

# Daily LADAKH TODAY



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## NC Legislature Party To Hold Protest In New Delhi To Demand Statehood, Constitutional Guarantees: Tanvir Sadiq

LT NEWS SERVICE

Srinagar, Jun 3: National Conference (NC) legislators will head to Delhi on the opening day of Parliament's Monsoon Session to press for the restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir and seek constitutional guarantees for its people. The decision was taken during a marathon meeting of NC legislators chaired by senior party leadership. The party resolved to intensify its political campaign for the restoration of J&K's constitutional and democratic rights. Addressing the media after the meeting, NC Chief Spokesperson Tanvir Sadiq said the party would raise the issue forcefully in the national capital, asserting that the people of Jammu and Kashmir deserve the return of their democratic and constitutional rights. "It is time to reclaim what has been -- Contd. on P2

## L-G Vinai Kumar Saxena lays foundation stone for the first Model Border Village at Chumur under Vibrant Village Programme



LT NEWS SERVICE

Leh, June 3: In a landmark development, aimed at strengthening border habitation and improving the quality of life of residents living in remote frontier regions, Ladakh L.G, Shri Vinai Kumar Saxena, yesterday laid the foundation stone for the first Model Border Village at Chumur under the Government of India's ambitious Vibrant Village Programme (VVP). Perched at an altitude of 16,700 feet along the Indo-China Border, Chumur houses 24 households with a

population of 91 people, who are all engaged with Pashmina rearing and production. This project will script a new chapter in the development journey of Ladakh, aligned with Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi's dream of strong, self-reliant border villages. Beginning with Chumur, 10 such border villages will be developed as Model Border Villages in the first phase of VVP. This Project, which is also the first of its kind in Ladakh and among the pioneering model border villages in India, will focus on four key pillars of

development - Infrastructure, Employment and Livelihood Creation, All-Weather Functionality, and Civilian-Defence Integration. The project has been conceived to develop Chumur as a self-reliant, climate-resilient, tourism-enabled and economically vibrant border settlement. The foundation-laying event witnessed jubilant celebrations from hundreds of locals, including youth and senior citizens, that reflected the spirit, aspirations and whole-hearted support for this new initiative. A large number of school children from nearby villages were specially brought in by the district administration to witness and experience the concept of Vibrant Village, which essentially aims at fostering inclusivity and connecting the people with the mainstream of development. Under the programme, families in these villages will be provided with climate-resilient, south-facing passive solar houses, designed to maximise solar heat gain and protect them from harsh winters, when the temperatures drop to -35 degrees, during the peak winter months. Each household will receive a residential unit with an attached bathroom, an additional room suitable for homestay activities, a kitchen garden space, livestock -- Contd. on P2

## HM Amit Shah To Review Amarnath Yatra Security Preparedness On June 8; Top Officials To Attend High-Level Meeting



LT NEWS SERVICE

New Delhi, Jun 3: Union Home Minister Amit Shah will chair a high-level security review meeting in the national capital on June 8 to assess preparations for the forthcoming Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra in Jammu and Kashmir. The meeting is expected to be attended by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo, Director General of Police Nalin Prabhat, senior officials of the Ministry of Home Affairs, intelligence agencies, the Army, Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), and key officers of the

Jammu and Kashmir administration. According to official sources, the Home Minister will evaluate the readiness of security and civil departments involved in the annual pilgrimage and review measures aimed at ensuring the smooth, secure, and successful conduct of the Yatra. Discussions are likely to focus on deployment of security personnel along the traditional Pahalgam and Baltal routes, counter-terrorism strategies, protection of pilgrim convoys, emergency response mechanisms, healthcare facilities, communication -- Contd. on P2

## D K Shivakumar Takes Oath As Karnataka Chief Minister

LT NEWS SERVICE

BENGALURU, Jun 3: State Congress President D K Shivakumar took oath as Karnataka Chief Minister on Wednesday and 13 other legislators, including senior leader G Parameshwara, were sworn in as ministers in his Cabinet. In the presence of AICC chief Mallikarjun Kharge, top Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and outgoing CM Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar took oath in the name of seer "Gangadhar Aja", while holding a copy of the Constitution. Governor Thaawarchand Gehlot administered the oath of office and secrecy to Shivakumar, Parameshwara and -- Contd. on P2

## 21 Killed In South Delhi Hotel Fire, Several Foreigners Among Dead

LT NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jun 3: A massive fire broke out in a hotel in a congested bylane in south Delhi's Malviya Nagar area on Wednesday, killing at least 21 people, including foreigners whose ailing relatives were being treated in hospitals nearby.



The blaze at the Flourish Stay B&B in Hauz Rani in Malviya Nagar started around 8.30 am and quickly spread, catching everybody unawares. Rescue workers, including many locals, rushed to the spot to pull out those trapped inside the five-floor narrow building. About 40 people were rescued and rushed to hospital where 21 were declared brought dead, officials said. The death toll could rise with several of the injured in a critical condition. The hotel had permission for only six rooms, granted under the Delhi government's bed and breakfast policy, but was operating 25, police officials said. Rooms had also come up in the basement. In a tragedy that was perhaps waiting to happen, they said the hotel had only one entry-exit. The fire NOC is under the scanner. The cause of the fire is yet to be ascertained. Among the casualties were foreign nationals, many from Central Asian and African countries, staying in the hotel to attend to their kin admitted in Max Hospital minutes away. Visuals from the area -- with narrow lanes, overhanging wires and cramped buildings haphazardly sharing space --

showed high flames rising in the air and wires twisted out of shape in the heat hanging precariously. Glass lay shattered all around the smoke charred building. Teams from the Delhi Fire Services, police and disaster response units searched the smoke-blackened structure for survivors. Victims were seen being pulled out of the basement and rushed to hospitals in ambulances. The urban village of Hauz Rani is minutes away from swanky malls, upscale hospitals and the Saket court complex as well as the residential localities of Malviya Nagar and Saket. Officials said the fire started at Lemon Green Restaurant, but police later clarified that it was a hotel building. The building has a basement, ground floor and five upper floors, according to fire officer A K Malik. The restaurant was on the ground floor while the rest of the building was being used as a hotel. "We have cordoned off the entire area. Multiple teams have already reached the site. Teams are checking the number of rooms the hotel had. Every single angle will be probed. Some -- Contd. on P2

