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## PM MODI HITS OUT AT RJD-CONG, SAYS THEY 'HOLD DALITS IN CONTEMPT'

Those responsible for 'jungle raj' looking for another chance to wreak havoc

AGENCIES  
SIWAN (BIHAR)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday slammed the RJD for allegedly insulting Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar and asserted that the people of Bihar would not tolerate any disrespect to the Dalit icon.

At a rally in Siwan district, which marked his fifth visit this year and second in less than a month, PM Modi hailed the "big role" played by Bihar in India's emergence as the "third largest economy" of the world.

In a nearly 45-minute-long speech, the Prime Minister cautioned the people against "attempts to recapture economic resources of Bihar" by the RJD-led opposition in the upcoming

assembly polls.

"Ambedkar was against dynasty rule. But they (RJD and its allies) do not like it. So they have his portrait placed at their feet. On my way, I saw posters demanding an apology for this insult to Babasaheb," said Modi.

He added, "But there has been no apology. This is because they hold Dalits in contempt. In contrast, Modi has Babasaheb in his heart and would like to keep his portrait close to his chest".

Modi, who did not mention RJD chief Lalu Prasad by name, referred to the instance of a portrait of Ambedkar being placed close to the feet of the ailing septuagenarian, for which he (Prasad) has been draw-

**PM launches  
Rs 5,900-cr  
projects**

AGENCIES  
SIWAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday launched 28 development projects worth more than Rs 5,900 crore in Bihar's Siwan district.

PM Modi inaugurated the new Vaishali-Deoria railway line project, built at a cost of over Rs 400 crore, and flagged off a new train service on this route.

Additionally, in a major boost to connectivity in north Bihar, Modi also flagged off the Vande Bharat Express between Patliputra (Patna) and Gorakhpur

P3



PM Modi flags off a state-of-the-art locomotive built at the Marhowra Plant, for export to the Republic of Guinea, under the 'Make in India' initiative, at a public gathering, in Siwan on Friday. Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, CM Nitish Kumar, Union Ministers Giriraj Singh, Jitan Ram Manjhi, Lalan Singh, Chirag Paswan and other dignitaries were also present. ANI

## Chaudhary Birender Singh unravels Congress secrets

Former Union Minister Chaudhary Birender Singh has unveiled the intricate details of his political odyssey, earning him the moniker "Tragedy King".

In an exclusive interview with Inkhabar Haryana, he candidly discussed missed Chief Ministerial opportunities in 1991 and 2005, and a "humiliating" last-minute exclusion from a UPA ministerial berth.

Singh elaborated on his departure from Congress due to feeling of unheard and his subsequent move to BJP.



He cited the missed chance to become Chief Minister in 2005 and the "humiliating" incident just

before he was to become a Union Minister in the UPA government.

DETAILS P2

## Quota row: BJP slams K'taka govt

The Karnataka government's decision to increase reservation for minority communities under housing schemes

has sparked strong criticism from the BJP. State party president Vijayendra Yediyurappa (in pic) has called it "unconstitutional" and accused the Congress of indulging in vote-bank politics.

DETAILS P4



## Language war: Rahul slams Shah

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday slammed Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his remarks that people speaking english will feel ashamed soon saying the language is not an obstacle but a "bridge" that gives every child equal opportunity, though the BJP-RSS doesn't want the poor to learn it as it empowers them to ask questions.



DETAILS P2

## Iran's foreign minister holds talks with top European diplomats

AGENCIES  
GENEVA

Iran's foreign minister was holding talks with top European diplomats in Geneva on Friday about the crisis that centres on concerns about his country's nuclear programme, a week after the long-simmering dispute erupted into war between Israel and Iran.

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived at a hotel in the Swiss city for a meeting with his counterparts from France, Germany and the UK and the European Union's foreign policy chief.

It is the first face-to-face meeting between Western and Iranian officials since the start of the conflict.

Ahead of the meeting, Araghchi said his country

has "nothing to discuss" with the United States as long as Israel continues its strikes on Iran, but is open to "dialogue" with others, though not negotiations. The war has seen Israeli air-strikes target Iranian nuclear and military sites and Tehran firing back.

British Foreign Secretary David Lammy said that "a

P3

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI

In a special gesture, Iran has lifted airspace restrictions for three charter flights to evacuate about 1,000 Indian nationals, mostly students, from the Iranian city of Mashad.

Mohammad Javad Hos-

Turkmenistan's capital Ashgabat will also land in Delhi. The Indians returning on the flight had left Iran through a land border crossing.

India launched Operation Sindhu on Wednesday to bring back its nationals from Iran and Israel in view of the precarious se-



Indian students board a flight from Armenia to New Delhi, under Operation Sindhu facilitated by the Government of India in view of the Israel-Iran conflict. File photo

seini, the deputy chief of mission at the Iranian embassy, said more evacuation flights could be operated in the coming days to bring back Indians if required.

The Indian nationals were moved to Mashad from Tehran following Israeli attacks on the Iranian capital city. The evacuation flights, to be operated by Iranian airline Mahan, are being arranged by New Delhi and the first flight is scheduled to arrive in Delhi on Friday evening.

Another flight, carrying Indian nationals from

curity situation arising out of Iran-Israel hostilities.

The first charter flight carrying Indians is set to land in Delhi on Friday evening.

"We consider Indians as our own people. Iran's airspace is closed but because of this issue, we are making arrangements to open it for the safe passage of Indian nationals," Hosseini said at a media briefing.

"We consider Indian nationals to be our own people. They are like Iranians," he added.

P3

CM'S STERN DIRECTION TO POLICE

## 'Ensure gangsters give up crime or leave Haryana'

NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

Faced with the criticism over the rising incidents of organized crime in the state, Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Saini has issued firm instructions to the top officers of the state police, giving them a free hand to eliminate gangsters and restore law and order.



Highly placed sources said that during a high-level meeting held recently and attended by Director

General of Police (DGP) Shatrueet Kapur and senior law enforcement officials, the chief minister directed them to go any extent to make the state free from gangsters.

The sources said the chief minister directed officers to launch a special drive against gangsters who are actively behind the organized crime in the state. The chief minister has

told the police chief that "not even a single gangster should remain active in the state."

"Ensure that either the gangsters give up crime or leave the state," the chief minister is believed to have told police officials.

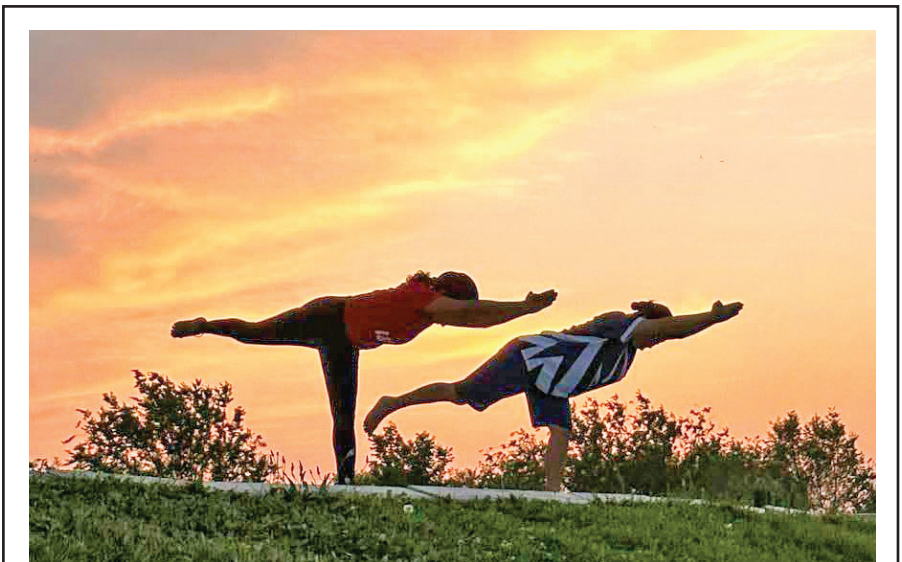
"During the meeting, the chief minister also emphasized that law and order is his government's top priority and he directed

the Home Department to ensure a visible, people-friendly yet fearsome police presence across Haryana," said a senior official.

The crackdown comes on the heels of rising criticism over the rise in gangster-related violence, particularly targeting the state's lucrative liquor trade.

On June 13, a liquor contractor was shot dead in

P3



The Indian Army Training Team (IATT) in partnership with the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture (LBSCIC) conducts a special Yoga session on the eve of the International Yoga Day, in Tashkent on Friday. ANI



# ENGLISH NOT OBSTACLE, BUT A BRIDGE THAT GIVES EQUAL OPPORTUNITY: RAHUL TAKES JIBE AT SHAH

Rahul accused BJP-RSS of not wanting poor Indian children to learn English

ANAND SINGH  
NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday slammed Union Home Minister Amit Shah over his remarks that people speaking English will feel ashamed soon saying the language is not an obstacle but a “bridge” that gives every child equal opportunity, though the BJP-RSS doesn’t want the poor to learn it as it empowers them to ask questions.

His remarks came a day after Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed that people speaking in English will start feeling “ashamed” soon.

In a post on X, Rahul Gandhi said, “It is not an English dam, it is a bridge. English is



not shame, it is power. English is not a chain - it is a tool to break the chains.”

Taking pot shot at the BJP and the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh, Rahul Gandhi, who is also a Lok Sabha MP from Uttar Pradesh’s Rae Bareilly said, “BJP-RSS don’t want poor children of India to learn English - because they don’t want you to

ask questions, move ahead, and become equal.”

The Gandhi scion asserted that in today’s world, “English is as important as your mother tongue”, because it will provide employment and boost your confidence.

“Every language of India has soul, culture, knowledge. We have to cherish them and at the same time

teach English to every child. This is the path to an India that competes with the world, that gives every child an equal opportunity,” the former Congress chief remarked.

He also posted a 50 second video of his interaction with a group of youth in which he claimed that the BJP-RSS leaders ask them not to speak in English but Hindi.

The clip also shows a short portion of RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat purportedly saying that he will never use English as well as a list of BJP leaders whose wards studied in foreign institutions like Wharton School, University of London, Oxford, Harvard, University of Leads and Yale. Look at the BJP ministers, they all are going to study in England.

English is a weapon. If you have learnt English, you can go anywhere...you can reach America, Japan, you can go anywhere, you can work in any company,” he said.

His remarks came a day after Shah stoked a controversy on English language as he remarked: “Remember what I say and listen to me carefully. Time is not far away for a society where people speaking in English in this country feel ashamed.”

Shah made the remarks while speaking at a book launch programme.

The Home Minister further said that the languages of our country are the jewels of our culture. “Without them, we are not Indians... India cannot be imagined with a foreign language,” Shah added.

# ‘90s decade proves who misused public money’: Chirag Paswan slams RJD

TDG NETWORK  
PATNA

Union Minister Chirag Paswan on Friday slammed RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav and dismissed his claims of state administration “forcibly” gathering people for Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s rally, saying the RJD had no moral ground to speak of public welfare.

“The 90s decade proves who misused the public money. The 90s were a decade in which the people of Bihar had to leave their homes, villages, and businesses and leave Bihar.”

He emphasised that under the current administration, there has been a positive shift. “Gradually, reverse migration has started in Bihar. Around 25 lakh people have returned to Bihar after COVID-19... This is a double-engine government, not

a jungle-raj...”

Meanwhile, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha hailed PM Modi’s visit to Siwan as a momentous occasion.

“It was a very historic event...The way people welcomed and greeted the Prime Minister was tremendous... this is a historic day for the people of Bihar,” said Deputy CM.

Apart from this, in a swift rebuttal Bihar Minister Ashok Choudhary also questioned the credibility of Tejashwi’s claims, saying, “Is it Lalu Prasad Yadav’s regime that the professors are not getting salaries? Has any government employee claimed that they are not getting their salaries? Tejashwi Yadav should reveal who is providing him with such information... In the upcoming Bihar Assembly

elections, Tejashwi Yadav will face a defeat greater than that experienced by Lalu Prasad Yadav.”

Notably, PM Modi during his visit to Siwan on Friday flagged off a state-of-the-art locomotive built at the Marhowra Plant, for export to the Republic of Guinea, under the ‘Make in India’ initiative.

The plant became the first export locomotive manufactured in this factory. They are equipped with high-horsepower engines, advanced AC propulsion systems, microprocessor-based control systems, and ergonomic cab designs, incorporating technologies like regenerative braking.

PM also flagged off the Vande Bharat Express between Patliputra and Gorakhpur via Muzaffarpur and Bettiah

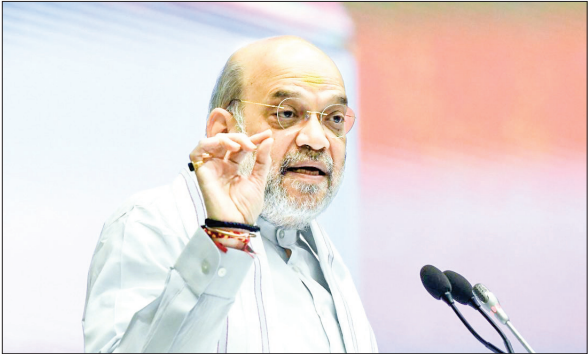
# English row: Cong, BJP engage in war of words

AJIT MAINDOLA  
NEW DELHI

Congress and BJP have come face to face on the language issue. While BJP is advocating for Hindi, Congress has taken up the cause of English. It so happened that Union Home Minister Amit Shah a day before openly advocated for Hindi language and said that soon those who speak English will be ashamed. Not only this, in a program Shah also attacked the Gandhi family by questioning their mother tongue. In response to this, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Friday advocated for English on his ex and said that English is not a dam, but a bridge.

‘English is not shame, it is power.’

English is not a chain - it is a tool to break chains. Rahul said that BJP and RSS do not want poor children of India to learn English - because they do not want you to ask questions, move ahead, be equal. In today’s world, English is as important as your mother tongue - because it will provide employment, boost self-confidence. Every language of India has soul, culture, knowledge. We have to cherish them - and at the



same time teach English to every child. This is the way to an India that competes with the world, which gives equal opportunity to every child.

Meaning, Rahul Gandhi has in a way retaliated and attacked the anti-English ideology of BJP. In 2021, Ashok Gehlot government of Rajasthan made opening government English medium schools in the name of Mahatma Gandhi a big election issue. Rahul Gandhi also patted the Gehlot government on the back for this. But Congress did not get any special benefit in the elections. The language issue gained momentum due to Tamil Nadu politics. DMK alleges that BJP wants to impose Hindi. However, BJP clarified that it gives importance to every regional language. Union Home Minister Shah clarified that only

after the formation of Modi government at the center, examinations of Union Public Service Commission, Engineering, Medical started being conducted in many regional languages including Hindi. Congress imposed English and promoted it. NDA government brought in local languages. Shah, while attacking English in a program, had said that English will be considered a symbol of colonial slavery and will be despised. English speakers will soon feel embarrassed. In a way, Shah has set BJP’s Hindi agenda by giving importance to Hindi and local languages. However, Sangh and BJP have been in favor of Hindi from the beginning and have also benefited from it. Because Hindi is the main language in a large part of the country and is also understood in all the states.

AJIT MAINDOLA  
NEW DELHI

The danger of a political rift within the Bihar Grand Alliance is growing. On one hand, the NDA, under the leadership of the JD(U), appears united and is preparing strongly. On the other, the Congress is creating friction within the Grand Alliance by not fully backing the RJD. Congress has neither endorsed Tejashwi Yadav’s name for Chief Minister nor agreed on seat-sharing arrangements. Meanwhile, RJD leader Lalu Yadav has already declared his son Tejashwi as the next Chief Ministerial candidate.

Congress-in-charge Krishna Alavaru has made it clear that the decision on who will become Chief Minister will be taken later. Currently, the Congress is preparing to contest elections on all seats. Alavaru made this statement just before NDA’s strongest face, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, visited Bihar, which caused a stir within the alliance.

During his visit to Siwan on Friday, PM Modi launched an indirect attack on Grand Alliance leaders. Without naming Lalu Yadav, he refer-

enced B.R. Ambedkar’s photo and said, “Modi keeps Baba’s photo in his heart, not at his feet.” He also commented that the lantern (RJD’s symbol) is now stuck in the clutches of the claws (Congress’s symbol), clearly targeting RJD. The Congress seems to be sensing that RJD may not perform strongly this time, and is using pressure tactics to either secure a larger seat share or keep the option open to contest alone.

Congress is also dealing with internal divisions. Many factions within the party are not in favor of aligning with RJD. In-charge Alavaru himself reportedly supports going solo. State President Rajesh Kumar, Kanhaiya Kumar, Pappu Yadav, and Ranjita Yadav — all younger leaders — are also said to be in favor of contesting independently. These young leaders are considered close to Rahul Gandhi.

The party is also concerned about the rising popularity of Prime Minister Modi, especially following Operation Sindoor. Congress strategists believe that if they contest the election in alliance with RJD and the results mirror the last election, Congress will not benefit.

# Haryana chief secy Rastogi gets one-year extension

RAVINDER MALIK & NEERAJ MOHAN  
CHANDIGARH

Acting on the proposal of the Haryana government, the Centre has approved a one-year extension Anurag Rastogi as the Chief Secretary of Haryana. The decision extends his tenure from July 1, 2025 to June 30, 2026. Rastogi, a 1990 batch IAS officer, was set to retire on June 30. But the state government had recently sent a proposal to the Centre to grant him extension, citing pendency of several key projects.

As per the orders communicated by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Department of Personnel and Training, the extension was granted under the relaxation of Rule 16(1) of the AIS (DCRB) Rules, 1958, by invoking Rule 3 of the AIS (CS-RM) Rules, 1960.

Rastogi was appointed Chief Secretary in February this year after the shifting of 1989 batch IAS officer Vivek Joshi, who was appointed as Election Commissioner. Rastogi had superseded four officers from the same batch, including the two se-



nior-most—Sudhir Rajpal and Sumita Misra.

Besides two other 1990-batch IAS officers -- Anand Mohan Sharan and Raja Sekhar Vundru -- were also in the line for the chief secretary’s post. Before Rastogi completes his extended term next year, most of these IAS officers from the 1990 batch will retire.

“Your own understanding also holds great importance—after all, Duryodhan and Arjun (key characters of Mahabharata) had the same teacher,” Misra shared a post in Hindi on her X account. Since his appointment at the top post Rastogi, who also heads the state’s Finance and Planning Departments, the state has witnessed several key reforms. While the state government backed Rastogi’s continua-

tion, many within the bureaucracy see the move as controversial.

The issue is further complicated by an unresolved seniority dispute. Rajpal, currently ACS (Health), and Misra, heading the Home Department, were both in contention for the Chief Secretary’s post when Rastogi was appointed earlier this year.

According to Rule 16(1) of the All India Services (Death-cum-Retirement Benefits) Rules, 1958, an IAS officer serving as Chief Secretary to a state government may be granted a service extension of up to six months, provided the state government offers full justification citing public interest and obtains prior approval from the Central government. Even there are instances when the Central government has occasionally granted extensions beyond the prescribed six-month limit by relaxing the rules in select cases.

Earlier, on the line of chief secretary of Himachal Pradesh and Odisha, there were speculation that the chief secretary of Haryana would get a six-month extension.

# Chaudhary Birender Singh unravels Cong secrets and the story behind his ‘Tragedy King’ title

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Former Union Minister Chaudhary Birender Singh, a prominent figure in Haryana politics, spoke candidly in an interview with ‘Inkhabar Haryana’ about his political journey, legacy, and experiences within both the Congress and BJP.

## LEGACY OF CHAUDHARY CHHOTU RAM AND CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Chaudhary Birender Singh recalled his childhood, sharing how he became aware of his lineage as the grandson of Chaudhary Chhotu Ram. He recounted an incident from the third grade where his headmaster made him the class monitor, which ironically led to his handwriting deteriorating. He referred to this as a “disadvantage” of his legacy.

However, he also shared a pivotal moment in the 8th grade at a cycle repair shop. A conversation between two teachers, who recognized him, changed his life.

They called him “spoiled” and said, “He will sell off his property and defame Sir Saab.” Birender Singh stated that from that day, “It was decided in my mind that my life is different. I am not an ordinary child,” and he needed to alter his daily routine and study habits. He considered this a “benefit” of his legacy, as it motivated him to strive for improvement.

## LONG JOURNEY WITH CONGRESS AND THE ‘TRAGEDY KING’ LABEL

Birender Singh discussed his relationship with Rajiv Gandhi and the missed opportunity to become Chief Minister in 1991. He explained that Rajiv Gandhi had directly indicated he would be the Chief Minister if Congress won in Haryana, but Gandhi’s untimely death prevented this. He said, “This is not just about the post; my thinking is that if I am in the political system, how do I implement my vision? How do I bring it to the ground?” He expressed that

this was not merely about losing a position but about missing the chance to implement his vision.

He also mentioned the ‘Tragedy King’ label given to him by the media due to this and similar subsequent experiences. He cited missing the chance to become Chief Minister in 2005 and the “humiliating” incident just before he was to become a Union Minister in the UP government. Despite receiving an invitation from Rashtrapati Bhavan, his name was dropped at the last minute. He said, “It was humiliation because 5,000 people had come outside my house... and at 11:30 AM, the message comes ‘Sorry, we’ll see later’.” He viewed this as a blow to his political standing and his relationships with Rajiv Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi.

## JOINING AND LEAVING THE BJP

Explaining his decision to leave Congress, Birender Singh stated he felt his political reputation had been damaged and his voice was



not being heard within the party. He recounted how he connected with the BJP through an RSS worker, and the party quickly showed confidence in him.

However, his time in the BJP also brought some bitter experiences. He shared an incident where, shortly after becoming a Union Minister, he was made to sit among the audience at an event, even though Rao Inderjit Singh was also present. He said, “Respect is not just about this; respect is also that if you are given a job because you are considered capable, then you must be given power.”

He felt he did not receive

the “respect” he had anticipated in the BJP. He cited the farmers’ issue as the primary reason for his departure, as the party deemed his support for farmers as indiscipline.

He said, “If speaking for farmers is indiscipline, then BJP can expel me.” He asserted that he considered it his duty to speak for farmers and would never compromise on that. He also mentioned that his son, Bijender Singh, was “more aggressive than me” and said, “You are sitting in the wrong party, and you have put me in the wrong one too. I am leaving.” He was the first to decide to leave the BJP.

strong in Haryana today. Even without an organization, it is strong.” This is because the people of Haryana do not believe in division based on religion and caste.

## BJP’S ‘MAGIC’ AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

Birender Singh criticized the BJP’s style of functioning, calling it “magic” where they “pull out a guava from under a cloth, or sometimes raisins,” to attract the public, but he labeled this as “fake work.” He said, “When this curtain rises, you will see... I used to tell them even when I was in BJP, ‘This politics, you are weakening the country.’” He accused the BJP of weakening the country and identified farmers, the armed forces, the working class (poor), and minorities as the biggest obstacles in their path. He alleged that the BJP seeks to weaken these groups.

Regarding the issue of employment, he dismissed the claims of the Saini government in Haryana as mere paperwork and said,

“Where has the investment come from? How much has it come? It’s been 11 years now. These are all paper talks.” He also voiced concern over the appointment of RSS-affiliated individuals as vice-chancellors in universities.

On leaders leaving Congress, he said that BJP will “use them as long as it feels right.” He mentioned telling Kiran Chaudhary, “Sister, they will use you as long as it suits them.”

He added, “After that, they don’t know where they will go.” He referred to Kiran Chaudhary’s joining the BJP and her statements against Hooda as a result of Congress’s factionalism, but he expressed hope that under Rahul Gandhi’s leadership, Congress would soon emerge as a strong force in Haryana with a robust organization.

