

GROWING INDIA

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Exclusion Of Pahalgam Terror Attack

Rajnath refuses to sign SCO communique

Qingdao/New Delhi: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday refused to sign a joint communique of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) following the omission of the Pahalgam terror attack and not explicitly addressing India's concerns over Pakistan-backed cross-border terrorism.

At a conference of SCO defence ministers' conclave, Singh demanded inclusion of the dastardly terror attack in the communique while the Pakistani side pressed for having a paragraph on militant activities in Balochistan in an apparent attempt to blame New Delhi, top sources said.

The SCO operates under the framework of consensus and Pakistan's approach resulted in the conclave ending without the joint communique, they said.

The draft communique neither figured the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack nor reflected India's position on cross-border terrorism, and it would have diluted New Delhi's position on a critical issue, they said.

In his address at the con-



Rajnath Singh during the SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting in Qingdao, China.

clave, Singh took a swipe at Pakistan for backing terrorist groups, as he called for holding accountable the "perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors" of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism.

Highlighting India's Operation Sindoor in response to the Pahalgam strike, the defence minister, who arrived here on Wednesday, said "epicentres of terrorism are no longer safe and we will not hesitate to target them."

"Some countries use cross-border terrorism as an instrument of policy and provide shelter to terrorists. There should be no place for such double standards. The SCO should

not hesitate to criticise such nations," he said.

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Asif and Chinese Defence Minister Dong Jun were among those who attended the conclave.

No consensus

In New Delhi, External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the SCO member nations could not reach a consensus on certain issues and hence the document could not be finalised.

"India wanted concerns on terrorism reflected in the document which was not acceptable to one particular country. As such the joint statement was not adopted," he said at his

weekly media briefing.

In his remarks at the conclave in the Chinese port city of Qingdao, the defence minister laid down the broad contours of India's "transitional shift" in its policy against terrorism and urged the SCO member nations to unite in combating and shun "double standards".

"Peace and prosperity cannot co-exist with terrorism and proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction in the hands of non-state actors and terror groups," Singh said.

"Dealing with these challenges requires decisive action. It is imperative that those who sponsor, nurture and utilise terrorism for their narrow and

selfish ends must bear the consequences," he said.

Singh also said that the pattern of the Pahalgam terror attack matched with Lashkar-e-Taiba's previous terror attacks in India.

The defence minister said India launched Operation Sindoor in response to the heinous terror attack in Pahalgam, and exercised its right to defend against terrorism and pre-empt as well as deter further cross-border attacks.

"During the Pahalgam terror attack, victims were shot after they were profiled on religious identity. The Resistance Front, a proxy of UN-designated terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) claimed responsibility for the attack," he said.

"The pattern of Pahalgam attack matches with LeT's previous terror attacks in India. India's zero tolerance for terrorism was demonstrated through its actions," he said.

"It includes our right to defend ourselves against terrorism. We have shown that epicentres of terrorism are no longer safe and we will not hesitate to target them," he said.



The first batch of Indian pilgrims at the Manasarovar Lake on Thursday after a gap on five years.

Khamenei resurfaces to warn US

Dubai: Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Thursday his country had delivered a "slap to America's face" with its strike on a US airbase in Qatar, and warned against any further attacks in his first public comments since a ceasefire was declared with Israel after 12 days of war.

Khamenei spoke in a recorded video broadcast on Iranian state television, his first appearance since June 19. The 86-year-old, a skilled orator known for his forceful addresses to the country's more than 90 million people, appeared and sounded more tired than he had just a week ago, speaking in a hoarse voice and occasionally stumbling over his words.

The speech, which went on for more than 10 min-



utes, was filled with warnings and threats directed toward the United States and Israel, the Islamic Republic's longtime adversaries.

The supreme leader downplayed Sunday's US strikes on three Iranian nuclear sites using bunker-buster bombs and cruise missiles, saying that US President Donald Trump — who said the attack "completely and fully obliterated Iran's nuclear programme — had "exaggerated" its impact.

"They could not achieve anything significant," Khamenei said. Missing from his video message was any mention of Iran's nuclear programme and the status of their facilities and centrifuges following extensive US and Israeli strikes.

His characterisation of Monday's strike on the US airbase in Qatar contrasted with US accounts of it as a limited attack with no casualties.

Khamenei claimed the US had only intervened in the war because "it felt that if it did not intervene, the Zionist regime would be utterly destroyed."

"It entered the war to save them, yet it gained nothing," he said.

"Should any aggression occur, the enemy will definitely pay a heavy price," he said.

Navy staffer held for leaking Classified info

Jaipur: An Indian Navy staffer posted in naval headquarters in Delhi was arrested in Jaipur for allegedly leaking defence-related sensitive information to a Pakistani handler in exchange for money, a police official said Thursday.

Vishal Yadav, an Upper Division Clerk (UDC) in the Directorate of Dockyard at the Navy building, allegedly also shared details on Operation Sindoor — strikes carried out by the Indian Armed Forces in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in response to the Pahalgam terror attack.

Inspector General of Police (CID-Security) Vishnu Kant Gupta said Yadav, originally from Rewari in Haryana, leaked the classified information to a female Pakistani handler posing as an Indian woman.

He was arrested on Wednesday in Jaipur and will be subjected to a joint probe by multiple agencies.

"Yadav confessed to receiving approximately Rs 2 lakh in total for the information he passed on," Gupta said.

"This included Rs 50,000 for leaking information related to Operation Sindoor," the IGP said, adding some of the payments were also made in cryptocurrency.

Intelligence sources revealed that Yadav was first approached on Facebook. The Pakistani handler sent a friend request under the fake identity "Priya Sharma".

The two started communicating regularly and eventually shifted to WhatsApp and later to Telegram, a platform known for its encryption-enabled messages.

Police said that Yadav initially received small payments of Rs 5,000-Rs 6,000 for lower-grade information. However, the handler allegedly encouraged him to provide more valuable intelligence in exchange for higher compensation. That's when Yadav began sharing critical defence-related data.

"He was lured by money and ended up leaking sensitive information from the Navy headquarters," Gupta said.

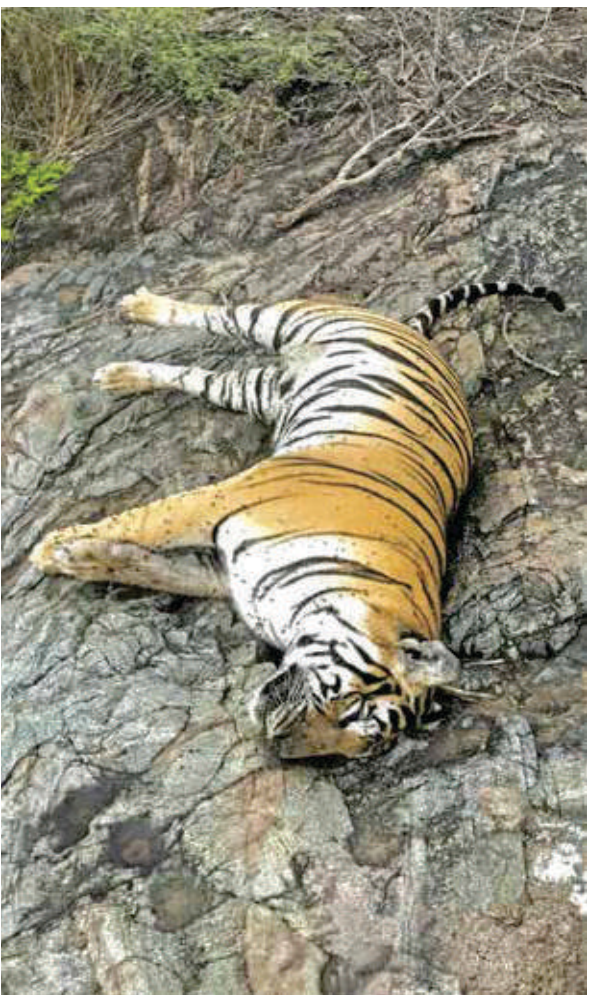
"After monitoring his social media activity and con-

firming his links with a Pakistani handler, he was detained in Jaipur for joint interrogation involving multiple national agencies," the IGP said.

Yadav, originally from Punsika village in Haryana's Rewari district, is also reported to be addicted to online gaming, which authorities believe may have made him more vulnerable to such traps.

Police said the forensic examination of Yadav's mobile phone reportedly uncovered extensive evidence, including financial transactions, sensitive messages, and confidential defence data exchanged with the handler. The investigation is ongoing, and authorities are probing his cryptocurrency transactions and connections.

IG Gupta emphasised that Pakistani intelligence agencies are using increasingly sophisticated methods to extract strategic information. "We are keeping a constant watch on such activities, and this arrest is a result of sustained monitoring and timely action," he said.



Mortal remains of a tigress after it died with four cubs at Male Mahadeshwara Hills under the Hugyam forest range in Bengaluru, Karnataka on Thursday. Karnataka Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre has ordered a probe into the unnatural death of the tigress and cubs.

Tragedy In School

Explosion, stampede kill 29 children

Bangui (Central African Republic): An explosion and the stampede that followed killed at least 29 schoolchildren and injured more than 250 at a high school in Central African Republic's capital city, authorities said Thursday.

The explosion occurred Wednesday at the Barthelemy Boganda High School in Bangui when power was being restored to an electrical transformer within the school premises after it malfunctioned, according to the country's Ministry of National Education.

Most of the victims — including 16 girls — died at the scene after the explosion resulted in a stampede while others were confirmed dead at the hospital, the Ministry of Health said in a statement. At least 260 students were injured and being treated in various hospitals, the ministry said.

An estimated 5,000 students were at the school for higher-education exams at the time. Survivors recounted hearing a loud explosion from the trans-

former midway into the examination.

"The building shook and we were all terrified. It was everyone man for himself," said Alvin Yaligao, one of the students.

Some of the victims died after jumping out of the building while others were killed in the stampede at the crowded entrance to the upper floors in an attempt to escape.

Many other students fainted amid the chaos and were rushed to the hospital, some of them transported on motorcycles.

Many people in the area were angered, accusing the government of negligence for not handling the problems with the electrical transformer. Government officials and workers who arrived at the scene were pelted with different objects by angry residents.

"We deplore this incident which was caused by a lack of maintenance," Gedeon Cyr Ngaisse, president of the school's parents' association, told reporters. He called for an investigation into the tragedy.

Abandoning Elderly Woman

Grandson, two others arrested

Mumbai: A 33-year-old man and two others have been arrested here for allegedly dumping his grandmother, a cancer patient, in a forested area near Aarey Colony in the city, police said.

The woman, around 70 years old, was found near a garbage dump in a distressed state on Sunday morning, and was admitted to hospital by police.

Her grandson Sagar Shevale (33), brother-in-law Babasaheb Gaikwad (70) and autorickshaw driver Sanjay Kadresham (27) were purportedly seen in CCTV footage leaving her at the spot where she was found.

The trio were arrested on Wednesday. CCTV footage showed that the accused first took the woman, resident of Borivali, to the civic-run Shatabdi Hospital late Saturday night, but when the hospital authorities refused to admit her, they took her to the Aarey forest and left her there.

The woman is now undergoing treatment at Cooper hospital.

Shukla 634th astronaut to travel to space



New Delhi: India's Shubhanshu Shukla became the 634th astronaut to travel to space as he entered the International Space Station on Thursday after a 28-hour journey.

Shukla and three other astronauts were formally welcomed on the space station by the members of Expedition 73 with warm hugs and handshakes.

Axiom mission commander Peggy Whitson handed out astronaut pins to Shukla, Polish astronaut Slawosz Uznanski-Wis-

niewski and Hungarian Tibor Kapu, who marked their maiden voyage to space.

"I am astronaut 634. It is a privilege to be here," Shukla said in brief remarks at the formal welcome ceremony on the space station.

"With your love and blessings, I have reached the International Space Station. It looks easy to stand here, but my head is a little heavy, facing some difficulty; but these are minor issues," he said.

"We will get used to it. This is the first step of this journey," he added.

Shukla said over the next 14 days, he and the other astronauts will conduct scientific experiments and interact with people on Earth.

"This is also a phase of India's space journey. I will keep talking to you. Let us make this journey exciting. I am carrying the tiranga and I am carrying all of you with me. The next 14 days will be exciting," he said.

Shukla said the ride to the space station was wonderful and great and he was overwhelmed by the welcome he received from the crew of the orbital laboratory.

"The minute I entered the International Space Station and met this crew, you just made me feel so welcome, as if you literally opened your doors, like your house doors, for us," he said.

"That is true. It was fantastic. I just feel even better now. Whatever expectations I had of coming here were surpassed by the view, of course, that is a big part of it, but also by you guys," Shukla said.

"So thank you so much. I think this is fantastic, this is wonderful and I am very confident that the next 14

days are going to be amazing, advancing science and research, and working together," he added.

This is the first time an Indian astronaut has travelled to the International Space Station.

"At 6:31 am EDT (4:01 IST) on Thursday, the SpaceX Dragon spacecraft docked to the International Space Station for the fourth private astronaut mission to the orbiting laboratory, Axiom Mission 4," the National Aeronautics and Space Administration announced. A live videolink from the

Learning like a baby: Shukla

Astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla on Thursday said he was learning to live in microgravity conditions "like a baby" and it was an amazing experience to float in vacuum as the Dragon spacecraft circled the Earth in its journey to dock at the International Space Station. Sharing his experience via a videolink from the spacecrat, Shukla said ater remaining in quarantine for 30 days, where he was far away from all the excitement, ahead of the launch of the Axiom-4 mission on Wednesday, "the only thought in my mind was to let us just go".

NASA showed the spacecraft approaching the space station. The docking sequence was completed at 4:15 pm IST. The new spacecraft - fifth in the Dragon

series, named Grace - achieved a soft capture with the space station at 4:01 pm IST over the North Atlantic ocean.

Deoli's Kinjal Chawla Selected for Miss Celeste India Finals

Deoli : Kinjal Chawla, a resident of Jaipur Road, Deoli, has been selected as one of the top 20 finalists for the prestigious Miss Celeste India national beauty pageant, to be held in Jaipur from August 18 to 24. Her selection follows a rigorous audition and interview process conducted by event organizers Yogesh Mishra and Nimisha Mishra. Kinjal emerged as a standout among hundreds of participants from across India, earning her spot in the grand finale and bringing pride to her hometown. Ahead of the final event, all finalists will undergo an intensive one-month training and grooming program designed to enhance their confidence, stage presence, and overall personality. The event will conclude with a grand finale featuring certificate presentations and the announcement of the title winner. Kinjal's selection has generated excitement in Deoli, with locals expressing pride and support as she prepares to represent her city on the national stage.

Antyodaya Sambal Pakhwada Camp Held in Chaumhala Gram Panchayat

Jhalrapatan: Welfare Camp Organized in Chaumhala Under Antyodaya PakhwadaAs part of the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Antyodaya Sambal Pakhwada, a public welfare camp was held in Chaumhala, Jhalawar, on Thursday to provide government services directly at the Gram Panchayat level. The Pakhwada, running from June 24 to July 9, aims to improve rural access to welfare schemes. Led by Dr. Rajkumar Baghela from the Medical Department, the camp featured health check-ups, distribution of nutrition kits, BP and sugar screenings, and medication under the 15 Ni Kshy Mitra Yojana and NCD program. Administrative services like border knowledge entries, sale deed verifications, and pension resolutions were also provided. A land dispute from Golkhedi village was amicably settled on-site. Government officials and locals actively participated, highlighting the camp's success in delivering essential services, resolving issues, and strengthening rural welfare outreach.

Moharram Rituals Begin at Dargah Sharif, Qawwalis Suspended for 12 Days

Ajmer: With the sighting of the Moharram moon, rituals began at Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti's Dargah in Ajmer. Qawwalis have been suspended for 12 days. On Thursday, the Chauki was ritually washed after Zohar prayers, followed by a procession from Garib Nawaz Guest House to Langar Khana Gate with large public participation. Syed Moin Hussain of Anjuman Syedzadgan said various religious events will be held for 10 days, including nightly Marsiyakhani and Bayane-Shahadat at Chhatrri Gate. On 4th Moharram, the Chilla of Baba Farid will open for 3 days. On 8th and 9th, Tazia processions will move through Nizam Gate, Chhatrri Gate, and Imambara. On 10th Moharram, the Tazia will be immersed in the Dargah's Jhalra, concluding the observances.

Strict Measures Must Be Taken to Prevent Road Accidents: District Collector Dr. Jitendra Kumar Soni

Traffic Management Committee meeting held at Collectorate, focus on congestion, black spots, and road safety enforcement

Jaipur: District Collector Dr. Jitendra Kumar Soni on Thursday chaired a meeting of the District Traffic Management Committee at the Collectorate Auditorium. During the session, he directed officials from all concerned departments to implement strict and effective measures to curb road accidents and manage growing traffic congestion in Jaipur.

