes with danger, secrecy and silence. The writing is fast, crisp and visually vivid. Surveillance tech, jungle warfare, encrypted chatter, everything feels real, lived in and urgent.

The Trojan Horse is a story of two women walking the knife's edge between survival and sacrifice. It delivers adrenaline without losing emotional weight. Gritty, emotional and gripping, this one stays with you long after the final page.

The Revelatory Power of Translated Short Stories

Dive into the captivating world of classic Indian short fiction, spanning epics to modern tales, KUMAR CHELLEAPPAN

MOVIES LIKE AN INCIDENT AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE, A FRENCH MOVIE OF 28 MINUTES DURATION RELEASED IN 1961 AND BIG CITY BLUES. BOTH THE MOVIES WERE MADE SANS ANY OPULENT SCENES AND SEQUENCES; THEY LEAVE A PANG ON THE HEART OF THE VIEWER

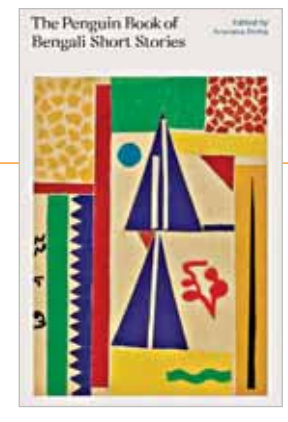
It goes without saying that the short story is the most popular literary form in the world. Though there are no mandatory laws regarding the length and size of a short story, the general impression is that it should be small and feature an individual, incident, or a place about which a story is carved out by the author. Many a time I have felt that short stories and short films have a lot in common. Those who doubt this contention may kindly watch movies like *An Incident at Owl Creek Bridge*, a French movie of 28 minutes duration released in 1961, and Big City Blues (1932). Both the movies were made sans any opulent scenes and sequences; they leave a pang on the heart of the viewer.

Sprightly taken shots speak to the viewer as the backdrops leave eternal pain that keeps on haunting after years of watching the film. These are just two instances of the power of short films which at times are more powerful than that of movies made by the great showmen of our times. Indian epics like the Mahabharata, Ramayana and Kathasaritsagara figure in the chronicle of the evolution of the short story. Modern short stories made an appearance during the fag-end of the 19th century and since then there was no looking back for this genre of art form. Malayalam short stories date back to the last decades of the 19th century thanks to many literary magazines which sprouted in the language as part of the renaissance movement. Two volumes on short stories of days of yore are the ones that caught the attention of the eye. "The Second Marriage of Kunju Namboodiri & Other Classic Malayalam Stories" edited by Mini Krishnan and "The Penguin Book of Bengali Short Stories" (edited by Arunava Sinha) could be described as a feast of short stories.

It is said that short stories take the readers to the hitherto unheard world of the country/state from where the authors hail. In 1000 to 5000 words, the storyteller conveys a panoramic view of the world known to him. Of course, there may be exaggeration and fiction but the true storyteller peppers it with certain ground realities. There are 19 short stories in the first volume which were written between 1891 and 1930. The story Instinctive Mischief, authored by "Anonymous" (1891) — though many literary critics are of the view that it was Vengayil Kunhiraman Nayanar who wrote this story. The volume has a story Dwaraka which was penned by Nayanar himself. The style and pattern of storytelling has the unique Nayanar touch as I have read some of the stories he had authored.

There was a humorous story by Nayanar about killing a man-eater which was prescribed as a lesson in our tenth standard textbook. Out of the 19 stories that figure in the collection, eight were authored by women writers. All these stories stand out for their readability and flow of language. Remember, these stories were written and published during the era when terms like feminism and Women's Lib were unheard of. Having gone through the stories, one can conclude that old-world love, romance, and human relations had that natural beauty associated with them. Despite the absence of mobile phones, satellite television, and other modern gadgets, life in those days was placid, serene, and honest. All the stories revolve around the life of middle-class people. There are stories in which lawyers play prominent roles. The southernmost state of the country, which was divided into three and united by the Malayalam language, believed in oneness and that is evident in all stories.

A word about translation. The stories become interesting and readable only when the translators assimilate the spirit and feeling of the original authors. The Bengali short stories collection has an array of authors, some of them figuring in the who's who of world literature. Rabindranath Tagore, Bibhuti Bhushan Bandyopadhyay, Banaphool, Ashapurna Devi, Satyajit Ray, Mahashweta Devi, and Manoranjan Byapari do not require any introduction to even ordinary folk. For those who are interested in the seriousness of literature, these two volumes are essential books and offer us a panoramic view of Bengal which has myriad colours and landscapes. The general feeling is that Malayalam short stories in the post-1990s have failed to inspire the mind comes true after reading "The Second Marriage of Kunju Namboodiri & Other Classic Stories" and "Book of Bengali short stories". Both are Books of Revelation, which tell the readers that stories could be written like this too. These stories are a mini-university, an institution that teaches how to write stories and also a trip down memory lane through the culture, tradition, and civilisation of Kerala and Bengal. Hope more and more short stories from other States too would be translated soon and these will help the readers in the discovery of real India.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Book: The Penguin Book of Bengali Short Stories
Author: Arunava Sinha
Price: ₹999/-

The Pioneer
RANCHI | FRIDAY | JUNE 13, 2025

Make England tour memorable: Gambhir

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Beckenham (England)

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

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

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

India head coach Gautam Gambhir PTI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Put ourselves under pressure at nets: Gill

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

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

India will be well prepared as Test team: McCullum

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ London

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

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

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

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

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

Azteca Stadium to feature hybrid field for 2026 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mexico City

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Munich

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Oakmont (US)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

US Open prize money

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

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

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

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

Poland coach resigns after dispute with Lewandowski

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Warsaw (Poland),

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Radha Yadav replaces Shuchi in India squad for England tour

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

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

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

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

AFFIDAVIT

I, Anita Rani, W/o Ashok Kumar Yadav, R/o Chhattar Bagicha, P.O. - Lohardaga, Dist -Lohardaga Jharkhand do hereby declare on affidavit number - 436 dated 10/06/2025 that my name is Anita Rani in Aadhar card, PAN card & Passport. My name in my husband's Air force service records is incorrectly mentioned as Anita Yadav. Anita Rani & Anita Yadav is one person. My real and correct name is Anita Rani.

AFFIDAVIT

I, Nivedita Oraon, Spouse-Rajmohan Bhagat, Village-Nigni PO Nigni Police Station- Lohardaga District-Lohardaga, Jharkhand. That my name NIVEDITA ORAON is recorded in my Aadhar Card No.- 9959 7189 9685. That my husband is working in the Army and my name is recorded as NIVEDITA KUMARI in his service book. That I am editing this affidavit to get my name NIVEDITA ORAON recorded in my husband's service book while making corrections. Vide Affidavit no. 17733, dated – 09.06.2025.

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