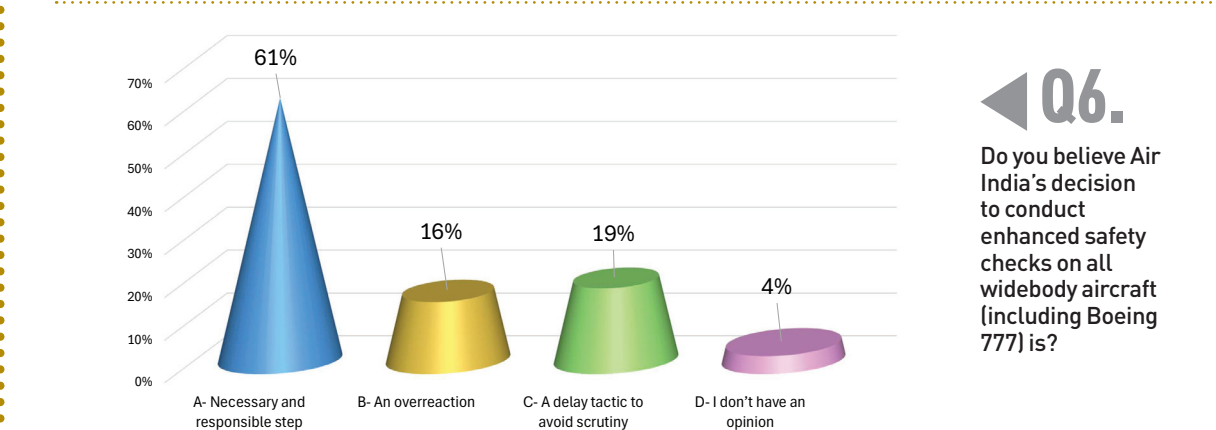
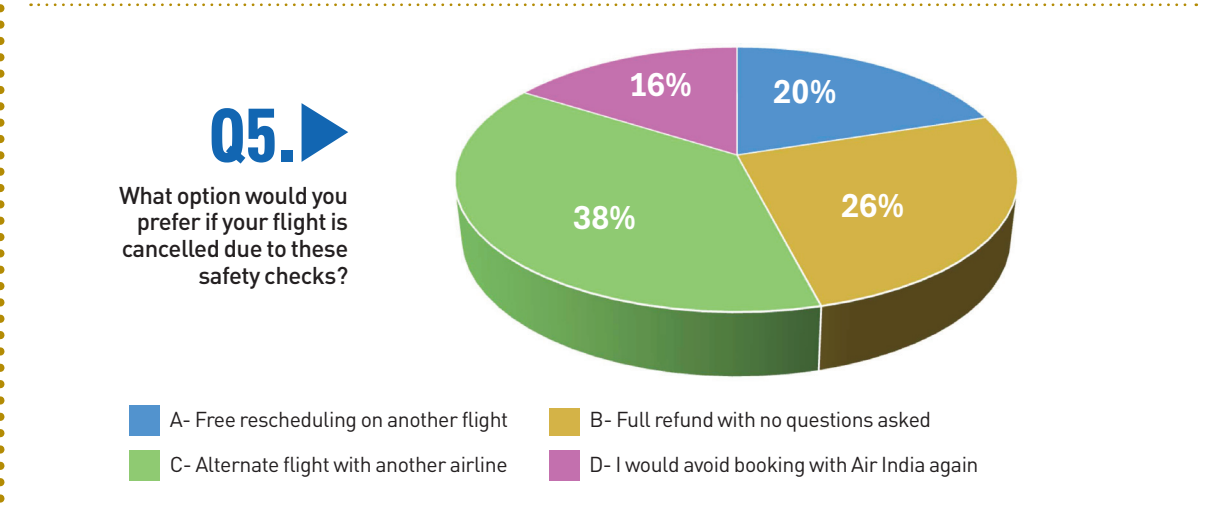
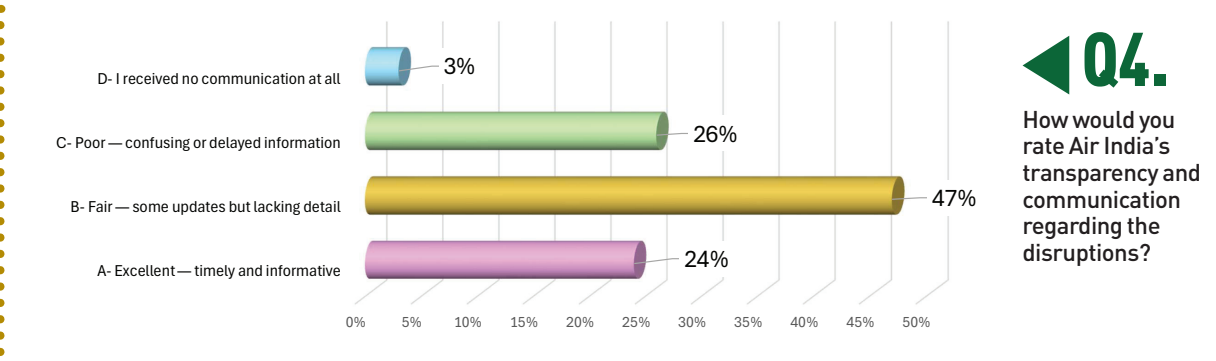
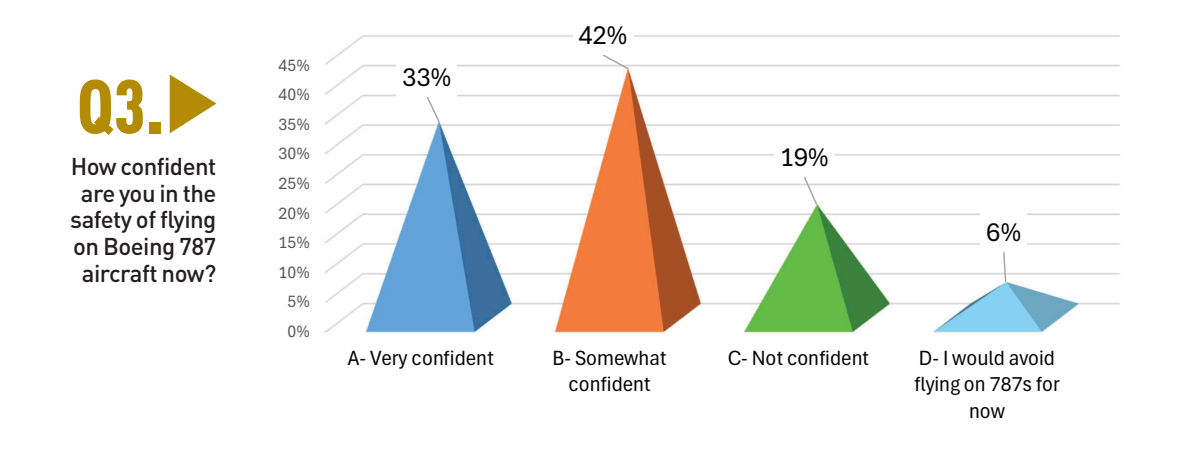
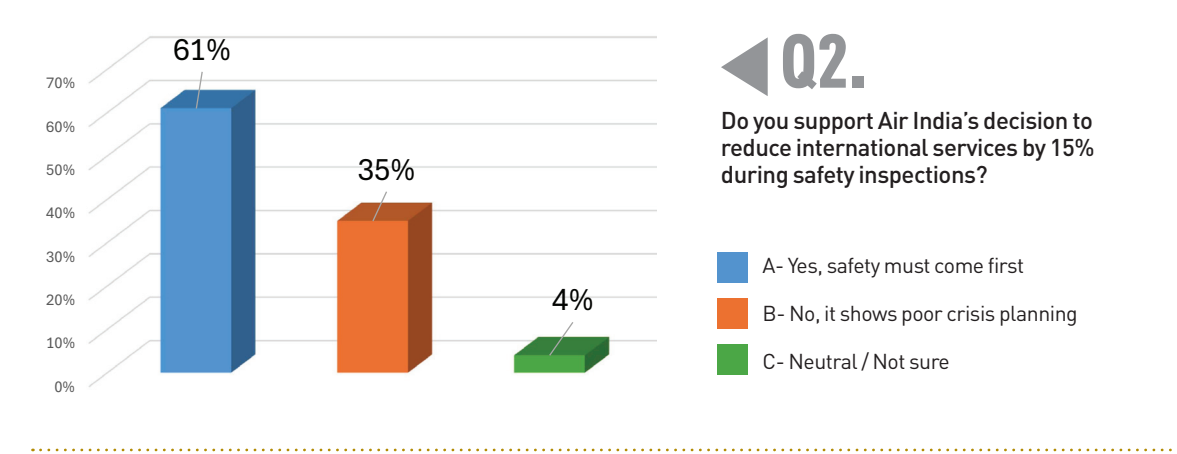
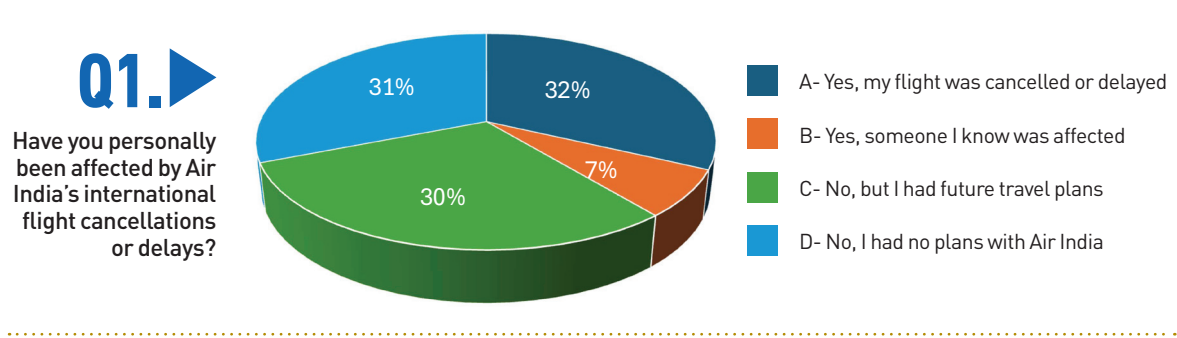
This interview with Chaudhary Birender Singh offers a clear insight into Haryana’s politics, his personal journey, and his profound views on the Indian political landscape.



THE DAILY GUARDIAN SURVEY ON AIR INDIA FLIGHT CANCELLATION

32% have been personally affected by Air India’s flight cancellations

Following the tragic crash of Air India Flight AI171 on June 12, which claimed 275 lives—including passengers, crew, and 34 people on the ground—Air India has announced a temporary reduction in its international operations. The Tata Group-owned airline will cut its wide-body international flights by around 15% starting June 20 through mid-July to conduct comprehensive safety checks across its long-haul fleet. In a heartfelt message to Maharaja Club members, CEO and MD Campbell Wilson called the incident an “occasion of devastating loss” and extended condolences to those affected.



PM launches Rs 5,900-cr projects

CONTINUED FROM P1

(Uttar Pradesh) via Muzaf-farpur and Bettiah.

Further promoting the ‘Make in India – Make for the World’ initiative, the PM flagged off a state-of-the-art locomotive built at Marhowra plant for export to the Republic of Guinea.

The locomotive is equipped with high-horsepower engines, advanced AC propulsion systems, micro-processor-based controls, ergonomic cab designs, and regenerative braking.

In line with his commitment to conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga, the PM inaugurated six Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) under the Namami Gange project, worth over Rs 1,800 crore.

He also laid the foundation stone for additional water

supply, sanitation and STP projects across Bihar, totaling Rs 3,000 crore.

In a major thrust to the energy sector, the PM laid the foundation stone for a 500 MWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) across 15 grid substations in the state, including those in Muzaffarpur, Motihari, Bettiah, and Siwan.

With each substation to house 20–80 MWh capacity batteries, the system is expected to help discoms reduce peak-hour electricity costs and enhance supply reliability.

These units will save the distribution companies from buying electricity at expensive rates by feeding the already-stored electricity back to the grid, benefiting the consumers, an official said.

PM Modi also handed over

the first instalment to more than 53,600 beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban (PMAY-U) and marked the Grih Pravesh ceremony for over 6,600 completed houses by handing over keys to select beneficiaries.

Earlier in the day, Bihar Deputy Chief Minister, Samrat Choudhary, in a post on X wrote, “Today the people of Bihar are eagerly waiting for Modi ji, from energy to railways, from housing to export.....he (the PM) is bringing many gifts for the people of the state during his 51st visit to Bihar today”.

Bihar Governor Arif Mohammad Khan, Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, Deputy CMs Samrat Choudhary and Vijay Kumar Sinha, Union ministers and several officials were present on the occasion.

PM Modi hits out at RJD-Congress

CONTINUED FROM P1

ing flak from the BJP-led NDA.

“The reason is that the RJD-Congress people have little respect for people belonging to the deprived castes, the Dalits, the OBCs and the EBCs. They consider themselves above Babasaheb Ambedkar. But they must remember that the disrespect to Babasaheb Ambedkar will not be forgiven by the people of Bihar,” the PM said.

Speaking at the rally, Modi asserted that the world was “greatly impressed” with India’s progress and underscored Bihar’s “big role” in

the country’s emergence as the “world’s third largest economy”.

“You all know I have returned from abroad only yesterday. During my tour, I met many leaders of the developed world. They all were greatly impressed with the rate of progress in India. They are watching India becoming the third-largest economy in the world. In this, Bihar will definitely play a big role”, said the PM.

In the last 11 years, the NDA government at the Centre has devoted itself to removing every hurdle that stands in the way of the poor, he said.

“We will continue to make such efforts. The hard work has yielded handsome results,” the PM said.

In the past decade, a record number of 25 crore Indians have defeated poverty, and this feat of India is being lauded by renowned institutions like the World Bank, he said.

“In this national accomplishment, Bihar and the government headed by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar have played a significant role,” said Modi.

The PM also said a “prosperous” Bihar will help the country prosper.

Training his guns at the opposition I.N.D.I.A bloc,

“My confidence stems from the resilience of you people who had banished ‘jungle raj’ several years ago. But beware, those responsible for ‘jungle raj’ are looking for another opportunity to wreak havoc like they had once done.”

“They are playing various tricks to ensure that they recapture the state’s economic resources”, said Modi, in an apparent reference to several populist promises made by the RJD-Congress combine in the run-up to the assembly polls.

The PM added that the younger generation may have only heard tales about

the bad shape in which the state was left by those responsible for ‘jungle raj’.

“For centuries, Bihar had led the nation’s progress. But the vice-like grip of the lantern and the palm of hand (poll symbols of RJD and Congress, respectively) had made the state synonymous with forced migration,” Modi said.

He added, “My Bihari brothers and sisters are known for thriving under the most trying circumstances without compromising on their self-respect. But their sense of pride in their own abilities had been shattered by the Congress-RJD rule”.

Iran’s foreign minister holds talks with top European diplomats

CONTINUED FROM P1

window now exists within the next two weeks to achieve a diplomatic solution.” He travelled to Geneva after meeting in Washington with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and President Donald Trump’s Mideast envoy, Steve Witkoff.

Trump has been weighing whether to attack Iran by striking its well-defended Fordo uranium enrichment facility, which is buried under a mountain and widely considered to be out of reach of all but America’s “bunker-buster” bombs.

He said Wednesday that he’ll decide within two weeks whether the US military will get directly involved in the war given the “substantial chance” for renewed negotiations over Tehran’s nuclear programme.

French President Em-

manuel Macron said the European diplomats would make a “comprehensive, diplomatic and technical offer of negotiation” to Iran.

Israel says it launched its airstrike campaign to stop Iran from getting closer to being able to build a nuclear weapon. Iran and the United States had been negotiating over the possibility of a new diplomatic deal over Tehran’s programme, though Trump has said Israel’s campaign came after a 60-day window he set for the talks.

Iran says no negotiations while Israeli attacks continue

Iran’s supreme leader rejected US calls for surrender Wednesday and warned that any military involvement by the Americans would cause “irreparable damage to them.”

In an interview aired Fri-

day by Iranian state television, Araghchi said that “in the current situation, as the Zionist regime’s attacks continue, we are not seeking negotiations with anyone.”

He said that “we have nothing to discuss with the United States, which is a partner in these crimes,” and Tehran rejected negotiations with the Americans.

“As for others, if they seek dialogue, not negotiations, which don’t make sense right now, we have no problem with that,” he added. But he said that Friday’s discussion would focus “solely on the nuclear issue and regional matters” and Iran won’t hold talks on its missiles with anyone.

Just before meeting the European diplomats, Araghchi made a brief appearance before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

CONTINUED FROM P1

“About 1,000 Indians, who were relocated from Tehran to Qom and then to Mashad, will be evacuated to New Delhi on three charter flights,” Hosseini said.

“The first flight will land tonight at the New Delhi airport and there will be two more flights on Saturday,” he said.

The Iranian diplomat said more such flights could be arranged in the coming days if required.

Hosseini said Tehran is in close contact with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Indian embassy in Iran to ensure safe evacuation of Indian nationals.

“We are arranging for the safe passage of Indians who want to leave via air or via road through third countries or directly from Iran,” he said.

The Iranian diplomat also said that all Indians in Iran

“About 1,000 Indians, who were relocated from Tehran to Qom and then to Mashad, will be evacuated to New Delhi on three charter flights,”

are safe. At the same time, he said a few Indian students sustained injuries after an Israeli air strike hit a students’ dormitory in Tehran a few days back.

A total of 110 Indian students were brought back to India on Thursday after they were moved from Iran to Armenia through a land border crossing. Hosseini said about 10,000 Indians are living in Iran and those wishing to return home are being evacuated.

The Israel-Iran military hostilities began more than a week back.

‘Ensure gangsters give up crime’

CONTINUED FROM P1

broad daylight in Kurukshetra, following earlier firing incidents at liquor vends in Rohtak and Yamunanagar. These attacks have crippled the state’s excise auctions with contractors fearing for their lives.

Earlier this month, In Yamunanagar gunmen even opened fire at the residence of a key contractor, halting the allocation of liquor vends worth crores. The police officials associated with the investigation revealed that the gangsters having links with operatives outside the country were using henchmen and social media to spread terror, warning bidders to stay away from auctions.

With the state eyeing an excise revenue target of Rs 14, 063.91 crore for 2025–26, the unrest has delayed the allotment of 260 retail liquor zones in 20 districts. So far, only 934 zones have been allotted across 22 districts.

Reacting to the violence, Saini ordered the State Task Force (STF) to be

strengthened with additional personnel and resources. All pending criminal cases involving gangs and extortion rackets are to be reviewed regularly and resolved under a strict, time-bound framework.

The previous Manohar Lal led Haryana government had passed Haryana Control of Organised Crime Bill, 2023 to deal with criminal activities of organised crime syndicate or gang. But in the past couple of months the state has witnessed a rise in the criminal activities with the involvement of the gangsters requiring special drive from the state police.

Meanwhile, the figures by the state crime records bureau witnessed a sharp decline of 19.6% in crime in the state in 2024 as the Haryana recorded 966 murders, 1388 rapes, 113 incidents of gang rape, 4,621 kidnappings, 9,488 crimes against women other than rape, gang rape or kidnapping, and 489 robberies during the year.

Also the special task

force (STF) formed to deal with organised crime has arrested 1997 accused, including 542 most wanted criminals, 256 gangsters and their accomplices and 1199 other offenders involved in heinous crimes. The STF has arrested 636 offenders in 2024, revealed the figures.

But the recent incidents have sparked outrage in the state giving the opposition an opportunity to target the government as Congress leader Randeep Singh Surjewala accused the government of allowing Haryana to become a “gangster state.” He alleged that criminals are running operations from inside jails, with extortion flourishing unchecked. “Jails have become command centers for gang lords, while social media is their new weapon of fear.”

Recently, INLD leader Abhay Chautala also remarked that if he were Chief Minister even for a single day, not a single criminal would remain in Haryana.



# BJP SLAMS KARNATAKA GOVT OVER 15% QUOTA IN HOUSING SCHEMES TO MUSLIM

BJP state chief calls it 'unconstitutional' accuses Cong of appeasement

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

The Karnataka government's decision to increase reservation for minority communities under housing schemes has sparked strong criticism from the BJP. State party president Vijayendra Yediyurappa has called it "unconstitutional" and accused the Congress government of indulging in vote-bank politics.

In a post on X, Yediyurappa accused the Congress government of turning welfare into vote-bank politics and claimed that the new reservation policy deprives SCs, STs, and OBCs of their rightful opportunities.

"Reservation on the basis of religion is unconstitutional! @ INCKarnataka in Karnataka has converted welfare into a marketplace for vote-bank politics. • First, 4% quota in government contracts. • Now, 15% quota in housing schemes.



*"In a post on X, Yediyurappa accused the Cong government of turning welfare into vote-bank politics"*

Where does this appeasement end? This is a dangerous attempt to institutionalise communal vote-bank politics. It not only robs SCs, STs, and OBCs of their rightful opportunities, but also sends a dis-

## '2019 panel recommended it, criticism unwarranted'

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

Karnataka Housing and Minority Welfare Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan on Friday defended government's decision to increase minority reservations in housing schemes from 10 per cent to 15 per cent, claiming that it was not a new decision but based on a 2019 recommendation.

"Decision to reserve 15 per cent for minorities in housing schemes is not a decision taken now. The cabinet subcommittee formed in 2019 when HD Kumaraswamy was the Chief Minister in the coalition government had recommended it," Khan said.



He noted that the central government already follows a 15 per cent reservation for minorities in housing schemes, as per the 2006 Sachar Committee report. "There was a demand that the same should be given in the state. Therefore, the central model has been followed," he added.

turbing message that merit, backwardness, and constitutional principles are secondary to religious appeasement," he wrote.

He asked the Congress to read the Constitution of India, asserting that reservations are intended for those who are socially and educationally backwards, not based on religious identity.

"I urge Congress to pick up the Constitution they love to wave at public meetings. Had they read it even once, they would know that reservations are based on social and educational backwardness, and not handed out based on "who votes for me." Under the guise of welfare, this government is brazenly pushing religion-based reservation, striking at the very foundation of Dr. BR Ambedkar's Constitution and dragging his vision through the dirt of appeasement politics," he added.

# DMK leader Maran accuses brother Kalanithi of 'fraud'

AGENCIES  
CHENNAI

DMK Lok Sabha MP Dayanidhi Maran has accused his brother Kalanithi Maran of "financial crimes," and asked him to restore the entire shareholding position of Sun TV and related companies to their original state or face legal and regulatory action.

Dayanidhi Maran alleged in a legal notice: "You and your accomplices have deliberately abused your fiduciary and professional obligations to commit a series of calculated and coordinated financial crimes." Such acts amount to white-collar criminality of the highest order and have caused irreparable loss to the legitimate stakeholders of the companies in question, Dayanidhi alleged in the notice.

The legal notice was sent to Kalanithi Maran and his wife Kaveri Kalanidhi and six others. According to the notice, these six persons, which includes the company secretary and auditor, are "close



associates" of Kalanithi and his wife.

Meanwhile, Sun TV said "the alleged matter dates back to 22 years when the company was a closely held private limited company."

"The statements allegedly made in the articles are incorrect, misleading, speculating, defamatory and not supported by facts or law. We wish to inform that all acts have been done in accordance with legal obligations and the same had been duly vetted by concerned intermediaries before the public issue of the Company," it said in a filing to the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).

The matters alleged in the articles do not have any bear-

ing on the business of the company or its day-to-day functioning and being the family matter of the promoter are purely personal in nature, it added.

The legal notice narrated the founding and growth of Sun TV company, which began in 1985 as "Sumangali Publications Private Limited". Late DMK patriarch M Karunanidhi's wife, M K Dayalu and 'Murasoli' Maran's (SN Maran) spouse, Mallika Maran were the only two promoters of Sumangali publications. The company had always been a two-family owned entity holding 50 percent shares each, the notice said and detailed the shareholding pattern over the years.

# AI-171 crash: 220 victims identified, 202 bodies handed over: Gujarat Minister

TDG NETWORK  
AHMEDABAD

Almost a week after the deadly Air India crash that took place in Ahmedabad, DNA samples of 220 victims had been matched with their families and the mortal remains of 202 passengers have been released, announced Gujarat Minister of Health, Family Welfare and Medical Education Rushikesh Patel on Friday.