Dr. Soni emphasized the urgent need to enforce road safety protocols and ensure compliance with traffic regulations across both urban and rural areas. He instructed that speed limit signage be installed as per the Government of India's latest guidelines and directed officials to identify and resolve black spots on national and state highways.

The Collector also stressed the need for strict action against unauthorized parking, violations related to reflective tapes, and general negligence in following safety norms. He asked the Jaipur



Development Authority (JDA) and Rajasthan State Road Development Corporation (RSRDC) to submit compliance reports on decisions taken in previ-

ous meetings. Officials from the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) were instructed to close dangerous median cuts and ensure that ongoing flyover

constructions are completed with high-quality standards and within timelines. He also called for the replacement of outdated signboards with clearer, updated

ones to improve highway safety. Other key issues discussed in the meeting included the GPS tracking of vehicles carrying inflammable substances, taking action against route violations, and catching drivers under the influence of alcohol at toll plazas. Additional measures such as placing reflective collars on stray animals were also suggested to prevent nighttime accidents. The meeting saw participation from Deputy Commissioner of Traffic Ms. Shaheen C., Additional District Collector Mukesh Kumar Moond, and senior officials from the Police Department, Traffic Police, Transport Department, NHAI, JDA, Public Works Department, Health Department, and other related agencies. Dr. Soni concluded the meeting by stating that the safety of citizens on the road is a top priority and directed departments to work in coordination to implement all recommended actions effectively and without delay.

Residents of Ward No. 13, Submit Memorandum Seeking Basic Amenities



Chaumhala (Jhalawar district): The residents of Ward No. 13 in Gram Panchayat Kolvi alias Mandi Rajendrapur, Chaumhala, have submitted a memorandum to the Sub-Divisional Officer addressed to the District Collector, urging prompt action to resolve the persistent civic issues in their locality. According to the memorandum, around 100 to 150 houses are situated in the colony near the Shani Mandir area of Ward No. 13, where residents face a multitude of problems related to poor roads, inadequate drainage, and lack of proper water supply. During the rainy season, the roads become muddy and waterlogged, causing great inconvenience, especially to school-going children and elderly residents. The residents highlighted that although a tubewell had been sanctioned to address the longstanding water scarcity in the area, it could not be put to use effectively. This was due to the inability to allocate a suitable location for the tubewell, allegedly hindered by certain private individuals pursuing personal interests. As a result, the water crisis in the ward remains unresolved. The residents, in their plea, have requested that the administration urgently address the issues of road construction, proper drainage, and functional water supply. They expressed hope that the District Collector would intervene promptly to ensure basic amenities are provided to improve living conditions in the ward.

Heavy Rain Alert in Rajasthan

Jaipur: The monsoon has intensified across Rajasthan, with heavy rainfall reported in several areas. Five people died due to lightning strikes in Jhalawar and Bundi. The Meteorological Department has issued a heavy to very heavy rain alert for June 27-30 in various districts, including Banswara, Dungarpur, Sikar, and Jaipur. Thunderstorms and strong winds are also expected.

Participation of family and community is necessary to keep children away from addiction

Awareness, rally organized in Ajmer on Child De-Addiction Day



Ajmer: On the occasion of Child De-Addiction Day, an awareness program and rally was organized in Ajmer under the joint aegis of Child Welfare Committee, Childline 1098 and non-governmental organization Dayanand Bal Sandan. The program was inaugurated by District Legal Services Authority Secretary K.M. Jindal and Child Welfare Committee Chairperson Anjali Sharma, Arvind Kumar Meena, Vandana Kharol, Vineeta and Prem and Rajendra Kumar Arya. Through the rally, the participants spread the message in the society with slogans like

De-Addiction-Towards Prosperity, Children's Life Free from Drugs, This is Our Resolution. After this, a seminar was organized, in which experts discussed in detail the causes, consequences and preventive measures of drug addiction. Assistant Director of District Child Protection Unit Sanjay Sawlani, present in the program, said that active participation of family and community is necessary to keep children away from addiction. In this direction, representatives of Sam Childline 1098 informed that helpline service is continuously available to help

drug-addicted children. Members of Child Welfare Committee threw light on child rights and legal provisions. Efforts of all participating organizations were appreciated for the successful organization of this program and a pledge was taken to run more such campaigns in future. On this occasion, boys and girls of the organization, officers, employees and social workers participated enthusiastically. The objective of the program was to make children and youth aware of the ill effects of drugs and to inspire them to adopt a healthy and drug-free lifestyle.

Shri Jagannath Bhagwan Rath Yatra Festival begins, women apply Jagannath Mehndi on their hands

Ajmer: The ten-day Lord Shri Jagannath Bhagwan Rath Yatra Festival started on Thursday with the Jagannath Mehndi Festival under the aegis of Shri Jagannath Bhagwan Rath Yatra Festival Committee and Shri Agarwal Panchayat Marwari Chota Dhada Janakpuri Ganj. A large number of women participated enthusiastically in the Jagannath Mehndi Festival organized in Janakpuri and applied Jagannath Mehndi on their hands. Women enjoyed a lot in many

games including Housie competition and chair race. Jivisha Agarwal got the first prize in the Mehndi competition, Sakshi Agarwal got the second prize and Shashi Agarwal got the third prize. Shri Jagannath Bhagwan Rath Yatra Committee President Sanjay Kandoi, Jyoti Swaroop and Govind Narayan Dani honored the women who were winners of the Jagannath Mehndi Utsav by giving gifts and consolation prizes to the women participating in the festival.

Shakti Singh Rathore Takes Additional Charge as Board Administrator

Ajmer: Indian Administrative Service officer Shakti Singh Rathore on Thursday assumed additional charge of Divisional Commissioner of Ajmer and Administrator of Secondary Education Board. Earlier, he was working as TAD Commissioner in Udaipur. After assuming charge, he informed about various priorities including effective implementation of various development schemes and public welfare programs. He said that concrete steps will be taken to improve the quality of public services. Giving special priority to the medical and health sector, necessary facilities will be provided at all levels. On this occasion, Additional Divisional Commissioner Deepti Sharma, officers, personnel and representatives of various organizations were present.



HC Halts Roadways' Order Deploying Medically Unfit Drivers

Jaipur: In a key decision prioritizing public safety, the Rajasthan High Court has stayed the State Roadways' directive allowing medically unfit drivers to operate buses. Justice Sudesh Bansal passed the order while hearing a petition filed by Chhatar Singh and others, who alleged that drivers with serious injuries and no medical board clearance were being assigned to active routes by the Alwar Depot. According to official rules, such drivers should be given light duties like booking or clerical work. Advocate Vinayak Joshi, representing the petitioners, stated that many drivers had sustained grave injuries, including implants in limbs, making them unfit for driving. He termed the move irresponsible and a threat to passenger lives. The High Court had earlier summoned the Managing Director of Rajasthan Roadways, Purushottam Sharma, who appeared via video conferencing and explained the situation. The court was informed that disciplinary action is underway against the officer who violated protocol. The court's intervention has been widely appreciated as a step toward ensuring safety and accountability in public transport.

All India IPSC Hockey Tournament begins: Sainik School Chittorgarh is hosting

Chittorgarh: The inaugural ceremony of the All India IPSC (Indian Public Schools Conference) Hockey Tournament (Under-14 Boys Category) was held at Sainik School Chittorgarh on Thursday. The chief guest of the inaugural ceremony was Colonel Anil Dev Singh Jasrotia, Principal of Sainik School Chittorgarh.



Deputy Principal Lieutenant Colonel Parul Srivastava and Administrative Officer Major C. Srikumar welcomed the chief guest. School Public Relations Officer Babu Lal Shivan said that teams from a total of four schools including Punjab Public School, Nabha (Punjab), Modern Public School, New Delhi; Hyderabad Public School, Begumpet (Telangana); and Sainik School Chittorgarh, are participating in this tournament. The oath-taking ceremony of the participating schools was organized in the inaugural ceremony. The chief guest inspired the participants with his motivational speech. In the inaugural matches held on Thursday, the atmosphere was filled with patriotic enthusiasm as the young players expressed their commitment to fair play during the oath-taking ceremony. The tournament started with exciting matches. Sainik School Chittorgarh defeated Hyderabad Public School 6-0, while Punjab Public School defeated Modern Public School Delhi 10-0. Gaurav Jakhar, physics laboratory assistant of the school, is the coordinator of the tournament. The tournament will run till 27 June 2025.

Zinc workforce diversifies with rise in LGBTQIA employees

Industry-leading, inclusive policies aimed at promoting a diverse workplace

Chittorgarh: Hindustan Zinc, India's only and the world's largest integrated zinc producer, has seen a 44 percent rise in the number of LGBTQIA employees across its operations. This growth is a result of the company's inclusive policies that reflect the company's commitment to creating a diverse and safe workplace. To further strengthen its commitment, Hindustan Zinc has launched its Pride Month campaign, 'RuCallHZLyourHome.'

The company has set an example by adopting industry-leading workplace policies to include the LGBTQIA community. These include financial assistance of up to Rs 1 lakh for transgender employees, leave for employees for gender reassignment surgery, and a compensation policy with up to Rs 2 lakh for gender reaffirmation. In addition, a paternity policy for LGBTQIA persons who legally adopt a child and a special housing policy for employees from the LGBTQIA community have also been formulated. Hindustan Zinc, in the traditionally male-dominated metals and mining sector, has provided job opportunities to 23 transgender employees across its various business units. These employees have significant representation in mainstream roles within the company, including finance, supply chain, marketing, medical, and other departments. The move reflects the company's inclusive approach. Technological advancements such as 4.0, digitalization, robotics, and automation have helped the company reduce manual labor, making the sector more attractive for job employment. Hindustan Zinc's digital mines include modern technologies



such as surface-based underground mining (tele-remote) operations, real-time analytics, and automation. Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Non-Executive Director, Vedanta Limited, and Chairperson, Hindustan Zinc Limited, shared her views and said that for many individuals from the LGBTQIA community, the outside world and sometimes even their own homes can feel like a stage where they are constantly watched, judged, and misunderstood. He said that at Hindustan Zinc, we strive to create an environment where every individual is valued and empowered to show their true self. Here they are not just an employee but part of the family. We are proud to give our people a homely atmosphere at the workplace. From the year 2022, the company is expanding its recruitment efforts to actively include members of the transgender community who face challenges in securing sustainable liveli-

hoods for a dignified life. Sharing his experience, LGBTQIA employee Kaushal Singh, working as a civil infrastructure manager, said that initially he had some apprehensions about being accepted, but the culture here is really inclusive. From gender-sensitive policies to mental health sessions and fair recruitment practices, I have always felt seen, respected, and empowered. My colleagues recognize me as an equal contributor, and this is a place where both my identity and expertise are truly valued. He said that Hindustan Zinc's support has not only helped me move forward but also enabled me to speak for others. Ankit Jadon, another LGBTQIA employee working as a store manager at one of the world's top silver-producing mines, said that at Hindustan Zinc, I feel respected, valued, and fully included like any other team member. I am entrusted with important responsibilities and mentored like any other professional with full attention to my development. The inclusive environment and thoughtful policies make me feel safe, motivated, and committed to building a long-term career here. Hindustan Zinc's Zincclusion is an in-house platform that aims to embrace all types of diversity. The main goal of this platform is to create a safe and welcoming workplace for all employees. Zincclusion ensures that employees get equal opportunities to advance regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Through Zincclusion, Hindustan Zinc strives to create a high-performing and innovative culture that draws upon the collective talent of a diverse workforce.

Coal Scam Update: Suspended IAS Officers Appear in Special Court After Supreme Court Bail



Raipur: In the ongoing 570 crore coal levy scam in Chhattisgarh, suspended IAS officers Ranu Sahu, Saumya Chaurasia, and Sameer Vishnoi appeared before the ACB-EOW special court in Raipur on Wednesday for the first time since being granted conditional bail by the Supreme Court. During the proceedings, they informed the court that they are residing outside the state as per the bail conditions—Ranu Sahu in Delhi, Saumya Chaurasia in Bengaluru, and Sameer Vishnoi in Kanpur. After signing the court's attendance register and order sheet, the court scheduled the next hearing for July 23. Notably, alleged scam mastermind and coal trader Surya Kant Tiwari did not appear in court and remains in custody. He has not yet secured bail. The three IAS officers are under strict bail conditions—they must appear whenever summoned, their passports remain in court custody, and they are barred from entering Chhattisgarh until further notice. They are also required to cooperate fully with the ongoing investigation. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) uncovered that the scam operated between July 2020 and June 2022, involving illegal collection of 25 per ton from coal transporters. The fraud began with a July 15, 2020 order signed by Sameer Vishnoi, then Mining Department Director, which shifted the coal transport permit system from online to offline. A substantial portion of the illicit money was also used to acquire property and assets. The high-profile case has sparked widespread public interest and political debate in Chhattisgarh. With three senior IAS officers and several political links under scrutiny, the spotlight remains firmly on the judiciary and investigation agencies to ensure transparency, accountability, and justice in what is considered one of the biggest financial scandals in the state's recent history.

Poster Unveiled for Shivpoojan Mahotsav in Shravan Month
Raipur: Deputy CM Arun Sao unveiled the poster for the Laksheshwar Lingarpan Shivpoojan Mahotsav, to be held on July 20 by the Chhattisgarhi Dau Agrawal Yuva Manch. The event will feature the creation of 1.25 lakh Parthiv Shivlings and collective worship by 51 yajmans for Chhattisgarh's peace and prosperity. The Deputy CM praised the Agrawal community's contributions to social and religious causes. Central President Dau Anurag Agrawal also invited them to the main event. Several prominent members of the community were present at the poster launch.

Massive 1500 Crore Fraud Busted: Government School Teacher Among Main Accused



Balodabazar/Janjgir-Champa: In a sensational case of financial fraud, police in Balodabazar have arrested Ramnarayan Sahu, a government school teacher, and his brother Hemant Sahu, for orchestrating a multi-crore scam involving false promises of doubling money through stock market investments. The scam, which originated in the village of Mahkam in Sonakhan Chowki region, has reportedly affected hundreds of people across multiple districts, including a significant number from Janjgir-Champa. Ramnarayan, along with his brother, lured villagers, prominent businessmen, and social workers by claiming they could double their investments within two years through the stock market.



Police say over 90% of the residents of Mahkam village, as well as several influential people from surrounding areas, fell victim to this elaborate scheme. The case came to light when Gopal Prasad Dewangan, a resident of Katgi, lodged a formal complaint. He stated that he met Ramnarayan in August during a railing installation job. Ramnarayan convinced him to invest in the stock market with the promise of doubling his money. Over time, Gopal transferred a total of 19.43

lakh through cash, PhonePe, and other digital platforms. The same modus operandi was used to defraud Gopal's friends—Rajesh Kumar Dewangan and Anil Kumar Prajapati—bringing the total known fraud amount in this case to 40.82 lakh. Additionally, another victim, Rajkumar Yadu, had earlier reported being duped of 82 lakh by the same accused in 2024. Cases have been registered under multiple sections including 420 and 34 of the IPC and sections 318(4) and 3(5) of the BNS. Further investigations have revealed that this scam was not limited to one village or district. Victims from Kasdol, Laván, Gidhauri, Shivrinarayan, Mahasamund, and Raigarh have also come forward with similar complaints. The fraud is now being regarded as one of Chhattisgarh's largest, possibly involving over 1500 crore. The Special Investigation Team (SIT), led by Additional Superintendent of Police Kaushal Kishore Wasnik and DSP Tulsi Lekham (Cyber Cell), has been formed to uncover the extent of the network and seize the assets of the accused.

The team includes senior officers from Kasdol, Palari, Gidhauri, Lavan, and cyber departments. As the investigation deepens, startling links to Janjgir-Champa district have emerged. Several local agents from the area are suspected to have played active roles in the scam. These agents reportedly built trust using photos with celebrities and politicians, convincing people to invest their savings with the promise of quick returns. Now, many of these investors are preparing to file formal complaints backed by evidence. Sources indicate growing panic among the agents and associates of the main accused, as the crackdown intensifies. Police believe a larger, organized network is behind this fraud, and efforts are underway to trace the kingpins and recover the stolen funds. This case serves as a sobering reminder of the dangers of high-return investment schemes and the consequences of financial greed. The spotlight is now on law enforcement: Will they be able to reach the mastermind and ensure justice for the hundreds who were duped?

Justice Delivered: Stepfather Sentenced to Life Imprisonment for Rape of 2-Year-Old; Social Activist Swami Surendranath's Protest Played Crucial Role

Janjgir-Champa: In a case that shook the conscience of the community, the Janjgir-Champa court has sentenced a stepfather to life imprisonment for the rape of a 2-year-old girl. The verdict comes eight months after the incident, following relentless efforts by citizens and social activists, most notably Swami Surendranath, whose early intervention and public protest helped bring swift attention to the case.