## CPCO Amit Reviews Census Preparations in Kulgam, Appeals for Public Cooperation

LT NEWS SERVICE

KULGAM, (J&K) June 03, 2027: Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations (DCO), Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma today visited Kulgam and chaired a meeting with Principal Census Officer, District Census Officer, Charge Officers, Enumerators and Supervisors at the Conference Hall of the Mini Secretariat, Kulgam. The meeting focused on the ongoing preparations for the Census and the implementation of the first phase of the House Listing Operation (HLO), which is being conducted from June 1 to June 30. During the meeting, CPCO Amit Sharma reviewed the arrangements made by the district administration and emphasized the importance of accurate data collection and effective coordination among field staff. Addressing the participants, Amit Sharma highlighted the significance of the Census exercise and urged enumerators and supervisors to discharge their duties with dedication and professionalism to ensure the successful completion of the House Listing Operation. Principal Census Officer Kulgam, Shahzad Alam, along with other district officers, was present during the meeting.



Various aspects related to census operations, field-level coordination, and public cooperation were also discussed. During the meeting, the officials of Kulgam reaffirmed their commitment towards conducting this important national exercise smoothly and efficiently across the district. While speaking with media especially DD News, CPCO Amit Sharma appealed to the public to cooperate with census enumerators and provide the required information. He urged people to actively participate in the

Census exercise to ensure its smooth and timely completion. Before leaving, CPCO Amit also assured the public that all information collected during the Census would remain strictly confidential and would not be shared with any individual or agency, as per the provisions governing Census data collection. Amit Sharma, IAS, Chief Principal Census Officer (CPCO) and Director Census Operations & Citizen Registration (DCO/DCR), Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, today chaired a detailed -- Contd. on P2

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sheds and dedicated fodder storage facilities. These houses are expected to be completed by September this year, subject to weather conditions.

The project is aimed at significantly boosting local economic activities by developing Chumur as a tourism destination on the Korzok – Hanle circuit. As part of it, tourism infrastructure, including a community-run café, promotion of handicrafts, Pashmina-based livelihoods and value-added Pashmina products, will be facilitated to create new income-generation opportunities for local residents. This primarily aims at infusing self-reliance among the villagers and reversing migration from the border regions.

Addressing the gathering on the occasion, L-G Shri Saxena described the project as a transformative initiative that goes beyond conventional development, and seeks to enhance the security, stability and resilience of the nation by strengthening border settlements. He stated that Chumur, owing to its strategic location along the India-China border, has been selected as Ladakh's first Model Border Village, under the Vibrant Village Programme, a dream project of Hon'ble Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, who has consistently emphasised that border villages are not the "last villages" but the "first villages" of India. He noted that the initiative aims to improve living standards, create sustainable livelihood opportunities and ensure long-term prosperity for residents of remote border areas.

To strengthen food security and livelihoods, a 90 x 27 feet commercial greenhouse will be established with the support of the Defence Institute of High-Altitude Research (DIHAR), for year-round vegetable cultivation. The produce will cater to local needs and supply nearby defence establishments, including the Army and ITBP, creating a sustainable market for the villagers, while promoting stronger civil-defence cooperation.

The village has been planned as an all-weather settlement with a reliable water supply, improved sanitation and wastewater management systems, renewable energy-based power infrastructure, modern digital connectivity and enhanced habitability during harsh winters. A central service core comprising a school, Primary Health Centre (PHC), community hall, parks, community café and Tourist Interpretation Centre (TIC) will provide essential services and strengthen social and economic life in the village.

L-G Shri Saxena highlighted the crucial role of the Indian Army, ITBP, local residents, and youth in ensuring the initiative's success and thanked the security forces for their unwavering service in the region.

Envisioned as a self-reliant, climate-resilient, tourism-enabled and economically vibrant border settlement, the Chumur Model Border Village is expected to emerge as a benchmark for sustainable development in high-altitude frontier regions and a model for border villages across the country.

The Key Highlights of Chumur Model Border Village include the following:

Chumur – Ladakh's First Model Border Village

- \* First village of its kind in Ladakh and among the pioneering model border villages in India.

- \* Developed under the Vibrant Villages Programme as a sustainable and resilient border settlement.

- \* Aims at improving the quality of life while strengthening border habitation.

Settlement Stabilisation

- \* Transition from a purely nomadic lifestyle to a secure and permanent settlement.

- \* South-facing passive solar houses designed for maximum sunlight and protection from cold wind during harsh winters.

- \* Residential house with attached bathroom.

- \* Additional room suitable for homestay/tourism activities.

- \* Kitchen garden space for household cultivation.

- \* Individual goat/sheep shed.

- \* Dedicated fodder storage for year-round livestock support.

Local Economy Activation

- \* Chumur to be developed as a tourism destination on the Korzok-Hanle circuit.