In a post on X, Rushikesh Patel wrote, "UPDATED UPTO:- 20/06/2025, 11:45 A.M. NO. OF DNA MATCH - 220, NO. OF RELATIVES CONTACTED- 220, NO. OF MORTAL RELEASED- 202."

Of the 220 victims identified in the recent Air India crash in Ahmedabad, 151 were Indian nationals, 34 were British, 7 Portuguese, one was Canadian, and 9 were non-passengers. So far, 202 bodies have been handed over, 15 sent by air and 187 by ambulance, while the remaining



mortal remains will be released soon.

"Indians 151, Portuguese 7, British 34, Canada 1, Non passengers 9.....BY AIR -15, By road via ambulance - 187.....Remaining Mortal remains will be handed over soon," the post further reads.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Air India CEO and MD Campbell Wilson said that the flight AI-171, which crashed shortly after taking off in Ahmedabad on June 12, was "well-maintained" and both the aircraft and its engines were regularly monitored, showing no issue before the flight.

# Shinde does whatever BJP tells it to do: Shiv Sena (UBT)

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray arrived at Sena Bhawan in Mumbai on Friday to hold a meeting with party leaders. Thackeray has called a crucial meeting with district heads, contact heads, and MLAs of the party.

Speaking about the meeting, Shiv Sena UBT Leader Bhaskar Jadhav informed that the meeting aims to strategise and prepare for potential elections.

"The Supreme Court has given a judgment that elections for local sectors like Municipal Corporations, Municipal Councils, District Councils, and Panchayat Committees must be conducted within four months. So, because of that, the party should also be ready for elections. The party must prepare some kind of strategy for the elections. The party should also be ready for the election and should make a strategy, that's why a meet-



Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray with party leaders Aditya Thackeray, Sanjay Raut and others during Shiv Sena's 59th foundation day celebrations, in Mumbai on Thursday. ANI



Shiv Sena MP Shrikant Shinde holds a mace in the presence of Maharashtra Deputy CM and Shiv Sena Chief Eknath Shinde during Shiv Sena's 59th foundation day celebrations, in Mumbai on Thursday. ANI

ing of the district chief and public representatives has been called", Jadhav told reporters.

Jadhav also criticised Eknath Shinde's recent remarks against Uddhav Thackeray, alleging that Shinde's words seemed to be dictated by the BJP.

"The words used by Eknath Shinde for Uddhav Thackeray ... it seems to me that the mouth is of Eknath Shinde but the words are of BJP, Eknath Shinde has no idea, no opinion, whatever BJP says, Eknath Shinde has to do that.

# Increasing attempts to destabilise Govts by using Guvs: Kerala

TDG NETWORK  
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Kerala Education Minister V Sivankutty announced on Friday that the powers and duties of governors will be included in school textbooks.

Minister Sivankutty told reporters that the governor's powers and duties will be included in school textbooks. "The state's curriculum has been revised to uphold constitutional values. The Department of Public Education will give priority to providing the necessary support to emulate them in life and through school education activities."

"There are increasing attempts to destabilise elected governments in the country by using governors. The Supreme Court itself has clarified the constitutional powers of governors. Since schools are the real places where the values of democracy should be learned, this matter will



be included separately in the revised textbooks to teach students about the constitutional powers of governors. This subject will be included in the second volume of Social Science this year and during the revision of higher secondary textbooks." Sivankutty stated.

Earlier, Kerala Education Minister V. Sivankutty criticized the BJP-led central government over its decision to give Hindi titles to English medium textbooks of NCERT, calling it against the "federal" principles of the nation.

# Three held as woman kills self over moral policing

TDG NETWORK  
KANNUR

Three men have been remanded in judicial custody in connection with the death of a woman who was found dead at her house in Kayalode under the Pinarayi police station limits on Tuesday, Kerala Police said.

The woman died purportedly due to alleged moral policing by a group of locals.

The arrested are MC Mubsheer (28) of V.C. Manzil, K A Faisal (34) of Kaniyan Vallappil, and V K Rafnas (24) of Koodathan Kandi House --all residents of Parambayi. The accused were produced before court on Thursday and remanded to judicial custody.

The woman, Raseena from Parambayi, died allegedly by suicide after being purportedly publicly harassed and shamed for being seen with a male friend.

# NHRC intervenes in assault on woman over husband's loan

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of India has taken suo motu cognizance of a disturbing media report involving the public assault of a woman by a moneylender in Narayanapuram village, Chittoor district, Andhra Pradesh.

The incident, which occurred on June 16, reportedly saw the woman tied to a tree and brutally beaten in full view of villagers--punished for her husband's failure to repay a long-standing debt.

NHRC stated that according to the media account published on June 17, the woman's husband had borrowed Rs 80,000 from a local moneylender nearly three years ago.

Over time, he is said to have incurred additional debts from other villagers. With repayment overdue and mounting pressure, he allegedly fled

the village, abandoning his wife and three children.

Left to fend for the family alone, the woman has since worked as a daily wage laborer and has been steadily repaying the debts in small instalments. However, this failed to appease the moneylender, who resorted to public violence to settle the outstanding dues.

The NHRC has deemed the reported incident a grave violation of human rights and human dignity.

In response, it has issued formal notices to both the Chief Secretary and the Director General of Police, Andhra Pradesh, seeking a comprehensive report on the matter within two weeks.

The Commission has expressed deep concern over the law enforcement's role and the need for protection of vulnerable citizens against such extrajudicial acts.

# Cooperative movement a philosophy of our traditional life: Shah

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation Amit Shah on Friday attended the National Seminar organised by NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India) on the occasion of International Year of Cooperatives 2025.

Speaking at the event, Union Minister Shah stated

that cooperatives are a "philosophy" of traditional Indian living and have been supporting the underprivileged and women in society for over a century.

"Cooperatives may be an economic system for the whole world, but for India, cooperatives are a philosophy of our traditional life. Coming together, thinking together, working together, going together for a single goal and

dealing with happiness and sorrow together, this is the soul of India's vision of life. In the almost 125 years old cooperative movement, almost in all ups and downs, the work of becoming a support for the lives of the farmers of this country, the poor, the rural citizens, especially the women, has been done by this cooperative movement... Under the cooperative movement, AMUL, IFFCO, KRIBHCO,



Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah with Maharashtra CM Devendra Fadnavis, state Dy CM Eknath Shinde launches various products of NAFED in Mumbai on Friday. (iCfCM Maharashtra X/ANI Photo)

NAFED... all these organisations have created deep success stories..." Shah said.

Highlighting the success story of AMUL (Anand Milk Union Limited), the Union Minister for Cooperation said, "I come from Gujarat. Today, 36 lakh poor sisters are associated with AMUL. None of the sisters has invested over Rs 100 in Amul, but their hard work has induced a turnover of Rs 80,000

crores, and the profit directly goes to their bank accounts."

The Union Minister further said that National Taxi, based on a co-operative model will be started and its profit will go directly to the driver's bank account.

He said, "Based on the co-operative model, National Taxi based on co-operative model will be started, in which the driver of every taxi will not be associated

with it but will be the owner of Bharat Taxi Co-operative, the profit made in it will go directly to the driver's bank account."

According to Ministry of Cooperation, based on principles of "Sahakar se Samridhii", a taxi-service cooperative will be formed by willing taxi drivers and the management will rest with the members of such society.



# AAP LEADER SISODIA APPEARS BEFORE ACB IN CLASSROOM SCAM CASE

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Aam Aadmi Party leader Manish Sisodia on Friday accused the Bhartiya Janata Party of ‘misusing’ agencies to file false cases against the opposition. The former Delhi Deputy CM appeared before the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in a case of Delhi’s classroom scam. Manish Sisodia said that excellent work has been done in Delhi in education and brilliant classrooms and schools were built during his tenure.

He alleged that the case filed against him is motivated by politics with the BJP, and he will keep his stand against the ACB. He further mentioned BJP MP Manoj Tiwari and asserted that he had made allegations against him related to the same case. However, Sisodia later filed a defamation suit against Tiwari, after which he is currently out of jail on bail. “See, excellent schools have been built in Delhi and excellent education is impart-



*He alleged that the case filed against him is motivated by politics with the BJP, and he will keep his stand against the ACB.*

ed but BJP, motivated by politics, misuses its agencies and files FIRs.

This is completely a politically motivated case and I will put my views before the ACB. BJP misused all the agencies and dug up the lives of each and every leader but they did not find anything. They only file fake FIRs, the same will happen in this case as well.

I want to say one thing that Manoj Tiwari had made these allegations against me but when I filed a defamation suit against him, he is out on bail. In this, Manoj Tiwari is also running away from the allegations, I wonder why BJP is doing this”, Manish Sisodia told reporters on Friday. On June 5, Delhi Police’s Anti-Corruption Branch (ACB)

has recorded statements of nearly 20 individuals, including engineers, contractors, and officials from the Education Department. According to sources, police have also questioned an architect whose bank account allegedly received funds from the contractors. Notably, no architect was officially appointed in this government project, raising serious questions about how and why the funds were transferred to the architect’s account.

This financial trail has now become a crucial aspect of the investigation. Earlier on the complaints of BJP leaders Harish Khurana, Kapil Mishra and Neelkanth Bakshi, the Anti-Corruption Branch, GNCTD has registered a case against Manish Sisodia and Satyendra Jain, the then Ministers of the erstwhile Delhi Govt. of Aam Aadmi Party, regarding allegations of a scam to the tune of Rs. 2,000 crore in the construction of school classrooms/buildings in NCT of Delhi at exorbitant costs.

## Has to pay for his actions: CM Rekha

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday said that former minister Manish Sisodia will have to face the consequences of his actions, following a summons issued to him by the Anti-Corruption Bureau. Speaking to reporters, Rekha Gupta said, “Soon all of them will have to appear in court.

Arvind Kejriwal will also have to come here from Punjab. Delhi does not need such fugitive leaders. He will have to pay for the misdeeds he has done.” CM Gupta also said that her government is working on a planned redevelopment of the city and aims to relocate slum dwellers in an orderly way. She also said the government is studying Mumbai’s Dharavi model to help improve living conditions in Delhi. “These people (AAP) just



wanted political gains and never thought about running the city... How will it work if we give houses, and still people don’t vacate the slums?... Delhi needs a revival. For this, we are also studying the Dharavi model of Mumbai... Delhi’s redevelopment will be done in a planned manner... We will not let anything happen to the slum dwellers of Delhi who have been permanent residents here for years... The 50,000 flats built by the last government remained vacant even though slum dwellers had deposited money with the government for years... We do not intend to demolish anyone’s houses but to get them to settle down orderly,” Gupta said.

## Delhi assembly LoP Atishi slams BJP

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhi assembly leader of opposition Atishi slammed the Bhartiya Janata Party following AAP leader Manish Sisodia’s appearance before the Anti-Corruption Bureau in connection with the classroom scam. Atishi said that ACB summoned Manish Sisodia in the “fake” classroom scam, and it is yet another addition to the list of BJP’s fake cases against AAP. The AAP leader alleged that in the past 10 years, the BJP has filed over 200 cases against the AAP leaders, but still not a single rupee has been found despite all the investigations. “Former minister Manish Sisodia was summoned for questioning in a fake classroom scam case.

This is yet another addition to the series of fake cases filed by the BJP. In the past 10 years, the BJP



government and its various agencies have filed over 200 cases against AAP members -- but despite all the raids and investigations, they haven’t found even 1 rupee of corrupt money from any AAP leader”, Atishi told reporters in New Delhi. Atishi further slammed the Delhi government and mentioned that the real reason behind the ACB probe is because BJP is unable to govern in the national capital. She highlighted that the Delhi government has failed at every front whether it be the waterlogging, electricity, or rising school fees.

## Union Min promises support for developing Assembly building as heritage hub

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Union Culture Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has written to Delhi Assembly Speaker Vijender Gupta, expressing willingness to work in collaboration to unlock the full cultural potential of the Assembly complex, and promised help in identifying conservation experts for the project.

Gupta had written to the minister, seeking his ministry’s help in developing the Assembly building campus as a historical heritage hub. In his letter to Gupta on June 17, Shekhawat commended the speaker on his «thoughtful and visionary initiative», adding that his ministry fully supports it and is «committed to assisting in identifying experts in the fields of conservation, curation



and cultural programming. “The Delhi Assembly Building is a significant landmark that not only represents the rich political legacy of our nation but also stands as an enduring symbol of architectural and historical value. Your proposal to develop the campus as a vibrant heritage hub is both timely and appropriate,” said Shekhawat, who also holds the tourism portfolio. The Ministry of Culture recognises the potential of

*Gupta had written to the minister, seeking his ministry’s help in developing the Assembly building campus as a historical heritage hub.*

the proposal in furthering cultural tourism in Delhi, he added.

“We look forward to working in close collaboration with your office to preserve this historical edifice and unlock its full cultural potential for the people of Delhi and the nation,” the letter read. Shekhawat also noted that a meeting, chaired by the secretary of the culture ministry and attended by relevant stakeholders to deliberate on Gupta’s proposal, was held on May 23.

In his letter to Shekhawat, Gupta had said the Delhi Assembly building has been a witness to several pivotal moments in India’s history. The speaker had sought the Union minister’s support in preparing a comprehensive project report to develop the Delhi Assembly building campus as a heritage hub. Shekhawat’s letter follows a meeting held on June 3, during which Gupta met the Union minister to discuss ongoing developmental initiatives and sought his ministry’s cooperation in transforming the Assembly campus into a nationally-recognised heritage site.

sembly building has been a witness to several pivotal moments in India’s history. The speaker had sought the Union minister’s support in preparing a comprehensive project report to develop the Delhi Assembly building campus as a heritage hub. Shekhawat’s letter follows a meeting held on June 3, during which Gupta met the Union minister to discuss ongoing developmental initiatives and sought his ministry’s cooperation in transforming the Assembly campus into a nationally-recognised heritage site.

## International Yoga Day: CM Rekha to lead Yoga session on banks of Yamuna today

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday asserted that she will practice Yoga on the banks of the Yamuna on the occasion of the International Day of Yoga.

Speaking to persons ahead of International Yoga Day tomorrow, she said, “Tomorrow I will practice Yoga on the banks of Yamuna... Tomorrow will be celebrated like a festival in many places in Delhi... The Delhi government will celebrate this International Yoga Day with great enthusiasm.”

Earlier in the day, she said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi made Yoga Day recognised on the world stage in such a



way that every country in the world is adopting Yoga with great affection today. Addressing an event at a Yoga, Meditation, and Medical Camp in Delhi’s Shalimar Bagh ahead of International Yoga Day tomorrow, Chief Minister Rekha Gupta said, “PM Modi got Yoga recognised on the world stage in such a way that every country in the world is adopting Yoga with great affection today... India

will be able to prosper only if it remains healthy.” As India is gearing up to celebrate the 11th International Day of Yoga on June 21, the government is organising a multitude of events nationwide to mark the occasion with “Yoga for One Earth, One Health” as this year’s theme. Yoga Sangam, the main event, will orchestrate a synchronised mass yoga demonstration based on the Common Yoga Pro-

tocol (CYP) at over 1 lakh locations across India on June 21, 2025, from 6:30 AM to 7:45 AM. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead the national event at Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. This collective celebration aims to reaffirm our shared commitment to the timeless practice of yoga and its enduring relevance in today’s world.

This year marks the 11th International Day of Yoga, with the theme “Yoga for One Earth, One Health”. This theme echoes a vital truth about the interconnectedness of health, sustainability, and the environment, aligning with India’s “One Earth, One Family, One Future” vision highlighted during its G20 presidency.

## 139 drug offenders arrested under ‘Operation Kavach-8.0’

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhi Police has arrested 139 drug offenders and registered 133 cases under the NDPS Act as part of its ongoing “Operation Kavach-8.0”, an official on Friday said.

The operation, conducted across 1,040 locations in the national capital, saw the involvement of over 350 teams from all 15 districts of Delhi Police, including the Special Cell and Crime Branch.

“The 24-hour exercise began at 6 pm on June 18 and concluded at 6 pm on June 19,” said Special Commissioner of Police (CP), Crime, Devesh Chandra Srivastava.

As part of the drive, Delhi Police recovered 90.3 grams



of heroin, 25.9 kg of ganja, 3.32 grams of cocaine, 4.63 grams of MDMA, 20.08 grams of amphetamine and 12 buprenorphine tablets, he added.

Besides narcotics, 217 cases were registered under the Delhi Excise Act with the arrest of 224 people and 47,476 quarters of

illicit liquor were seized, police said. In addition to drug-related cases, 30 people were arrested in 29 Arms Act cases leading to the recovery of six semi-automatic pistols, two country-made pistols, seven live cartridges, three magazines and 23 knives, they said.

Delhi Police also arrested 55 people in 28 gambling cases and seized Rs 25,592 in cash.

As many as 5,682 people were taken into preventive custody and 494 vehicles were impounded under Section 66 of the Delhi Police Act, police said.

“Under the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2,031 violators were prosecuted and one person was arrested with over 1.71 lakh prohibited foreign cigarettes and 469 e-cigarettes,” said the Special CP. Ekanjot Singh Sandhu (18) from Punjab was held with four semi-automatic pistols in southeast Delhi, police said.

## Delhi Police nabs fraudster involved in multi-crore real estate scam

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

A 56-year-old man has been arrested for allegedly masterminding a multi-crore housing scam in Navi Mumbai that duped thousands of investors in the national capital with false promises of land, high returns and fake government approvals, an official on Friday said.

The accused, identified as Dattatray Ganapati Mohite, was caught from Maharashtra’s Raigad, he said.

The officer said that Mohite, who carried a cash reward of Rs 50,000 on his head, was wanted in four separate cases registered with the Economic



Offences Wing (EOW) and one case with Amar Colony Police Station. “Mohite was the mastermind behind a massive real estate scam involving a fictitious housing scheme named ‘Pragati Valley Project’ at Karjat, Navi Mumbai. He, along with associates, allegedly lured thousands

of Delhi investors to put money into a non-existent project through false promises of land ownership, high returns and fake government approvals,” said Additional Commissioner of Police (CP), Crime, Sanjay Kumar Sain. The accused and his firm, Pragati Land & Housing

Corporation, in conspiracy with more than 70 fake estate companies launched an aggressive marketing campaign using forged brochures, pre-launch offers and fabricated documents, he added.

The victims were induced to invest via cheques and cash, amounting to over Rs 20 crore, police said.

“Investigations later revealed that the company did not own any land, had no government registration or approvals and abruptly shut down operations by 2010 following which the accused and his associates absconded,” the Additional CP said.

## DDA plans hot-air balloon rides at four locations

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Delhiites will get to experience the thrill of hot-air balloon rides as the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) is planning to launch the recreational activity at four locations in the city, officials said.

According to officials, after careful consideration, four locations -- Bansera, Asita, Yamuna Sports Complex and the Commonwealth Games Village Sports Complex -- have been se-



lected for the initial start of the project, and a tender has been issued inviting private players to operate these rides at DDA sites. “These sites will be offered

for operation of hot air ballooning on a revenue-sharing basis. The required area, approximately 60 metres by 60 metres at each site, will be provided to the

firm as per mutually agreed timings and days,” the tender issued by the DDA. With an eye on generating revenue and promoting tourism, the landowning agency has marked four sites at each of the two mega sports complexes managed by it. Currently, there are several other sporting areas within these complexes.

According to officials, the firms will be allowed to advertise on the balloons, and the licence issued will be for three years, which will be extendable up to a

maximum of nine years. Baansera and Asita, the two pet projects of Lt Governor VK Saxena, are large portions of Yamuna floodplain revived by the land owing agency in the past two years. Baansera, is located at Sarai Kale Khan on the western bank of the Yamuna river and has been developed as the Delhi’s first bamboo-themed public space.

Similarly, Asita, is located on the eastern bank of Yamuna in the stretch between the Old Railway Bridge and ITO barrage.

## HC rejects anticipatory bail plea of goldsmith accused of misappropriating gold

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Thursday rejected the anticipatory bail of a goldsmith in a case of alleged misappropriation of part of the gold delivered to him for making jewellery.

Economic Offence Wing (EOW) lodged an FIR in 2022. A non-bailable warrant was issued against the accused, who had not joined the investigation. He was declared a proclaimed offender (PO). Justice Ravinder Duda rejected the anticipatory bail of Jagdish Das and said that in the light of the cumulative circumstances, the petitioner is not entitled to seek the benefit of pre-arrest/ anticipatory bail.

While rejecting the plea, the High Court observed, “Keeping in view the law and judicial precedents, anticipatory bail shall not be granted to a person who is a proclaimed person under Section 82 CrPC except in exceptional circumstances.”

“The present case does not form an exceptional or extraordinary case where this discretionary power of the Court be used,” Justice Duda held in the judgement passed on June 19. The High Court also considered the status report filed by the police, which revealed that despite the orders of the trial Court, he failed to join the investigation and appear before it even after the issuance of NBWs and process under Section 82 CrPC.



# PM MODI HAS ADDRESSED HEALTH WITH A HOLISTIC VIEW: AMIT SHAH

At a Bengaluru event, Amit Shah lauded Modi's broad vision for health, citing major expansions in infrastructure and schemes.

TDG NETWORK  
BENGALURU

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has addressed health with a holistic view by initiating various schemes. He added that the number of All India Institute of Medical Sciences in India increased from seven to 23 after Modi became Prime Minister.

Shah said that the Centre constructed toilets in 12 crore houses, started the Fit India movement, and initi-

## KEY HIGHLIGHTS FROM SHAH'S ADDRESS

- AIIMS expansion: Number of AIIMS increased from 7 to 23 since 2014
- Infrastructure boost: Medical colleges doubled from 387 to 780; MBBS seats rose to 1.18 lakh
- Holistic health schemes: Fit India, Yoga Day, Ayushman Bharat, and Poshan Abhiyan cited as key initiatives
- Bengaluru visit: Shah inaugurated Adichunchanagiri University campus, met former CM BS Yediyurappa



*"In 2014, there were only seven AIIMS in the country against 23 AIIMS hospitals. Today, the number of medical colleges in the country is 780, compared to 387 earlier. MBBS seats have increased to 1,18,000 seats," he said.*

ated Yoga Day, keeping in the holistic view of health. He also highlighted the health benefits of Poshan Abhiyan and the PM Janau-shadhi Scheme.

"PM Modi has addressed health with a holistic view.

The government constructed toilets in 12 crore houses, started the Fit India movement, initiated Yoga Day, and also introduced schemes like Mission In-dradhanush for free vacci-nation. Poshan Abhiyan -

for nutrition of mother and child, Ayushman Bharat - Rs 5 lakh health insurance scheme and PM Janau-shadhi Scheme," Shah said while speaking at the inauguration ceremony of the Bengaluru campus of Adichunchanagiri University.

Speaking about the achievements of the PM Modi government in boosting the health infrastructure of the country, he said that medical colleges in the country are now 780, compared to 387 earlier, and MBBS seats have increased

to 1,18,000 seats.

"In 2014, there were only seven AIIMS in the country against 23 AIIMS hospitals. Today, the number of medical colleges in the country is 780, compared to 387 earlier. MBBS seats have increased to 1,18,000 seats," he said.

The Union Home Minister also praised Adichunchanagiri Math for connecting "many poor and middle-class families with spirituality and selfless action."

"This Math has connected many poor and middle-class families with spirituality and selfless action," he said.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah arrived in Karnataka's Bengaluru on Thursday evening, to a warm welcome from BJP leaders and supporters.

During his visit, Shah also met senior BJP leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister, BS Yediyurappa. Sharing a photo from their meeting on X, he wrote, "Met senior BJP leader and former Chief Minister of Karnataka, Shri B S Yediyurappa in Bengaluru."

## Dhankhar slams SC over Emergency-era verdict, says darkest in judicial history

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Friday slammed the Supreme Court for its verdict delivered during the Emergency, dubbing it as the "darkest" in the judicial history of the world.

According to an official statement, he said the judgment of the Supreme Court overruling that of nine high courts legitimised dictatorship and authoritarianism.

Dhankhar also questioned the then president Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed for signing the proclamation of Emergency on the "instance" of then prime minister Indira Gandhi and not the entire council of ministers.