Protest That Sparked Action: The heinous crime occurred on 19 October 2024, and upon learning of it, Swami Surendranath—a well-known social reformer and ascetic—was deeply disturbed. Just two days later, on 21 October, he organized a candlelight march in Janjgir-Champa to voice outrage and demand immediate action. The march saw participation from numerous respected citizens and brought significant media and administrative attention to the case. Speaking with Growing India's Chhattisgarh head Kulwant Singh Saluja, Swami Surendranath expressed his concern over the growing moral decay in society and the increasing incidents of atrocities against the innocent. He stated, Swami Surendranath not only led the protest but also extended financial assistance of 1 lakh for the medical treatment of the survivor, urging citizens to stand united against such inhuman acts.

Court Verdict Sends Strong Message: After an eight-month trial, Additional Sessions Judge (POCSO) Anil Kumar Bara pronounced a life sentence to the accused stepfather. The ruling was welcomed across the district and seen as a victory for justice and public unity. Swami Surendranath, reacting to the verdict, said, "The purpose of the candle march was to alert the administration and demand quick and strict action. Today, the judgment has not only delivered justice to the victim but also sent a strong message to society—such acts will not be tolerated, and perpetrators will be punished severely."

A Call for Vigilance and Awareness: This case stands as an example of how public awareness, prompt action, and social unity can drive justice, even in the darkest of crimes. Swami Surendranath emphasized that raising one's voice against injustice is the highest form of social duty, especially in times when moral values are rapidly eroding.

Jewellery Store and Hotel Sealed in Ambikapur Over 3 Crore Loan Default; Confiscation Proceedings Initiated

Ambikapur: In a decisive move against loan defaulters, the Central Bank of India, with active support from the district administration, sealed Hariom Jewellers and Hotel Mountain at Gudri Chowk in Ambikapur on Wednesday. The action was taken after businessman Rajesh Soni defaulted on a 3 crore loan taken for expanding his jewellery business and constructing a hotel. Despite being given a final opportunity to settle the dues for 1.5 crore, Soni failed to respond, prompting the bank to begin recovery proceedings. Bank officials revealed that the loan, sanctioned in 2019 from the Ambikapur branch, was used to establish a three-storey hotel on a prime 6-disamil plot in the city's commercial hub. However, the COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted Soni's business, leading to defaulted EMIs. Over time, the unpaid principal and mounting interest pushed the total



outstanding amount to nearly 3 crore. The bank served multiple notices under Section 13(2) of the SARFAESI Act (Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act), but received no concrete response. On Wednesday, a team led by Naib Tehsildar Jayendra Singh, along with revenue officials, bank representatives, and police personnel, executed the sealing. Both the jewellery store and hotel were evacuated and sealed amidst public attention. Soni reportedly pleaded for an extension of 10 days, but authorities denied the request due to his continued non-compliance. Officials

have clarified that the sealing is the first step in a broader recovery strategy. Confiscation and auction of the assets will follow to recover the outstanding dues. The incident has created a stir in the local business community, sparking discussions on financial discipline and post-pandemic liabilities. While many traders empathized with the economic strain caused by COVID-19, they also acknowledged that ignoring legal obligations invites strict enforcement action. The case now serves as a cautionary example for borrowers and business owners alike, highlighting the serious consequences of loan default.

Violations Found in Private Hospitals, Owner's Name Missing in Notice

Korba: Following the death of a pregnant woman, the Korba administration probed Shweta Hospital and New Korba Hospital (NKH), uncovering serious violations under the Chhattisgarh Nursing Home Act. NKH, with 104 beds, lacked adequate doctors and used unregistered medical staff, while also conducting

unauthorized pathology tests. Shweta Hospital operated with only three qualified doctors for 30 beds and conducted 368 surgeries, some by unlicensed individuals. Government doctors were found consulting without proper registration, and medical records lacked essential details. Shockingly, while NKH's

owner was named in the notice, Shweta Hospital's owner was not, raising concerns of concealment. Both hospitals have been given 24 hours to reply or face disciplinary action under the law. The lack of transparency and regulation has sparked outrage. The administration is now under pressure to act.

Former MLA Shailesh Pandey Receives Death Threat and Ransom Demand, Sparks Political Alarm

Bilaspur: In a deeply unsettling incident that has triggered widespread concern across political and administrative circles, former Bilaspur MLA Shailesh Pandey has reportedly received a chilling death threat coupled with a ransom demand of ₹20 lakh. What has made the threat even more disturbing is that the caller also threatened to abduct the daughter of a known government official, Manju Pandey, who is currently pursuing her education in Delhi. The incident occurred around 11:45 AM on Wednesday when a call from an unknown number was received on Pandey's mobile phone. The call was initially answered by his wife, Ritu Pandey, who was taken aback when the caller insisted on speaking directly to the former legislator. Upon taking the call, Pandey was met with explicit threats from an individual who identified himself as a criminal and demanded the extortion amount while also issuing the kidnapping threat. Reacting swiftly to the gravity of the situation, Shailesh Pandey immediately informed Bilaspur's Senior Superintendent of Police, Rajnesh Singh, and proceeded to lodge a formal complaint at the Sakri Police Station. Following the complaint, the police acted promptly, registering an FIR and initiating



a detailed investigation. Pradeep Arya, the in-charge of Sakri Police Station, confirmed that the threatening call had originated from a mobile number registered in Delhi. The cyber cell has since been deployed and is actively engaged in technical surveillance to trace the caller's location and identity. Authorities are also analyzing call records and communication trails to establish any previous links or patterns. Adding a layer of complexity to the case, police sources revealed that while the targeted girl resides in

Delhi for her studies, she is currently in Bilaspur and remains safe under supervision. Investigators are examining multiple angles, including the motive for targeting a former political leader and the unusual choice of using someone else's family member in the threat. This has raised suspicions of either a deliberate attempt to spread fear, create political instability, or target Pandey through indirect intimidation. The threat has stirred considerable anxiety in the political landscape, especially considering Shailesh

Pandey's active role in local governance and his public image. It has sparked conversations about the growing climate of political vendetta, rising crime threats against public figures, and the need for stronger security mechanisms. The administration has assured full protection for the individuals involved and promised that no stone will be left unturned in unmasking those behind the call. The case is being treated with the highest priority, and further developments are expected as the investigation deepens.

Raipur Suitcase Murder Solved: Teen Killed Over Property Dispute, Body Found in Cement-Filled Trunk

Raipur: In a case that has shocked the city, Raipur Police have solved the gruesome suitcase murder, revealing a disturbing plot involving a married couple who murdered a disabled teenager over a financial and property dispute. The victim's body was stuffed into a suitcase filled with cement to mask the smell and then dumped in a nearby thicket with the help of two accomplices. According to police, the murder occurred on June 21 in a rented flat at Indraprastha Phase-2, Raipur. The accused, Ankit Sharma and his wife Shivani Sharma, kept the body in the flat for nearly 48 hours before disposing of it. As the corpse began to emit a foul odor, the couple hastily packed it into a new suitcase, poured cement into it to suppress the stench, and discarded it with the assistance of two acquaintances, Vinay Yadu and Suryakant Yadu. The victim, Kishore Paikara, had been acquainted with Ankit since 2018. Earlier, Ankit had helped Kishore sell land worth ₹30 lakh in Madhi village, earning a ₹2 lakh commission. Later, Kishore lent Ankit ₹10 lakh for another land deal that never materialized. With Ankit refusing to repay the money, tension between them grew. At the time of the murder, Kishore had around ₹18 lakh in cash and had recently become disabled after a bicycle accident. Dependent on Ankit for daily essentials, he trusted him, believing the assistance was part of settling the owed money. However, growing pressure to return the debt and Kishore's increasing demands—including restaurant food and bottled water—pushed Ankit to plot the murder. He shared the plan with his wife, Shivani, who eventually agreed. On June 19, the couple rented a flat for ₹6,500 using online payment and lured Kishore there on the pretext of helping clean his ancestral home. Inside the flat, Ankit strangled Kishore while Shivani held his legs. To ensure death, Ankit also stabbed him in the neck. Initially intending to use a suitcase to dispose of the body, they found it unusable due to excessive bleeding and went out the next day to purchase a new trunk. Upon returning, they packed the decomposing body into the suitcase, filled it with cement, and called their acquaintances to help transport and dump it in nearby bushes during the day to avoid suspicion. After disposing of the body, the couple fled Raipur, booking flight tickets with plans to settle in Delhi. However, police traced the vehicle used in the crime, identified the Indraprastha flat, and zeroed in on the suspects based on payment records and eyewitness accounts. All four accused—Ankit Sharma, Shivani Sharma, Vinay Yadu, and Suryakant Yadu—have been arrested and are now in police custody.



Irregularities in Bilaspur-Urga Highway Land Acquisition: FIR Against Ex-Officials



Bilaspur/Champa: Major irregularities have been exposed in the land acquisition process for the Bilaspur-Urga National Highway under the Bharatmala Project. An FIR has been registered against former Tehsildar D.S. Uike and ex-Patwari Suresh Kumar Mishra for allegedly forging documents related to compensation for land in Dheka village. A complaint led to an investigation by the SDM and a district committee, revealing tampering of revenue records, creation of fake land entries, and fraudulent ownership transfers. This led to inflated compensation amounts, causing substantial financial loss to the state and delays in payouts. Based on the probe, the Torwa police filed a case under IPC sections for cheating and forgery. Both accused are currently absconding. The case has highlighted broader issues in the Bharatmala project, with multiple similar scams reported. The Anti-Corruption Bureau recently raided homes of officials involved in related cases, while a state-level team continues its investigation. Multiple FIRs have been lodged across districts, and several patwaris have been suspended. Patwari Suresh Mishra, found directly involved, was officially suspended and attached to the district office. Further arrests and legal action are expected as investigations deepen.

‘Hindi friend of all Indian languages’

New Delhi: Union Home minister Amit Shah on Thursday said Hindi is not opposed to any Indian language, rather it is friends with all Indian languages and there should be no opposition to any foreign language in the country.

Addressing the golden jubilee celebrations of the Central government's official language department, Shah also asked all the state governments to take the initiative to impart medical and engineering education in the local language.

The Centre will help all the state governments in using Indian languages to conduct administrative works, he said. "I sincerely believe that Hindi can't be opposed ('virodhi') to any Indian language. Hindi is a friend ('sakhi') of all Indian languages," the home minister said.

Hindi and other Indian languages together can take the self-esteem of the country's culture to its final destination, Shah said.

The home minister also said that everyone should get rid of the slavery mentality and until a person takes pride in his own language, or does not express himself in his language, that person cannot be free from mentality of slavery.

"There is no opposition to any language. There should not be any opposition to any foreign language. But there should be an urge to glorify one's own language, there should be an urge to speak one's own language, there should be an urge to think in one's own language," he said.

Shah said the country is concerned, language is not just a medium of communication, it is the soul of a nation.

India rejoice again as Shukla reaches ISS

Lucknow: India rejoiced again as the Space-X spacecraft with Lucknow-born astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla on board landed at the International Space Station (ISS) on Thursday.

'Bharat Mata ki jai', 'India-India' and 'Hip Hip Hurray' chants intermingled with resounding applause after the Dragon spacecraft docked to the orbital laboratory after a 28-hour journey around the earth.

After joining for Wednesday's successful liftoff from Kennedy Space Centre in Florida, marking India's return to human spaceflight after 41 years, Shukla's parents and relatives, teachers, friends, scores of students, and astounded onlookers greeted the successful docking with a standing ovation and let out a collective roar at Lucknow's City Montessori School here.

Shubhanshu's family were also seen joyously holding the tricolour as the Dragon spacecraft completed the docking sequence with ISS.

"He has reached the ISS; we are over the moon," Shubhanshu's sister Suchi Misra told PTI, admitting that it was a moment when the astronaut's family, like the rest of India, felt overwhelmed.

Like Wednesday, Shubhanshu's parents - Shambhu and Asha Shukla - were there to witness the momentous occasion at the World Unity Convention Centre (WUCC) of CMS, where Sudhanshu studied till class 12.

"He is our son, but now he is more than that. For he is carrying with him to space not just our blessings but the dreams and prayers of a billion Indians, all of whom are rejoicing not just for my son but also because the moment heralds India's triumph in space," Shubhanshu's father told PTI.

Since Wednesday's lift-off, the Shukla household had been praying. "Of course, we have deep belief in



ZeroG indicator Joy fith 'crew' member

A new 'crew' member of the Axiom-4 mission - a toy swan named Joy - was seen floating in the Dragon spacecrat as astronauts interacted with the mission control via a videolink on Thursday. Joy is the zero gravity indicator carried by the astronauts of the Axiom-4 mission which was selected because astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla's son Kiash's love for animals. The tradition of flying a toy to mark the moment gravity gives way to weightlessness began with Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space, and has since become a ritual in space missions. Joy, the baby swan, embodies the shared pursuit of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Hungarian to Orbit program (HUNOR) to soar high above our home planet, Axiom Space said in a statement.

"In this way, Joy represents cultural unity as three nations realize the return to human spaceflight, together as one crew," it said.

the almighty whose blessings help in achieving big missions. Shubhanshu is a deep believer in Lord Hanuman and all other gods, and now we are praying for his safe return after successful completion of the mission," he added.

More than celebrations

CMS manager Geeta Gandhi Kingdon told PTI that there was more to the moment than just celebrations.

"Of course we are delighted, like all Indians, more so as he is an alumna who has made all of us so proud. But, at this moment as he enters the ISS, Shubhanshu also symbolises India's growing muscle in space," she added.

"I hope his journey inspires the rise of many more Shubhanshus

across the country. It's a moment of immense pride for every Indian," Suchi had said during Wednesday's liftoff.

And on Thursday, Sudhanshu Gaur, sports teacher at the CMS Ali-ganj branch where Shubhanshu studied, admitted to growing enthusiasm among students to become astronauts.

"I am witnessing a newfound enthusiasm among students to become astronauts. We had a fancy dress competition in school sometime back, and the majority of students turned up as astronauts. This is just amazing," Gaur told PTI.

"As the docking happened and everyone went up I had tears in my eyes," said Rishi Khanna, head of communications at CMS.

Both Rakesh Sharma, Shubhanshu Shukla, alumni of NDA

By Quaid Najmi

Mumbai: In a pleasant coincidence, the two Indians to travel in space – earlier Rakesh Sharma and now Shubhanshu Shukla – both acquired their first flying lessons at the prestigious National Defence Academy (NDA) at Khadakwasla in Pune.

It was on April 3, 1984 that Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma was catapulted to space and after 41 years, Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla followed in his space-steps today, June 25, 2025.

Sharma, now 76, spent almost 8 days orbiting Earth and now Shukla is likely to spend around two weeks conducting some 60 scientific experiments during his sojourn at the International Space Station (ISS) zooming around the planet at dizzying speeds almost 400 kms in the sky.

While Sharma had entered the hallowed precincts of NDA in July 1966, Shukla entered the elite joint military training institution in 1999, after the Kargil war.

Having a distinguished career, Sharma flew the MiG-21 fighter aircraft and carried out 21 combat missions during the 1971

India-Pakistan War that saw the birth of Bangladesh.

On September 20, 1982, after undergoing rigorous tests, he was selected for a joint space programme of the Indian Air Force and Soviet Interkosmos Space Program.

The Cosmonaut spent nearly 8 days in space at the Salyut 7 Orbital Station, creating history and carried out 43 scientific experiments up above the sky.

It was during his video interaction with the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that he made his memorable statement on India's appearance from the space station: "Saare Jahan Se Achha".

Thereafter, in 1987 he joined the Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd as a Chief Test Pilot in Nashik Division till 1992 when he shifted to Bengaluru as HAL's Chief Test Pilot till his retirement in 2001.

For his incredible space odyssey, the Punjab-born Sharma was later decorated with the Ashok Chakra, India's highest peace-time gallantry honour and also 'Hero of the Soviet Union', the first and only Indian to be conferred the award.

Data extraction underway

BLACK BOXES BEING ANALYSED AT AAIB LAB



New Delhi: The government on Thursday said data is being extracted from black boxes, and analysis of cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder is underway to reconstruct the sequence of events that led to the fatal crash of the Air India plane in Ahmedabad on June 12.

Providing a detailed update a fortnight after the fatal accident that killed 270 people, the civil aviation ministry said the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) promptly initiated an investigation and constituted a multi-disciplinary team headed by the AAIB chief on June 13 in line with prescribed norms.

The team includes an aviation medicine specialist, an Air Traffic Control (ATC) officer, and representatives from the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), it

said in a statement.