- \* Plans for a community-run café to promote local entrepreneurship.

- \* Capacity building and skill development in Pashmina production and value addition.

- \* Promotion of locally made value-added Pashmina products.

- \* Establishment of a 90 x 27 ft commercial greenhouse with support from DIHAR.

- \* Fresh vegetable production to generate income and meet local and defence requirements.

All-Weather Functionality

- \* Reliable year-round water supply system.

- \* Resilient and sustainable power supply through maximum solar energy utilisation.

- \* Improved sanitation and wastewater management infrastructure.

- \* Enhanced habitability during harsh winters.

Civil-Defence Integration

- \* Vegetable production from greenhouses to supply nearby defence establishments.

- \* Creation of a sustainable local market for villagers.

- \* Greater civil-defence cooperation and mutual support.

- \* Opportunities for local employment through engagement with the defence forces.

Settlement Structure

- \* Cluster-based neighbourhoods with 8-10 housing units per cluster.

- \* Houses oriented southward for solar gain and wind protection.

- \* Dedicated greenhouse belt integrated into village planning.

- \* Livestock infrastructure designed according to Changthang's geography and climatic conditions.

Central Service Core comprising:

- \* School

snatched from us," Sadiq said, emphasizing that the restoration of statehood remains the party's foremost political priority. The NC leadership reiterated its commitment to pursuing the issue through democratic and constitutional means and said the delegation of legislators would seek support from various political parties during the Parliament session. (KNC) Geographic Reference Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Omar Abdullah on Wednesday flagged off a cyclothon at the Royal Springs Golf Course (RSGC) here to mark World Bicycle Day.

The event, organised by the Jammu and Kashmir Sports Council under its flagship initiative "My Youth My Pride", witnessed enthusiastic participation from cyclists, youth, students and sports enthusiasts from different parts of the Valley.

The chief minister launched the mascot, jersey and publicity campaign for the forthcoming Jammu Cyclothon, announced the event dates, and stated that the Kashmir Cyclothon should be held as a national-level event to attract cyclists from across the country, thereby promoting Jammu and Kashmir as a hub for adventure and sporting activities.

Abdullah appreciated the youths' growing interest in cycling and emphasised the importance of adopting active lifestyles, ensuring better physical and mental well-being and strengthening community engagement.

The chief minister highlighted cycling as an environmentally sustainable mode of transport that contributes to public health while supporting efforts towards environmental conservation.

He lauded the initiatives undertaken by the Youth Services and Sports Department and the J&K Sports Council to encourage mass participation in sports and recreational activities.

The cyclothon commenced from the Royal Springs Golf Course (RSGC) and proceeded towards Duck Park on Foreshore Road, covering a distance of approximately 20 kilometres.

The Congress protested in Jammu on Wednesday against rising prices, unemployment and repeated paper leak incidents, accusing the government of failing to address the economic hardships faced by common people and the concerns of the youth.

Jammu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee (JKPCC) working president Raman Bhalla said inflation has emerged as one of the biggest challenges facing ordinary families. He alleged that the continuous rise in the prices of food items, cooking gas, fuel, medicines, electricity and other essential commodities has severely impacted household budgets, with economically weaker sections bearing the brunt.

Bhalla alleged that increasing fuel prices had triggered a cascading effect on transportation costs, leading to a rise in the prices of food grains, vegetables and other daily-use items.

He urged the government to take immediate measures to stabilise prices and provide relief to vulnerable sections of society.

He called for a comprehensive strategy to tackle inflation, stressing the need for job generation, greater investment in productive sectors and stronger social welfare initiatives to improve household incomes and restore economic confidence.

Former minister Yogesh Sawhney said the protest reflected the growing frustration among citizens struggling to cope with the rising cost of living. Sawhney said the Congress would continue to raise public issues through protests and institutional forums until meaningful relief measures were announced.

JKPCC chief spokesperson Ravinder Sharma said higher prices reduced consumer demand, affected businesses and limited job opportunities for young people.

He expressed concern over rising unemployment and repeated paper-leak incidents, saying such developments had increased frustration among students and job aspirants.

Several senior Congress leaders, party workers, women, youth and residents participated in the protest. (Agencies)

Amit Shah

systems, and overall logistical arrangements. Officials are also expected to brief the Home Minister on the prevailing security situation in Jammu and Kashmir and the steps being taken to safeguard pilgrims throughout the pilgrimage period.

Special attention is likely to be given to intelligence coordination among various agencies, surveillance measures along the Yatra routes, and contingency plans to tackle any unforeseen challenges or security threats.

The review meeting forms part of the Centre's broader strategy to ensure robust security coverage and efficient facilities for thousands of devotees expected to participate in this year's Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra.

Besides Union Minister for Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) Jyotiraditya Scindia on Tuesday virtually launched the Rs 411 crore Mission Muga Silk 'Senehjori' to empower more than 2.5 lakh weavers, rearers and entrepreneurs associated with Muga silk production in Assam.

The launch event held in New Delhi was attended by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Union Minister of State for Textiles Pabitra Margherita and Minister of State for DoNER Sukanta Majumdar, among others.

Describing the initiative as a transformative step for Assam's famed 'golden thread', Scindia said the mission would enhance value addition, improve production and quality, economically empower stakeholders and position Muga silk competitively in global markets.

"This initiative is to take Muga Silk from farm gate to foreign shore," Scindia said while launching the ambitious three-year project, which will be implemented from 2026 to 2028.

Shivkumar

others at Lok Bhavan here.

Parameshwara, who is set to be designated as Deputy CM, took oath in the name of Dr B R Ambedkar.