Addressing a group of Rajya Sabha interns here, the vice president said, "A president cannot act on the advice of an individual, the prime minister. The Constitu-



tion is very categorical.

"There is a council of ministers headed by the PM to aid and advise the president. This was one violation, but what was the result? More than 1,00,000 citizens of this country were put behind bars in hours," he said.

Referring to the role of the judiciary during the Emergency, Dhankhar said, "That was a time when the fundamental essence of democracy capsized in times of distress. People look up to the judiciary.

"Nine high courts in the country have gloriously defined that emergency or no emergency,

people have fundamental rights and there is access to the justice system. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court overturned all nine high courts and gave a judgment which will be the darkest in the history of any judicial institution in the world that believes in the rule of law," he further said.

Dhankhar pointed out that the decision was that "it is the will of the executive to have Emergency for as much time as it thinks fit".

In the 1976 ADM Jabalpur case, a five-judge Constitution bench, by a majority of 4-1, upheld the suspension of fundamental rights during the national emergency.

The majority verdict of the then chief justice of India A N Ray and Justices M H Beg, Y V Chandrachud and P N Bhagwati held that the right to seek legal remedy for violations of Article 21 was suspended during the Emergency.

## UP Chief Minister Yogi inaugurates Gorakhpur Link Expressway

TDG NETWORK  
AZAMGARH

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said that the new Uttar Pradesh of the new India is making its new identity as the "express-way state."

CM Yogi inaugurated the 91.35 km long Gorakhpur Link Expressway built at a cost of Rs 7,283 crore, connecting several districts to Gorakhpur including Azamgarh.

Addressing a gathering in Azamgarh, Chief Minister Yogi said, "The new Uttar Pradesh of the new India is making its new identity as the 'express-way state.' The inauguration of the 91.35 km long Gorakhpur Link Expressway is a historic moment for eastern Uttar Pradesh. Under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh is taking new



heights of development, confidence and glory with the largest expressway network in the country," said CM Yogi.

He said that the Gorakhpur Link Expressway opens the doors of infinite possibilities of prosperity in the 'new Uttar Pradesh.'

"When there is speed, there will be progress, when there is progress, there will be prosperity and when there is prosperity, there will be happiness on every face. We have come to connect you with this happiness," said CM Yogi while addressing a gathering.

Critising the previous state govern-

ment, CM Yogi Adityanath said that the work of the Agra-Lucknow Expressway was half done but during his tenure projects related to six expressways in the state have been completed.

"The work on the Agra Lucknow Expressway was half done. Today I am happy to tell you that we have completed six projects. You are witnessing the journey of the Purvanchal Expressway. We are continuously building it since 2021. In 2022, the Bundelkhand Expressway has been started. It is 300 km long. The 340 km long Purvanchal Expressway has already been completed and its connectivity to Patna is about to be completed. Now remember how easy the connectivity from Patna to Lucknow and Lucknow to Delhi will become", CM Yogi said.

He stated that the 340 km-long Purvanchal Expressway is about to extend its connectivity to Patna.

## Goyal's statement on India-ASEAN trade deal unwarranted: Cong's Anand Sharma

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Former Union Commerce & Industry Minister of India, Anand Sharma, on Friday said in a statement that the statement by Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal on "belittling India ASEAN Trade Agreements is unwarranted, ill-advised and unfortunate."

Anand Sharma believes that both India and ASEAN has been together for three decades engaged in a multi-faceted relationship which is mutually rewarding and important.

ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, is a regional bloc of ten Southeast Asian countries.



Formed in 1967, its primary goals are to foster economic growth, social progress, and cultural development, while also promoting regional peace and stability.

He further believes that this relationship is important for "Look East policy to deepen and diversify India's relations with a region that is economically vibrant and of enormous geo-strategic importance for engage-

ment with the Asia-Pacific region."

"Piyush Goyal's statement terming the Trade agreement with ASEAN as silly and labelling these countries as B team of China is irresponsible and insulting. He has forgotten, that President of Indonesia Prabowo Subianto was the chief guest for 2025 Republic Day Parade," Anand Sharma said.

The former Union Minister in his statement also emphasized that, "trade in goods with ASEAN countries also includes essential imports: Iron ore and Coal from Indonesia, Palm oil from Malaysia and Indonesia, Oil - Petroleum products from Brunei Dares Salam and Malaysia and pulses from

Myanmar."

"It needs mention that ASEAN is India's 4th largest trading partner accounting for over 11% of India's total global trade with bilateral trade at 120 billion USD and accounts for over 11% of India's Exports. FDI inflows from ASEAN to India account for over 18% of total FDI inflows since 2000," he further added.

Talking about the Commerce Minister, he also said that, "Commerce Minister should be prioritising strengthening trade relations with partner countries and not insulting them while bending backwards to negotiate a suboptimal trade agreement with USA on its terms."

## PM not coming for welfare of Bihar but to seek votes: Kishor

TDG NETWORK  
GOPALGANJ

Jan Suraaj Founder Prashant Kishor on Friday criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bihar, claiming it was not aimed at the state's development but solely focused on securing votes for the BJP-led NDA alliance.

Kishor said, "PM is not coming for the first time... PM Modi is not coming for the welfare and development of Bihar but to seek votes for the BJP and NDA."

Kishor questioned the Prime Minister's claims about new development projects in the state, pointing out that some of the initiatives were already functional. "The locomo-



tive factory is already there in Marhohrah; it is nothing new," he said, referring to the manufacturing unit often highlighted in government speeches.

The Jan Suraaj founder further accused the Prime Minister of ignoring critical issues that matter to the people of Bihar. "PM

should speak on the sugar mill which is closed there," he said.

He added that residents of Bihar have grown disillusioned over the years due to repeated unfulfilled promises. "For the last 10-12 years, people have seen that announcements are made but nothing happens," he stated.

Raising the issue of large-scale migration from Bihar, Kishor questioned the Centre's commitment to creating opportunities in the state. "PM should tell when the migration of children from Bihar will stop," he demanded.

On Thursday, Prashant Kishor slammed PM Modi's visit to Bihar, labelling it political campaigning funded by the state's taxpayers.

## J&K CM requests Union Rail Minister for more trains on Katra-Srinagar rail route

TDG NETWORK  
SRINAGAR

In light of the overwhelming public response to the recently launched Vande Bharat train service between Katra and Srinagar, JK Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has formally requested the Union Ministry of Railways to introduce additional trains on Katra-Srinagar rail route to meet high-demand.

Speaking to the media during his visit to Katra, CM Omar highlighted that the newly inaugurated Vande Bharat service has witnessed full bookings since its launch, reflecting the strong demand for improved and faster connectivity between the Jammu



region and the Kashmir Valley.

"The Vande Bharat service has brought immense relief to commuters and boosted regional connectivity. However, the current capacity is not sufficient to meet the rising demand. I have urged the Centre to increase the frequency of trains and consider deploying additional services to cater to the growing number of passengers," said the Chief Minister.

## Manipur police exchange heavy fire with miscreants following firing incident in Phubala

TDG NETWORK  
IMPHAL

The Manipur police informed that the law-and-order situation in Manipur was generally normal in the past 24 hours except for a lone report of unprovoked firing in Bishnupur district, according to a press release.

On Thursday at approximately 3:00 PM, a cultivator from Phubala Awang Maning Leikai, namely Ningthoujam Biren Singh, was shot in his left arm by an unknown armed miscreant while he was working in his paddy field at Phubala Maning.

Biren Singh was initially taken to the District Hospital, Bishnupur, for medical treatment and later referred to the RIMS Hospital, Imphal. His condition is re-



ported to be stable at present.

In response, security forces launched a search operation in and around Langchingmanbi, Heichanglok, and the western areas of Phubala village.

During the course of the operation, security forces came under fire from unknown armed miscreants, and the forces retaliated accordingly. During the crossfire, one woman from Langchingmanbi village was

found dead with a bullet injury. She was later identified as Mrs. Hoikholing, wife of the village chief of Langchingmanbi.

Local police have attended to the incident, and the deceased is being transported to the District Hospital, Churachandpur, for necessary legal formalities.

Cases have been registered in connection with the incidents, and an investigation is underway.

## 'Targeting hits root of independence': SC bar bodies deplore ED summons to senior lawyers

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Supreme Court bar bodies SCBA and the SCAORA have condemned the ED notices to senior advocates Arvind Datar and Pratap Venugopal for their legal advice to clients, saying the "disturbing trend" hit the very foundation of legal profession.

The anti-money laundering agency, however, withdrew its summons issued to the senior counsel.

The Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) headed by senior advocate Vikas Singh and the Supreme Court Advocates on Record Association (SCAORA) presided by advocate Vipin Nair took exception to the summons in their official communication.

"The issuance of such illegal notices and summons to the senior advocates and to the advocate-on-record reflect a disturbing trend, striking at the very founda-



tions of the legal profession and undermining the independence of the Bar which is a core pillar of India's Constitutional democrac , " the SCBA's statement issued through its secretary Pragya Baghel said.

The SCBA continued, "Independent judiciary and independent bar are the backbone of the democracy and if advocates or senior advocates are targeted in such manner then it is hitting the independence of the legal

profession in its root."

Nair wrote to Chief Justice of India B R Gavai on the "deeply disquieting development" having "serious ramifications for the independence of the legal profession and the foundational principle of lawyer-client confidentiality".

He wrote the letter following ED summons to Venugopal.

"It has come to our notice that senior advocate Pratap Venugopal, has received on

June 19, summons dated June 18, by ED under Section 50 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in its investigation into the Employee Stock Option Plan (ESOP) granted by M/s Care Health Insurance Ltd for a purported legal opinion rendered by senior advocate Arvind Datar, wherein Pratap Venugopal, was the advocate-on-record, supporting the grant of stock options to former Religare enterprises chairperson Rashmi Saluja,"

he said.

Section 50 of the PMLA deals with "powers of authorities regarding summons, production of documents and to give evidence, etc."

Venugopal, the letter said, was directed to appear before the ED on June 24.

"It would be imperative to mention that a similar notice was earlier issued by the ED to senior advocate Arvind Data, albeit withdrawn subsequently," Nair added.



# STOCK MARKET SURGES, NIFTY SOARS OVER 25K

Markets closed sharply higher on Friday, lifted by broad-based buying and positive technical signals across major sectors.

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI


The Indian stock market witnessed a powerful rally on Friday, with benchmark indices closing significantly higher, buoyed by wide-spread buying across sectors and strong investor sentiment.

The BSE Sensex surged 1,046.30 points to settle at 82,408.17, while the NSE Nifty jumped 319.15 points, ending the day at 25,112.40. Among the Nifty 50 constituents, 44 stocks ended in the green, with only 6 closing in the red, indicating broad-based market strength.

Commenting on the market action, Sundar Kewat, Technical and Derivatives Analyst at Ashika Institutional Equity - Ashika Stock Broking, noted, "In a bullish session, the Nifty opened flat at 24,787 and briefly

### MARKET HIGHLIGHTS

- Sensex, Nifty soar: Sensex jumped 1,046 points to 82,408; Nifty closed above 25,100, gaining 319 points
- Broad rally: 44 of 50 Nifty stocks rose; Construction, PSU Banks, and Auto led sectoral gains
- Bullish sentiment: Analysts flagged a reclaim of key technical levels, with 'buy on dips' strategy now in play
- Mid & Smallcaps rise:



Nifty Midcap 100 gained 1%+; derivatives data showed strong open interest in multiple stocks

dipped to 24,783 before staging a sharp rally. The index gained momentum right from the opening tick and scaled an intraday high of 25,078, closing firmly in the green."

Kewat highlighted the widespread sectoral participation, with Construc-

tion, PSU Banks, Financial Services, Auto, and Metal stocks leading the gains. The broader markets mirrored this optimism, as the Nifty Midcap 100 rose over 1 per cent, and Smallcap stocks continued to attract buying interest.

On the derivatives front,

market breadth remained robust with 186 advancing stocks versus 36 declining. Noteworthy open interest build-up was seen in Kaynes Technology, Mankind Pharma, Hero MotoCorp, JSW Steel, and LTIMindtree, signaling increased trader participation and bullish

sentiment.

Adding to the positive outlook, Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst at LKP Securities, said, "Nifty moved up sharply after three days of consolidation, resuming its short-term rally. Moreover, the index has reclaimed the 21-day EMA, which could provide further momentum for an upward move."

De added, "Support is now placed at 24,850, and the index remains a 'buy on dips' as long as it holds above this level. On the higher side, it may continue advancing towards 25,350 and beyond."

With upbeat technical indicators and sector-wide buying, Friday's market performance reflects growing investor confidence and sets the stage for continued momentum in the sessions ahead.

## India assesses trade impact of Iran-Israel conflict

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

According to the Commerce Ministry sources, the Commerce Secretary held a meeting with stakeholders from shipping and air-cargo sectors to discuss the impact of the Iran-Israel conflict on India's trade and he actions needed to normalize it.

During the meeting, the participants informed that the situation in the Strait of Hormuz is currently stable.

Additionally, country's ship reporting system is in place to monitor any incidents. The freight and insurance rates are also being closely monitored, the source revealed.

Furthermore, the Commerce Secretary also emphasized the need to assess the evolving situation and its impact on Indian EXIM trade. He highlighted the importance of exploring all possible alternatives in response to the situation.

Recently, the Israeli De-



fence Forces shared that on Thursday night it targeted the missiles manufacturing sites in Iran by using approximately 120 munitions.

The conflict between Iran and Israel started after the latter launched a series of strikes against military and nuclear infrastructure in Iran under 'Operation Rising Lion' on June 13. Iran responded with retaliatory strikes and launched 'Operation True Promise III'.

Since the military attacks started almost a week ago, the UN nuclear watchdog has been reporting damage at several of these facilities, including at nuclear-relat-

ed sites located in Natanz, Arak, Esfahan and Tehran, and their potential radiological effect, according to the statement released by the IAEA. Furthermore, amid these rising threats and regional attacks, US President Donald Trump has said he will allow two weeks for diplomatic efforts with Tehran before deciding whether to authorize military action against Iran.

Meanwhile, three Israeli Defence Forces said that on Thursday night it targeted the missiles manufacturing sites in Iran by using approximately 120 munitions. The details were provided in a post on X.

## Jefferies flags overvalued midcap stocks in India

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

According to a report by Jefferies, the Indian stock market is once again facing concerns around high valuations, particularly in the midcap segment.

The report pointed out that the recent market rally has pushed valuations to high levels, raising questions about sustainability and risks going forward.

Jefferies stated, "The rally in the market means valuations have become an issue again, particularly in the mid-cap space".

The report highlighted that the benchmark Nifty



Index is now trading at 22.2 times its 12-month forward earnings after rising 14.1 per cent from its recent low on April 7.

The midcap space has seen even sharper gains. The Nifty Mid-Cap 100 Index has surged by 23.7 per cent since April 7 and is now trading at a steep valuation of 27.1 times 12-month forward earnings. Due to such high valua-

tions, many corporates are once again placing equity in the market to take advantage of the bullish sentiment. The report added that the equity supply has increased sharply, with companies raising around USD 7.2 billion in May and USD 6 billion so far in June.

Jefferies noted that this wave of equity supply poses the main risk to the market. Before the market correction that began in late September last year, monthly equity supply was running at around USD 7 billion.

The report also highlighted a shift in market focus since the Union Budget announcement on February 1.

## Petroleum consumption in India set to surge 5.4% yearly: PHDCCI

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

According to a recent report by the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI), India's petroleum product demand is forecast to increase by a CAGR of 5.37 per cent between 2025 and 2030, largely propelled by the manufacturing and transportation sectors.

Diesel, petrol, Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), and petroleum coke are expected to lead this surge.

India's economy is projected to grow at over 6 per cent annually, with primary energy demand increasing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.4 per cent. This robust eco-



nom expansion will inevitably fuel higher energy consumption.

Additionally, Natural gas consumption is also projected to see substantial growth, with a nearly 60per cent increase (37 bcm/year) by 2030, reaching 103 bcm/

year. The City Gas Distribution (CGD) sector, along with heavy industrial and manufacturing sectors, are anticipated to drive this demand.

Despite this rising demand, India faces inherent vulnerabilities as over

85per cent of its crude oil needs are met through imports, positioning it as the world's third-largest oil importer. Furthermore, geopolitical instabilities, particularly in crucial chokepoints like the Hormuz Strait and Suez Canal, pose consistent threats to crude supply and pricing. On the price front, Brent crude prices are forecast to decline from an average of USD 81/barrel in 2024 to USD 74/barrel in 2025 and further to USD 66/barrel in 2026. This decline is attributed to a global expansion in petroleum production outside OPEC+ and a more moderate demand growth.

Domestically, India's

crude oil production is expected to increase over the short term, reaching 48.5 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) by FY 2026-27, before a projected decline to 45.5 MMT by FY 2029-30 due to maturing oil fields and limited new discoveries. In contrast, natural gas production is anticipated to rise significantly, reaching 54.7 Billion Cubic Meters (BCM) by FY 2029-30.

This growth aligns with the government's objective to increase natural gas's share in the primary energy mix from 6 per cent to 15 per cent by 2030, a commitment driven by cleaner energy goals and reduced carbon emissions.

## Air India bookings down 20 pc, fares dip up to 15 pc after Dreamliner crash



TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Bookings for Air India flights have declined by around 20 per cent on domestic as well as international routes while the average fares have dropped by 8-15 per cent in the aftermath of the Boeing 787-8 Dreamliner crash last week, Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO) President Ravi Gosain said on Friday.

An Air India spokesperson did not respond to a query seeking comments from the airline.

A London-bound Air India flight, AI-171 carrying 242 passengers and crew members crashed in Ahmedabad on June 12. All but one on board the plane died along with nearly 29 on the ground when the aircraft smashed into a medical complex in Meghaninagar area of the city shortly after takeoff.

"Following the unfortunate incident involving Air India, we have observed a temporary decline in bookings, particularly on international sectors. While the exact percentage varies by route, our estimates indicate a dip of around 18-22 per cent on international bookings and

a 10-12 per cent decline domestically in the immediate aftermath. However, this appears to be a short-term sentiment-driven reaction, as confidence typically stabilizes over time," Gosain told PTI.

The IATO president shared that there has been a moderate adjustment in fares across key Air India routes.

"On an average, ticket prices have reduced by 8-12 per cent on domestic sectors where the airline competes directly with low cost carriers like IndiGo and Akasa. On international routes, especially to Europe and Southeast Asia, fares have seen a drop of 10-15 per cent, depending on route occupancy and competition. These reductions are mix of promotional strategies and yield correction due to lowered demand," Gosain said.

Asked whether there have been cancellations by travellers for Air India flights booked via tour operators, the IATO president said, "Yes, we have witnessed a noticeable rise in cancellations, particularly from corporate and high-end leisure travellers who prefer to switch to alternative carriers".

## 'India holds critical position in global energy transition'

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Ranked 4th among the world's five largest economies, India holds a critical position in shaping the global energy transition, not only due to its rapid economic growth but also because of its rising energy demand and increasing influence on global emissions and energy policy, according to a report by the World Economic Forum (WEF).

The real measure of the world's shift to clean and sustainable energy lies in the hands of -- the United States, China, the European Union, Japan, and India.

These five economies together make up about half of the world's population, GDP, and energy use.



More significantly, they are responsible for nearly two-thirds of global emissions, giving them a major role in how quickly and effectively the planet can shift to cleaner energy.

Over the past ten years, all five of these economic giants have made progress. India and China showed

the most improvement, especially in expanding access to energy and preparing their systems for the future.

"Over the past decade, India made significant strides in increasing equity through greater access to energy and clean fuels, while also improving

energy regulations and investment in renewable and other clean-energy technologies," said the WEF report

In India, strong steps were taken to ensure more people have access to electricity and clean fuels, along with better energy laws and increased investments in solar, wind, and other renewable sources.

India still faces challenges. The WEF report highlights the need to improve electricity supply in rural areas, reduce dependence on imported energy, and strengthen grid reliability. More investments in infrastructure, clean energy technologies, skilled workforce, and finance options will be key to moving forward.

## FY26 air travel growth unlikely to stop airline losses: ICRA

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

The Indian aviation industry is expected to continue growing, with domestic air passenger traffic expected to grow by 7-10 per cent year-on-year (YoY) in FY2026, reaching 175-181 million passengers, according to ICRA report.

This follows a 7.6 per cent YoY increase in FY2025, when the total domestic traffic stood at 165.4 million passengers. Notably, this figure is 16.8 per cent higher than pre-Covid levels in FY2020, indicating a strong rebound in air travel demand.

Despite the increase in passenger numbers, ICRA expects the Indian aviation



industry to report a net loss of Rs.20,000-Rs.30,000 crore in FY2026.

ICRA stated in its report, "The Indian aviation industry to report a net loss of Rs. 20-30 billion in FY2026."

This projected loss is similar to the estimated losses in FY2025, and a stark contrast to the Rs.1,600 crore net profit reported in

FY2024.

The report attributes this ongoing loss to rising costs, high jet fuel prices, and mounting lease liabilities associated with new aircraft deliveries.

The industry's interest coverage ratio--a key financial metric-- is projected to be between 1.5 and 2.0 times in FY2026, suggesting some

improvement in financial stability despite ongoing challenges.

International travel by Indian carriers is also expected to see robust growth. ICRA forecasts a 15-20 per cent rise in international passenger traffic in FY2026.

In FY2025, Indian airlines carried 33.86 million international passengers, a 14.1 per cent increase from the previous year and 49 per cent higher than pre-Covid levels in FY2020.

In terms of recent monthly trends, domestic passenger traffic in May 2025 was estimated at 14.36 million, a 4.1 per cent increase from 13.80 million in May 2024, although it remained largely flat compared to April 2025.

## IEA: India's battery investment rising, costs still high

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Battery storage investment in India is expected to cross USD 1 billion in 2025; however, high financing costs remain a challenge, according to a recent report by the International Energy Agency (IEA).

The report noted that while battery storage investment continues to rise globally, challenges remain, particularly in developing economies like India, where high financing costs are still a major hurdle.

The IEA stated, "Developing economies continue to struggle with high financing costs, with financing costs for battery storage projects reaching twice the levels seen in advanced



economies. Battery storage investment in India stands out, and is expected to surpass USD 1 billion in 2025."

The report also shared that globally, investment in battery storage grew by 45 per cent in 2024 compared to the previous year. The United States, Europe, and China remained the largest contributors, accounting for more than 90 per cent of total global investment in the sector.

## Swiss Bank deposits by Indians down nearly 18%

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Deposits of Indian customers in Swiss banks have declined by around 18 per cent over the past decade, according to the latest figures released by the Swiss National Bank (SNB).

The data highlighted a drop from approximately 425 million Swiss francs in 2015 to 346 million Swiss francs in 2024.

The SNB data also showed that Indian deposits had seen a sharp rise during the COVID-19 period, touching a 10-year high of around 602 million Swiss francs.



However, the deposits started declining after the pandemic peak.

In 2023, deposits stood at 309 million Swiss francs, but in 2024, it grows by 37 million Swiss francs to reach 346 million Swiss francs. Despite this annual rise, the overall trend over the last decade remains downward. However, the decline in deposits is not unique to India.