Air India's Boeing 787-8 aircraft operating flight AI 171 en-route to London Gatwick crashed into a medical hostel complex soon after take-off from Ahmedabad on June 12, killing 270 people, including 241 people who were onboard the plane.

"On the evening of June 24, the team led by AAIB DG with technical members from AAIB and NTSB began the data extraction process. The Crash Protection Module (CPM) from the front black box was safely retrieved, and on June 25, 2025, the memory module was successfully accessed and its data downloaded at the AAIB Lab," the ministry said.

The AAIB Lab was inaugurated in the national capital in April this year.

"The analysis of CVR (Cockpit Voice Recorder) and FDR (Flight Data Recorder) data is underway. These efforts aim to reconstruct the sequence of events leading to the accident and identify contributing factors to enhance aviation safety and prevent future occurrences," the ministry noted.

Boeing 787 aircraft has

two black boxes, each having a CVR and an FDR.

The ministry also emphasised that all actions have been taken in full compliance with domestic laws and international obligations in a time-bound manner.

Both the CVRs and FDRs were recovered within a week after the accident. One was retrieved from a rooftop of the building at the crash site on June 13, and the other from the debris on June 16.

"Standard Operating Procedures were issued for their secure handling, storage, and transportation. The devices were kept under 24x7 police protection and CCTV surveillance in Ahmedabad.

"Subsequently, the black boxes were brought from Ahmedabad to Delhi by IAF aircraft with full security on June 24, 2025. The front black box arrived at AAIB Lab, Delhi, with the DG, AAIB at 1400 hrs on June 24, 2025. The rear black box was brought by a second AAIB team and reached AAIB Lab, Delhi at 1715 hrs on June 24, 2025," the ministry said.

Mock Drill Conducted in Kushinagar to Prepare for Flood and Disaster Management

Khadda (Kushinagar): In a proactive move to enhance disaster preparedness, the district administration of Kushinagar organized a large-scale flood mock drill on Thursday in village Bhasa under Khadda Tehsil. This pre-monsoon exercise aimed to evaluate emergency response capabilities and improve inter-departmental coordination in the event of real flood emergencies. The drill simulated a rising water level in the Budi Gandak River and was carried out under the supervision of District Disaster Management Specialist Ravi Pratap Rai, using the Incident Response System (IRS) framework. Multiple departments participated, including Revenue, Police, Health, Animal Husbandry, Fire Services, PWD, and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF). The scenario began with the Deputy District Magistrate alerting the Emergency Operations Center about people stranded and swept away due to sudden flooding. Swift communication led to the creation of a green corridor for SDRF teams to conduct rescue operations. The teams successfully rescued five people from rooftops and trees and recovered two bodies while search efforts continued for the remaining victims. Additional simulations included rescuing injured persons from a collapsed building, evacuating seven flood-affected individuals by boat, and providing medical aid and CPR at a relief camp. Ambulances transported the injured,



and food and essential items were distributed to those affected. The police played a vital role in controlling misinformation and ensuring public order during the drill. Tehsildar Khadda, acting as Logistics Chief, supervised the relief camp setup and ensured all displaced individuals were registered and supported. Officials praised the drill's success, highlighting the importance of such simulations in identifying gaps and strengthening disaster response mechanisms. A senior officer emphasized that the ultimate goal is to save lives and minimize damage, and exercises like these are key to achieving that readiness.

Man Fatally Stabbed While Confronting Attackers of His Brother in Kushinagar; Police Avert Mob Violence

Kushinagar: A 40-year-old man was fatally stabbed on Thursday morning in Kushinagar district, Uttar Pradesh, after he went to confront a group of men who had assaulted his younger brother the previous night. The accused reportedly attacked him with a knife in front of others, leading to his death while being taken to the hospital. According to the police, the incident began on Wednesday night when Umashankar Nishad, a resident of Benia Tola in the Rajpur Khas area under Sevarahi police station limits, was returning home from the market. He was intercepted by six individuals, including Prince Munna Nishad, Nathu (son of Gosai Nishad), and Munna (son of Nathu Nishad). The group allegedly beat him and tried to snatch his motorcycle and mobile phone. Umashankar, though injured, managed to hold on to his belongings and escape to his home. The next

morning, his elder brother, Jagu Nishad (40), went to Prince's house to ask why his brother had been assaulted. While he was inquiring about the incident, Prince allegedly emerged with a knife and attacked Jagu in front of several people. He sustained multiple stab wounds and collapsed on the spot. Family members rushed him to the government hospital in Sevarahi, but he succumbed to his injuries en route. Doctors at the hospital declared him dead on arrival. Tensions flared following the murder. Enraged villagers and family members carried the body to the accused's residence and began protesting. A large crowd surrounded the house, raising fears of potential violence. However, the police responded swiftly. Sevarahi Station Officer (SO) alerted Circle Officer (CO) of Tamkuhi Raj, Rakesh Pratap Singh, who deployed forces from four nearby police stations to the scene.

US visa: List social media platforms

New Delhi: Outlining each visa adjudication as a "national security decision", the US has asked applicants to share their social media usernames or handles of each platform they have used in the last five years.

The US Embassy in India shared the information in a brief statement issued on Thursday, which also cautioned against "omitting" social media information as it could lead to "visa denial and ineligibility for future visas".

The statement which was posted on X read, "Visa applicants are required to list all social media usernames or handles of every platform they have used from the last 5 years on the DS-160 visa application form. Applicants certify

that the information in their visa application is true and correct before they sign and submit."

The communication continued, "Omitting social media information could lead to visa denial and ineligibility for future visas."

On June 23, the US Embassy asked those applying for an F, M, or J non-immigrant visa to switch the privacy settings of their social media accounts to "public" to facilitate vetting, which it said was necessary to establish their identity and admissibility to the US under law.

The embassy had also said since 2019, the US has required visa applicants to provide "social media identifiers



fiers" on immigrant and non-immigrant visa application forms.

F or M category for student visas

and J category for exchange visitor visa.

In Thursday's communication, the embassy also attached two related digital posters.

"Every U.S. visa adjudication is a national security decision," read the caption on the top of a poster followed by a note.

The note read, "The United States requires visa applicants to provide social media identifiers on visa application forms. We use all available information in our visa screening and vetting."

It comes against the backdrop of an immigration crackdown by the Trump administration in California's Los An-

geles recently.

On June 24, the embassy's statement said that the US had increased enforcement of immigration laws, and violators would face detention, deportation and permanent consequences for future visa eligibility.

The US further warned that those entering the country illegally would face jail time and deportation.

The US Embassy in India has issued a series of statements on the subject of visa and immigration this month.

On June 19, the embassy said a US visa was "a privilege, not a right" and its screening did not stop after a visa was issued as authorities might revoke it if one broke the law.

Minister Otaram Dewasi Reviews Antyodaya Sambal Camp in Joyla, Sirohi

Jaipur: Rajasthan Minister of State for Panchayati Raj, Otaram Dewasi, inspected a welfare camp organized under the Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Antyodaya Sambal Pakhwada in Joyla village of Shivganj. The camp aimed to deliver 63 services across 16 departments, including land demarcation, issuance of ownership documents, plant distribution, animal health checkups, pensions, and more. Dewasi emphasized the importance of reaching the last person in society with government welfare schemes and directed officials to ensure no eligible person is left out.

‘See your Prime Minister on screen’

WHAT LED TO A BAN ON GULZAR’S ‘AANDHI’ DURING EMERGENCY



Half Century Of Emergency

New Delhi: “Aandhi” was running in theatres in 1975 when lyricist-filmmaker Gulzar, who was in Moscow to present it at a film festival, received the news about the movie being banned in India.

Set against the backdrop of elections, “Aandhi” is a love story between a hotel manager (Sanjeev Kumar) and his estranged wife, played by Suchitra Sen, who reconnects years later after she becomes a politician.

Author Saba Mahmood Bashir’s 2019 “Gulzar’s Aandhi: Insights into the Film” sheds light on the controversy around the movie and the political climate in the country during its release.

Many had noted the similarities between prime minister Indira Gandhi and Sen’s characters, including the white streak of hair, the attire and the walk but the then I&B ministry, headed by I K Gujral, found nothing objectionable in it and the movie was released in theatres in February.

Then on June 25, 1975,



Gandhi declared Emergency.

In July the same year, Gulzar was in Moscow to present the movie at a film festival and that’s when he got to know that. It had been in theatres for over 20 weeks at the time.

“He learnt that he would have to pull out of the show as the film had been banned in India. To be sure, it was a film magazine that had published a feature on ‘Aandhi’, with the headline, ‘See your Prime Minister on screen,’” Bashir writes in the book.

The book also featured an interview with Gulzar, who spoke about how he rushed back to India after the ban.

“Sanjeev was also there with me. After we got back, J Om Prakashji (film’s producer) tried very hard to have the ban lifted. We were already in the twenty-fourth week, so we decided to modify two scenes,” the cinema veteran recalled.

New scenes added

One of the new scenes that were incorporated fea-

tured Aarti Devi looking at a portrait of Indira Gandhi and calling her a “role model”.

“They made us add that bit. They insisted. By then the movie was running in its twenty-third or twenty-fourth week,” he said.

Gulzar insisted that there was no similarity between the lead character and Indira Gandhi but he did borrow references from the late prime minister for Aarti Devi’s personality traits and mannerisms.

“At the time, it was not Indira Gandhi’s life story. But even today, there is no one like her, so she was the best persona to keep in mind. Accordingly, that was the reference one could offer to any actor - the way she used to walk, the way she used to descend a flight of stairs, the way she would come out of a helicopter.

“We used her traits in good taste - not because the character was based on her or her life. But then things happened - the opposition parties remarked that Aarti Devi’s character is

shown to consume alcohol, and some decided to connect the two unrelated personalities,” Gulzar said.

Fuel to the fire

According to Gulzar, what added fuel to the fire were the advertisements and posters for the film.

In the book, Bashir wrote that it was baseless to debate whether “Aandhi” has been modelled on the life of Indira Gandhi but the similarities between the real and reel characters were quite striking.

“Both Aarti Devi and Mrs Gandhi had an estranged marriage. If stones were pelted at Aarti Devi at a rally, they were also pelted at Mrs Gandhi in 1967 at a rally near Bhubaneswar, Orissa.

“It is this coincidence about the estranged marriage, and the fact that Feroze Gandhi too ran a hotel in Allahabad that led the critics and viewers to connect the dots and begin to believe that ‘Aandhi’ was the story of Indira Gandhi,” she wrote.

Gulzar recalled that he went to Moscow at a later time where he met Gujral, who was serving as the Indian ambassador to the Soviet Union.

“Gujral sahib told me that it was Sanjay (Gandhi) who had not taken the controversy well. Otherwise, there was no objection from the others. I remember my reply too, that it was just one of those things which happens in a democracy.”



People mourn after their family members were swept away in the lash loods triggered by cloudbursts on Wednesday, in Sainj vally of Kullu district.

Himachal floods: Toll rises to four

Shimla/Dharamshala: With the recovery of two more bodies from a hydro project site in Himachal Pradesh’s Kangra district that was hit by flash floods on Wednesday, the death toll has risen to four, officials said on Thursday.

Two bodies were recovered on Wednesday, while two more bodies were traced on Thursday, Additional Deputy Magistrate Kangra Shilpa Bekta said.

The deceased have been identified as Chain Singh, a resident of Jammu and Kashmir, Aditya Thakur from Chamba, and Pardeep Verma and Chandan from Uttar Pradesh, Kangra SP Shalini Agnihotri said on Thursday.

Search operations have been intensified to find the seven persons still missing since flash floods triggered by cloudbursts hit Kangra and Kullu districts on Wednesday.

Lovely from Chamba district, whom the search teams rescued from a forest near the project site, said there were 13 people in the camp, of which five ran towards the hills while the remaining were swept by the gushing waters.

“We saw the floods coming and screamed to alert the people below

before running to safety,” Daya Kishan, a labourer, said.

National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) Commandant Baljinder Singh said they are trying to trace the people who are feared to have been swept away from the project site during the floods.

Three more people are yet to be traced at Rehla Bihal in Kullu district.

Two persons were confirmed dead, while about 15-20 workers were feared swept away at the makeshift labour colony near the Indira Priyadarshini Hydroelectric project site following a surge in the water level at Manuni Khad in Khaniyara village on Wednesday evening.

While some of the missing persons have been rescued, the authorities did not clarify the exact number of people saved.

NDRF’s Singh said that joint search teams of NDRF, State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), police, and Home Guards are on the job, though the tough topography and bad weather have made the search operation difficult.

Another person who was last known to have fled to a nearby hill to save himself during the floods has

been found, officials said.

Some of the missing persons were from Nurpur and Chamba areas of Himachal Pradesh, while the others were from Uttar Pradesh, they said.

Expressing condolences to the bereaved families of the workers, BJP president J P Nadda said, “In this hour of crisis, every BJP worker is dedicated to providing all possible help to the citizens of Devbhoomi. I pray to God to give peace to the departed souls and provide strength to the bereaved families.”

Dharamsala’s BJP MLA Sudhir Sharma, who reached the spot on Thursday, said the project site was 1 km from his village.

He received a call on Wednesday that the water level had surged and 15-20 people had been swept away, Sharma said.

He claimed the building sheltered the labourers near a stream, and not shifting them to safer areas when the weather deteriorated pointed at negligence which should be probed.

Besides alleging lapses by the authorities in ensuring the safety of the workers, Sharma also raised serious concern about the negligence on the part of the contractor and the project officials.

Bus Carrying Pilgrims Falls

Three killed, nine missing

Rudraprayag: At least three people were killed, eight injured and nine others reported missing on Thursday when a 31-seater bus carrying pilgrims from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra to Badrinath fell into the Alaknanda river here, police said.

The vehicle met with the accident near the Gholtri village on the Badrinath National Highway between Rudraprayag and Gauchar, they said.

Relief and rescue efforts, hampered by the strong currents of the river, are underway on the spot with the help of local villagers.

Three bodies have been recovered so far, Rudraprayag District Disaster Management Officer Nandan Singh Rajwar said. The third body has been identified as that of Gauri Soni (41) from Rajgarh in Madhya Pradesh, he said.

Two bodies were recovered earlier, one near the accident site and the other from the river near Rudraprayag, Satyendra Singh Bhandari, a member of the Red Cross Society rescue team told PTI. They were identified as

Vishal Soni (42) from Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Drimmy (17), a resident of Surat in Gujarat.

The accident occurred at around 7.30 am as the bus fell into the river several hundred feet down the road with a loud bang, Bhandari, who lives close to the accident site, said. Whoever heard the sound rushed towards the scene of the accident, he further said.

The injured driver of the vehicle, who hails from Kankhal in Haridwar, claimed the bus fell into the river after being hit by a truck coming from the opposite direction. “I was driving at a speed of hardly around 10-20 kmph. We were going comfortably listening to bhajans when a truck hit the bus hard and it plunged into the gorge,” the driver named Sumit said.

He is among the four injured airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh.

Eight people, including four women and two children, were injured in the accident while nine others went missing, the SP office said, adding that the injured were rushed to the district hospital from

where some of them were airlifted to AIIMS, Rishikesh in a helicopter.

Those airlifted to AIIMS are Deepika Soni, Hemlata Soni, Ishwar Soni and the driver Sumit.

There were 20 people, including the driver, on board the vehicle when it fell into the river, police said.

The missing pilgrims are: Ravi Bhavasar (28) from Udaipur, Mauli Soni (19) from Gujarat, Lalit Kumar Soni (48) from Rajasthan, Sanjay Soni (55) from Udaipur, Mayuri (24) from Surat, Chetna Soni (52) from Udaipur, Cheshta (12) from Gujarat, Katta Ranjana Ashok (54) from Maharashtra and Sushila Soni (77) from Udaipur.

The injured were identified as Deepika Soni (42) from Sirohi Meena in Rajasthan, Hemlata Soni (45) from Gogunda, Rajasthan, Ishwar Soni (46) from Gujarat, Amita Soni (49) from Maharashtra, Soni Bhavna Ishwar (43) from Gujarat, Bhavya Soni (7) from Gujarat, Parth Soni (10) from Rajgarh, Madhya Pradesh and the driver named Sumit Kumar (23) from Haridwar, police said.



Indian nationals who were evacuated from Iran under Operation Sindhu arrive at the Delhi airport on Thursday.

40 IAS adopt first place of posting

Dehradun: Forty senior IAS officers of Uttarakhand have adopted their first place of posting to develop them further as desired by Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami.

The chief minister had asked the IAS officers to adopt and develop their first place of posting and contribute to the building of a developed nation and a developed state through the development of villages, an official release here said.

After this, an order was issued by Chief Secretary

Anand Bardhan in which all the officers were also expected to comment about the pace of social and economic development in the villages adopted by them over the years and how it can be improved by the use of CSR funds or through other resources.