Along with Shivakumar and Parameshwara, the legislators, who took oath as ministers were — K H Muniyappa, K J George, M B Patil, Ramalinga Reddy, Satish Jarkiholi, Krishna Byregowda, Priyank Kharge, U T Khader, Eshwar Khandre, Yathindra Siddaramaiah, Byrathi Suresh, and Sharan Prakash Patil. Barring Khader and Yathindra, all the others were ministers in the previous Siddaramaiah government.

Khader had been the Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly and Yathindra, a member of the legislative council, is Siddaramaiah's son.

Shivakumar, a 64-year-old Vokkaliga strongman, was elected leader of the Congress Legislature Party on May 30, following Siddaramaiah's resignation as chief minister on May 28.

Shivakumar had served as Deputy Chief Minister under Siddaramaiah. AICC general secretaries K C Venugopal and Randeep Singh Surjewala, CMs of Congress ruled states, several top Congress leaders, dignitaries, and invitees were present at the swearing-in.

Religious leaders from all major communities, including heads of various maths, were also present. According to officials, the invitees included students from a government school in Doddaalahlali in Kanakapura, which is Shivakumar's native village. Representatives from various sections of society, including labourers, civic workers, farmer leaders, women self-help groups, and pro-Kannada organisations took part. (Agencies)

CEC Kargil Meets Director General of Border Roads Organisation ( DGBR) Discusses Developmental Initiatives



Kargil, June 3, 2026: Hon'ble Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor, LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhoo, today met the Director General Border Roads Organisation ( DGBR) Lt Gen. Harpal Singh, at the Council Secretariat, Kargil.

During the meeting, Dr. Akhoo extended his heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Gen. Harpal Singh on assuming the charge of Director General Border Roads. He expressed confidence that under his dynamic leadership, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) would continue its exemplary service in strengthening infrastructure and connectivity in border regions.

The CEC conveyed his sincere gratitude to the BRO for its tireless efforts, particularly in ensuring winter road connectivity and carrying out snow clearance operations at Zojila Pass, which play a vital role in maintaining the lifeline between Ladakh and the rest of the country.

Dr. Akhoo also appreciated the significant contribution of the BRO towards the development of Kargil district through the construction of roads, bridges, and other critical infrastructure projects. He remarked that these initiatives have greatly

benefited the people of Kargil and have accelerated the region's socio-economic development.

During the interaction, both sides exchanged views on various developmental issues and emphasized the importance of continued cooperation and coordination between the LAHDC Kargil and the BRO. Discussions were also held regarding several ongoing infrastructure projects as well as projects proposed for future implementation in the district.

Present during the meeting were Chief Engineer, Project Vijayak, Brigadier Rahul Oberoi, and PS to DGBR, Col. Vishal Kumar.

A five-day training programme on Inclusive Education for Children With Special Needs (CWSN) under the Aspirational Block Programme, Karsha Block, commenced today at Government Higher Secondary School (GHSS) Padum.

Deputy Commissioner Zanskar, Shri Omkar Rajinder Gundage, IAS, attended the inaugural function as the Chief Guest, while Superintendent of Police Zanskar, Shri Regzin Sandup, JKPS, was the Guest of Honour. Tehsildar Zanskar, Shri Mohd Hassan, attended the programme as Special Guest. Zonal Education Officer

Zanskar, Smt Tsewang Yangdol, delivered the welcome address and expressed gratitude to the Deputy Commissioner Zanskar for his continuous support and cooperation towards the education sector and successful conduct of such programmes in the district.

Addressing the gathering, the Deputy Commissioner highlighted the importance of inclusive education and emphasized the need to ensure equal educational opportunities for Children With Special Needs (CWSN). He assured the teaching fraternity of full administrative support and stated that the district administration would always stand with teachers facing any challenges in the field of education.

Speaking on the occasion, the Superintendent of Police Zanskar stressed the importance of strong coordination between teachers and students. He also raised concern over the increasing issue of drug abuse among youth and discussed ways to overcome the growing menace through awareness, counselling, and collective responsibility.

During the training session, trainers from District Kargil presented various Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) and delivered presentations on inclusive teaching methodologies and classroom practices aimed at supporting Children With Special Needs. The programme witnessed participation from teachers of various institutions across Karsha Block.

The Zonal Level Inter-School Tournaments 2026 officially commenced today in the Tai-Suru Zone amidst immense enthusiasm and sporting fervor. The multi-day event has drawn around 500 student-athletes from various educational institutions across the region, showcasing the vibrant youth talent in the zone.

The tournament is being organized by the Zonal Physical Education Office, Tai-Suru, under the aegis of the Department of Youth Services & Sports, Kargil, as part of its Annual Calendar of Activities 2026. A total of 22 Middle Schools.

CPCO

review and orientation meeting with Deputy Commissioner Jammu, Dr. Rakesh Minhas, IAS and all charge officers, regarding the ongoing Self-Enumeration exercise and overall preparedness for Census 2027 in District Jammu. The meeting focused on reviewing the progress of Self-Enumeration, House Listing Block (HLB) demarcation and geo-tagging, training activities, media and publicity initiatives, distribution of Census materials, mapping and jurisdictional updations and financial preparedness relating to Census operations in Jammu, which is the winter capital district of the UT. The meeting was also attended by Vidhu Shekhar, IAS, Additional Deputy Commissioner who apprised the meeting regarding progress on various aspects and the initiatives taken for IEC activities.