# TRAILS OF INDIAN WATER POTS

## OPINION

ARUNANGSHU MUKHERJEE  
& ANANDAJIT GOSWAMI



The utilization of water pots in India represents a tangible intersection of culture, necessity, and environmental adaptation, revealing a rich tapestry of human ingenuity in response to water acquisition, storage, and transport challenges. Archaeological evidence indicates that the use of water pots in the Indian subcontinent dates back millennia, with early examples crafted from rudimentary materials like clay and gourds showcasing the resourcefulness of ancient communities in harnessing available resources for survival. Over time, the design and construction of water pots evolved, reflecting regional variations in material availability, climate conditions, and cultural practices, thereby underscoring the adaptive capacity of these humble vessels in meeting diverse needs across the landscape. The significance of water pots extends beyond their utilitarian function, as they often hold deep cultural and symbolic meaning within

Indian society, embodying notions of purity, sustenance, and community well-being, thus serving as potent symbols of life's essential elements. In India, where water scarcity poses a persistent challenge, water pots have played a crucial role in enabling communities to thrive in harsh environments by providing a means to collect and conserve precious water resources, thereby mitigating the impacts of drought and ensuring access to potable water for daily needs. Traditional water harvesting techniques, such as rainwater harvesting and well construction, are often coupled with water pots for storage and distribution, forming an integrated system that promotes water security at the household and community levels. The craftsmanship in creating water pots is often passed down through generations, with artisans employing time-honoured techniques to mold fire clay into durable and aesthetically pleasing vessels, thereby preserving

a valuable aspect of intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, using locally sourced materials in water pot construction contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing reliance on external resources and minimizing transportation costs, aligning with ecological conservation principles. The wisdom of our ancestors, who captured rainwater using old buckets and wooden barrels, is an idea worth revisiting. Ancient civilizations developed efficient strategies that we can still learn from. The integration of water pots into daily life is deeply ingrained in the cultural fabric of rural communities, where women often bear the responsibility of fetching water from distant sources, carrying the heavy pots on their heads or hips, and traversing long distances to secure this essential resource for their families. The design of water pots, with their rounded shapes and narrow mouths, facilitates ease of carrying and minimizes water spillage, reflecting an intimate understanding of ergonomics and fluid dynamics. Social structures and community bonds are often reinforced through the shared practice of water collection, with women gathering at wells or water sources to exchange news, share stories, and support one another in their daily tasks, fostering a sense of solidarity and collective identity. Furthermore, the use of water pots in religious rituals and ceremonies underscores their symbolic significance, with water from sacred rivers, ponds or springs stored in specially decorated pots and used for purification, ablution, and other ceremonial purposes, thereby imbuing these vessels with spiritual meaning and cultural reverence. In India, different types of water pots are used for various occasions, each serving a specific purpose. The pots used for drinking water differ from those used in religious rituals. Clay pots used during funerals are distinct from



those employed in auspicious ceremonies. Pots with necks typically have smaller openings compared to those without necks. The style of carrying these pots varies accordingly. Necked pots are generally held at the waist, supported by a hand around the neck. In contrast, pots without necks are typically carried on the head, with a hand

supporting the mouth. The water pots of India are deeply rooted in the country's cultural and practical traditions, many of which date back to the Indus Valley Civilization. The application of clay pots as a part of water conservation techniques within India has a spatial and temporal dimension. Across states, the usage of clay pots for water conservation and water applications for different cultural rights and customs, rituals flows very naturally within the Indian context. A woman from Rajasthan holds a very different clay pot for conserving water in comparison to a woman from West Bengal. This is because the weather, the distance travelled, and the cultural practices of Rajasthan are very different from West Bengal. Essentially, in this context, therefore, water conservation using a clay pot becomes an out-

come of the geographical terrain and cultural practices of the place and location. There are cultural references of early age water conservation techniques using clay pots even during Indus Valley Civilisation (3000-1500 BCE), Vedic and Post Vedic Periods (1500-500 BCE) before in the Medieval India during 500-1800 CE different water conservation structures other than clay pots flourished in Gujarat and Rajasthan with regional innovations. However, water conservation using a clay earthen pot has a long cultural history in Africa, which originated 4000 years ago. With a promotion of these pots, the demand for potters can rise too, leading to a preservation of cultural heritage across the states of India. For instance, preservation of the cultural tradition of water saving and conservation through pots can sus-

tain Kumbhars. Adopting strategies for economizing water usage will be crucial in addressing intensifying global water scarcity. The role of water pots as a part of that strategy will be of paramount importance in the Indian rural context by contextualizing it with the cultural fabric of the location. A time has come to create a water preservation, conservation, and security plan by internalizing the cultural knowledge of water pots and their impact on water conservation in India through a digital repository for future policy-making, addressing water security in India. (Arunangshu Mukherjee is Professor, Director, CAWTM, MRIIRS and Anandajit Goswami is Professor, Research Director, MRIIRS, Visiting Fellow, ACPET, Ashoka University, Honorary Professor, IMPRI. Views are personal.)

## ‘Jako Rakhe Saiyaan Maar Sake Na Koi’ (Whom God protects, no one can kill)

## OPINION

PRIYA S. TANDON



Often have we heard the proverb, ‘Jako Rakhe Saiyaan Maar Sake Na Koi’. The recent plane crash in Ahmedabad literally proved this and showed us the truth in it. As the bone chilling, horrific videos of the plane crash started coming in, there were prayers for the casualties to be minimal. But God had other plans for the 242 on board. Of all the passengers and crew, comprising of Indians and foreigners, only one survived! And even he says that he doesn't know how he survived. Within a minute of take-off, the pilot realised that something was majorly amiss and he called out, ‘May Day, May Day, May Day. No power. No thrust. Going down.’

And what a traumatic going down it must have been. What agonising helplessness would the pilot have gone through before he and 241 others were charred amidst smoke and flames. 241 lives were snuffed out ... of those who had no inkling that death was knocking their door. The very thought of how painful death in flames would have been for whom the inferno was fatal, is very tragic. Professionals, businessmen, travel journalists, social media influencers, newlyweds, entire families ... were wiped out, in that ill-fated aeroplane crash. The way this has panned out is completely unthinkable. No one could have imagined in their wildest dreams, the possibility of sitting in the medical college mess, and having an aircraft land literally on their heads; and its bursting into flames, causing immeasurable damage to life and more. Strange are the ways of God. In the recent past we have been privy to the Pahalgam massacre, Operation Sindoor, incessant floods and rains in the

North-East, five helicopters crashes on the Char Dham Yatra, Kedarnath route in the last six weeks and now, the Ahmedabad plane crash. How does one explain the will of God? How does one explain fate? Can one be sure of anything at all in life? It seems the answer is ‘No’. And there are some who narrowly escaped death. I read the news of someone who had cancelled his ticket on the ill-fated aircraft, because his mother got emotional and asked him to stay some more days. There was a young girl who got stuck in traffic and missed her flight by 10 minutes. A doctor cancelled his ticket because he was running fever and his wife insisted that he should not travel. All of them got saved from getting trapped in the clutches of death. The greatest miracle is the lone survivor, who emerged from that ball of fire, with just a few bruises and a limp! Against all odds, he emerged alive! How does one fathom destiny? No one knows what the future holds. Everything is so uncertain. We are all puppets in the hands of God. A copy of The Bhagwad Gita and an idol of Laddoo-Gopal has been found almost intact, amidst the burnt wreckage of the crashed flight. This is nothing short of a miracle. The heat that melted the metallic body of the plane, could not burn the Bhagwad Gita. This seems to spell out a message for all of humanity. Everything can perish but the name of the Lord shall remain forever! It is said, ‘Samaan sau baras ka, pal bhar ki khabar nabin’. Meaning: We prepare for



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets and enquires about the health condition of Vishwashkumar Ramesh, the lone survivor of the Air India AI-171 flight crash, at a hospital in Ahmedabad. File photo

*The greatest miracle is the lone survivor, who emerged from that ball of fire, with just a few bruises and a limp! Against all odds, he emerged alive! How does one fathom destiny? No one knows what the future holds. Everything is so uncertain. We are all puppets in the hands of God.*

life as if we are going to live a hundred years, but we cannot be certain if we shall be alive in the next moment! Each day, we go about doing our daily chores, going to the office, attending meetings, looking after the house, picking and dropping our

children from school, socialising ... but life is uncertain at every juncture. I had heard and read that the year 2025 is going to be a year of resetting and realignment for the universe. Lots shall happen. There shall be disasters and natural calamities too. We are seeing everything unfolding in front of our eyes and it is very painful. I wonder when this death dance shall stop. Sri Sathya Sai Baba said in a discourse, ‘The play is His; the role is His gift; the lines are written by Him; He decides the dress and decoration, the gesture and the tone, the entrance and the exit. You have to act well your part and when

the curtain falls receive His approbation. By your efficiency and enthusiasm earn the right to play higher and higher roles - that is the meaning and purpose of life ... Do not worry about anything. Place yourself fully at His disposal. He knows. He has written the Play and He knows how it will end and how it will go on. Yours is but to act and retire. The Lord alone is aware of the Play, for His is the Plan! ... You are only actors on the stage, before the footlights. The Director who knows the Play, who assigns the roles, who gives the cues, who calls you in and puts you on - He is behind the curtain. You're a puppet, He holds

the strings. You are only working out His plan.” The only way forward for us, in a world engulfed with fear, violence, war, unrest and insecurity; the only thing that can give succour and strength, is the name of the Lord. Baba says, “In Krutayuga, dhyaana (meditation) was prescribed as the means of liberation. In the Tretayuga, tapas (penance) was the means. For the Dwaaparayuga, it was archana (ritual worship). However, for people in this Kaliyuga, the simple remedy prescribed is just Naamasmarana, the constant awareness of the Name.” Recently, on June 15, I was a part of the massive online chanting of the Sai Gayatri Mantra, for world peace, organised by the Sri Sathya Sai Media Centre. Some 23,000 spiritual aspirants from across the globe had registered for it. Due to the limitations of the online platform, only 10,000 devotees were able to join the chanting online. The rest were requested to do the chanting off-line. It really doesn't matter whether one was a part of the online participants or not. What matters is that so many people prayed for world peace. There is a huge awareness that it is only the name of God that can save us. If each one of us would start praying for world peace, the Lord shall surely have mercy ... do give this a thought.



# EX-NETANYAHU AIDE WARNS OF IRAN THREAT, URGES INDIA TO COUNTER CHINA GLOBALLY

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Priya Sahgal, the Editorial Director at NewsX (iTV Network), interviews George Eli Birnbaum, an American political consultant. Birnbaum worked on the United States congressional and senatorial races. In 1998, he moved to Israel to work as a consultant to Prime Minister Netanyahu, became his chief of staff, and afterwards formed a partnership with political consultant Arthur Finkelstein.

**Q. We've seen a most significant turn in the world order. I think perhaps after World War Two, this has been the most in terms of destabilizing and there have been a new world order is now going to be coming together. How do you see how do you envisage that? And where do you really see India's role, for instance, in that?**

A. I think India has become already an enormous leader in terms of geopolitics, not just because of the population of India or the fact that India has nuclear weapons or a strong military, but India is leading the world in many ways in terms of economic growth and in terms of leadership.

And the Prime Minister, your Prime Minister Modi has really stepped into that role and embraced it. I think India plays a unique role in that it has relationships that are very broad. It has relationships with Israel. It has relationships with China. It has a relationship with Russia. It has relationships with the US.

And I believe that India can play an enormous role as a as a as an interlocutor, if you will, for geopolitical conflict. I've been advocating for a long time that I think India could play a big role in the Iranian-Russian conflict and bringing that to an end. I see India as a real honest broker when it comes to world conflict and world issues because of the relationships that India has built internationally with other governments around the world.

So I'm happy to see it. I don't like a simple bipolar world where we saw the US and Russia as the two global powerhouses and no one else mattered. Other countries matter, India being one of the major countries that matter in the world in geopolitics.

And I really see India growing into that. And Prime Minister Modi has done a wonderful, masterful job of embracing it and playing that role. And I look forward to seeing India grow even more in terms of being a geopolitical player when it comes to world conflict and the global economy in general and global manufacturing and industry, export, import.

India is going to be a wonderful place for world leadership.

**Q. Yes, that is what we actually want to do is to consolidate ourselves economically and focus on that story. But there is always Pakistan trying to distract and try and derail us.**

**Given the Iran conflict happening right now, has that increased Pakistan's utility for the US? We saw Donald Trump reach out to, sorry, President**

**Trump reach out to Field Marshal Asif Munir. He never, you know, that was really thumbing his nose at the civilian leadership in Pakistan, but he needs something from Pakistan. Pakistan has always been a client state for the US, whether it was in terms of Afghanistan and now vis-a-vis Iran. So how do you see that as a stumbling block?**

A. You know, I'm not sure exactly. President Trump, he will he will utilize those relationships as is necessary when it comes to this particular conflict. I think if you look at Pakistan's vocal or outgoing position in regard to this conflict, it's been relatively muted given some of the ties to Iran.

And so I think there's been a really good job in terms of keeping Pakistan from being too vocal in this conflict and fairly muted. And by the way, you know, when you talk about, you know, new world order, what's fascinating

is preventing more and more countries in the region, in the Middle East. And, you know, quite frankly, you know, it's not a very large step to go from the Middle East to Pakistan and India, preventing the whole region from being a nuclear region.

And so I think there's a lot of credit that has to be given to Israel that it has prevented this new order from being a new nuclear world order.

**Q. Fair enough. But, you know, let's not talk about the role of China. There's also the role of Russia. President Putin has just offered to mediate. You know, how do you see that going?**

A. Well, I mean, you know, I think President Putin has to first mediate his own conflict and bring it into the Russia-Ukraine war in which, you know, quite frankly, Russia has been targeting the civilian population in Ukraine relentlessly

*China has invested an enormous amount of money in their military infrastructure, an enormous amount of money. And that's a dangerous thing for the Indo-Pacific, to be sure. Whether or not they use that military in the near future to be more aggressive, I think we'll have to wait and see. But they are definitely watching and taking notes.*

ing to see is how countries like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and Kuwait and other Jordan, if you will, even Syria now really not being too vocal in terms of the rhetoric against Israel going after Iran. I mean, let's remember, this is not the first time that Israel has done something like this.

In 1981, Israel took out the nuclear reactors in Iraq that were clearly being built for weaponization. In 2007, Israel did the same thing in Syria. Israel is doing it now in 2025 in Iran.

You know, if you look at the new world order, as you put it, had those countries been allowed to develop their nuclear programs, Saudi Arabia would be nuclear, Kuwait would probably be nuclear, the UAE would probably be nuclear, Qatar would probably be nuclear. And so, you know, we're really looking at a world in which by doing what Israel has done, not just in 2025, but going back to 1981, 2007,

for year after year.

And so I think it's a little laughable that President Putin would be offering to mediate a ceasefire on this conflict when he has his own war that he started and has not been willing to take the steps to bring to an end. So I would suggest respectfully to President Putin to first mediate his own ceasefire before he worries about mediating another ceasefire.

**Q. But do you think also the one reason why Russia has not really come to Iran's aid is the energy issue, you know, because they do have an energy tariff competition or whatever you want to call it between Russia and Iran?**

A. Listen, the fact of the matter is, and we have to be honest, that as the prices of oil goes up, that helps Russia in terms of its economy and being able to continue to fight this war.

Every dollar that a barrel of oil goes up, Russia's economy

is able to survive a little longer through this war. So, you know, looking at it from that point of view, Russia is, I think, quite happy to allow the attacks on Iran's energy sector and on its oil refineries and anything else because that will just help Russia's economy in the short term. Long term, of course, that's another story.

But this is certainly an economic benefit to Russia at the current moment.

**Q. But isn't it a time where each nation is really looking after its own self-interest? I mean, who's looking at the larger picture over here?**

A. Yeah, listen, I mean, that's the nature of geopolitics. It's generally that you look out for your own interests first.

**Q. The United States used to play that role, but with Trump, I don't see that role happening anymore. The U.S. was the one that**



George Birnbaum

**used to play the big brother role, so to say, but that is not happening anymore. Trump is trying to, but he's also going by his own vested interest, America's vested interest, rather than looking for a larger role of world peace or whatever.**

A. Sure. Listen, I think the U.S. overextended itself for many years and getting involved in too many areas and being trying to get involved in too many places. But that goes back to the comment we spoke about briefly, where this is really an opportunity for countries like India and Prime Minister Modi to step up and step in and play a very vital role. You do have a US president who absolutely, very clearly before the election and after the election, put an America first agenda at the forefront. His goal is not to get involved in global conflicts.

His goal is not to insert the U.S. into every negotiation, every conflict. And the American people voted for that, whether you agree with it or not. However, again, that does create an opportunity.

And I would like to see a country like India and Prime Minister Modi step into that vacuum, certainly much more than I'd like to see China or Russia or any other of those types of countries get involved.

**Q. Now, let's talk about China, you know, China is also watching this and everybody is now repositioning themselves. China is, of course, looking to see whether it can. Is there some kind of tacit understanding that, you know, China between the U.S. will play a role here, China will wait and watch and then put its stake where it wants it?**

A. China has its eyes on

Taiwan, for sure. Now, that's a little different situation because of the security agreements that the U.S. has with Taiwan and in the region. And so it's a little bit of a different animal when you look at it.

But certainly, the president of China is watching very closely and he's watching everyone's movements very, very closely and analyzing them very, very closely. And so I think we have to watch China very carefully.

China has invested an enormous amount of money in their military infrastructure, an enormous amount of money. And that's a dangerous thing for the Indo-Pacific, to be sure. Whether or not they use that military in the near future to be more aggressive, I think we'll have to wait and see. But they are definitely watching and taking notes.

And so every action that whether it's the U.S. takes or India takes or anyone else, the Chinese are watching and taking notes.

**Q. But, you know, once again, China is watching and taking note. Again, we also have to deal with China in our own immediate neighbourhood. India, in that sense, has been isolated because China is now, you know, co-opting Pakistan. They're also reaching into Nepal, Sri Lanka. How do you see, in the sense, how should India proceed forward to fill into the role that you see for India?**

A. So the Chinese, and I see this across the African continent and even in Latin America, the Chinese have been very, very involved in going aggressively after natural resources in the countries, whether it be gold or lithium or other rare earths. They go after infrastruc-

ture projects like building ports and highways. If I were advising Prime Minister Modi, I would suggest that India compete with the Chinese at that level. Because a lot of these countries, whether it be African nations or Latin American nations, they are looking for alternatives.

They are looking for someone other than the Chinese to come and invest and help them grow, whether it's through their natural resources or infrastructure. Here's a place where I think India could counter the Chinese like no other nation. America is too slow to move on these issues sometimes.

But the Indian nation, I believe, could play a big counterbalance role if they were to start getting a little more aggressive in competing with the Chinese in these types of big projects. It would be a way for India to assert itself, not just within a country. But remember, the influence then flows over to things like in the United Nations and in other types of international organizations.

And it allows India to have a much louder voice when it comes to geopolitics. So that would be my advice to the Prime Minister. If you were listening to me, it would be, compete with China.

Compete at that level. Go after the natural resources in Africa. Go after the natural resources in Latin America. Help these countries build their infrastructure and become a large, influencing country in these regions, which are the future, quite frankly. Africa has a huge potential if their natural resources are exploited properly and fairly. Same thing in Latin America.

And this is a place I really do believe where India could act as a counterbalance to the Chinese globally.

**Q. That was going to be my question to you because you also have been a political consultant and have advised many global leaders. So in terms of a dominant narrative, that's your advice to the Indian Prime Minister; something. But if you would just sum it up, and also the art of the political campaign, the political narrative in today's world of social media and of, it's now, it's a world without borders. So in that sense, if you can just give us just a summation of your advice.**

A. Yeah, I mean, social media has made, yeah, a world

without borders. But at the end of the day, personal relationships matter. Face to face matters. And what I see the Chinese doing around the world is putting boots on the ground, keep on the ground and aggressively taking over many of these areas in which I do believe India is one of the few countries that could compete.

And so while India has an enormous amount of influence currently, they could grow their influence exponentially by creating a much stronger global footprint by going around the world and competing one on one against the Chinese to offer an alternative that many of these countries are looking for, but haven't been given yet.

**Q. So our focus should be China more than Pakistan? A. I believe so.**

**Q. Also, in the recent conflict with Pakistan Operation Sindhu, there is a feeling that while we may have won the war militarily, we did lose it in terms of narrative building. We did send delegations abroad to 33 countries to give a point of view. But also at a point when there is a conflict in Gaza, I think people are dying all over. I don't know how much of a resonance that had. So how should India take this narrative forward?**

A. Well, yeah, I think you're right. I think it got lost in other global events. And so not a lot of people were paying attention to it. But the thing that I see India being able to do is have a moral high ground and take the moral high ground. And I'll go back to the China issue, because if you can go and compete with China and go into countries and show we're not going to do the same thing that the Chinese are doing, we're not going to bring in our own people.

We're going to train the local people. We're not going to exploit the resources and then leave. We're going to invest in the country.

We're going to stay there. India has a much different culture than the Chinese culture. And I do believe that the way you change the perception of India long term globally is by showing the contrast between you and other global super-powers.

And I believe that that would happen very quickly, because when you would come into a country, whether it be an African nation or Latin American nation or any other nation around the world, and show how you take an approach to a natural resource or infrastructure, it would be such a different and stark contrast to the way the Chinese do. You would immediately start to help people look at India very differently and with affection and with a desire to create a much stronger global connection. So I think it goes back to that. I think India has an enormous opportunity to change its global perception. But it goes back, I think, to competing with the Chinese and showing the contrast between.





# FROM RICE GRAINS TO TEMPLES: PAINTER BHAIRULAL SWARNKAR'S LEGACY

BHUPENDRA SHARMA

In the vibrant lanes of Nawalgarh, Shekhawati—where grand havelis whisper tales of a glorious past—one man is quietly bringing back the soul of Indian heritage through his paintbrush. Bhairulal Swarnkar, a name now synonymous with Indian miniature painting on global platforms, believes that painting is not just art—it is a spiritual practice, a sadhana. His journey from painting advertisements on walls to creating intricate miniature artworks that now adorn homes and galleries across the world is a testament to passion, perseverance, and purpose.

Born into an ordinary family in Bhilwara, Rajasthan, Bhairulal's formal education ended after the 11th grade. But learning, for him, didn't stop within the walls of a classroom. Nature, everyday life, and great gurus became his real teachers. The spark of art was first kindled in the biology labs of school, where he sketched animals in class files. Those lines, he says, spoke to something deep within him. Over time, this curiosity transformed into devotion—a sacred pursuit of beauty, detail, and expression.

To earn a living in his early days, Bhairulal painted advertisements on walls, a practice that sustained him financially but left his inner artist unfulfilled. "While making advertisements, I felt as if my soul was bound," he reflects. It was his grandfather's words—"If you do something different, you will be recognized"—that nudged him to



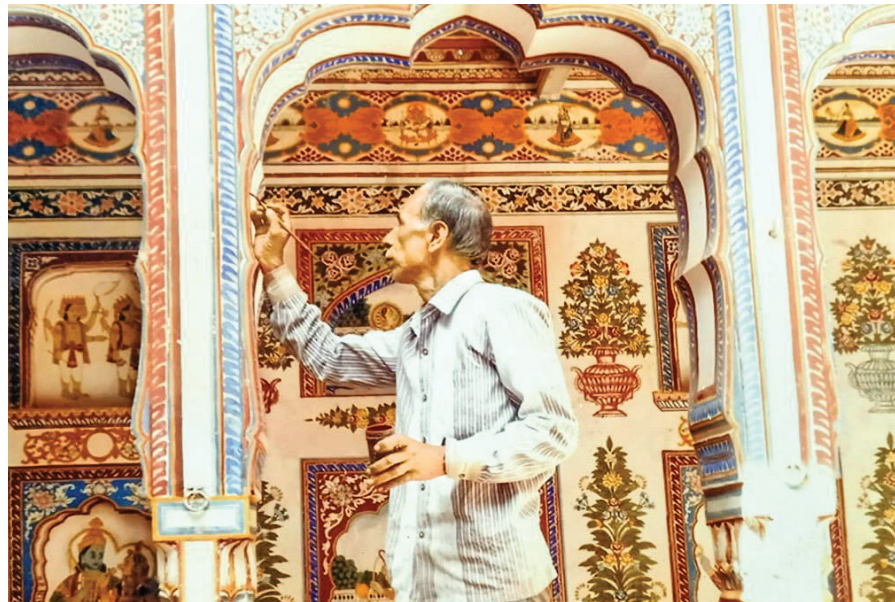
seek a deeper artistic path. This led him to the door of President Award-winning artist Badrilal, under whose guidance he trained for 13 years in the traditional Indian styles of miniature painting.