The officers also have to prepare an action plan for 100 per cent correct utilisation of the funds received from the district plan and Finance Commission for the development of the adopted villages.

The officials have started working for the development of the adopted villages. Many of them have stayed overnight in the villages and closely understood the lives of villagers and their problems.

After the action plan is prepared by the officials, the state government will run a campaign for the development of the villages. The officials are also getting the support of local public representatives and voluntary organisations in the effort.

Fallout Of Pahalgam Terror Attack

10 pc drop in Amarnath Yatra registration

Srinagar: Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha said on Thursday said there has been a drop of over 10 per cent in pilgrim registration for this year’s Amarnath Yatra in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack.

“The pilgrim registration before the April 22 incident was going on at a good pace but after that the registrations decreased. There was a drop of 10.19 per cent in registration compared to last year,” Sinha told reporters at Raj Bhavan here.

The LG said around 2.36 lakh pilgrims had regis-

tered for the yatra before the attack took place at Baisaran in Pahalgam area that left 26 Hindu tourists dead.

“The confidence among the pilgrims is returning due to the steps taken by the Jammu and Kashmir Administration and the security forces which has resulted in the registrations picking up again,” he added.

“So far, 85000 pilgrims have reconfirmed their registration. We are hoping that the registrations will pick up in the coming days,” he said.

180 companies of CAPF deployed

A total of 180 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), which is 30 more than previous years, have been deployed for the security of annual Amarnath Yatra in Jammu division this year, a senior police officer said on Thursday. Inspector General of Police, Jammu zone, Bhim Sen Tuti assured a safe pilgrimage to every ‘yatri’ but appealed them to undertake the journey in official convoys if they plan to travel from Jammu rather than travelling independently. The 38-day-long yatra to 3,880-meter-high holy cave shrine of Amarnath in south Kashmir Himalayas is scheduled to start from the twin routes -- the traditional 48-km Pahalgam route in the Anantnag district and the 14-km shorter but steeper Baltal route in the Ganderbal district -- on July 3. The first batch of pilgrims will leave for Kashmir from Jammu’s Bhagwati Nagar base camp a day before the start of the annual yatra.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

“When Zohran Mamdani opens his mouth, Pakistan’s PR team takes the day off. India doesn’t need enemies with ‘allies’ like him shouting iction from New York.”

Abhishek Manu Singhvi, MP, Congress



Planet Earth belongs to everyone: Rakesh Sharma

New Delhi: Astronaut Rakesh Sharma, the first Indian to journey into space in 1984, said space travel alters the mindset of humans and makes them see the world from a perspective that “this planet belongs to everyone” and is not the sole preserve of anyone.

He shared his thoughts in a recorded podcast shared by the Ministry of Defence on the day India returned to space after 41 years, as Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla from India and three other astronauts set forth on a landmark space odyssey on Wednesday. Sharma had spent eight days

in orbit in the erstwhile Soviet Union’s Salyut-7 space station in 1984.

Shukla scripted history by embarking on space travel, along with three others from the US, Poland and Hungary, to the International Space Station as part of a commercial mission by Axiom Space.

In the podcast released Wednesday night, Sharma, who had famously said, ‘Sare Jahan Se Acha...’ during his time in the orbit, said he was a test pilot in the Indian Air Force when the selection happened.

He later retired as wing commander from the IAF.



“Because I was a test pilot when the selection happened, that time, I was young, I was fit, and I had the qualification, so I was lucky enough to have been chosen. Then, after selection, we moved to Star City, just outside

Moscow, for our training.

“The training went on for 18 months, which culminated in the Indo-Soviet spaceflight in 1984. It was an eight-day mission, and we carried out experiments which were designed by Indian scientists,” he said.

Sharma recalled that the entire training, and communication with crew members and mission control while they were in orbit, was in Russian.

“We had to learn the language before we started training, and that was not easy because of the paucity of time. So, we took about two months to learn the language,” he said.

While the Indo-Soviet spaceflight took place in an analogue era when very few owned a television, the Axiom-4 mission lift-off was watched by people on TV screens and mobile phones live across the globe.

After multiple delays, Elon Musk’s SpaceX launch vehicle with Crew Dragon spacecraft atop a Falcon-9 rocket blasted off from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida at 12:01 pm (IST) carrying mission pilot Shukla, former NASA astronaut Commander Peggy Whitson and mission specialists Tibor Kapu of Hungary and Slawosz Uznanski-Wisniewski of Poland.

Pre-poll Sops To Women

States to spend Rs 1 lakh cr in FY26: Report



Mumbai: Top 18 states will spend Rs 1 lakh crore on pre-poll sops to women this fiscal, Crisil Ratings said on Thursday.

States' spending on social sector schemes will be at an elevated 2 per cent of GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) in FY26 and is likely to impact capital expenditure, it added.

The social sector spends used to be in the range of 1.4-1.6 per cent of GSDP between fiscals 2019 and 2024, and climbed up to 2 per cent last fiscal, the rating agency said.

"This fiscal (FY26), the elevated spending will result in high revenue deficit, thereby limiting the flexibility of the states to undertake higher capital outlays," the agency said.

The analysis includes 18

top states accounting for over 90 per cent of aggregate GSDP of all states, and added that social sector spends includes revenue expenditure for welfare of backward classes, women, children and labour, as well as assistance to certain demographics in the form of social security pensions.

Its senior director Anuj Sethi said the overall expenditure across states will come at Rs 2.3 lakh crore, and of this, Rs 1 lakh crore is towards direct benefit transfers (DBT) to women primarily as "election commitments".

It may be recalled that concerns were raised about the impact of the pre-poll sops to women, and with the electoral success of such schemes, a larger number of governments

were feared to announce similar measures.

Crisil said such tendencies will make this a key monitorable factor going ahead.

"Over the past few years, several key states that have gone to the polls have introduced or increased allocations to DBT schemes. With upcoming elections in... (some) states, a rise in DBT, as part of election commitments, is possible and remains a key monitorable," it said.

Estimate not uniform

The agency said the increase in social welfare expenses over FY25 and FY26 is not estimated to be uniform across the states, with half of the analysed states expected to see a significant surge in these expenses,

Sensex, Nifty jump over 1 pc

Mumbai: Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Thursday, taking their winning momentum to the third day running, amid growing optimism following easing geopolitical tensions and buying in market heavyweights HDFC Bank and Reliance Industries.

The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 1,000.36 points or 1.21 per cent to settle at 83,755.87. During the day, it surged 1,056.58 points or 1.27 per cent to 83,812.09.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 304.25 points or 1.21 per cent to 25,549.

From the Sensex constituents, Tata Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bharti Airtel, Adani Ports, Eternal, Bajaj Finserv, NTPC, HDFC Bank, Reliance Industries and Axis Bank were among the major gainers.

In contrast, Trent, State Bank of India, Tech Mahindra, Maruti and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the laggards.

In Asian markets, Japan's Nikkei 225 index settled higher, while South Korea's Kospi, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended lower.

European markets were trading in the green in mid-session deals.

US markets ended on a mixed note on Wednesday.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.18 per cent to USD 67.80 a barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,427.74 crore on Wednesday, while Domestic Institutional Investors (DII) bought stocks worth Rs 2,372.96 crore, according to exchange data.



British High Commissioner to India Lindy Cameron during a visit to Karnataka Soaps at its manufacturing complex in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Top seven housing markets see 11 pc rise

New Delhi: Housing prices rose 11 per cent annually in the April-June quarter across the top seven cities, leading to a 20 per cent fall in sales, according to Anarock.

Real estate consultant Anarock on Thursday released the data, which showed an estimated 20 per cent decline in housing sales to 96,285 units during the April-June quarter across seven major cities from 1,20,335 units in the year-ago period.

Housing sales declined in Delhi-NCR, Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR), Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune and Kolkata. The demand increased only in Chennai.

Earlier this week, PropEquity data estimated a 19 per cent fall in sales this quarter.

On reasons for subdued demand, Anarock Chairman Anuj Puri said, "The

second quarter of 2025 was a rollercoaster for the Indian housing market, rocked by major military actions at home and abroad. The war-like climate pushed homebuyers into wait-and-watch mode, compounding the impact of soaring property prices over the past two years."

With domestic tensions easing and the RBI's repo rate cut injecting fresh optimism, he said buyer sentiment is rebounding.

As per the Anarock data, the average residential prices rose by 11 per cent annually in the top 7 cities during April-June.

Highest in NCR

NCR saw the highest 27 per cent yearly jump, followed by Bengaluru with 12 per cent and Hyderabad with 11 per cent average price jumps.

On the demand side, housing sales in Delhi-

NCR fell 14 per cent in April-June to 14,255 units from 16,550 units in the year-ago period.

In MMR, the sales declined 25 per cent to 31,275 units from 41,540 units.

Bengaluru witnessed an 8 per cent fall in sales to 15,120 units from 16,355 units, while Pune saw a 27 per cent fall to 15,410 units from 21,145 units.

In Hyderabad, sales dropped 27 per cent to 11,040 units from 15,085 units.

Housing sales in Kolkata decreased 23 per cent to 3,525 units from 4,560 units.

However, housing sales in Chennai rose 11 per cent to 5,660 units during April-June 2025 from 5,100 units in the same period last year. Realtors' body CREDAI-MCHI President Dominic Romell said, "A marginal dip in Q2 property sales across key cities is a cyclical and expected."

NSE's monthly electricity futures

New Delhi: The National Stock Exchange (NSE) on Thursday said it will launch electricity futures contract - a product which will allow power buyers, sellers, traders, industrial and retailers to manage price risks - in the next 2-3 weeks.

"We have all approvals in place...we are talking to all stakeholders. Our internal team is fully prepared... within 2-3 weeks we will announce the launch date," NSE head of sustainability, power, carbon markets and listing Harish K Ahuja said.

The electricity futures contract will become functional on the NSE within a few days of the announcement of the launch date.

The monthly contract will be available throughout the year, he said, adding, it will commence on the first business day of every month and expire a day before the contract ends.

To promote the product, NSE Chief Business Development Officer Sriram Krishnan said the exchange plans to waive off transaction charges on trading of electricity futures contracts for the first six months after launch.

The lot size of the one-month electricity futures contract will be 50 MWh,

which is equivalent to 50,000 units of electricity in one contract.

The price will be decided by taking the 30-day weighted average spot price of the three energy exchanges — Indian Energy Exchange Ltd, Hindustan Power Exchange Ltd and HPL Electric and Power Ltd.

The monthly electricity contracts will have 50MWh as the trading unit, Re 1 per MWh as tick size and the maximum order size of 2,500 MWh.

Besides, the NSE is exploring a contract for difference (CFD) that enables renewable projects to achieve stable revenue.

Last month, NSE received approval from the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) to launch monthly electricity futures contracts.

India's journey toward achieving its net-zero emissions target demands substantial investment, estimated at over USD 250 billion year-on-year till 2047 as per the Niti Aayog report.

By 2030, renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are expected to contribute over 50 per cent of the nation's installed power capacity.

Sequel to film on Zuckerberg

Los Angeles: The story of social media giant Facebook and its billionaire owner Mark Zuckerberg is set to be explored further by filmmaker Aaron Sorkin in a follow-up to his critically-acclaimed movie "The Social Network".

Sorkin had adapted Ben Mezrich's 2009 book "The Accidental Billionaires" for the 2010 movie, which was directed by David Fincher and chronicled how Zuckerberg started Facebook from his dorm at Harvard University as well as the legal dispute he had with co-founder Eduardo Saverin.

The sequel is currently titled "The Social Network Part II" and is set up at Sony Pictures, according to entertainment news outlet Deadline.

The follow-up will also be directed by Sorkin and will tackle the story behind the Wall Street Journal's article series The Facebook Files by Jeff Horowitz. The reports, published in October 2021, exposed the inner workings of — and multiple harms caused by — the world's largest social network.

It is unclear whether Jesse Eisenberg, who played Zuckerberg in the first part, will return for the sequel.



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman being welcomed upon arrival in Gandhinagar in Gujarat on Thursday.

'Pass on rate cut to customers'

Mumbai: A RBI report has suggested that all banks should bring down their lending rates for speedy transmission of the policy rate, which was lowered by 50 basis points earlier this month.

An article published in the Reserve Bank's June Bulletin stressed that the financial conditions remained conducive to facilitating an efficient transmission of rate cuts.

Most of the banks have already passed on the rate cuts announced in February and April to their customers.

It may be mentioned here that several large banks, including SBI, Bank

of Baroda, and HDFC Bank, have already passed on the benchmark lending rate-linked interest rate to borrowers by the same margin within days of the RBI cutting repo rate by a jumbo 50 bps on June 6.

Besides reducing the repo rate by 50 bps earlier this month, the RBI had announced a reduction in the cash reserve ratio (CRR) by 100 bps to 3 per cent of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) in a staggered manner during the latter half of the year.

"Financial conditions remained conducive to facilitate an efficient transmission of rate cuts to the credit market," said an ar-

ticle on 'State of the Economy' in the Reserve Bank's June 2025 Bulletin.

The reduction in CRR would release primary liquidity of about Rs 2.5 lakh crore into the banking system by December 2025.

"Besides providing durable liquidity, it will reduce the cost of funds for banks, thereby facilitating monetary policy transmission to the credit market," the article added.

The central bank, however, said that the views expressed in the Bulletin article are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Reserve Bank of India.

Reliance Launches Mega Seva Drive to Support Lakhs of Devotees During Rath Yatra



Bhubaneswar: As the spiritual fervour of Rath Yatra grips Puri, Reliance Industries Limited, in collaboration with the Puri district administration, has launched a large-scale seva initiative to support lakhs of devotees. Through Reliance Foundation, the company is ensuring a safe and comfortable experience for pilgrims during the annual chariot procession of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra. Under its 'We Care' philosophy, Reliance is providing hot meals to devotees and duty personnel at six major points along the Yatra route. To maintain cleanliness, sanitation facilities, contactless sanitizers, and garbage bags have been arranged. The company is also working with local authorities to install directional signage to manage the massive crowd flow. Over 4,000

trained volunteers are deployed to assist with crowd control, hydration points, and pilgrim support. In view of the heat, 1.5 lakh eco-friendly hand fans are being distributed. Additionally, 100 police aid posts have been set up, and 3,500 raincoats have been provided to police staff in anticipation of rain. Refreshment kits are also being supplied to volunteers and sanitation workers. Earlier this year, Reliance Foundation undertook similar service initiatives at Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj, benefiting lakhs of pilgrims. Led by Smt. Nita M. Ambani, the Foundation continues to impact millions through efforts in education, healthcare, rural development, and disaster response. This Rath Yatra, Reliance reaffirms its belief that serving people is a path to serving the divine.

Rise in office space demand from corporates

New Delhi: Gross leasing of office space rose 11 per cent to 178 lakh sq ft across seven major cities during the April-June period on healthy demand from corporates despite global economic uncertainties, according to Colliers.

The gross leasing stood at 161 lakh sq ft in the year-ago period across seven major cities, according to Colliers data released on Thursday.

Real estate consultant Colliers India data showed that demand of workspace increased in six cities --

Bengaluru, Chennai, Delhi-NCR, Hyderabad, Kolkata, and Pune.

Leasing activities declined only in Mumbai, it said.

The gross absorption, or leasing, does not include lease renewals, pre-commitments and deals where only a letter of intent has been signed.

Backed by a diversifying occupier base, a steady supply pipeline and growing investor appetite, he said 2025 is shaping up to be another impressive year for commercial real estate



in India.

As per the data, leasing activities in Bengaluru remained flat at 48 lakh sq ft in April-June 2025 compared to 48 lakh sq ft in the year-ago period.

In Chennai, the demand increased 30 per cent to 26 lakh sq ft in the second

quarter of 2025 from 20 lakh sq ft in the year-ago period.

Leasing of office space rose 16 per cent in Delhi-NCR to 22 lakh sq ft from 19 lakh sq ft.

Hyderabad saw 23 per cent rise in demand to 32 lakh sq ft from 26 lakh sq ft.

In Kolkata, the demand doubled to 6 lakh sq ft from 3 lakh sq ft.

The gross leasing of office space in Pune increased 60 per cent to 16 lakh sq ft from 10 lakh sq ft.

However, the leasing of workspaces fell 20 per cent in Mumbai to 28 lakh sq ft during the period under review from 35 lakh sq ft in the corresponding period of the preceding year.

Of the total 178 lakh sq ft of leasing in the June quarter across all these seven cities, Colliers India noted that 135 lakh sq ft of

office spaces were picked up directly by corporates while 43 lakh sq ft spaces were taken by co-working operators, which set up their centres and then sub-lease the areas to end-users.

Amal Mishra, Founder and CEO of coworking firm Urban Vault, said, "The demand for office space continues to gain momentum, driven by competitive operating costs and the growing availability of build-to-suit facilities."