The Chief Principal Census Officer Amit Sharma was accompanied with Manmeet Singh Loomba, Deputy Chief Principal Census Officer, Jatinder Kumar and Nimrat Kour, Assistant Chief Principal Census Officers. During the review, CPCO Amit Sharma appreciated the progress achieved by District Jammu in various Census-related activities and particularly commended the encouraging response being witnessed in the ongoing Self-Enumeration exercise.

He noted with satisfaction the growing number of households voluntarily participating in Self-Enumeration and appreciated the extensive awareness and publicity drives being carried out by the district administration for promotion of Census 2027 and Self-Enumeration. Amit observed that District Jammu, being one of the largest and most diverse districts of the Union Territory, has shown significant public participation in the ongoing digital Census exercise through coordinated field-level mobilisation, citizen outreach initiatives and thematic awareness campaigns. CPCO Amit Sharma stressed upon maintaining strong momentum during the remaining days of the Self-Enumeration period and directed that awareness campaigns should be further intensified across urban, semi-urban and rural areas to ensure wider public participation and timely completion of Self-Enumeration by households. The meeting also reviewed the status of HLB demarcation and geo-tagging activities, during which it was informed that all identified House Listing Blocks in District Jammu have been fully demarcated and geo-tagged as part of the preparatory framework for Census 2027. The progress of training programmes for Enumerators and Supervisors was also discussed in-detail. It was informed to CPCO Amit Sharma that both Field Trainer training and Enumerator & Supervisor training activities have been completed successfully and field-level Census functionaries have been fully oriented regarding digital Census applications and operational procedures for smooth conduct of Census operations. Detailed discussions were also held regarding media outreach initiatives, participation of dignitaries in Self-Enumeration, thematic publicity campaigns and citizen engagement activities being undertaken across the district. CPCO Amit Sharma emphasised the importance of coordinated IEC activities and digital awareness initiatives for ensuring maximum public participation in Census 2027. The review further covered receipt and distribution of Census kit items, updation of village and urban jurisdiction records, updation of administrative boundaries on the HLBC portal and maintenance of financial and operational documentation relating to Census activities. Necessary directions were issued by CPCO regarding timely updation of records and smooth operational coordination at all levels. Reiterating the importance of accurate demographic data for governance and developmental planning, CPCO Amit Sharma appealed to all residents of District Jammu to actively participate in the ongoing Self-Enumeration exercise and complete their Census submissions within the notified timelines. Before leaving, he wished PCO-cum-DC Jammu Rakesh Minhas and his entire team for the conduct of upcoming first phase of HLO in ongoing Census 2027 with quality data collection from all Households during entire month of June 2026.

21 Killed

of the police personnel and fire officials also received injuries," a senior police official said.

According to one eyewitness and a first responder, the basement was locked and he helped the fire team to help open it. "It took more than 20 minutes to open the basement area," he alleged.

Horrific scenes played out all over.

As thick smoke engulfed the building and flames spread rapidly, several people were seen breaking window panes and calling for help. "A woman holding a young child jumped from the third floor after local residents spread mattresses on the ground below in an attempt to save those trapped inside," an eyewitness said.

"She was carrying the child tightly and jumped when there was no other way out. People had already arranged mattresses below the building. Both survived, but she appeared to have suffered injuries," he added.

A mattress-seller spread his mattresses on the ground to cushion the fall of people while others administered CPR to injured victims.

At the Max Hospital across the road, stunned relatives crowded the waiting area searching for their loved ones, scanning lists and making frantic phone calls as the injured and the dead were brought in.

"We can't recognise them by looking at pictures; it's unrecognisable. Everyone is severely burnt," said one man sobbing uncontrollably.

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Tender Notice No.- 770-W/01/WA/JAT/2025 09-2026-27-DRM-JAT (to be opened on date 24.06.2026) acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on [www.ireps.gov.in](https://www.ireps.gov.in) with closing date 24.06.2026 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against these tenders, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

| Tender Type               | Tendering Section | Bidding System        |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Open                      | Works             | Two Packet System     |
| Date of Uploading Tenders | Bid Starting Date | Bid Closing Date/Time |
| 02.06.2026                | 10.06.2026        | 24.06.2026            |

S.No.:1 Tender No. 09-2026-27-JAT-DRM-JAT

Details of Tender : Earthwork for Cess repair and other misc. works in the section of SSE/WJAT & SSE/WKTHU under ADEN/JAT.

| Advised Value (Rs.) | Validity of Offer | Period of Completion |
|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| 79857946.69         | 60 Days           | 06 Months            |

NOTE: Contractors are advised to check the IREPS website for any corrigendum issued against this tender before submitting the bids. 1885/2026

NORTHERN RAILWAY E-TENDER NOTICE

Sr. DSTE/JAT acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders on <https://www.ireps.gov.in> against Tender Notice no. 433\_Sig\_38\_25\_26 Closing Date/Time 24.06.2026 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored.

Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through online payment modes available on IREPS portal like Net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed.