That mentorship became a turning point. Under Badrilal's watchful eye, Bhairulal delved deep into the nuances of miniature painting—a meticulous, centuries-old art form demanding extreme focus, delicacy, and spiritual immersion. His brush began to tell stories, not just decorate surfaces. From over 60 temples in Rajasthan to the Bharat Mata Mandir in Haridwar, and from the murals at Mumbai Airport to Indian cultural festivals in America, Bhairulal's art began to travel—telling the tale of India's rich cultural legacy through color and form.

In 2011, the Government of India honored his work by issuing a postage stamp featuring his painting of Lord Devnarayan. "I have made many paintings in my life," he says, "but when the Government of India issued that stamp, I felt that my art had truly been recognized." That moment became a symbol—not just of personal pride,



महामहिम राष्ट्रपति श्री शंकरदयाल जी शर्मा को सिद्धि सिद्धि सहित श्री गणेशजी की बसोली शैली में कलाकृति भोलवाड़ा में शेंट कर पुरस्कार प्राप्त करते हुए ।



but of the cultural prestige that Indian miniature painting could still command.

What truly sets Bhairulal apart is not just his technical mastery, but the extraordinary innovation he brings to the field. He has created micro-miniature masterpieces—such as Lord Ganesha painted on

a single grain of rice, a portrait of Indira Gandhi on a gram lentil, the Lok Sabha Speaker on a tamarind seed, and a golden Ashoka Pillar on a rice grain. These works require immense patience, precision, and the ability to work in an almost meditative trance. "The eyes get tired," he admits, "but when

the picture emerges, the joy is indescribable."

But Bhairulal's mission goes beyond personal accomplishment. Since 1995, he has made Nawalgarh in the Shekhawati region his karmabhoomi. Once known for its opulent mansions adorned with frescoes, the havelis of Shekhawati had



fallen into neglect. Bhairulal took it upon himself to revive them—not just with fresh paint, but with historical fidelity and cultural reverence. "The havelis of Shekhawati are living books of culture," he says. "The purpose of my art is to revive them and connect the culture here with the people again."

Through his tireless work, Bhairulal has become more than just an artist—he is a cultural custodian. His art bridges past and present, merging mythological themes with contempo-

rary relevance. His paintings have found homes not only in India but also in the United States, England, France, Germany, Pakistan, and Nepal. Each piece carries with it a fragment of Indian heritage, transformed by devotion into something timeless.

Bhairulal Swarnkar's life and work remind us that true art comes not just from skill, but from purpose. It is born in the quiet moments of self-discovery, shaped by mentorship, and fulfilled in service to something greater than the self. Whether he is

reviving a crumbling fresco on a Shekhawati haveli or painting a deity on a grain of rice, Bhairulal is not simply making art—he is preserving a soul.

His story is a vivid brushstroke on the canvas of India's living traditions—a reminder that art, at its finest, is not decoration, but devotion. Through his spiritual journey with painting, Bhairulal Swarnkar has become a bridge between generations, cultures, and times—making the past speak again, and ensuring that the future listens

## The veins of Rajasthan: Reviving lifelines with Vande Ganga



KUNAL VASHISHT

In the arid and semi-arid terrain of Rajasthan, where every drop of water is as precious as a gem, the launch of the Vande Ganga Jalsanrakshan Jalabhiyan marks a momentous turning point. This initiative, spearheaded by Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, is not just a campaign—it is a renewed commitment to protecting what can only be described as the very veins of the earth: our rivers, streams, and lifelines of water. This campaign aligns seamlessly with the goals of the Jal Jeevan Mission launched by the honorable Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on August 15, 2019, as both initiatives are rooted in the belief that water security is essential for human development and ecological balance.

Water, often invisible in its significance until it disappears, flows not just through our land but through our collective memory, our culture, and our survival. Rajasthan, with its harsh summers and historic water scarcity, has long struggled against the tide of depletion. Yet, it is also a land that understands the value of conservation;

home to ancient baoris (stepwells), johads (water harvesting structures), and a legacy of water wisdom. The Vande Ganga Jalsanrakshan Jalabhiyan builds upon this heritage while embracing modern innovation and community participation. As the Vande Ganga Jalsanrakshan Jalabhiyan draws to a close today, Rajasthan finds itself standing at a new threshold, a threshold of hope, commitment, and sustainable growth. Over the past weeks, the campaign has not only mobilized citizens but has also etched a profound legacy in the state's fight for water conservation.

Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma, this campaign has rekindled the spirit of collective responsibility and revitalized our most precious resource: water. His leadership reflects a rare blend of vision, cultural sensitivity, and administrative will. In a time where climate change and erratic rainfall pose severe threats, his proactive stance underlines a vital truth: water security is not a luxury; it is a responsibility. By tying the campaign to the revered Ganga, he invokes not just ecological urgency but spiritual duty—an appeal that resonates deeply in the hearts of citizens. The very name of the campaign Vande Ganga Jalsanrakshan Jalabhiyan evokes a deep connection to the sacred rivers of India, with the Ganga symbolizing purity, life, and continuity. It reminds us that water, the



*Under the visionary leadership of Chief Minister Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma, this campaign has rekindled the spirit of collective responsibility and revitalized our most precious resource: water. His leadership reflects a rare blend of vision, cultural sensitivity, and administrative will.*

lifeblood of the earth, is not merely a resource; it is a link between our past, our present, and our future. Today, on the final day of the campaign, we reflect on the tremendous strides we have made in restoring the water bodies that sustain us. From desilting of rivers, cleaning of lakes and ponds, the campaign has successfully mobilized thousands of volunteers, students, local bodies, and panchayats. The collective effort of these individuals has breathed new life into water bodies that were once at the brink of collapse. This rejuvenation, however, is not just about restoring the physical appearance of our rivers and lakes—it's about reinvigorating a sense of responsibility and reverence for water that will continue to echo in the years to come. Rajasthan has not only revived its water bodies, but has also set a shining example for other states grappling with water scarcity and environmental degradation. Shri Bhajan Lal Sharma's commitment

to sustainable water management has earned him the admiration of many. His vision transcends immediate needs, looking toward long-term solutions that are deeply rooted in Rajasthan's unique environmental challenges. As we bid farewell to this phase of the campaign, let us carry forward the lessons it has imparted. Water is the lifeblood of our land, the veins of the Earth, pumping life into every corner of our society, culture, and environment. Vande Ganga Jalsanrakshan Jalabhiyan has given us the tools to not just conserve water, but to embrace it as a sacred responsibility. It is a reminder that the health of a state is measured not just in GDP, but in groundwater levels, clean rivers, and the resilience of its ecosystems. Rajasthan's story is being rewritten—with water, with wisdom, and with unwavering commitment.

*The writer is Assistant Public Relations Officer*



# WILL RUSSIA JOIN THE ISRAEL-IRAN WAR IF US INTERVENES?

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov emphasises that even the mere consideration of direct military support for Israel by the U.S. could “radically destabilize the entire situation”.

Russia has issued some of its most unequivocal warnings yet to the United States, cautioning that any U.S. military intervention in the Israel–Iran conflict would be “an extremely dangerous step” and could unleash “truly unpredictable negative consequences”.

Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov emphasized that even the mere consideration of direct military support for Israel by the U.S. could “radically destabilize the entire situation”. Meanwhile, spokesperson Maria Zakharova labeled Israeli strikes on Iranian nuclear sites illegal and warned that the world was “millimetres” from a nuclear disaster



Russian President Vladimir Putin (Left) and his US counterpart Donald Trump

These warnings reflect Moscow’s broader strategy: exerting diplomatic pressure to dissuade Western powers from deepening military involvement, especially given the risk of a broader international confrontation.

## RUSSIA’S PRES- ENCE AT BUSHEHR

Central to Russia’s concern is the Bushehr nuclear power plant—Iran’s only operating nuclear facility—which was built and is still maintained by Rosatom. Russia employs hundreds of specialists there. Alexei Likhachev, Rosatom’s head, warned that an Israeli strike on the plant could cause a “Chernobyl-style catastrophe”. In response, Russia evacuated some staff but kept its core personnel in place and said it could evacuate all specialists on short notice.

Russian President Vlad-

imir Putin stated that Israel had assured Moscow regarding the safety of its workers, signaling that while Russia does not seek direct confrontation, it is ready to defend its nationals and key interests. The presence of Russian engineers and a fully operational facility on site transforms any attack into a direct threat not only to Iran’s infrastructure but also to Russian territory itself.

## MOSCOW’S DUAL ROLE

Condemnation Meets Mediation

Russia’s Kremlin has condemned Israel’s military actions against Iran, deeming them breaches of international law and threatening global nuclear security. At the same time, Putin has offered to mediate the conflict, highlighting Russia’s unique position of maintaining ties with both

Tehran and Jerusalem. In a recent phone call, Putin and China’s Xi Jinping jointly denounced Israel’s strikes and urged de-escalation, asserting there is “no military solution”. This diplomatic front positions Russia as a global stabilizer—even as it warns of severe con-

sequences should military escalation occur. Consolidation of Iranian Support

Putin also noted that Israel’s attacks had led to widespread Iranian internal consolidation behind its leadership, thereby making regime change—which some Is-

## Kremlin Warning

**Kremlin’s Clear Warning:** Russia has warned the U.S. against military intervention in the Israel–Iran war, calling it extremely dangerous with “truly unpredictable negative consequences.”

**Rosatom’s Nuclear Concern:** Russia’s state nuclear agency, Rosatom, fears a disaster like Chernobyl if Israel strikes Iran’s Bushehr nuclear plant, where Russian engineers are sta-

tioned.

**Evacuation Plans in Place:** Though some Russian workers have been withdrawn, the Kremlin said it could fully evacuate Rosatom personnel if tensions escalate. Putin Seeks Diplomatic Role: Russian President Vladimir Putin offered to mediate between Israel and Iran, suggesting a deal to allow Iran a peaceful nuclear program while addressing Israeli

concerns.

**No Direct Combat Promise Yet:** Russia hasn’t committed troops to Iran but strongly opposes U.S. involvement and could increase support if nuclear or Russian interests are attacked.

**Historical Context Matters:** Russia has a longstanding partnership with Iran and a vested interest in regional stability due to proximity and energy concerns.

Red Lines and Nuclear Interests

Should the U.S. or Israel directly strike Bushehr or threaten to do so, Russia has positioned that as its red line. Given the nuclear stakes and Russian personnel at risk, Moscow has virtually signaled it will respond decisively—whether diplomatically or otherwise—if its key interests are threatened.

## HIGH STAKES, BROADER CONTEXT

Russia’s position in the Israel–Iran conflict is driven by a convergence of diplomatic, strategic, and existential considerations. It seeks to: Protect its citizens and nuclear interests in Iran, especially at Bushehr. Prevent a nuclear catastrophe that could have global fallout.

Act as a mediator to assert global leadership and deepen bilateral ties with both Tehran and Jerusalem.

Resist any form of U.S. military escalation, which it warns could trigger global instability.

While Moscow has not pledged to join the war militarily, Kremlin comments leave little doubt: any direct attack on Bushehr or overt U.S. intervention will force Russia to respond—potentially unraveling regional order and dragging multiple powers deeper into conflict.

● TDG NETWORK

## Why there are no free lunches, especially in White House

In an unprecedented move, President Trump hosted Pakistan Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir for a two-hour luncheon in the Cabinet Room of the White House—a gathering that departed from traditional protocol by involving a foreign military leader without accompanying civilian officials, signaling a deliberate and strategic outreach aimed at testing Pakistan’s role in broader regional contingencies, especially if hostilities escalate between the United States, Israel, and Iran



White House

## IRAN LOOMS LARGE

Although Pakistani media focused its narrative on munificence, Trump made clear that the conversation centered significantly on Iran, noting Pakistan’s intimate knowledge of its neighbour’s region and expressing disquiet over Iran’s actions—underscoring Washington’s desire for Islamabad to align its oversight of Iranian airspace and infrastructure with potential U.S. military interests should conflict erupt.

## REINFORCING PAK’S STRATEGIC AMBIGUITY

Munir, cognizant of the need to maintain dual allegiances, reportedly warned of the destabilising risks that a collapse in Iranian authority could pose—especially militant flares along Pakistan’s 560-mile shared border—thus reinforcing Islamabad’s tightrope stance of offering moral support to Tehran while explor-

## REMAINS IN THE DRIVER’S SEAT

By highlighting military-to-military dialogue and bypassing the civilian government, Trump’s move effectively acknowledged Pakistan’s enduring institutional architecture in which the army retains primary control over foreign policy and security matters, sparking debate over democratic consolidation within Islamabad and prompting warnings that, indeed, “there are no free lunches” at the White House.

## BLOW TO INDIAN DIPLOMACY

The optics of hosting Pakistan’s military chief without civilian counterparts came amid Indian alarm, with New Delhi rejecting narratives of U.S. mediation in the Kashmir ceasefire and domestic opposition branding Munir a terror “mastermind”—highlighting how the U.S. move could undercut longstanding India–U.S. rapprochement.

## THE MILITARY

## PAKISTAN’S TACTICAL CALCULUS

From Islamabad’s perspective, the luncheon accomplished a delicate balancing act—maintaining rhetorical support for Iran (abstaining from IAEA censure motions and condemning Israeli actions) while signaling openness to cooperation with the U.S. on matters of regional stability, counter-terrorism, and economic engagement.

## STRATEGIC RIPPLES REGIONWIDE

The meeting resonated beyond Pakistan–U.S. bilateral ties, reverberating across South Asia and the Middle East, as Washington clearly signalled that it values Pakistan’s geographic positioning and intelligence capabilities in the event of a military confrontation over Iran’s nuclear program, even as New Delhi and Tehran watch closely.

## STRATEGIC RESET WRAPPED IN NU- ANCE

In orchestrating this high-profile diplomatic gesture, President Trump sent a message that while Washington remains wary of Pakistan’s human rights and terrorism record, it sees enduring strategic value in military-to-military engagement—particularly as this conflict-laced moment tests alliances, borders, and airspace in ways that may affect coalition preparedness should a broader confrontation with Iran erupt.

● TDG NETWORK

## Why did China warn British Navy over vessel HMS Spey’s passage through the Taiwan Strait?

A fresh episode of maritime tension played out this week in the Taiwan Strait after HMS Spey, a British Royal Navy patrol vessel, sailed through the contested waters, prompting strong warnings from China. Beijing’s reaction to the passage was swift and assertive, calling it an act of “intentional provocation” and warning that the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) would “resolutely counter all threats.”

## FIRST BRITISH NAVAL PASSAGE IN FOUR YEARS

HMS Spey is one of two British warships permanently deployed in the Indo-Pacific region. Its recent patrol through the Taiwan Strait marks the first such British passage since 2021, when HMS Richmond traversed the strait during a regional deployment. The Royal Navy emphasized that HMS Spey’s transit was part of a “long-planned deployment” and conducted “in full compliance with international law.”

This action, however, comes at a sensitive time in UK-China relations. Prime Minister Keir Starmer is expected to visit China later this year, which would be the first visit by a British leader since 2018. That trip is seen as part of broader efforts to stabilize and possibly reset ties between the two nations amid growing geopolitical frictions.

## CHINA’S SHARP RE- ACTION

China, which claims the self-governing island of Taiwan as its own territory, views foreign military presence in the Taiwan Strait as a challenge to its sovereignty. In response to HMS



Spey’s passage, the Chinese foreign ministry labeled the move as an “intentional provocation” aimed at undermining peace and stability in the region.

Beijing stated that PLA naval forces had monitored the British ship throughout its passage. The Chinese government accused London of disrupting regional order and warned that the PLA would not hesitate to counter any perceived threat to its territorial integrity.

The Taiwan Strait remains one of the most politically sensitive and militarily charged waterways in the world. While Taiwan insists the strait is international waters and welcomes freedom of navigation operations, China continues to reject such claims and portrays foreign military actions as threats to its national security.

## TAIWAN HAILS BRIT- ISH MOVE

Taiwanese authorities welcomed the Royal Navy’s actions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Taipei expressed appreciation, stating, “The British side has once again taken concrete actions to defend the freedom of navigation in the

Taiwan Strait.” Taiwan’s position on the strait has been consistent—that it is an international waterway—and Taipei has regularly expressed support for the presence of allied ships, including those from the U.S., U.K., and other democratic nations, to reinforce norms of international law and freedom of navigation.

## WIDER PATTERN OF PATROLS

The United States Navy regularly sails through the Taiwan Strait, typically once every two months. These passages are sometimes conducted in coordination with allied nations, further underlining international support for Taiwan’s claims and highlighting the strait’s strategic significance. However, the British Royal Navy has been more restrained, making HMS Spey’s recent voyage notable.

The UK has, in recent years, stepped up its military engagement in the Indo-Pacific, aligning with its “Global Britain” policy post-Brexit. The permanent deployment of two Royal Navy vessels to the region—HMS Spey and HMS Tamar—reflects the UK’s strategic interest in

maintaining a rules-based international order and safeguarding freedom of navigation in vital sea lanes.

## DIPLOMATIC REPER- CUSSIONS

The passage also complicates efforts by London and Beijing to normalize ties. The UK government has expressed interest in rekindling trade and diplomatic relationships, but military posturing in sensitive regions like the Taiwan Strait often acts as a flashpoint.

China’s response, while sharp in rhetoric, was measured in terms of action—a deliberate signal that while Beijing is watching closely, it is also wary of overreaction. The message, however, is clear: further such moves by Britain or its allies may provoke stronger countermeasures.

As global power competition intensifies and Taiwan emerges as a critical flashpoint, actions like HMS Spey’s patrol are likely to recur. Each passage reinforces international commitment to the rules-based maritime order but also raises the risk of confrontation in an already volatile region.

● TDG NETWORK



# KHAMENEI FACES CHALLENGE AS ISRAEL DISMANTLES IRAN’S MILITARY CORE

Khamenei’s grip weakens as Israel targets Iran’s axis of resistance and nuclear capabilities simultaneously.

AGENCIES  
TEHRAN

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has ruled with an iron grip for over three decades, now finds himself facing the most critical challenge of his leadership as Israel escalates its aerial campaign deep into Iranian territory, openly targeting its nuclear program and senior military leadership. The Israeli offensive has not only pierced Iran’s airspace but also rattled the very foundations of the Islamic Republic’s military and ideological structures. With Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz directly threatening Khamenei’s life, saying he “cannot continue to exist,” the threat is both existential and personal.

At 86, Khamenei faces a fateful choice: escalate

Iran’s retaliation and risk devastating counterstrikes from Israel and possibly the United States, or pursue a diplomatic off-ramp that could force him to dismantle the nuclear program that has become a core pillar of Iranian strategic identity. In a televised address this week, Khamenei appeared defiant, warning that Iran would not surrender and that U.S. intervention would bring “irreparable damage.”

Khamenei rose to power in 1989, succeeding the revered Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini despite lacking comparable religious stature or charisma. Over the years, he entrenched clerical dominance in Iranian politics, built the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) into a powerful state-within-a-state, and created the “Axis of Resistance”—a web of pro-Iranian militias

### KHAMENEI CORNERED

- Israel targets Iran’s military and nuclear sites
- Khamenei faces biggest challenge in decades
- Iran warns U.S. against intervention
- Axis of Resistance is weakening
- Domestic unrest remains a threat
- Revolutionary Guard under pressure
- Diplomatic options still on table



and governments from Lebanon to Yemen. The Guard also became a major economic player, controlling vast sectors of Iran’s economy.

At home, Khamenei overcame several domestic uprisings. The reformist movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which pushed for more political openness, was crushed through electoral manipulation and repression. Protests erupted in 2009, 2017, 2019, and most recently in 2022 following

the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman detained for improper hijab. Each time, the state responded with brutal crackdowns, resulting in hundreds of deaths and widespread human rights abuses. Despite these suppressions, growing public anger and economic despair have continued to erode support for the regime.

Internationally, Khamenei transformed Iran from a post-war pariah into a dominant regional player.

The fall of Saddam Hussein in Iraq enabled Tehran to install friendly Shiite factions in Baghdad. Iran’s influence peaked around 2015 with its control over Hezbollah in Lebanon, Hamas in Gaza, Assad in Syria, and the Houthis in Yemen. These proxies gave Iran leverage against Israel and the Gulf states and created what Khamenei saw as a strategic buffer against foreign threats.

# Trump sets 2-week deadline for decision to launch strikes on Iran

AGENCIES  
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump has given his administration a two-week window to decide whether to launch military strikes against Iran, intensifying already heightened tensions in the Middle East as European powers scramble to broker a last-minute diplomatic solution.

Speaking via a statement delivered by White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt on Thursday, Trump said he would base his final decision on the prospect of negotiations with Tehran. “Based on the fact that there’s a substantial chance of negotiations that may or may not take place with Iran in the future, I will make my decision whether or not to go within the next two weeks,” the statement read.

The announcement came



Donald Trump

as top diplomats from the United Kingdom, France, and Germany met in Geneva with hopes of diffusing the crisis through renewed talks with Iran. This comes amid fears of direct U.S. involvement in the escalating war between Israel and Iran, following a week of cross-border strikes that began in the wake of Hamas’ October 2023 attack on Israel.

U.K. Foreign Minister Da-

vid Lammy, following meetings with U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, said, “A window now exists within the next two weeks to achieve a diplomatic solution and avoid a deepening conflict.” However, Iran has remained firm in its stance, with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi saying on Iranian state television, “There is no room for negotiations with the U.S. until Israeli aggression stops.”

European leaders have voiced strong opposition to military escalation, citing past U.S. interventions in Libya, Iraq, and Afghanistan. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot warned against repeating past errors, while Germany’s Johann Wadepuhl and EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas joined calls for de-escalation during Friday’s high-level meetings in Geneva.

# Israeli strikes kill 44 in Gaza, UN warns of man-made drought

AGENCIES  
CAIRO/GENEVA

Israeli fire killed at least 44 Palestinians in Gaza on Friday, many of whom had been trying to get food, local officials said, while the United Nations’ children’s agency warned of a looming man-made drought in the enclave as its water systems collapse.

At least 25 people awaiting aid trucks were killed by Israeli fire south of Netzarim in central Gaza Strip, the Hamas-run local health authority said.

The Israel Defense Force said its troops had fired warning shots at suspected militants who advanced in a crowd towards them.

An Israeli aircraft then “struck and eliminated the suspects”, it said in a statement, adding that it was aware of others being hurt in the incident and was conducting a review.

Separately, Gazan medics said at least 19 others were killed in other Israeli military strikes across the enclave, including 12 people in a house in Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza Strip, taking Friday’s total death toll to at least 44.

In a statement on Friday, the Islamist Hamas group, which says Israel is using



A mourner during the funeral of Palestinians killed by Israeli fire, at Al-Shifa Hospital, in Gaza City, June 19, 2025. Agencies

hunger as a weapon against the population of Gaza, accused Israel of systematically targeting Palestinians seeking food aid across the enclave. Israel denies this and accuses Hamas of stealing food aid, which the group denies.

Meanwhile UNICEF, the U.N.’s children’s agency, warned in Geneva of drought conditions developing in Gaza.

“Children will begin to die of thirst ... Just 40% of drinking water production facilities remain functional,” UNICEF spokesperson James Elder told reporters. “We are way below emergency standards in terms of drinking water...”

UNICEF also reported a 50% increase in children aged six months to 5 years admitted for treatment of malnutrition from April to May in Gaza, and half a mil-

lion people going hungry.

**FOOD AID**

Elder, who was recently in Gaza, said he had many testimonials of women and children injured while trying to receive food aid, including a young boy who was wounded by a tank shell and later died of his injuries.

A lack of public clarity on when the sites - some of which are in combat zones - are open is causing mass casualty events, he added.

The route near Netzarim has become dangerous since the start of a new U.S.-backed aid distribution system run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF), witnesses told the media, with desperate Gazans heading to a designated area late at night to try and get something from aid supplies due to be handed out after dawn.

# Israel warns Hezbollah against joining conflict

TDG NETWORK  
TEL AVIV

Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz warned Lebanon’s Hezbollah to exercise caution on Friday, saying Israel’s patience with “terrorists” who threaten it had worn thin.

The head of Iran-backed Hezbollah, Naim Qassem, said on Thursday that the Lebanese group would act as



Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz

it saw fit in the face of what he called “brutal Israeli-American aggression” against Iran. The Reuters Daily Briefing newsletter provides all the news you need to start your day. Sign up here.