QUOTE OF THE DAY

needs a roof over its head but it costs more than your entire life's savings. The next time someone tells you the GDP figures, show them the truth about your domestic budget - and ask, who is this economy for?"

Rahul Gandhi, Leader, Congress



Trump’s Decision Questioned

First classified briefing to Congress on Iran strikes

Washington: Senators are set to meet with top national security officials Thursday as many question President Donald Trump's decision to bomb three Iranian nuclear sites — and whether those strikes were ultimately successful.

The classified briefing, which was originally scheduled for Tuesday and was delayed, also comes as the Senate is expected to vote this week on a resolution that would require congressional approval if Trump decides to strike Iran again.

Democrats, and some Republicans, have said that the White House overstepped its authority when it failed to seek the advice of Congress and they want to know more about the intelligence that Trump relied on when he authorised the attacks.

“Senators deserve full transparency, and the administration has a legal obligation to inform Congress precisely about what is happening,” said Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer, who said Tuesday that it was “outrageous” that the Senate and House briefings were postponed. A similar briefing for House members was pushed to Friday.

CIA Director John Ratcliffe, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth are expected to brief the senators on Thursday. Director of National Intelligence



Tulsi Gabbard was scheduled to be at the Tuesday briefing, but will not be attending, according to a person familiar with the schedule.

The briefing could be contentious as questions have swirled around Trump's decision to strike Iran and whether the attacks were successful. A preliminary US intelligence report found this week that Iran's nuclear programme had been set back only a few months, contradicting statements from Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the status of Iran's nuclear facilities, according to two people familiar with the report.

The people were not authorised to address the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

On Wednesday, Gabbard and Ratcliffe sent out statements backing Trump's claims that the facilities were “completely and fully obliterated”.

Gabbard posted on social media that “new intelligence confirms what @POTUS has stated numerous times: Iran's nuclear

facilities have been destroyed.”

She said that if the Iranians choose to rebuild the three facilities, it would “likely take years to do.”

Ratcliffe said in a statement from the CIA that Iran's nuclear programme has been “severely damaged” and cited new intelligence “from a historically reliable and accurate source/method that several key Iranian nuclear facilities were destroyed and would have to be rebuilt over the course of years”.

Republicans defend Trump

Most Republicans have staunchly defended Trump and hailed the tentative ceasefire he brokered in the Israel-Iran war. House Speaker Mike Johnson even went as far as to question the constitutionality of the War Powers Act, which is intended to give Congress a say in military action.

“The bottom line is the commander in chief is the president, the military reports to the president, and the person empowered to act on the nation's behalf is the president,” Johnson

told reporters.

But some Republicans — including some of Trump's staunchest supporters — are uncomfortable with the strikes and the potential for US involvement in an extended Middle East conflict.

“I think the speaker needs to review the Constitution,” said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky. “And I think there's a lot of evidence that our Founding Fathers did not want presidents to unilaterally go to war.”

Paul would not say if he is voting for the resolution by Sen. Tim Kaine, D-Va., that would require congressional approval for specific military action in Iran. The resolution is likely to fail as 60 votes would be needed to pass it and Republicans have a 53-47 majority. But Kaine says it's important to put the Senate on the record.

“You have a debate like this so that the entire American public, whose sons and daughters are in the military and whose lives will be at risk in war, get to see the debate and reach their own conclusion together with the elected officials about whether the mission is worth it or not,” Kaine said.

While he did not seek approval, Trump sent congressional leaders a short letter Monday serving as his official notice of the strikes, two days after the bombs fell.



Rescuers search through the rubble of a damaged section of Evin Prison following an Israeli strike the day before in Tehran, Iran.

India rejects Pak's nefarious agenda

By Yoshita Singh

United Nations: India strongly rejected Pakistan's “unwarranted aspersions” over UN processes and attempts to deflect attention from atrocities committed against children in the country and rampant cross-border terrorism, asserting that the world has not forgotten the Pahalgalam attacks.

“I am constrained to respond to the politically motivated remarks made by the delegate of Pakistan, one of the grave violators of the CAAC (Children and Armed Conflict) agenda,” India's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador P Harish said.

In a statement at the UN Security Council open debate on ‘Effective strategies to end and prevent grave violations against children’ Wednesday, Harish said that Pakistan is casting unwarranted as-

persions over UN processes and also smearing India at various discussions to pursue their nefarious agenda.

“We reject this attempt by Pakistan to deflect attention from the atrocities committed against children in their country, as highlighted in the Secretary General's report, as well as their rampant cross border terrorism,” Harish said.

Harish said that UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres' report on CAAC provides details of serious violations against children in armed conflict in Pakistan.

Secretary General has “expressed concern at the rise in such grave violations reported including attacks against schools, particularly girls' schools, against health workers, and about the incidents in the border areas with Afghanistan where a series

of killing and maiming of Afghan children was directly attributed to cross border shelling and air strikes by Pakistani armed forces!”

“To preach at this body after such behaviour is grossly hypocritical,” Harish said.

He told the Council that the world has not forgotten the “savagely targeted attacks” by Pakistani and Pakistani-trained terrorists killing 26 tourists in India in Pahalgalam, Jammu and Kashmir on April 22.

He noted that the Security Council had issued a Press Statement on April 25 that had underlined the need to hold perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act accountable and bring them to justice.

India had undertaken non-escalatory, proportionate and focused attacks that targeted nine terrorist infrastructure sites on

May 7 in response through Operation Sindoor, he said, while pointing out that terrorists killed in these attacks were given state funerals by Pakistan.

The Pakistani army also deliberately shelled Indian border villages in May 2025, killing and injuring a number of civilians, he said.

“And yet, they try to preach to others,” the Indian envoy said.

Harish underscored that the entire Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir has been, is and will always be an integral and inalienable part of India irrespective of the frequent and incessant spate of lies and falsehoods by Pakistan.

The Secretary General's report on Children and armed conflict noted that a total of 99 grave violations against 86 children (27 boys, 14 girls, 45 sex unknown) were reported in Pakistan.

EU leaders discuss tougher Russia sanctions

Brussels: The heads of the European Union's 27 member nations will meet Thursday in Brussels to discuss tougher sanctions on Russia, ways to prevent painful new US tariffs, and how to make their voices heard in the Middle East conflicts.

Most of the leaders will arrive from a brief but intense NATO summit where they pledged a big boost in defense spending, and paped over some of their differences with US President Donald Trump.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will join the EU summit by videoconference, after meeting Trump on Wednesday.

US-led NATO downgraded Ukraine from a top priority to a side player this week, but Russia's war in Ukraine remains of paramount concern for the EU.

Members will be discussing an 18th round of sanctions against Russia and whether to maintain a price cap on Russian oil, measures that some nations oppose because it could raise energy prices.

Meanwhile, Trump's threatened tariffs are weighing on the EU, which

Zelenskyy backs prosecution of Russian leaders

The Hague: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy formally approved plans Wednesday to set up a new international court to prosecute senior Russian officials for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The special tribunal will be created through an agreement between Ukraine and the Council of Europe, the continent's top human rights body. Zelenskyy visited the Strasbourg-based organisation for the first time as part of the announcement. The special tribunal aims to target senior Russian leaders for the “crime of aggression,” which underpins the countless war crimes Ukraine accuses Russian forces of committing since the start of the war on Feb 24, 2022. Existing international courts, including the International Criminal Court in The Hague lack jurisdiction to prosecute Russian nationals for that specific offense.

negotiates trade deals on behalf of all 27 member countries. He lashed out at Spain on Wednesday for not spending more on defense and suggested yet more tariffs. France's president called Trump to task for starting a trade war with longtime allies.

European leaders are also concerned about fallout from the wars in the Middle East, and the EU is pushing to revive diplomatic negotiations with Iran over its nuclear programme.

EU members have internal disagreements to overcome. They are divided

over what to do about European policy toward Israel because of its conduct in Gaza. And left-leaning parties are attacking European Commissioner Ursula von Der Leyen's pivot away from the EU's climate leadership in favour of military investment.

Defence and security are likely to top the agenda. The summit will end with a statement of conclusions that will set the agenda for the bloc for the next four months and can be seen as a bellwether for political sentiment in Europe on major regional and global issues.



Mourners carry the flag-draped coffin of Mahan Setareh, a member of the paramilitary Basij force who was killed in Israeli attacks, during his funeral ceremony in Tehran on Thursday.

Indian woman assaulted in Canada

Ottawa: A 23-year-old Indian woman was brutally attacked and robbed near her home in Winnipeg, the capital of the Canadian province of Manitoba, and a teenager has been arrested in connection with the incident, police said.

The woman, identified by community members as Tanpreet Kaur, was walking back to her apartment in Winnipeg after finishing her evening shift late when she was ambushed by two strangers at

the 1-99 block of Roslyn Road shortly after midnight on June 23.

Winnipeg police said in a statement on Wednesday that bystanders in the area stopped the attack after which suspects quickly fled after stabbing and robbing the victim of her property.

“The victim was stabbed and robbed of her cell phone. During the assault, she was able to disarm the suspect and held onto the knife, while they contin-

ued to assault her. Bystanders intervened and called 911 and the suspects ran off,” the police statement said, adding, the woman was transported to a hospital in critical condition.

A 17-year-old girl was arrested in connection with the incident and faces charges of aggravated assault, robbery, and multiple breaches of a release order. “She was detained in custody,” the statement added.

N Korea to open key tourist site

Seoul: North Korea next week will open a signature tourist site on its east coast that it called a prelude to a new era in its tourism industry, though there is no word on when the country will fully reopen its borders to foreign visitors.

The Wonsan-Kalma coastal tourist zone has hotels and other accommodations for nearly 20,000 guests who can swim in the sea, play sports and other recreation activities and eat at restaurants and cafeterias on site, state media said.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un toured the site and cut the inaugural tape at a lavish ceremony Tuesday, the official Korean Central News Agency reported Thursday.

He said its construction would be recorded as “one of the greatest successes this year” and called the site “the proud first step” toward realising the government's policy of developing tourism, according to KCNA.

The Wonsan-Kalma zone will begin service for domestic tourists next Tuesday, KCNA said. But it didn't say when it will

start receiving foreign tourists.

Kim has been pushing to make the country a tourism hub as part of efforts to revive the ailing economy, and the Wonsan-Kalma zone is one of his most talked-about tourism projects.

KCNA reported North Korea will confirm plans to build large tourist sites in other parts of the country, too.

But North Korea hasn't fully lifted the travel curbs, including a ban on foreign tourists, that were imposed at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Starting from February 2024, North Korea has been accepting Russian tourists amid the booming military and other partnerships between the two countries, but Chinese group tours, which made up more than 90 per cent of visitors before the pandemic, remain stalled.

In February this year, a small group of international tourists visited the country for the first time in five years, but tourist agencies said in March that their tours to North Korea were paused.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"I couldn't really get much of the culture, of the land, of the people in India. But of course, I'm interested in such a huge, important part of the world that has so much effect on a lot of things, among them spirituality."



Javier Bardem, Actor

‘Evidence of rice in ancient cave’

Canberra: In a new study published today in Science Advances, my colleagues and I have uncovered the earliest evidence of rice in the Pacific Islands – at an ancient cave site on Guam in the Mariana Islands of western Micronesia.

The domesticated rice was transported by the first islanders, who sailed 2,300 kilometres of open ocean from the Philippines about 3,500 years ago.

The discovery settles long-standing academic debates and satisfies dec-

ades of curiosity about the origins and lifestyles of early Pacific peoples.

The case of the Marianas, located more than 2,000km east of the Philippines and northeast of Indonesia, is especially intriguing. These islands were the first places in Remote Oceania reached by anyone, in this case inhabited for the first time by Malayo-Polynesian-speaking populations from islands in Southeast Asia.

For nearly two decades, scholars debated the tim-



ing and the overseas source of these first islanders, the ancestors of today's Chamorro people. How did they come to Guam and the Marianas?

Archaeological research has confirmed settlement in the Mariana Islands 3,500 years ago at several sites in Guam, Tinian and Saipan.

In 2020, the first ancient DNA analysis from Guam confirmed what archaeology and linguistics had suggested: the early settlers came from central or northern Philippines. Further ancestral links trace them back to Taiwan, the homeland of both their language and their genetics.

Ritual in caves?

The setting of the discovery – a beach cave – gives us another interpretive perspective.

In Chamorro traditions, caves are sacred places for important spiritual practices. According to records of 1521 through 1602, the Chamorro people in the Marianas grew rice in limited amounts and consumed it only sparingly, reserved for special occasions and critical life events, such as the impending death of a loved one. Rice became more common after the intensive Spanish colonial period, after 1668.

-The Conversation

Editorial

The Real Message of the Gita: Responsibility, Not Escape

Perform your duties without worrying about the results, as outcomes are not entirely in your control—they depend on many external factors. Obsessing over results only robs you of focus, peace, and health. True understanding of karma eliminates the need to separately understand religion. When you act without selfish desire, your action becomes worship. Purity or impurity lies not in the action, but in the mindset of the doer.

Some coincidences carry profound meaning. They are not just random events but turning points that have the potential to change not only an individual's life but the fate of an entire civilization. One such powerful coincidence took place during the epic battle of the Mahabharata. It is both fascinating and enlightening to realize that the Bhagavad Gita, one of the greatest spiritual texts known to mankind, was born not because of the war itself, but in a moment of intense personal crisis. The Gita was spoken on the battlefield, but its cause was not war—it was the inner conflict of Arjuna, the great warrior, who found himself unwilling to fight. Arjuna's refusal to fight did not come from fear or cowardice. It came from a sudden emotional and spiritual turmoil. As he stood on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, facing the army of the Kauravas, he saw among them his own relatives, teachers, and loved ones. The thought of killing his own kin for the sake of a kingdom filled him with sorrow. He was overwhelmed by a sense of detachment, of renunciation. And though renunciation (vairagya) is glorified in our scriptures, what made Arjuna's renunciation problematic was its timing. It came at a moment when action was necessary—when duty had to be performed. Instead of rising to the occasion, Arjuna dropped his weapons and sat at the back of his chariot. He was not rejecting war alone; he was turning away from his dharma, his responsibility. The situation was delicate. Both armies were ready to fight. The war could begin

any moment. It was at this moment, amidst chaos and hesitation, that Lord Krishna gave the immortal teachings of the Gita. He reminded Arjuna of his duties, the nature of the soul, the reality of life and death, and the essence of selfless action. If Arjuna had not faltered, if he had not questioned, the world would never have received this profound scripture. India is a land of deep spirituality and religion. It is home to countless temples, ashrams, gurudwaras, mosques, churches, and sacred spaces. Rarely does one find another country with such diversity and depth in spiritual traditions. And yet, no other land is so plagued by confusion and misconceptions about religion and spirituality. Over time, we have unconsciously glorified the idea of renunciation, but at the same time, we have distorted its meaning. We have made it rigid, filled it with unrealistic conditions, and pushed it so far away from ordinary life that it seems incompatible with modern living. This distorted understanding led to a dangerous mindset: that to be religious is to perform rituals, visit places of worship, and that to be spiritual means to abandon life, wear saffron robes, and separate oneself from society. We became caught in symbols, forgetting substance. We set out for divine devotion but got lost in ritualism. Our interpretations became shallow. Words like yajna, vairagya, and spirituality lost their essence. They became ritualistic, hollow, and disconnected from daily life. But now the time has come to break free from these mental shackles. It is time to rediscover the real meaning of spiritual living—to

embrace a joyful, purposeful, and compassionate life. In the Gita, when Krishna asks Arjuna to renounce desires, he does not ask him to renounce action. He makes it clear: desires may arise, but we must not act out of selfish cravings. We cannot stop acting—action is the very nature of life. Even breathing is an action, whether done consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, the goal is not to abandon karma (action), but to rise above selfish motives. Krishna emphasizes that true detachment is not from the world, but from personal greed. To move from self-interest to universal interest is the simplest path to the Divine. Caring for others, fulfilling our responsibilities sincerely, and living with compassion—this is the highest form of worship. The only real barrier on the path to God is the ego, our personal desires, and attachments. Vairagya should not disconnect us from the world; it should disconnect us from selfishness. The world, after all, is God's creation and must be embraced fully, with love and compassion. We must continue to act, for action is inevitable. And those who understand action deeply—who understand karma—do not need to separately understand religion. They are already living it. Such individuals are the true renunciates, not because they have left the world, but because they act without ego or desire. When we live like this, our pride, our anger, our attachments—all begin to dissolve. Again and again, the question arises: How can we be happy? How can we live joyfully? How can life become a poem, a song, a dance? How can we break free from sorrow, fear,

frustration, anxiety, and stress? Every human heart is silently screaming for freedom—from these burdens, from these emotions. We want to be the master of our own mind. We want to live with inner freedom. And this desire is universal. Every religion, every scripture, every spiritual tradition, in essence, teaches the same thing: pleasure and happiness are not the same. Most of us confuse the two. We chase comfort and luxury thinking they will bring us joy. But comfort is not happiness. When we acquire what we desire, we often still feel empty. There's a gap, a hollowness, a sense of incompleteness. The comforts are there, but the joy is missing. This is because happiness is internal—it is not found in wealth, position, or pleasure. This is the real sadhana, the real spirituality. No action in itself is sattvic (pure), rajasic (ambitious), or tamasic (ignorant). These are not properties of actions—they are states of the human mind. What matters is not what we do, but why we do it. Intention is everything. If you help someone, ask yourself: What is my intention? Am I doing this for praise? For a favor in return? For some hidden gain? Or am I helping simply because compassion is my nature? When helping others becomes a part of our natural being, when we act out of love without any expectation, we become truly free. And when that happens, sorrow, anger, stress, and fear begin to vanish on their own. The heart becomes light. The soul becomes calm. And in that calmness, we find true joy—the joy of simply being. And in the end, what more do we really need?