Contract Type Works

Name of Work Comprehensive Annual Maintenance contract (AMC) of El Make MEDHA under the jurisdiction of SR.DSTE/JAT over JAMMU division for three (3) years.

| Tender Closing Date Time | Date Time of Uploading Tender   |  |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 24.06.2026 15:00         | 02.06.2026 17:50                |  |
| Advised Value (Rs.)      | Bidding Start Date as per IREPS |  |
| 4236900.00               | 10.06.2026                      |  |
| Earnest Money (Rs.)      | Period of Completion            |  |
| 84700.00                 | 36 Months                       |  |

Tender Notice No: 433\_Sig\_38\_25\_26 Date: 02.06.2026 Closing Date/Time : 24.06.2026 15:00 1883/2026

SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE



# CEC Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhooon Graces Book Launch "Stories from a Kargili Kitchen"

Kargil: Hon'ble Chairman and Chief Executive Councillor (CEC), LAHDC Kargil, Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhooon, attended the launch of the book "Stories from a Kargili Kitchen" today as the chief guest. The event, organized by Roots Ladakh and led by founder Muzammil, was an evening dedicated to celebrating the rich food memories and cultural heritage of Kargil. Muzammil, the visionary behind Roots Ladakh, began by sharing the inspiring journey of the book. As he detailed, "Stories from a Kargili Kitchen" is a heartfelt endeavor to revive and document Kargil's unique traditional foods, passed down through generations. He extended his gratitude to the entire team whose dedication made this book possible and urged all dignitaries to distribute it widely in educational institutions. Following Muzammil, co-author Neha Nair, a distinguished Anthropologist, took the stage. She recounted her research journey, emphasizing that Kargil is a region beyond war and borders. Neha added that this book is not just a culinary journey but a cultural revival. Co-author Yash Saxena then shared his personal experiences with food culture across different regions, highlighting how Kargil's food heritage is gradually fading and calling attention to its causes and impacts.



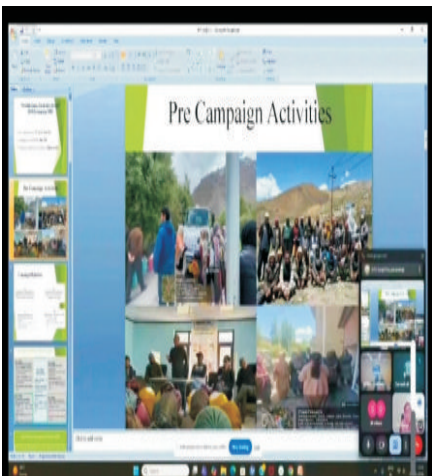
Renowned Writer Reza Amjad Badgami, known for his work in Shina literature, underscored the significance of buckwheat (known as "Baro" in Shina/Balti). He

highlighted its historical presence in literature. CEC Dr. Mohd Jaffer Akhooon, in his address, lauded the entire team, especially Roots Ladakh, for their invaluable contribu-

tion to promoting Ladakh's culture, food, and organic farming—a crucial identity of Kargil. He highlighted LAHDC's ongoing efforts in tourism promotion and expressed optimism that Kargil and Ladakh would gain national and global recognition. He assured that the book would reach every educational institution and thanked all contributors for their passion. Member of Parliament Haji Hnifa Jan, congratulated the authors, especially Yash, Neha, and Muzammil. He praised Muzammil's efforts to promote Kargil's culture and tourism at both national and international levels, urging youth to engage in preserving Ladakh's unique traditions. The event was attended by a distinguished lineup of dignitaries. The special guest, Deputy Commissioner Kargil, Rakesh Kumar, along with other special guests, including SSP Kargil Nitin Yadav, Brigadier Joshi (Commander, 121), former CEC Kacho Ahmed Khan, and former CEC Feroza Ahmed Khan, graced the occasion. The evening concluded with the felicitation of all contributors with traditional Khataks, leaving the audience inspired by the rich tapestry of Kargil's food and culture. National SC-ST Hub, Ludhiana under the Ministry of MSME (Government of India) is

organising an "Entrepreneur Awareness & Special Vendor Development Programme" for Existing and Aspiring SC-ST Entrepreneurs in association with the Dalit Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DICC) – North India at Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar, Leh, Ladakh-194104, on 5th June, 2026 at 9 AM Onwards. Leh is all set to witness an important Entrepreneur Awareness & Special Vendor Development Programme aimed at promoting business opportunities and skill development among existing and aspiring SC-ST entrepreneurs. The event is scheduled to be held at Central Institute of Buddhist Studies, Choglamsar, Leh, Ladakh-194104. The programme is being organized to educate participants about various government schemes, financial support systems and business development strategies. Experts and representatives from different organizations will be present to guide attendees and share valuable insights. Participants will also get an opportunity to interact with industry and banking professionals from GeM, HPCL, POWERGRID, FCI, NTPC, SBI and other Government Organizations like MSME DFO Jammu, Social & Tribal Welfare Department, training institute like ITI.

## District-Level Sensitization Workshop on "Swachh Gaon, Surakshit Jalvayu" Campaign Held at Kargil



Kargil: Under the guidance of Deputy Commissioner/CEO, LAHDC Kargil, Rakesh Kumar, IAS, a district-level sensitization workshop on the "Swachh Gaon, Surakshit Jalvayu" Campaign was conducted today. The workshop was attended by the Additional District Development Commissioner Ghulam Mohd (JKAS), Chief Planning Officer Kacho Mohd Hussain, Block Development Officers, Panchayat Inspectors, Panchayat Secretaries,

Panchayat Accounts Assistants, RGSA team and other concerned officials. During the workshop, District Panchayat Officer, Raziya Khatoon (JKAS), delivered a presentation on the objectives of campaign, the roles and responsibilities of Rural Local Bodies, provisions of the Solid Waste Management Rules, 2026, waste segregation, management of community sanitation assets, and documentation requirements during the campaign period. The ADDC briefed participants on the importance of effective implementation of the campaign and directed the Panchayat Account Assistant to play an active role in Panchayat-level activities, including planning, monitoring, documentation, and implementation. He also emphasized timely reporting and proper documentation of campaign activities. The Chief Planning Officer highlighted roles and responsibilities of Panchayat functionaries in solid waste management and urged all stakeholders to actively participate in making the campaign a success. The workshop concluded with an interactive session and a commitment from all stakeholders to ensure the successful implementation of the campaign across the district.