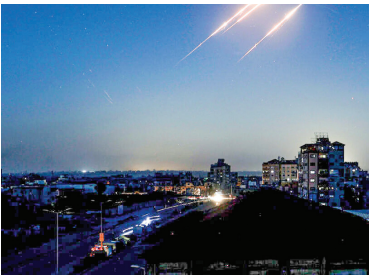
In other statements, the group has made no explicit pledge to join the fighting and a Hezbollah official told the media last week that the group did not intend to initiate attacks against Israel.

# Kremlin warns US against Iran strike, cautions of major escalation

AGENCIES  
MOSCOW

Washington would be making a serious mistake by launching an attack on Iran, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said, warning that direct US involvement in the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict would further destabilise the region, as reported by RT.

Tensions have escalated since last week after Israel launched a large-scale bombing campaign against Iran, alleging that Tehran was on the verge of producing a nuclear bomb. Iran de-



A still of Iran-Israel war. Agencies

nied the allegations and responded with multiple drone and missile strikes. The exchange of hostilities between the two

nations has continued, stoking fears of a wider regional war.

Commenting on the possible US strike, Peskov said, “Moscow believes it is a wrong move. This is a step that is bound to lead to further escalation, a major escalation, and would only complicate the situation in the region,” RT reported. He further cautioned, “Such conflicts are capable of setting the entire region on fire.” Peskov reiterated Russia’s willingness to help mediate and resolve the crisis, while calling any notion of regime change in Iran by the US or Israel “unacceptable.”

# China, Pakistan, Bangladesh hold inaugural trilateral ministerial meet

AGENCIES  
BEIJING

China, Pakistan and Bangladesh have agreed to advance cooperation based on the principles of good-neighbourliness, equality and mutual trust at the inaugural trilateral meeting of their foreign ministry officials.

Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong, Bangladeshi Acting Foreign Secretary Ruhul Alam Siddique and Pakistani Additional Secretary (Asia Pacific) Imran Ahmed Siddiqui in Kunming, China, on June 19, 2025. Agencies

China is holding its annual South Asia expo.

Pakistani Foreign Secretary Amna Baloch participated, via a video link, in the first phase of the meeting on Thursday, a Chinese



Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Sun Weidong (center), Bangladeshi Acting Foreign Secretary Ruhul Alam Siddique (left) and Pakistani Additional Secretary (Asia Pacific) Imran Ahmed Siddiqui in Kunming, China, on June 19, 2025. Agencies

Foreign Ministry press release said here on Friday.

China’s new strategic initiative to bring closer the two estranged South Asian countries in India’s immediate neighbourhood

comes a month after a similar trilateral mechanism meeting was held with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

In his address, Sun Weidong said Bangladesh and Pakistan are both good neighbours, good friends, and good partners of China, and important partners in high quality Belt and Road cooperation, the Foreign Ministry’s press release said. Cooperation among China, Pakistan and Bangladesh aligns with the common interests of the three people, and can contribute to regional peace, stability, development and prosperity, Sun who was a former Ambassador to Pakistan and India, said.

# TRUMP’S SHIFTING STATEMENTS AND RE-ENGAGEMENT WITH PAKISTAN: SECURING US’ INTERESTS IN WEST ASIA

This week, the conflict in the West Asian region has escalated significantly. A prominent hospital in southern Israel has suffered considerable damage due to a barrage of Iranian missiles. Iran has stated that it aimed at a nearby technology park, which it alleges was utilized by the Israeli military. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu cautioned that his military will target all nuclear facilities in Iran. In the aftermath of its initial assaults on Iran, the Israel Defence Forces asserted that it had eliminated nine Iranian nuclear scientists. Iran has also confirmed that nuclear scientists were killed by Israel during the attack. Israel has also issued threats against Iran’s highest leader as Netanyahu stated the possibility

of targeting Iran’s supreme leader. Also, after executing its first series of strikes on Iran, Israel referenced a recent IAEA report that acknowledged Iran is enriching uranium to a level exceeding that of other nations without nuclear weapons programs, thereby breaching its nuclear non-proliferation commitments.

On the other hand, following the announcement of a potential attack on Iran by the US, President Trump has now stated that he will take a two-week period for diplomatic efforts to unfold before making a decision on whether to initiate a strike in Iran. In reaction, a formidable Iran-supported militia in Iraq has issued a warning to target US military installations in the area should Trump opt to engage

in the conflict. It is important to note that it has been suggested that Israel would require assistance from the US to neutralize Iran’s Fordow nuclear facility, which is situated deep within the Iranian mountains, as only the US military possesses the substantial ‘bunker buster’ bombs believed to be capable of effectively hitting an underground target at such significant depths. After several days of Israeli airstrikes on Iran and retaliatory missiles launched at Tel Aviv and other cities by that nation, the US had announced its direct involvement in the ongoing critical conflict in West Asia. This situation is alarming, as the world is aware of the enormous political and economic costs associated with US interventions in Iraq. Furthermore, the

## WORLD RECAP

ANSHU JOSHI



prolonged US occupation of Afghanistan concluded in a dismal retreat, having accomplished even fewer objectives while incurring even greater expenses.

This may explain why Trump is frequently altering his statements. Also, his impulsive approach regarding direct military confrontation with Iran is evident in his fluctuating remarks about Israel’s choice to attack Iran. He had previously been advising Israel against launching an assault on Iran, fearing it could entangle the US in the conflict, and this caution seems to have stemmed

partly from an understanding of the potential risks of failure and the numerous unintended consequences that could arise. However, following some of Israel’s notable achievements, such as the targeted elimination of several of Iran’s military leaders and prominent nuclear scientists, Trump appeared keen to claim a portion of the credit, and abruptly began his direct involvement into his references to Israel’s ongoing military actions. Trump appears to be seeking validation on a global scale, as he has been unable to resolve the Russia-Ukraine conflict

or the Israel-Hamas war, which he had promised to address during his electoral campaign. This may also account for his shifting statements regarding a potential mediation between India and Pakistan. Initially, he proclaimed that he had mediated between India and Pakistan to reduce tensions, then he altered his statement, subsequently reaffirmed his involvement in de-escalation between the two nuclear-armed nations, and now asserts that India and Pakistan have independently decided to de-escalate.

On the other hand, Trump is attempting to attract Munir in order to restrain Pakistan amid the escalating conflict between Israel and Iran. Pakistan holds a crucial position in this conflict due to its close

alliance with China and its shared borders with Iran. First and foremost, Trump aims to prevent Pakistan from being utilized by China to support Iran. There is a possibility that China could leverage Pakistan as a route to provide aid and assistance to Iran. Consequently, the US may find itself needing bases in Pakistan to launch attacks on Iran. Furthermore, Iranian officials have made remarks suggesting that Pakistan could potentially deploy its nuclear weapons against Israel. Although Pakistan has refuted any such likelihood, it is likely that Trump has taken note of this situation. Any involvement from Pakistan could disrupt the regional balance of power, prompting Trump to reverse his earlier position of condemning Pakistan

for its support of terrorist organizations. Whether it pertains to making statements about resolving the India-Pakistan conflict, attacking Iran, or expressing affection for Pakistan, President Trump has thus far issued remarks that depict him as unserious and impulsive. Until about a week ago, Trump had based his foreign policy reputation on the principles of avoiding conflict and pursuing peace, then suddenly announced the US’ direct involvement with Iran, and now again stepped back. Trump must recognize that all tactical decisions can have strategic repercussions, potentially leading to intricate political challenges in both West Asia and South Asia.

*The author is Professor, School of International Studies, JNU*



# 'SON OF SARDAAR 2' TO HIT BIG SCREEN ON JULY 25

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

"Son of Sardaar 2", starring Ajay Devgn and Mrunal Thakur, is set to release in theatres on July 25.

The film from Vijay Kumar Arora is a sequel to "Son of Sardaar", which released in 2012.

Devgn, whose latest work is "Azaad", which came out earlier this year, shared the news on his Instagram handle on Thursday. He uploaded a poster from the film, with the release date written over it.

"The Return of the Sardaar" #SOS2 in cinemas near you on 25th July.



#SardaarIsBack #SonOfSardaar2 @mrunalthakur @officialjiostudios @devgn-films @series.Official #JyotiDeshpande @kumarman-gatpathak @nrapachisia5 #PravinTalreja @vijaycam @jagdeepsidhu3 @danish-devgn," read the caption. The upcoming film is pro-

duced by Devgn alongside Jyoti Deshpande, N R Pachisia and Pravin Talreja. It will also feature Vindu Dara Singh.

"Son of Sardaar" was helmed by Ashwni Dhir and starred Devgn, late actor Mukul Dev, Sanjay Dutt and Sonakshi Sinha.

It revolved around Jaswinder "Jassi" Singh Randhawa(Devgn), who returns to his village in Punjab after spending years in London to sell ancestral property. But things take an unexpected turn.

The film emerged as box office hit and grossed Rs 161.48 crore with its worldwide collection.



## Couldn't understand maths but it does not define me: Boman on what defines a person

TDG NETWORK  
NEW DELHI

Bollywood actor Boman Irani, known for his standout roles in 'Munna Bhai MBBS', '3 Idiots', and 'Khosla Ka Ghosla', has been vocal about his childhood struggles with dyslexia. Reflecting on his journey, Irani shared how he overcame the challenges, highlighting that the learning disorder doesn't "define" who he is today.

In a candid conversation, Boman Irani spoke about the uniqueness of every individual, pointing out that no two people share the same DNA, which makes each person naturally different. He urged people to



use their "ability or disability" to their advantage and to focus on areas in which they truly excel. "No human being's DNA is identical. Right? Their structure, or maybe their

their disability to their advantage. I always think that when I was in school, I could not understand mathematics. And that does not define me. What does define me then? My ability to communicate. My ability to tell stories. My ability to use my body. My ability to use my voice. Use that," said Boman Irani.

The 'Khosla Ka Ghosla' actor shared that while he struggles with numbers and has no memory for arithmetic, he has excelled in other areas, like remembering film scenes since childhood. He concluded by urging people never to feel inferior because of their differences.

## Munawar, Krystle D'Souza share experience of working in 'First Copy'

TDG NETWORK  
MUMBAI

Comedian Munawar Faruqui and actress Krystle D'Souza shared their experience of working in the OTT series 'First Copy', which is currently streaming on Amazon MX Player.

In an interview, Munawar shared his happiness for making his debut on the screen as the lead actor with th series 'First Copy'. He called the script of the series "unique" and said that he had a "good experience" shooting the film.

"It was a great experience. Firstly, I got to debut on screen and as a lead. This is a big thing. I was very happy for that. Also, this story is unique. It is so relatable and unique that we have never seen anything being made on this subject. So, the subject was good plus I had a role. I think, the experience was very good," said Munawar.

As for Krystle D'Souza, the actress recalled her acting career and said that it was the first time she had been play-



ing the role of an "actress" in a series. She calls it a "weird experience" for herself as an actor.

"I think I have been acting for 16-17 years. But, first time I am playing an actress. So, I think that is really different for me. It's weird that you have to play the role of an actress, being an actor. But it's a very enjoyable journey. It's a beautiful journey of a woman," said Krystle.

She also hailed the concept of the show, which is based on the piracy business of the films.

"We have all heard and seen piracy when we were growing up. And no one has

touched that subject. So, to be a part of something like that, that has so much mystery, so much pace," added Krystle.

The actress also revealed her favourite scene from the series. She said, "I think the song sequence that we did in Mauritius, I think that is one sequence that I really enjoyed shooting. Because there were no dialogues. And, we were actually enjoying ourselves."

Directed by Farhan Zamma, 'First Copy' stars Gulshan Grover, Saqib Ayub, Ashi Singh, Meiyang Chang, Inam Ul Haq, and Raza Murad along with the lead cast of Munawar and Krystle.

### BRAIN PICKING



I don't want to become a star, but I want to become a good actor.

—DISHA PATANI  
(Indian Actress)

## Umer Nisar aims to revive Kashmir's cinema industry post Pahalgam

TDG NETWORK  
SRINAGAR

Assistant Director Umer Nisar shared his intent to revive film industry in Kashmir following the terror attack in Pahalgam, a prominent tourist destination, through his short film 'Tasruddar: Gins of Kashmir'. Umer Nisar called his upcoming short film, "Tasruddar," an "effort" to revive the local cinema in Kashmir. He also highlighted the need for Kashmiri filmmakers to "step forward" and produce

content for the boom of the film industry in Kashmir after the tragic terror attack in the union territory.

"Whenever we talk about the industry, the most important thing is that we want to bring all the makers



here -- they all have to contribute something meaningful... So we came up with the concept of Tasruddar: Gins of Kashmir, a short film. Overall, this effort is to revive cinema here, and all the local makers have come forward. We tell our stories. If we don't initiate something here -- post-Pahalgam attack or even otherwise -- then why would any filmmaker from outside come here? So I think it's very important that the makers step forward and tell their stories."

## Robert De Niro attends 'Tanvi The Great' US gala screening

AGENCIES  
NEW YORK

Oscar-winning actor Robert De Niro attended the premiere of Anupam Kher directorial 'Tanvi The Great' in New York on Thursday.

Taking to his Instagram handle, Anupam Kher shared the photos and videos from the gala screening of his upcoming film 'Tanvi The Great' at the New York



Indian Film Festival. The 'Raging Bull' actor was

joined by his longtime girlfriend Tiffany Chen for the premiere.

In the videos, Anupam Kher welcomes De Niro to the premiere, which is followed by a photo session with the actor and the movie's lead actress, Shubhangi Dutt.

Kher expressed his gratitude to Robert De Niro and his girlfriend Tiffany Chen for attending the premiere.

### REVIEW: SITAARE ZAMEEN PAR \*\*\*\*\*

## SITAARE ZAMEEN PAR



PRAVEEN NAGDA

In a spectacular comeback on the silver screen Aamir Khan, with his latest film Sitaare Zameen Par, ensures that the whole family can laugh together in a healthy manner and at the same time take away a lot of empathy and love for those who are

often tagged as abnormal in the society, by and large. It's also a story of the duality of emotions, feelings, and thoughts that exist within our own minds and a sort of self-realization that develops in due course about the affected people.

Directed by R.S. Prasanna and written by Divy Nidhi Sharma, Sitaare Zameen Par revolves around the issue of neurodiversity among children and how society deals with them. It's about that one extra chromosome, that gives them Down's syndrome, and their brain doesn't develop like a normal person. It is an official remake

of Campeones (Champions), a Spanish film released in 2018, where a basketball coach is sentenced to community service, and forced to work with a team of mentally disabled players.

Gulshan (Aamir Khan), a talented Basketball coach, but carefree and all of I-Me-Myself character, fully opaque to other people's views, ends up slapping his senior coach and gets suspended. His marriage is already on the verge of a breakdown, and he is sentenced to community service for 3-months for drunken driving and altercations with cops on duty.

It is during this period he ends up training a bunch of mentally disabled and underdeveloped ones in Basketball, making them win not only the matches but

also hearts. Initially, just hating the job over a period Gulshan creates a strong bond of love and affection for them and leaves a strong message for all of us who can see him mirroring what we are from within.

Lotus (Ayush Bhansali), Gudu (Gopi Krishna Varma), Sunil (Ashish Pendse), Raju (Rishabh Jain), Sharma Ji (Rishi Shahani), Satbir (Aroush Datta), Bantu (Vedant Sharma), Kareem (Samvit Desai) and Har Govind (Naman Mishra), all of them as affected people make a deep connection with our hearts via their unique characters, mannerisms, speech, actions, and acting too of course including the late entrant in the film Golu (Simran Mangeshkar), the only girl Basketball player in the team, but

with a very powerful presence. While they are underdeveloped brains, they teach us the reasons to be happy, to find joy in small things in life, to overcome inhibitions and fears, to fight problems without tears, and to see the positive side of things that all of us with developed brains tend to not see at all. In the climax, their team Sitaare loses the match winning the hearts as they all celebrate with Golu's mature statement, saying that they haven't lost the match but won it at the second position. A perspective that makes them fight all adversities and come out as a winner in every moment of their existence while making their parents proud, also leaving everyone with a deep introspection of seeing

things in life.

Genelia Deshmukh as Suneeta, plays Gulshan's wife exhibits a mature womanhood with her lip-biting blushes as brilliantly as reflecting a youthful tomboyish girl while dealing with the basketball players. And Gurpal Singh as Kartar Paaji leaves a mark establishing that everyone's normal is different.

It's a great super-clean comedy that will make you laugh throughout the film and make you emotional but without making you teary-eyed. Sitaare Zameen Par is a must-watch film for everyone with their children and grandparents as well.

Praveen Nagda is Festival Director of KidzCINEMA and CultureCinema Film Festivals





# DIVORCED, NOT DONE: INDIAN WOMEN SAY ‘I DO’ AGAIN



NAMRATA KOHLI

## WOMAN WISE

When Mahua Moitra, 50, known more for sparring in the House and fiery floor speeches than a fairy-clean image, tied the knot with senior advocate and MP Pinaki Misra, 65, the photo that surfaced was almost cinematic: no drama, no declarations—just two grown-ups, hand in hand, striding into their second innings like it's nobody's business (because frankly, it isn't). In a world obsessed with scandal and spectacle, their quiet wedding in Berlin felt like a mic drop. And while I may not vote for her politics, I'll give full marks to her personal playbook—graceful, unapologetic, and gloriously grown-up.

Let's be honest. When a man remarries, it's "normal." When a woman does, even today, eyebrows rise. She's called "bold" at best, "reckless" at worst. But that's precisely why every second marriage led by choice, not pressure, chips away at that archaic

mindset. These are partnerships, not patriarchy. Dialogues, not diktats. It's less about merging homes and more about merging hearts—with full knowledge of what doesn't work. There's a refreshing maturity in second marriages: fewer games, more grounding, lesser expectations.

For generations, second marriages—especially for women—have been cloaked in whispers. Widowhood was synonymous with sacrifice. Divorce with disgrace. A woman who remarried was seen as "lucky" to have found someone again—as though it were charity. But things are changing.

Divorce, widowhood, or simply walking away from a bad first marriage—more Indian women today are embracing the idea of second marriages on their own terms. Bottom of Form

according to matchmaking specialist from Odisha, Chandan Kumar Nayak, "Earlier... women were expected to focus solely on their children and grandchildren. Today, they're openly expressing their desire for companionship."

This underscores a significant attitude shift—a move away from stigma toward empowerment and fulfilment in later life – a time when you would need a partner, more than ever before. From Bollywood sets to Parliament benches, women are publicly own-



ing their second innings, eroding the old taboo that "remarriage or second innings = stigma."

Take the case of actor, eco-activist Dia Mirza who married businessman Vaibhav Rekhi in a minimalist, eco-friendly

ceremony in 2021 after ending her first marriage in 2019. Or Renuka Shahane- actor/director who married actor Ashutosh Rana in 2001 after an early marriage and divorce. Or jewellery designer Neelam Kothari who left an emo-

tionally draining first marriage - "They asked me to change everything – even my identity. I finally asked myself, How am I allowing this?" and later married actor Samir Soni in 2011.

Whether embracing second innings in their 30s,



40s, or 50s these stories prove there's no expiry date on companionship. These high-profile remarriages give everyday women social proof that starting over is not just possible but celebrated.

And more women are openly choosing to remarry—not to "settle," but to soar. These are women who've lived, loved, lost—and learned. They come back not naïve, but empowered.

Whether they're looking for emotional companionship, co-parenting support, or just someone to share Sunday morning chai with—these choices are rooted in clarity, not compulsion.

Take the case of Radhika Menon, 44, an HR professional in Bengaluru, who walked out of a toxic mar-

riage after 15 years. "My first marriage drained me. I stayed for my son. But when he turned 18, I chose myself," she says. She recently married her college friend. "It's different this time—simpler, quieter, deeper." Sumati Rao, 53, a widow from Bhopal, remarried after 12 years. "People said, 'But you had a good marriage, why start over?' I said—why not? I miss companionship, laughter. I'm not dead yet."

These stories are becoming increasingly common—and increasingly public. But why now? Because the woman of today has her own nameplate, her own bank account, and—perhaps most importantly—her own narrative. She's already battled disgrace, she's raised a child alone, she's rebuilt herself.

Now, if love reappears, she's not afraid to let it in. As they say, love doesn't follow a timeline. Nor does it knock only once.

The Second Act is no longer a secret. And for Indian women today, that's more than enough reason to say yes. Again. After the Storm, they choose spring as the Indian women rewrite the rules of remarriage.

They come with baggage—but also with boundaries. They come with vulnerability—but also with vision. Above all, they come with the courage to choose love—not for society, not for security, but for the self. Because as Mahua Moitra's recent walk down the aisle reminds us: Love doesn't need a perfect past. It only needs a willing present.

## From side hustle to empire: Lessons from women who turned passion into profit

DR. SONALI PRIY KAPOOR

In a world where perception is power and narrative drives influence, women in communication are no longer just shaping stories, they are the story. What once started as a passion project after hours, during maternity leave, or squeezed between freelance gigs has now become a formidable wave of women-led empires rewriting the rules of business and branding.

These are not tales of overnight success. They're chronicles of resilience; of women who turned coffee table brainstorming into boardroom blueprints. From pitching pro bono ideas to running multi-client portfolios, they've shown that purpose fuels

growth in ways that hustle alone never could.

### THE RISE OF THE SELF-MADE COMMUNICATOR

It started with small wins, a friend's brand launch, a cousin's social media plan, or an unpaid opportunity to build a portfolio. Slowly but surely, weekend experiments grew into full-fledged consultancies. Not with VC backing or celebrity clients, but with relentless intent, sharp skill sets, and stories that resonated.

And somewhere between client meetings and campaign decks, these women weren't just building brands. They were building themselves.

### POWER MOVES THAT

### BUILT EMPIRES

- 1. Brand Yourself Like You'd Brand a Client**  
They didn't wait to be discovered. By turning platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram into portfolios, journals, and think tanks, they built their own spotlight. Thought pieces, case studies, and behind-the-scenes content turned into magnets for clients and media alike.
- 2. Focus Is the New Feminine Superpower**  
Instead of serving everyone, they became the one in their niche; whether in fashion, tech, wellness, hospitality, or sustainability. In a world full of noise, they chose clarity. Specializing meant mastery, and mastery meant momentum.
- 3. Stay Relentlessly Curious**

These empire-builders aren't just creative; they're strategic sponges. They keep pace with emerging tools, AI innovations, social media shifts, and consumer behavior trends. They know: evolve or evaporate.

### 4. Choose Community Over Competition

Women-led businesses are redefining leadership by infusing empathy into entrepreneurship. From mentoring juniors to collaborating with peers and celebrating others' wins, they know that lifting others builds legacy.

### WHY THE WORLD NEEDS MORE WOMEN IN COMMUNICATION

Post-pandemic, the world exploded with personal brands, startups, and digital-first ventures—all hungry for clear, compelling communication. This shift is a massive opportunity for women who understand nuance, storytelling, and the power of connection.

To lead in this space, three things matter:

- Credibility. Consistency. Connection.

Deliver what you promise. Show up with purpose. And never underestimate the relationships you build; they are your currency.

These women didn't wait for the industry to welcome them. They built doors. And opened them wide.

"Success isn't about going big. It's about starting small; with an intent, with courage, and with the belief that your voice belongs at the top."

The author is Founder & MD, The Hatch Project

## Indian women are redefining global travel — One sustainable journey at a time



VARSHA AGARWAL

The new generation of Indian travellers seems to have evolved with autonomy and inquisitiveness; the new kind of traveller considers purpose just as much as a passport stamp. Indian women constitute the very spirit of this movement, quietly but powerfully revamping how we travel.

They're not just ticking off tourist hotspots or filling suitcases with souvenirs; they're choosing eco-conscious stays, supporting local economies, and seeking experiences that leave a positive footprint. Simply put, they are recasting global travel in light of ethics and sustainability.