The Unanswered Question: Why Did the Israel-Iran War Happen?

The big question now is: Why did the Israel-Iran war happen? Former U.S. President Donald Trump had repeatedly declared his intention to topple Iran's Khamenei regime. However, after the ceasefire, he claimed that regime change leads to chaos and that such decisions should be left to the Iranian people. This contradiction raises concerns—was the war launched amid this confusion? The U.S. and Israel had a clear goal: to destroy Iran's nuclear capabilities and stop it from developing nuclear weapons. However, many questions about Iran's nuclear program remain unanswered. Iran has now completely cut ties with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). It has stopped surveillance, blocked inspections, and will no longer submit regular reports. Despite the ceasefire, Iran insists that its nuclear program will continue. One of the most significant blows to Iran during the war was the loss of 17 nuclear scientists, reportedly killed by Israeli forces. This damage is irreparable. If Iran's nuclear infrastructure still exists, it's unclear how the U.S. and Israel can claim victory. And if their goals remain unmet, what was the point of this war? Israel suffered major economic losses—around \$12 billion. Nearly 60,000 businesses left the country. Industrial damages are estimated at \$1.9 billion, and the destruction of infrastructure has cost \$4.2 billion. Iran struck back, bombing Israeli military bases, airfields, and buildings in Tel Aviv. Iran, too, incurred heavy losses: \$150–200 billion in economic damage, the deaths of 800–900 people, including senior military commanders, and the destruction of thousands of centrifuges in nuclear facilities. The war also impacted Iran's economy, reducing its GDP by an estimated \$9.6 billion. In the end, both countries were left devastated. This leads to a painful question: Was such destruction worth it? Now, peace and stability in the Middle East are more critical than ever. Gaza remains under blockade, with ongoing violence and mass killings. Over 60,000 deaths have occurred, including many children. There's suspicion that the U.S. and Israel want to take full control of Gaza. The global economy heavily depends on Middle Eastern stability. Millions of Indians work in the region. If Iran's instability affects countries like Syria, Libya, Lebanon, and Iraq, it could lead to rising terrorism and regional extremism, threatening internal security across the Gulf—and possibly even India. This was a strange war, ended in a theatrical manner. For instance, Iran's missile attack on a U.S. base in Qatar was reportedly pre-announced. As a result, 13 of the 14 missiles were intercepted, and the last one missed its target. It appeared more symbolic than real—meant to show Iranian citizens that the government had retaliated. Despite the ceasefire, contradictory statements have emerged from Trump and Iranian leaders. The U.S. still claims credit for ending the war. However, a ceasefire must be real and lasting. If both countries continue to attack, the meaning of both war and peace is lost. Iran now needs to abandon secrecy and adopt diplomacy and transparency. Its nuclear power must be a deterrent—not a threat. Iran should avoid becoming a second North Korea.



Current Article

What does it truly mean when a person, after losing their powerful seat, still expresses affection toward the one who replaced them and even offers blessings? At face value, it portrays them as someone exceptionally noble—someone who has become indifferent to the turbulent ups and downs of life, who remains untouched like a lotus in muddy water. In today's world of politics, society, and the blind race for power and position, it has almost become a ritual: the person who falls behind issues a statement of graceful detachment, giving the impression that worldly ambitions never meant anything to them. They suggest that they were always prepared to give it all up, that they walked into the arena not for power but for service, and that now, having fulfilled their duty, they retreat in peace, with their resignation perpetually in their pocket. Thrones once claimed as their own are lost. Palaces once seen as ancestral rights now feel alien. And so, in departure, what better narrative to adopt than one of renunciation? "I never desired power," they say. "I merely bore the burden of public service." Some even go as far as to imply that had fate allowed, their sons, grandsons, and generations after would have continued this divine 'service.' But alas, their greatness was too much for the petty minds of their opponents to endure. And so, they leave with poetic flair—just as in an old folk song that says, "Take these keys, mother, the noble ones have become strangers." They walk away from it all—but not without letting the world know. This carefully choreographed exit often feels like a theatrical performance, complete with tragic overtones and dramatic pauses. They leave behind vague hints of betrayal, injustice, and lost glory. Press statements become soliloquies of sorrow, interviews drip with emotional undertones. Their followers turn into mourners, their party offices into tempo-

The Drama of Departure and the Illusion of Renunciation

In the political arena, every exit is a performance and every return a calculated comeback. Beneath noble words lies a familiar script of ambition and power.



rary shrines of loyalty. The symbolism is rich, the messaging carefully designed. Even their silence becomes meaningful—a political language in itself. And though they walk out with bowed heads, their eyes remain fixed on the road back in. After all, politics is less about exit and more about re-entry. The so-called retreat is often no more than a pause—a time to recalibrate, regroup, and re-emerge with a fresh narrative and a new enemy. In some cases, they spend this period abroad, penning memoirs, delivering lectures on leadership, or simply waiting for the tide to turn in their favor. Meanwhile, they keep their machinery well-oiled, their loyalists active, and their social media pages emotionally charged. Retirement is a costume; the comeback is

the play. Yet every grand tale of sacrifice has another side, another version whispered by critics and insiders alike. "This wasn't sacrifice," they say, "but survival masquerading as nobility." The water had already risen too high—there was no choice but to sink. And when sinking became inevitable, it was wrapped in the noble garb of a self-chosen departure. These farewells are rarely genuine. Those who glorify their exit often spend their time plotting a grand return. And when they do come back, they do so not quietly but with loud declarations: "I am a warrior, I shall fight for the people until my last breath." With new alliances, new followers, they dive back into the very battlefield they once condemned as rotten, declaring it now their sacred mission

to clean it for the people's welfare. Often, the stage is set before the curtain even falls. Meanwhile, those who have seized the vacated throne chant a similar tune. They too claim to be saviors, declaring that the people have suffered enough under the burden of nepotism, corruption, and systemic decay. "Now begins the real transformation," they proclaim. Both parties—those who leave and those who arrive—speak the same language, wear the same mask of revolution, and promise to create a "new world." It's ironic: the one who exits vows to return and reshape society, and the one who enters claims to be its redeemer. Both point fingers at the mess left behind, both promise change, both declare that the time for truth, justice, and people's rule has finally arrived. In this cyclical theatre, even enemies begin to sound identical, their ideologies blurring into a common script of righteous indignation and hollow hope. And so, we continue to witness this cycle—one hero departs, another enters, both promising to sweep the system clean and give birth to a better world. This "new world" is a familiar one—it is always promised, never delivered. Every political warrior who steps into the ring does so draped in the banner of righteousness and reform. Whether on the side of the ruling power or the opposition, all bear the same message: we will rebuild, we will rise, we are your last hope. Is there anyone left who can enter this battlefield without making such shiny declarations? Is there a soul brave enough to fight without cloaking their ambitions in the noble veil of sacrifice and service? Until then, let us bow to the loudest among them, the one with the grandest promises and the boldest slogans, and place upon their head the garland of victory—for they understand the performance, and the audience is always ready.

Healthcare or Exploitation? A Deepening Crisis in India's Medical System

In Indian society, the medical profession still commands great respect—and rightly so, thanks to a handful of honest and dedicated doctors who serve patients with compassion and commitment. However, with time, the growing attitude of "money over morals" has started creeping into every profession. Idealism, ethics, and honesty are being sidelined, while corruption, selfishness, and exploitation take center stage. Hospitals are increasingly being run like profit-making enterprises rather than service institutions. The human connection between doctor and patient is slowly being replaced by transactional interactions. As a result, trust—once the foundation of medical care—is now steadily eroding. The film Gabbar is Back attempted to highlight this very crisis of morality and growing corruption in both public and private sectors. While critics dismissed it as a typical masala film, for many citizens who've suffered at the hands of a corrupt system, the film felt like a reflection of their own struggles. A powerful dialogue from the film—"Society doesn't suffer because of

It is commonly seen that private hospitals generate bills ranging from thousands to lakhs of rupees for even minor tests or treatments. Charges are levied under various heads such as ICU fees, monitoring charges, disposable items, and even for things like bedsheets and gloves. In many instances, patients are viewed not as individuals in need of care, but as opportunities for profit. As a result, they are often subjected to unnecessary tests and procedures. This exploitation turns healthcare into a commercial transaction rather than a humanitarian service. Many families are financially burdened by such practices. It reflects a growing crisis of ethics in the medical system.

criminals, but because of the inaction of capable people"—perfectly captures the frustration of the common man. One subplot in the film reveals how private hospital mafias exploit people by prescribing unnecessary tests or keeping even the dead on ventilators to extract money. Sadly, this is not just fiction—it mirrors the harsh reality of many Indian hospitals. Negligence in both public and private hospitals is rampant, yet weak systems allow the guilty to go unpunished, while victims are left helpless. India's rich philosophical and spiritual tradition has always emphasized compassion and well-being for all. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

contains a prayer that says: "May all be happy, may all be free from illness, may all see goodness, and may none suffer." Despite such profound teachings, today's man seems trapped in a web of material desires, often exploiting his own brethren for gain. Several instances have emerged where government doctors practice privately at home or are employed in private hospitals. A recent scandal under the Ayushman Bharat scheme revealed massive fraud by private hospitals. According to the National Health Authority (NHA), over 2.7 lakh insurance claims worth ₹562.4 crore were found to be fake. In response, the government delisted over 1,100

hospitals from the panel. As per the National Medical Commission, India currently has over 1.38 million allopathic (MBBS) doctors, giving the country a doctor-patient ratio of 1:811, which is better than the WHO-recommended 1:1000. There are now 1.18 lakh MBBS seats, a major increase from 51,348 in 2014. Yet, access to healthcare in rural India remains poor, with severe infrastructure shortages. Take Himachal Pradesh, for instance—a peaceful and naturally beautiful state. Yet even here, private hospitals have begun exploiting common people financially. Many families, after exhausting local options, are forced to

take their patients to Chandigarh for better treatment. The reason? Government hospitals often lack proper facilities and staff. In desperation, people turn to private hospitals, where even minor procedures are billed in lakhs. ICU charges, monitoring fees, disposables, even items like bed sheets and gloves—everything is billed. Often, patients are treated not as humans but as revenue sources. Unnecessary tests like MRIs and CT scans are routinely recommended. Sometimes, surgeries are pushed for problems that could be solved with basic care. This commercialization of healthcare is a breach of public trust. Let us not forget—healthcare is not a business. It is a noble service. Incidents like these hurt the very soul of socially responsible states like Himachal Pradesh. It's time to reform the system and restore healthcare to its rightful place as a service rooted in compassion and ethics. Only then can we truly uphold the spirit of "Sarve Santu Niramayah"—may all be free of illness. The need for honest, accessible, and fair healthcare has never been more urgent.



KALEIDOSCOPE

1. Devotees visit the Kamakhya Temple to offer prayers as the doors reopen after the four-day Ambubachi Mela in Guwahati on Thursday.
2. Models wearing the props made by Dehradun-based enterprise Lord of Battles.
3. Sadhus raise slogans at the Ram Mandir base camp ahead of the annual Amarnath Yatra 2025 in Jammu on Wednesday.
4. Police personnel and artistes take part in a rally to mark International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Chikkamagaluru on Thursday.
5. A man dressed as Goddess Kali performs during the Ashada Masam Bonalu celebrations at Golconda Fort in Hyderabad on Thursday..



GAME CHANGER

Underdogs to Overlords



By Rajeev Puri

On June 25, 1983, cricket's global power balance shifted irreversibly. That day, a team not taken seriously by pundits or bookies toppled the indomitable West Indies at Lord's, lifting the Prudential World Cup for the first time. The men who achieved it - Kapil Dev's 'devils' - did more than just win a trophy. They rewired the sporting psyche of a nation, inspiring a transformation whose reverberations continue to echo through the game's corridors of power.

As a cricketer and a devoted reader of the game's literature, the first autobiography I ever read remains etched in memory: *Chappelli* by the abrasive and articulate Ian Chappell. Beyond the swagger and flair that mirrored his playing style, what jarred me even as a boy was his thinly veiled disdain for India. Re-counting his 1969 tour under Bill Lawry, Chappell mocked the facilities, the infrastructure and the socialist morass he perceived in Indian society. That he was tipped to become captain perhaps explains why he tolerated what he saw as a 'torture tour' to a country then considered irrelevant to world cricket.

Fast forward four decades. In 2024, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) boasted a net worth of Rs. 20,686 crore - more than 30 times that of Cricket Australia. The once-dismissed periphery is now the epicentre. The International Cricket Council (ICC), once the fiefdom of the SENA countries (South Africa, England, New Zealand, Australia), now often appears beholden to India. Former Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Najam Sethi bluntly declared that the ICC is now "subservient" to Indian interests.

This revolution did not begin at Lord's, but at Tunbridge Wells a



week earlier. On June 18, India - rank outsiders - faced Zimbabwe in a must-win game. Their prior World Cup performances had been forgettable, with just one win (against East Africa) across the 1975 and 1979 editions. The match against Zimbabwe began disastrously: 17 for 5, teetering on the brink of elimination. Kapil Dev then played an innings that rewrote India's cricketing destiny, hammering an unbeaten 175 off 138 balls, laced with six towering sixes and sixteen authoritative fours. Sunil Gavaskar later called it the greatest one-day innings he had ever seen, with some shots clearing not just the boundary, but the stadium itself.

That innings instilled belief. India defeated a formidable England side in the semi-final, setting up a daunting final against Clive Lloyd's West Indies, chasing its third consecutive title. The odds were 66 to 1 against India. Batting first, India managed a modest 183. With legends like Vivian Richards, Gordon Greenidge, and Lloyd in their ranks, most expected the West Indies to chase it down in 30 overs.

But Indian bowlers had other plans. Balwinder Sandhu clean-bowled Greenidge with a delivery that jagged in sharply. Haynes followed. Then came the moment that swung the momentum: a sprinting Kapil Dev took a backward catch off Richards that has since become part of cricketing folklore. With Richards gone and Lloyd, Gomes and Bachchu falling cheaply, India sensed blood. Mohinder Amarnath cleaned up the tail with three wickets, as the West Indies were bundled out for 140. India had won by 43 runs. Amarnath, for his all-round heroics, was rightly

named man of the match.

Kapil Dev lifting the World Cup has become an enduring image of national pride, an emblem of possibility for a country then grappling with economic and political malaise. The victory sparked a cricketing renaissance.

First, it fuelled self-belief. India now knew it could beat the best. Second, the televised triumph ignited public imagination. Cricket had been popular, but it now became religion. Third, it democratised the sport, expanding its reach beyond elite urban centres to small towns and rural outposts. Fourth, it sowed the seeds for the professionalisation and commercialisation of the game. And finally, it elevated India's performance. With stars like Dhoni, Gill, and Pant hailing from provincial backgrounds, the bench strength today is unmatched. India consistently ranks among the top two in all formats.

Perhaps the biggest transformation has been economic. Cricket is now a multibillion-dollar industry in India. The Indian Premier League is the most lucrative and widely watched T20 league in the world. Cricketers command endorsement deals rivaling those of Bollywood stars, and broadcasting rights draw fierce global bidding. No cricketing nation dares ignore India's clout.

On that June afternoon in 1983, Kapil Dev and his men sowed a seed that would grow into an empire. Today, India's cricketing juggernaut rolls on - but it does so in the long shadow of that audacious coup at Lord's.

(The author is a political commentator and a global affairs observer. Views personal.)

KARGIL VICTORY DAY

Laddoos, Loyalty, and the Line of Control



By Brigadier AS Ranade, VSM (Retired)



The Indian Army proved its mettle again in the 1999 Kargil War. Brave soldiers, determined units, and strong leaders ensured the Tricolour flew over all Indian soil up to the Line of Control, despite early setbacks and a missed intelligence warning of large Pakistani intrusions in rugged Western Ladakh. The Batalik sub-sector was among the most remote and underdeveloped, making evicting a well-entrenched enemy even harder. Our Assault Team fought from mid-June to late July 1999 in Muntho Dhalo and beyond, up to the Line of Control.