## DC Drass visits Segregation Shed of Drass Block under Swachh Gaon Surakshit Jalvayu Campaign

Drass: As part of the ongoing Swachh Gaon Surakshit Jalvayu Campaign, the Deputy Commissioner of Drass, Imteaz Kacho today visited the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Centre near Lamochan Bridge to take stock of the functioning of the facility and assess the progress of waste management initiatives being undertaken in Drass District. He was accompanied by the Sub-Divisional Magistrate, Vishal Atri. During the visit, the Block Development Officer, Drass, Dr. Mohd. Amin Naqvi, briefed the Deputy Commissioner about the operational procedures of the SWM Centre, including waste collection, segregation, processing, recycling and disposal mechanisms. Detailed information was also provided regarding the measures being taken to ensure scientific management of solid waste and to promote environmental sustainability across the Block. The Deputy Commissioner inspected various sections of the facility and reviewed the arrangements made for proper handling and processing waste. He emphasized the importance of community participation, source-level segregation of waste, and



adherence to Solid Waste Management Rules for maintaining cleanliness and safeguarding the environment. He also stressed on the need for sustained efforts towards cleaning water bodies and various locations in the District. The event witnessed active participation of Nambardars of various Panchayats of Drass

Block, senior citizens, Panchayat representatives and local residents. Participants were sensitized about the objectives of the Swachh Gaon Surakshit Jalvayu Campaign and the collective responsibility of citizens in preserving a clean and healthy environment. The Deputy Commissioner appreciated the efforts of the Rural Development Department and all stakeholders involved in the implementation of the campaign. He urged the public to continue supporting cleanliness drives, adopt proper waste segregation practices and contribute towards making villages cleaner, greener and environmentally sustainable. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the various initiatives taken in the past for turning Drass into a living model of hygiene and cleanliness. He urged the citizens to extend full cooperation for making the ongoing campaign successful. The visit concluded with a renewed commitment from all participants to strengthen solid waste management practices and promote environmental awareness throughout the District.

## TWO-DAY ONLINE HANDS-ON TRAINING WORKSHOP ON DIGITAL HOLISTIC PROGRESS CARD (DHPC) FOR PM SHRI SCHOOLS OF UT LADAKH

Leh: In continuation of the corrigendum issued by the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Leh, regarding the mandatory participation of concerned Headmasters and School Admins of PM SHRI Schools, a two-day online hands-on training workshop on the Digital Holistic Progress Card (DHPC) was successfully conducted on 1st and 2nd June 2026 for PM SHRI Schools of the Union Territory of Ladakh. The training programme was organized under the guidance and support of PARAKH, NCERT, New Delhi, with the objective of building the capacity of school functionaries for the effective implementation of the Digital Holistic Progress Card (DHPC), a key initiative aligned with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The workshop was conducted under the visionary leadership, constant support, and valuable guidance of Prof. Indrani Bhaduri, CEO, PARAKH and Head, Educational Survey Division (ESD), NCERT, New Delhi, whose continuous efforts have been instrumental in facilitating the implementation of DHPC in the Union Territory of Ladakh. Day-1 Proceedings (1st June 2026) The workshop commenced with an introductory session by the PARAKH resource persons, Mr. Christopher Tongbram and Mr. Prashant Singh. The experts welcomed the participants and provided an overview of the objectives, significance, and implementation framework of the Digital Holistic Progress Card initiative. They highlighted the importance of holistic assessment and competency-based evaluation envisioned under NEP 2020. During the morning session, the experts explained the hierarchical functional framework of the DHPC platform. Participants were ac-

quainted with the administrative structure of the portal comprising PARAKH Admin, Regional Admins, State Admin, District Admins, School Admins, Teachers, Students, and Parents. Detailed explanations were provided regarding the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder involved in the implementation process. A practical hands-on session followed, wherein login credentials were first created for the State Admin. Subsequently, the State Admin generated login credentials for the District Admins of Leh and Kargil. Thereafter, the District Admins successfully generated credentials for all participating PM SHRI schools attending the online training programme. This practical exercise enabled participants to gain first-hand experience in navigating and managing the DHPC platform. The post-lunch session was devoted to an interactive query and clarification segment. School Admins raised several concerns regarding credential generation, user management, and onboarding procedures for teachers and students. The PARAKH experts addressed each query comprehensively and provided practical solutions to ensure smooth implementation. To reinforce the learning outcomes, School Admins were assigned practical homework to create and verify login credentials for teachers and students up to the Middle Stage before the commencement of the next day's session. Day-2 Proceedings (2nd June 2026) The second day of the workshop commenced with a recapitulation of the previous day's proceedings, followed by a query and doubt-clearance session. The resource persons responded to the issues encountered by participants during the onboarding process and provided

additional guidance wherever required. The technical session began with a detailed demonstration of the Holistic Progress Card (HPC) filling process for the Preparatory Stage. The experts conducted live demonstrations and guided participants through the various components and indicators incorporated in the progress card. The session was highly interactive and provided participants with practical exposure to the assessment and reporting process. Subsequently, the experts conducted an extensive practical session on HPC filling for the Middle Stage. Detailed explanations were provided regarding the assessment framework, data entry procedures, and reporting mechanisms. Participants actively engaged in the live exercises and gained a comprehensive understanding of the platform's functionalities. The resource persons also covered the implementation procedures and assessment processes for the Foundational, Preparatory, and Middle Stages in a comprehensive manner. Through demonstrations and practical exercises, participants developed a clear understanding of the holistic assessment framework and its implementation through the DHPC platform. School Admins continued the onboarding process by generating and verifying credentials for teachers and students in their respective schools. It was informed that the complete onboarding of data across participating schools would be completed by 3rd June 2026. Following the successful onboarding of teachers and students, particularly up to Grade II under the respective stages, the concerned teachers will initiate the Holistic Progress Card assessment process through the DHPC platform.