### A CONSCIOUS SHIFT IN WOMEN TRAVELLER'S MINDSET

Over the last decade, international travel from India has seen exponential growth. And post-COVID, it's no longer just about the "best deals" or "Instagrammable" moments. Increasingly, Indian women travellers are asking: Where is my money going? Is this experience helping the local community? How is this impacting the environment?

This mindset shift is especially visible among solo

travellers, young professionals, and millennial mothers who are blending family vacations with values-led choices. From staying in women-run homestays in Bali to volunteering at reforestation camps in Costa Rica, the Indian women travellers

ly sharing sustainable travel tips. From promoting reusable packing to supporting carbon-neutral flights, these influencers are creating a ripple effect among their followers.

### THE RISE OF ETHICAL



From an environmental standpoint, this extends to taking public transport and skipping their usual daily linen change, making a very strong statement of intent to travel responsibly and sustainably.

### COMMUNITY, SAFETY & SISTERHOOD ABROAD

Another major reason Indian women are drawn to this new form of travel is the sense of community it brings. Sustainable travel groups often foster safer, more intimate environments. For solo Indian women, especially first-time travellers, this support system is invaluable.

### WHY SUSTAINABLE TOURISM MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

Travel becomes more critical with every passing day, especially with climate change moving in full swing and tourism industry caught in the midst of environmental and social justice allegations. Indian women are leading the way, not just for the rest of India but for the world at large. They exhibit that being mindful can go hand in hand with being adventurous: global yet grounded. Intellectually hungry yet nurtured. Their message is clear: The women are ready not just to see the world but to respect, protect, and uplift it.

From Kerala to Kyoto and Goa to Greece, Indian women are leading a new travel narrative. One that's slower, deeper, and infinitely more meaningful.

The author is Co-Founder - TravGreen - A Sustainable Luxury Travel Company

### TRAVEL DECISIONS

Selectively pleasing, more and more Indian women travellers are changing the very notion of ethical tourism by putting an emphasis not only on the destination but also on the manner in which they experience it. They stand for boutique eco-hotel accommodations rather than luxurious brand chains, purchasing goods from women's cooperatives in Morocco instead of duty-free shops at the airport, and prioritising ethical activities such as wildlife sanctuaries over exploitative ones like elephant rides.

Many women travellers also partake in cultural immersion by acquiring skills relevant to the area, such as cooking in Tuscany or Ikat weaving in Uzbekistan; these activities help local economies and preserve culture.





# POSTURES OF THE MIND



ARUNA LADVA

International Yoga Day, 21st June, reminds us how much benefit there is in following certain disciplines. There are many kinds of yoga, and the most widely known are those yogas that teach therapeutic physical postures, for health on all levels. Yet there is also a yoga that concentrates on postures of the mind that can enhance or inhibit our interaction and understanding of the world.

As with the physical moves, some postures of the mind are for strengthening, some for stretching, and others for balance. We are empowered as we develop certain strong, positive “I can do!” attitudes. As we stretch our soul muscles, i.e. we increase capacity in the soul as we stay humble and open. And with meditation we create a balanced life as

the mind calms and we are able to take better decisions for our well-being. As with all types of yoga, this requires regular practice.

Research indicates that when we adopt an upright posture, we can enhance or recall positive thoughts. Whereas a slumped posture invites negative thoughts. There are also physical power poses which can increase the feeling of confidence, such as standing like a superman or superwoman, with one's arms on the waist. Another power move is raising the arms in a ‘V’ formation after a victory. All these and more give one a feeling of inner motivation and confidence.

An alert, awake, and conscious mind is an upright, open mental posture, which means the soul is open to learning and growing, expanding its horizons; confident to tackle anything. It is a posture of self-respect and self-awareness. And when we emit that feeling, then we get the power to accomplish. The universe is not controlling us, punishing us, or blessing us, it is simply responding to our vibrations. A powerful vibration would be what we need for a happy, joyous life.



An alert, awake, and conscious mind is an upright, open mental posture, which means the soul is open to learning and growing.

Listed below are examples of six particular mental postures.

## FOCUS

Focus is attention and clarity. Focus is not just about concentration; it is about prioritization. Focus on what you want, not on what you do not want. Focus is

about knowing what is important. It is the ability to direct our energy to one thing, despite distractions.

## ATTITUDE

It is not what we face, but how we face it. As a mental posture, attitude is like the spine of the mind - it holds everything else upright. At-

titude shapes our energy, relationships, and outcomes.

## RESILIENCE

Bending without breaking. One of the reasons why we do exercise is so we keep ourselves malleable and supple. One who is resilient is flexible. By staying rooted, we have the ability to absorb

pressure, adapt to change, and recover from failure.

## DISCIPLINE (AND DETERMINATION)

Discipline is not simply about being harsh, but being consistent and committed. It is choosing what you want more, over what you want now. Discipline

*An alert, awake, and conscious mind is an upright, open mental posture, which means the soul is open to learning and growing, expanding its horizons; confident to tackle anything. It is a posture of self-respect and self-awareness.*

always reaps rewards and it comes with an added ‘feel good’ factor.

## INTENTION

Intention is purposeful direction. In karma philosophy, intention is everything. You might assist someone by helping them cross the road, but then if, by doing so, you expect to be in their will, the act loses power. Pure intention is everything. A pure intentioned posture does not react, it chooses awareness and brings clarity to the action.

## PRESENCE

Presence means to be fully here and now. Complete attention to this moment now. Presence grounds the mind; you are neither living in the past or future; you are present; like a child who is fully absorbed and present in class. When the mind is fully present in the moment, it is ready to receive, accept, absorb. Presence is perhaps the greatest foundation for all the other postures, for you cannot build strength without being grounded.

Concentration is needed, and developed, through the disciplines of physical yoga, physical postures, and breathing techniques. Flexibility of the body that develops through these disciplines bring enhanced health and well-being. It is through deep meditation that the many postures of the mind are acquired. Rajyoga meditation links the individual mind with the mind of the Supreme, and in so doing, with regular practice, the mind becomes flexible, powerful, and full of peace.

*Aruna Ladva is an author and Rajyoga meditation teacher based at the Global Retreat Centre, Oxford, UK.*

## Polarize, balance or blend?



JUDY JOHNSON

At this time in the world, we see polarizing energies separating our human family into opposing factions and groupings. This polarizing energy comes when strong opinions are charged with the emotional intensity of fear, hurt, anger, or the ego of righteousness. They threaten to pull us apart. Because this energy is intensifying in the world around us, it is even more important now that we find a way to detach from it and dissolve our reactivity.

On the spiritual journey we learn to catch this energy inside ourselves and transform it before it causes harm. When we hear news that someone has

been wronged or an injustice has occurred, a quick flash of emotion arises, often blended with judgement. When my feelings become charged in this way, they add to the polarization in the world.

Meditation helps me rise above intense energies to become a detached observer of my own reactions. Like an owl sitting in a tree high above the forest floor, I can look down at the intense and conflicting energies beneath me and choose wisely how to respond.

I am even able to detach from my own story in these moments and begin to dissolve the hard feelings that have been absorbed from past hurts and injustices. This is known as healing. Connection with the Divine source brings pure healing energy into the soul in these moments of detachment, so I can heal.

Balance: My journey of meditation continues as I rise above polarizing energy, only to discover myself pushed and pulled in many directions as I try to do the right thing in all domains of my life. Then I strive to achieve

balance. This quest can make me exhausted and further out of balance. In meditation we discover the practice of being centred. This brings the focus of my attention inside, to the core of my spiritual centre – the soul. It is a relief when I find my centre, and my daily practice is to stay centred, especially during

activity. This practice creates a natural balance, a centre point from which to pivot, like a fulcrum, and maintain equilibrium in the midst of my daily life.

Blend: Ultimately my spiritual destination is to fully integrate all the best parts of me, so that I become a whole and blended human being. Interacting with

*Meditation helps me rise above intense energies to become a detached observer of my own reactions. Like an owl sitting in a tree high above the forest floor, I can look down at the intense and conflicting energies beneath me and choose wisely how to respond.*

people, I see their different personalities and notice qualities

that I do not share. Perhaps I react to those personality traits



We can dissolve polarizing energies by becoming centred, and do our part in restoring wholeness to the world.

that are opposite to my own, either by being attracted, or irritated by them. Sometimes I even develop a dependency on someone's strength, rather than developing it within myself. Resisting the temptation to polarize, I check to see how I might benefit from awakening this quality in myself. When I discover that my full and complete state of being is one of wholeness, I realize that I have all the qualities within blended in a beautiful way that is uniquely me. Then, instead of seeing polar differences and falling into the trap of attraction, rejection, or subtle dependency, I discover that I can be inspired to integrate these qualities into myself. Then my character becomes well-rounded. When I am full, I do not react to the polarizing energies around me. We can dissolve polarizing energies by becoming centred and appreciating our own unique blend of qualities. I can do my part in restoring wholeness to the world.

*Judy Johnson coordinates the activities of Brahma Kumaris meditation centres in Atlantic Canada.*

## From seeking peace, to becoming a peaceful being



B.K. DEEPA

Come summer and urbanites head to beaches, mountains, and forests to get away from it all. Retreating into nature helps us experience peace, for some time. But for how long are we able to sustain that peace in the midst of everyday life? Is it possible to develop a mind that is always at peace?

The mind is constantly active — chasing pleasure, avoiding discomfort, judging, analysing, remembering, and imagining. These fluctuations are the main sources of inner disturbance. A peaceful mind is not a mind that never thinks — it is a mind

that sees clearly, accepts what is, and is not thrown off balance by every external event or internal thought.

Meditation is one of the most effective tools to cultivate such a mind. Meditation trains us to notice our thoughts and emotions without being pulled into them. This awareness provides us the space to respond instead of reacting. Over time, we build a capacity to remain centred in the face of both joy and sorrow. This does not mean becoming indifferent, but becoming balanced.

Much of our suffering is linked to dwelling on the past or worrying about the future. Meditation roots us in the present moment — where peace naturally resides. This mindfulness helps us nurture peace throughout the day. When we become more mindful and approach daily activities such as walking, eating, and working with attention and care, it builds a peaceful attitude.

But the most powerful foundation for building a peaceful life is spiritual knowledge, the first lesson of which is that I am an



When I begin to see myself as a being of peace, this self-image shapes my outlook and behaviour.

eternal, indestructible soul, not a perishable body. Peace is my natural state of being, not something I need to acquire from out-

side.

When we recognise this spiritual truth, accept it, and regularly remind ourselves of it,

our state of mind and outlook change. Knowing that the soul is eternal, while the body and material world are temporary, reduces the fear of death and loss, and minimises anxiety related to material success or failure. But most of all, it is when we tap into the reservoir of peace within the soul that our life begins to be imbued with peace. Having a peaceful self-image inclines us to respond to people and situations with peace, because how we see ourselves influences how we perceive others. A peaceful attitude makes us more patient and tolerant in our interactions, rather than being critical or judgmental.

When I begin to see myself as a being of peace, this self-image shapes my outlook and behaviour. It acts as a lens through which I experience life. A peaceful self-image leads to more peaceful thoughts, choices, and relationships. I realise that the peace I was looking for is not something to be created or discovered. It is already there, beneath the noise of thought and

reactivity. Meditation helps me uncover it, moment by moment.

Once I start to experience myself as a peaceful being, I can go a step further and supercharge myself by connecting to the ocean of peace, the Almighty, or God. He is the one the whole world prays to for peace, because He is eternally and infinitely peaceful. But I need not pray. He, the Supreme Soul, is my Father, and His resources are mine to claim. When I remember God as my Father and connect to Him as a child, this mental and emotional link becomes a conduit through which His powers and virtues flow into me, the soul. Regular practice of such remembrance transforms the soul. My inner stock of peace increases, and old feelings of impatience, insecurity, and anger gradually disappear. My thoughts, words, and behaviour now reflect the peace within. From a seeker of peace, I become an embodiment of it.

*B.K. Deepa is a Rajyoga teacher based in Mumbai*

## A THOUGHT FOR TODAY

The energy of thinking is precious. When collected, it can be channeled and used to create a quality life. When my thought energy is scattered I am unable to concentrate and act effectively or efficiently. Casting a mental net outwards, I can pull my thought energy into a concentrated still point. Collecting thought energy gives me power. Today let me collect my precious energy of thought with the net of determination.



# INDIA VS ENG: GILL, JAISWAL SHINE AS INDIA TAKE CONTROL IN LEEDS

AGENCIES  
LEEDS

India scored 338/3 in the first innings. India captain Shubman Gill slammed a century as the visitors continued to pile runs on Day 1 of the 1st Test against England in Leeds. Gill and Rishabh Pant have asserted India's dominance on the opening day. Pant is also nearing his half-century. Ben Stokes dismissed centurion Yashasvi Jaiswal shortly after play resumed for the final session.

India reached 92/2 at lunch in Leeds, with Gill partnered by Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was nearing a half-century. In the first session, Jaiswal and KL Rahul stitched a 91-run opening partnership at Headingley. However, England ended the session on a positive note, taking two wickets in five balls. India debutant B



India's Yashasvi Jaiswal and captain Shubman Gill during the 1st test match against England, at Headingley Cricket Ground in Leeds on Friday.

Sai Sudharsan got out for a four-ball duck.

Yashasvi Jaiswal's commanding century, along with Indian skipper Shubman Gill's fifty-plus score,

powered India to 215/2 at the end of the second session on Day 1 of the first Test against England, at Headingley, Leeds. It was a wicketless session

for India, as the duo of Gill and Jaiswal added 123 runs off 154 balls in the second session. India started their second session on 92/2, with Indian skipper Shub-

man Gill joining Jaiswal in the middle. India crossed the 100-run mark in the 29th over after Gill smashed a four towards cover-point off Brydon Carse.

Jaiswal completed his maiden fifty in England after pushing the ball towards midwicket for a single off Josh Tongue. The duo of Gill and Jaiswal added 50 runs for the third wicket in the 36th over.

Gill, in his first match as Indian skipper, took charge of the England bowlers as he smashed 40 runs off just 44 balls. At drinks, India were 159/2 with Yashasvi Jaiswal on 67 (112) and Shubman Gill on 40 (44).

Gill slammed his first half-century as captain. He broke his fifty-less SENA streak, slamming his first fifty in SENA since his 91 at Gabba in January 2021, after a streak of eight Tests and 15 innings without a fifty.

## Disappointing start by Aditi Ashok in PGA championship

AGENCIES  
FRISCO

Indian golfer Aditi Ashok endured another rough start at a Major as she began the KPMG Women's PGA Championship at Fields Ranch East with a disappointing 9-over 81 that had no birdies. Almost sure to miss the cut unless she shoots a very low second round, she was lying tied 135th and the projected cut is around 3-over. Aditi had six bogeys and one triple bogey.

World No. 2 Jeeno Thitikul overcame an early double bogey to shoot 4-under 68. The 22-year-old Thai golfer made four pars on the first four holes of round one in Frisco, Texas before she had a frustrating double bogey on the par-4 5th hole to drop to 2-over.

# India archers bag 9 medals, lose 5 finals in Asia Cup

AGENCIES  
SINGAPORE

India's junior archers returned with nine medals — two gold, six silver, and one bronze — from the Asia Cup Leg 2 here on Friday.

It seemed a successful outing on paper, but a deeper look once again highlighted a troubling trend that has come to define Indian archery at all levels — faltering when it matters the most.

Despite making seven of the 10 finals across recurve and compound disciplines, Indian archers finished on top of the podium just twice.

The rest of the finals — five in all — ended in heart-break, with the Indians visibly crumbling under pressure.

It wasn't so much that the losses stood out, but the manner in which the Indian archers lost was more concerning with top seeds going down to lower-ranked opponents, arrows straying to outer rings, and composure evaporating at the slightest of resistance.

As usual, the results were particularly alarming in



recurve the Olympic discipline — where India failed to win a single gold.

In fact, apart from two silver medals in team events, the recurve archers returned empty-handed.

The men's team, top-seeded after the qualification round, simply fell apart against Japan in the final.

Vishnu Choudhary, Paras Hooda, and Juyel Sarkar failed to touch the 50-mark in two of the three sets, bowing out in straight sets 6-0.

It was a similar story in the recurve mixed team final.

Fourth-seeded Choudhary and Vaishnavi Pawar were error-prone throughout their clash against Indonesia.

A 32-point start, followed by a disastrous second set that included a one-pointer, effectively sealed their fate.

The lack of rhythm and nerve showed again in the third as they lost 32-35 to finish with silver.

The women's recurve team, along with all individual recurve entries, failed to even reach the medal rounds, an outcome that underlined India's deepening struggle in the discipline while they continue to chase a maiden Olympic medal.

If the recurve results were disheartening, the compound section offered some respite, albeit not without its own share of missed chances.

## FIH Hockey Pro League: India vs Belgium next

AGENCIES  
ANTWERP

India's outing in the ongoing FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25 hasn't gone as per the script. Finishing in the top three and vying for a World Cup berth was on their minds when they left India for the European leg.

After six straight losses, the Indian men's hockey team will now take on their nemesis in modern hockey, Belgium. Belgium comes into the game tomorrow with a 6-3 win against Spain, after they lost 1-2 in the previous tie to the same team. They are currently placed third in the points table after the Netherlands and Australia, respectively. The Indian men's and women's teams will take on Belgium in a double-header on June 21 and 22.

Meanwhile, India has slipped to the 8th position in the current pool standings and with two matches to go, the team will look to end their campaign with a consolation win. Putting things into perspective, vice-skipper Hardik Singh said as quoted from Hockey India, "The results have not gone as planned, and it's not that we



## MOC approves Rs 25000 allowance

**New Delhi:** The Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has, for the first time, approved a monthly pocket allowance of 25,000 for the Indian Senior men's and women's hockey teams at their 156th meeting on Thursday, according to a release from MYAS.

Hockey India will submit the players' lists to the Sports Au-

thority of India (SAI). A total of 80 players from both teams will be given a monthly pocket allowance, which will cost 20 lakhs every month. This is a part of the recent achievements of the men's team, winning Bronze at Paris Olympics, Tokyo Olympics 2020 and Gold at the Hangzhou Asian Games 2023.

have played badly. I think it hurts more when you play well but not convert that into desired result. This is some-

thing we will introspect on, but for now we are focused on the last two matches here. Belgium and India have al-

ways shared a healthy rivalry in recent times and both teams bring out the best in each other. Our focus will be on finishing well, ensuring tighter defence and creating chances to score."

Meanwhile, the women's team will take on the hosts in Antwerp, hoping to turn the tide against world no.3 Belgium. Speaking about the upcoming game, women's captain Salima Tete expressed, "While we had two close matches against Australia and took Argentina to a penalty shootout in our last match, it was our 1-4 loss against Argentina in the previous match that gave us most insight into where we need to strengthen our game further and that is what we worked upon in our last match and take forward for our match against Belgium. Last year, during our previous encounter against the Belgium Team, we didn't give them any easy wins, and we're now taking our learnings from those matches and our recent encounters against Australia and Argentina to go all out against them again and hopefully win."

## Ajeetesh Sandhu plays steady first round, lies 13th in Morocco

AGENCIES  
MARRAKECH

Marrakech, India's Ajeetesh Sandhu started his week at the Morocco Rising Stars event with a bogey-free round of 4-under 68 and was tied 13th after the first day here.

Sandhu began his day at the Samanah Golf Club on the front nine and had only one birdie on the first nine holes. On the back nine Sandhu made birdies on the 12th and 16th holes before ending his day with

his fourth birdie on the 18th hole. There are a total of eight Indians taking part this week including Sandhu. The others included Karandeep Kochhar at T-26th, Khalin Joshi at T-32, Arjun Sharma at T-63. The remaining Indians Rahil Gangjee at T-78, S. Chikkarangappa and Aman Raj and T-93 and Pukhraj Singh Gill at T-106 will need to pick up the pace if they hope to make cut. Indian-American Manav Shah shot 73 to be placed tied 63rd in the standings. At the end of the first

round the leader is Thai star Varanyu Rattanaphiboonkij with a round of 9-under 63. The 28-year-old set himself up for a chance at a third tour title with his strong performance. Having started on the front nine he looked unstoppable and had picked up shots on the fourth, sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth holes.

On the back nine he continued his run as he shot four more birdies on the 12th, 14th, 16th and 18th holes to shoot a bogey-free first round.



Indiana Pacers guard Andrew Nembhard (2) rebounds over Oklahoma City Thunder guard Luguentz Dort during the second half of Game 6 of the NBA Finals basketball series. (AGENCY)

## India tops doping charts with 213 positive cases in 2023

AGENCIES  
NEW DELHI

India's doping woes came to the fore once again with the country topping the World Anti-Doping Agency's 2023 testing figures among countries which analysed 5,000 or more samples even as the sports ministry promised an "aggressive clean-up" and an amended Anti-Doping Act after addressing objections from the WADA. India's positivity rate for banned substances stood at 3.8 per cent -- 214 Adverse Analyti-

cal Findings (AAF) from 5606 samples. The sample size was significantly higher from 2022 when 3865 tests returned an AAF rate of 3.2 per cent.

Of the 5606 tests, 2748 were conducted in competition. India's positivity rate for banned substances was significantly higher than China (28,197 samples, 0.2 per cent AAF rate), USA (6798 samples, 1.0 per cent AAF rate), France (11,368 samples, 0.9 per cent AAF rate), Germany (15,153 samples, 0.4 per cent AAF rate) and Russia (10,395



samples, 1.0 per cent AAF rate).

As compared to India's 214, France, Russia, USA, China and Germany recorded 105, 99, 66, 60 and 57 AAFs respectively.

"Any amount of doping is

unacceptable but we have to acknowledge that our testing is vigorous and with every year the sample size is increasing.

With our aggressive awareness campaigns, we intend to bring the num-

bers down in the next two years," a sports ministry source said when approached for a comment on the latest report.

Globally, 204,809 tests were conducted in 2023, of which 1820 came positive for banned drugs with India's share of 214 accounting for over 11 per cent of the total number of offenders, the highest for any country.

In all, Delhi's National Dope testing Laboratory (NDTL) tested 6,077 samples, including those from neighbouring countries.

## Amandeep Drall shoots 8-under 64 to take lead in Czech Ladies Open

AGENCIES  
BEROUN

Indian golfer Amandeep Drall made a stunning start to the Tipsport Czech Ladies Open, carding a brilliant 8-under 64 to grab the opening-round lead. Competing in just her second Ladies European Tour (LET) event of the season, Amandeep delivered her best-ever round on the LET which was made all the more significant by the fact that she hasn't made a cut on the Tour since October

2023.

A former runner-up at the LET event, Amandeep had failed to make any cut in 2024 and lost her card. Last week she played in Belgium on an invite and missed the cut, but in the first round in Czech Ladies in Beroun, she began on the tenth tee and had nine birdies against one bogey.

Her closest rivals were English women — Lianna Bailey and Florentyna Parker, who both shot 7-under 65 each.

Among the other Indians,

rookie Hitaashee Bakshi got off to a fine start with 4-under 68 and was tied 12th, while Avani Prashanth, who at one stage was 3-under through six holes, finished 1-under 71 and was T-43.

Tvesa Malik (72) was T-67, Sneha Singh (73) was T-96 and Vani Kapoor (74) was T-110. Diksha Dagar, a late starter, was 2-over through seven and way back, while Neha Tripathi, who got into the field following a late withdrawal, was even par through five holes.

Amandeep started on the tenth and parred her first three holes. She followed that up with four birdies in a row and after a par on the 17th, she got her fifth birdie to turn in 5-under.

A birdie on the first made it six birdies in seven holes. She dropped her only shot on Par-3 fourth but closed with three birdies four holes between the sixth and the ninth.

Hitaashee also started on the tenth and dropped a shot on the 12th, which was her third hole. But she did

not drop any more shots and birdied the 15th and the 18th to turn in 1-under. Birdies on the third, fifth and the seventh saw her finish in 4-under.

Avani had birdies on the third, fifth and the seventh to be 3-under, but on the back nine she bogeyed the 11th, 14th and the 16th and had just one birdie on the 12th for a 71.

Another English golfer, Esme Hamilton and Ivory Coast's Alexandra Swayne carded 6-under 66 each to be tied fourth.