In the third week of July, we were tasked with clearing a key enemy stronghold on the Line of Control watershed. We had to advance to a ridge already secured by another unit, reconnoitre the target, and launch quickly. Movement had to be at night, as daylight drew accurate enemy fire. Time was critical; we had to link up with the unit on the adjacent ridge before the first light.

No sooner had we advanced after the last light than the column halted, and Company Havildar Major Digh Ram, our "Tail-end Charlie", asked for a two-minute break. Tough and experienced since the IPKF days, Digh Ram was a respected junior leader. I allowed the brief pause as we soon moved again. But ten minutes later, he asked for another short break. We moved within five minutes. When it happened a third time, I lost patience; time was slipping away, and no one explained why.

I called Digh Ram forward to ask what was wrong. After some probing, he admitted to a severe stomach upset since the afternoon. Such infections were common due to poor hygiene

and scarce mountain stream water. The others knew, but the sergeant major kept it from me, fearing Digh Ram would be excluded. He couldn't bear missing the mission. Now that the truth was out, I ordered him to return to the Forward Base with a young soldier. Reluctantly, dejected and heartbroken, he obeyed, feeling "left out of the battle."

We moved swiftly, racing against time. Loads felt heavier above 4,500 metres, slowing us down. To cut weight, we shared essentials but carried enough ammo for any contingency. Despite the burden, our fitness and acclimatisation helped us beat daylight and link up with the other unit before dawn. There, we completed the final reconnaissance and refined our plan.

Over three days and nights, with the blessing of Maa Durga Bhawani, all went to plan. We evicted the enemy from South Saddle. Standing in silence, we saw deep into PoK. The watershed was now fully under our brigade's control, marking the end of operations in Muntho Dhalo, Batalik sub-sector.

But this story is less about our success and more about Havildar Major Digh Ram, who simply couldn't be "left out of battle". During reconnaissance, we saw that enemy positions on the reverse slope—now partly visible and within 600 metres—could be hit with shoulder-fired rocket launchers. With extra rounds, we could weaken them before the final assault, reducing casualties. The Brigade Commander approved my radio request for more time and 40 additional rounds. The ammunition was hauled up from the Forward Base by our men, supported by troops from a sis-

ter unit, led by none other than Digh Ram. He was back in action!

About ten days before the mission, we hit a jackpot—an abandoned Pakistani post stocked with rations, including sealed tins of desi ghee. In the days leading up to the operation, we feasted on it at the forward base. Seizing the moment, Havildar Major Digh Ram made desi ghee ke churma laddoos—two per comrade—for his Band of Brothers before moving out with the rocket launcher rounds. The extra time and ammo from the Brigade Commander let him return where he belonged—this time, with laddoos he'd made himself. Over the radio, I checked with the doctor about Digh Ram's condition: severe amoebiasis and dehydration. Strong antibiotics and sheer grit were helping him recover fast.

These Churma Laddoos tasted extra special and served as a morale booster. They were made by a man who was extra special, made by using the binding of camaraderie and esprit de corps. Their taste was still lingering when we stood proudly on the South Saddle watershed. Company Havildar Major Digh Ram was with us, smiling. He could not be left out of the battle!

In the years that followed, he deservedly rose to the rank of Subedar Major of our unit and later faded away from the army as a proud honorary captain. He lives in Haryana, still full of energy and enterprise

(The writer is an Indian Army veteran and Vice President CRM, ANSEC HR Services Ltd. He is a skydiver and a specialist in Security and Risk Management. Views personal.)

‘I wanted to cast Dhoni in a Bollywood movie’

CRICKETER SHIKHAR DHAWAN DEBUTS AS AUTHOR, PENS MEMOIR

New Delhi: Swashbuckling former opening batsman Shikhar Dhawan has come out with his memoir in which he bares it all - from his relationships to friendships, to all the controversies surrounding him, be it off or on the field.

"Cricket gave me purpose, but it was the journey with the highs, the falls and the quiet moments, that truly shaped me as a man I am today. This is me sharing that journey from the heart - raw, honest and unfiltered," Dhawan said about his book "The One: Cricket, My Life and More".

"Written with candour and sincerity, 'The One' offers an unprecedented glimpse into Shikhar Dhawan's inner monologue and all the vulnerabilities that have shaped him into the champion cricketer and sensitive human being he is today," publishers HarperCollins India said.

According to Sachin Sharma, publisher at HarperCollins India, "Shikhar Dhawan has lived an incredible

life both on and off the field. In this unputdownable memoir, Shikhar has opened up about his life, cricket, relationships, and every curveball that he faced and emerged stronger."

Growing up in the intensely competitive cricketing scene of Delhi,

Dhawan started out as a wicketkeeper but later transitioned to an opening batsman. He played 34 Tests for India scoring 2315 runs, 167 ODIs (6793 runs) and 68 T20 matches (1759 runs).

"When I was trying to break into the Indian side, social media was still nascent and cricketers were under a lot less scrutiny. But other media platforms - print and broadcast - were thriving," he writes in the book.

"Team selections and individual cricket performances were discussed threadbare and had gained sufficient audience in the country. However, unlike the current times in which social

media can transform cricketers from 'hero' to 'zero' almost overnight, narratives took a lot longer to change back in those days," he says.

Long-awaited call

Talking about his entry into the Indian dressing room, he said when Australia came to India for a short tour in October 2010, "that's when I received my long-awaited call to join the big boys".

Dhawan also writes that when he first saw Mahendra Singh Dhoni, "I wanted to cast him in a Bollywood movie; he looked like a film star with that long hair and easy smile".

He added: "We were having a chat about my motivation when I suddenly blurted out, 'I want to play for India and I want to make you a Bollywood hero!' He threw back his head and laughed."

Though he was chosen for the three ODIs, the first and third matches in Kochi and Margao were washed out.

"Before the first match in Kochi, there was so much nervous energy bubbling inside me that I could not sleep the

whole night... But when I got up in the morning, it was raining heavily, and all my hopes turned to naught. No action was possible that day," Dhawan writes.

"Then, just ahead of the second ODI at Vizag, I took a sleeping pill to soothe my nerves. I thought it was important to sleep well, and I was worried that my performance would suffer if I went through another round of insomnia as I had done on the eve of the first match," he recalls.

India won the toss and invited Australia to field. Dhawan's debut game had begun.

The Aussies batted first and scored 289. Dhawan opened the batting with Murali Vijay. But in the very first over, he was bowled for a duck off the second ball by Clint McKay.

"I walked off from the crease with a smile pasted on my face, but inside, I was kicking myself hard. I had visualized myself playing dazzling shots and piling up a huge amount of runs for India for so long that I found it difficult to wrap the reality around my head," he writes.



Sri Lanka's Pathum Nissanka celebrates his century as batting partner Dinesh Chandimal watches during the second day of the second cricket test match against Bangladesh in Colombo on Thursday.

Stop clock in new WTC cycle

Dubai: The ICC has introduced stop clock in Test cricket to deal with slow over rates while allowing fielding teams to decide which batter should be on strike in case of a 'deliberate' short-run as part of the playing conditions for 2025-27 World Test Championship cycle.

The new rules have been implemented from the 2025-2027 World Test Championship which got underway with the first of the two Tests between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh in Galle.

According to the ICC Test Match Playing Conditions on the governing body's website, the use of the stop clock — like in

limited-overs cricket — has been implemented to eradicate the issue of slow over-rate.

"The fielding side shall be ready to start each over within 60 seconds of the previous over being completed. An electronic clock will be displayed at the ground that counts up seconds from zero to 60," the ICC said.

The fielding side will thus be given two warnings and in case of a third infraction, the batting side will be awarded with five penalty runs.

These warnings will be reset to zero after the completion of 80 overs, the ICC said.

Meanwhile, ESPNcricin-

fo reported that the ICC no longer mandates the umpires to change the ball once they discover saliva on it as the ban on the use of saliva remains in force.

The website said fielding teams may deliberately apply saliva on the ball to force a ball-change but the current document available on playing conditions for men's Test cricket does not mention any such change.

The ICC also said in case there are instances of referrals being made by both player and the on-field umpire, the process will be carried out in a chronological order, effectively as per the order of their occurrence.

Extend batting time

ASHWIN'S ADVICE TO INDIANS BEFORE SECOND TEST MATCH AGAINST ENGLAND

New Delhi: India should focus on extending their batting time and Rishabh pant must convert his hundreds into double centuries against an "average" England attack in the ongoing Test series, said senior off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin in his detailed post-mortem of the team's five-wicket loss in the opener at Leeds.

Despite five centuries from their batters across both innings, India allowed England to chase their second highest target of 371 to concede a 0-1 lead in the five-match series.

"One thing that the Indian team's batting can focus on is in every innings, can you extend your batting with time -- not by runs. Increase the amount of time England is fielding and increase the amount of time you keep them on the field," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel 'Ash Ki Baat'.

"...I will say one thing -- don't panic and change drastically. India could and



might level the series in the next Test. But if we don't understand the tactics England are using, this series could very well go away from us quickly."

Ashwin stressed that the game slipped out of India's hands the moment they were bowled out early on the fourth day.

"When you didn't extend your batting into Day 5, the game was over. This England team has openly advertised that they will go for the target whatever may be the target. So as a batting lineup, we've to keep in mind that we have to give them less time but give a bigger target," he explained.

"If you want to set a tar-

get, you will have to keep a minimum of 400-450. I would say 450 with as little time as possible is the best way to win a Test match in England at this point of time. If the wicket is such."

Compare with Kohli

lauding the twin centuries by Pant, Ashwin said comparing him to Mahendra Singh Dhoni was not appropriate, as the latter never batted at the reasonably high No. 5 position.

"...Rishabh Pant should be compared with the likes of Virat Kohli...He is a mainstream batter. Because he has got so much time..." he said.

Ashwin compared Pant's ability to pick a delivery with Pakistani great Inzamam-ul-Haq.

"...some of these special batters have that knack of picking the ball early. They pick the line quickly, pick the length quickly and they get into lovely positions. Rishabh Pant is one of those rare players who has got that special skill."

Asian Junior Championship 19-member team named

New Delhi: The fast-rising Tanvi Sharma was on Thursday named in India's 19-member squad for the Badminton Asian Junior Championships (team and individual) to be held in Solo, Indonesia from July 18 to 27.

Tanvi won a gold in the Badminton Asia women's team championship. Junior world No. 1 men's doubles pair of Bhargava Ram Arigela and Viswa Tej Gibburu will also be critical to India's chances.

The team competitions are scheduled from July 18-22 while the individual events will be held from July 23-27.

The team event will be played in a relay format, with the first side to reach 110 points declared the winner. It will begin with a group stage, followed by knockout rounds, with the top two teams from each group advancing.

The full squad will report to a national preparatory camp at National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati from July 4 to 15.

Elite Women's Boxing Lovlina, Nikhat highlight tournament

Hyderabad: Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist Lovlina Borgohain and two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen will be among a host of top Indian pugilists to vie for top honours at the Elite Women's Boxing Tournament, beginning here on Friday.

Former world youth champion Ankushita Boro will be another big name taking part in the tournament to be held at the Sarornagar Indoor Stadium till July 1.

Organised by the Telangana state body under the aegis of the Boxing Federation of India and the Sports Authority of Telangana, the tournament will feature boxers from 15 units.

Railways, Haryana, All India Police, Services, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Sikkim, Combined SAI National Centre of Excellence team and TOPS Core and Development squad will also take part in the tournament, besides host Telangana.



Lovlina Borgohain and Nikhat Zareen

Other notable names in the fray include World Championships bronze medalist Manisha Moun, Olympian Preeti, world youth champion Arundhati Chaudhary, and more than 100 other contenders.

The boxers will compete across 10 weight categories. Gold and silver medalists in each category will get the opportunity to join the elite camp in Patiala.

"This tournament is designed to strengthen the competitive structure of Indian boxing. It provides our top athletes competitive exposure and platform for young boxers to challenge the experienced boxers, learn from them and advance towards high performance training being provided at National Camps," said BFI president and chairman Interim Committee Ajay Singh.

All teams can field a maximum of 10 boxers provided they are born between January 1, 1985 and December 31, 2006.

SKY undergoes sports hernia surgery

New Delhi: India's T20I captain Suryakumar Yadav has undergone a successful surgery for a sports hernia in his lower right abdomen in Munich, Germany.

PTI had reported last week that Suryakumar was suffering from sports hernia in his right lower abdomen and will go under the knife if required.

"Life Update: Underwent surgery for a sports hernia in the lower right abdomen. Grateful to share that after a smooth surgery, I'm already on the road to recovery. Can't wait to be back," the 34-year-old batter wrote on his social media handle on Wednesday.

A sports hernia is a soft tissue injury in the groin or lower abdomen, often involving muscles, tendons, or ligaments.

Following the surgery in Germany, he is expected to begin rehabilitation at the BCCI's Centre of Excellence in Bengaluru in about two weeks.

Working on patience, endurance: Sindhu

By Aparajita Upadhyay

Bengaluru: Blistering aggression has given way to stamina-testing rallies in women's singles badminton, says ace Indian shuttler P V Sindhu, who is re-inventing her game to keep pace with the evolving tempo while navigating a challenging lean phase.

This year has been far from ideal for the two-time Olympic-medallist. She has endured four first-round exits and three second-round losses, with a lone quarterfinal appearance at the India Open in January being a rare bright spot.

"The women's singles

(competition) has completely changed. Initially it was more of attack and fast rallies; it has become much more defensive with long rallies and long matches," Sindhu told a select group of reporters at the Sports Authority of India Centre here.

"We have been working on that, especially in terms of being more patient to continue that rally and keep the shuttle in the court for a longer period of time. Because we have to make changes every time the game changes."

"As an athlete I have been changing my game, it might take time but it's important to do it every time,"

she added.

Significant adjustments The former world champion, currently training under Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama for close to six months, is making subtle yet significant adjustments to her game.

"Back then I used to attack but now every athlete is good in their defence. We are working on how patient I need to be to maintain the rally let's say 30 strokes or 40 strokes."

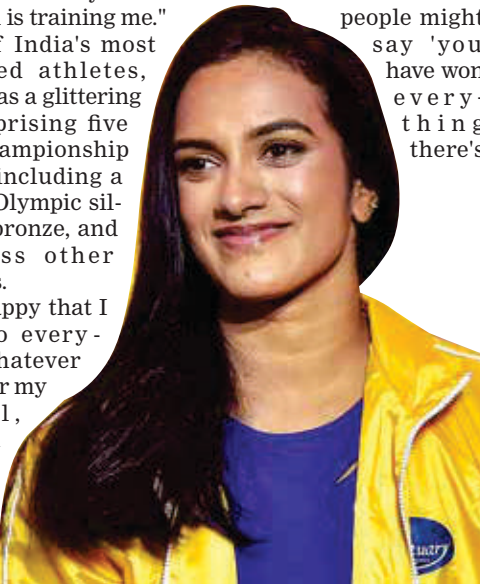
"I need to keep a check on my physical fitness, endurance. Because I need to withstand the court for a very long period. So, that way we have been working

on these changes and it's good that Irwansyah has come and is training me."

One of India's most decorated athletes, Sindhu has a glittering CV comprising five world championship medals, including a gold, an Olympic silver and bronze, and countless other accolades.

"I'm happy that I could do everything, whatever was under my control, and won every medal. Now it is also

important to make sure to maintain it. I know people might say 'you have won everything there's



no pressure' but I have to make sure it's going on," she said.

Body response

At 29, Sindhu is also becoming more mindful of how her body responds to the physical grind.

"It's not going to be the same as it was 10 years ago. Back then I would do a different type of training but now it might be different. So, I need to understand that as a player."

"(I need to) Understand that things might change and we adapt accordingly. Every time we need to make sure our body

is in the right direction and we are able to take load, otherwise there are chances of injury and it's hard to come back."

That shift means being selective with tournaments and prioritising quality over quantity.

"Definitely (the training module has changed). Earlier we used to have back-to-back four-five tournaments...But now you have to make sure your body condition is good, you can't just go out there and play five-six tournaments in a row and not being fit."

"We need to make sure how the body is feeling after one tournament, otherwise there's no point play-

ing. You rather skip a tournament and train harder and then come back stronger."

Recently Sindhu ended up on the wrong side of some close games and while she conceded that the results have bothered her, Sindhu believes she's closing the gap.

"Recent results definitely bother me. But there's been an improvement. I think five-six tournaments back I was losing a bit easy but there's been improvement with some tough matches with top athletes."

"That's a positive thing I can take and work on what's required."