### TODAY'S horoscope

(04.06.2026)

*Sapam Chanu Prema*  
(Astro — numerologist)

Contact No. 9366411415 | Email: chanuprema39@gmail.com

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|---|---|
| <p><b>ARIES:</b> Your usual powers of organisation may have failed you, making you unsure how to get some urgent work done on time. The day may be less fortunate and may face serious obstacles in his work.</p>   | <p><b>LIBRA:</b> The push to complete projects and processes gathers momentum. You should be able to finish up your to-do list right now. You may get support from your friends, family and your love ones too.</p>             |
| <p><b>TAURUS:</b> Check to ensure that your life isn't being driven by personal fears and phobias, or by other's people agendas. You may face health related problems at the moment and might also feel a little bit stressed.</p>                          | <p><b>SCORPIO:</b> Any gathering involving friends is likely to be good fun. There may be financial ups and downs at the moment for you. You should follow the path of truth in order to achieve fame and success.</p>          |
| <p><b>GEMINI:</b> If you've been thinking about yourself lately, it would be a good idea to share those thoughts with someone you trust. The day may be auspicious for you and there may be increase in your income too.</p>                                | <p><b>SAGITTARIUS:</b> Balancing out the give and the take is vital in making a deal fair. The day is auspicious for you and may gain wealth and increase happiness in your life. You would be very efficient at work also.</p> |
| <p><b>CANCER:</b> Previously ignore issues that arise will provide a better perspective. This is a good time for taking a detailed look at restructuring a business venture. Your health may remain healthy and fit and you might also achieve success.</p> | <p><b>CAPRICORN:</b> There is likely to be increase in your expenditures during the day. Avoid any conflicts and arguments otherwise you may face certain issues and your mental health might be distress.</p>                  |
| <p><b>LEO:</b> The responsibilities of your home and family life may be weighing heavily upon you. Life in workplace is likely to be quite busy. Some health related problems may also persists at the moment.</p>  | <p><b>AQUARIUS:</b> This promises to be an easygoing yet rewarding day with numerous opportunities to go out and to be entertained. You may reap certain benefits right now and might have a happy state of mind.</p>           |
| <p><b>VIRGO:</b> Craftpersons and the self-employed may have to step from creative mode into business mode. In the meantime, some mental issues and burdens might persists. And also certain obstacles might come in your work.</p>                         | <p><b>PISCES:</b> You'll have no problems and nothing to fear if you've been doing the right thing. The day is auspicious for those who do business. You would be hardworking and feel energetic during the day.</p>            |

# 30 Indians living and working illegally in US as truck drivers arrested, will be deported



NEW YORK, Jun 3 : About 30 individuals from India, found to be living in the US illegally and working as commercial truck drivers, have been arrested as part of a federal operation and will soon be deported. The US Customs and Border Protection said in a statement Monday that during the week of May 11-15, Border Patrol agents from Yuma Sector in Arizona arrested 52 individuals during 'Operation Checkmate' for being in the US illegally, including 36 who were found to be driving semi-trucks. Out of the 36 illegal semi-truck drivers arrested, 30 were from India, while the remaining six were from Mexico, El Salvador, and Russia. They had commercial driver's licenses from states such as California, New York, Washington and Virginia, while some did not possess any form of driver's license. Most possessed employment authorisation documents, which were obtained during the Joe Biden administration and were no longer valid. All individuals were processed in accordance with federal law and will be deported. Operation Checkmate is aimed at enhancing public safety through enforcement of immigration statutes to detect and arrest illegal persons operating commercial motor vehicles in the country. "Operation Checkmate reflects our commitment to

safeguarding communities and roads from unlawfully present drivers who pose significant risks to public safety," Acting Chief Patrol Agent of the US Border Patrol's Yuma Sector Dustin Caudle said. Federal agents are on patrol every day to "ensure we stop these individuals and prevent more deadly crashes from occurring on the road across the United States." Under the administration of President Donald Trump, the Department of Transportation issued an order to stop unqualified foreign drivers from obtaining licenses to drive commercial trucks and buses. Over the past several months, there have been instances of Indian-origin truck drivers arrested and charged with causing fatal crashes while driving commercial vehicles in the US. Indian nationals will no longer need a transit visa when travelling to another country with a layover at a German airport, the country's embassy said here on Tuesday. The decision will come into effect on June 3, 2026. Every year, a large number of Indians, including students, professionals and tourists, travel through German airports, on way to other destinations. "Indian nationals will no longer need a transit visa when travelling to another country with a layover at a German airport. The lifting of the so-called airport transit visa

requirement for Indian citizens was announced in the Federal Law Gazette on June 2, 2026, and takes effect on June 3, 2026," the German embassy said in a statement. "It underlines the Federal Government's commitment to deepening German-Indian relations, facilitating the movement of people, and further strengthening economic ties," it said. This comes as a result of German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit to India in January, the embassy said. In April, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) had said that the visa-free transit for Indian nationals transiting through the European territory of France has been operationalised by the French government. At a media briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal had said that the decision reflected the enduring partnership between India and France, elevated to the level of a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership' during the recent visit of President Emmanuel Macron to India, as also further facilitation of smoother movement of people, and enhancing of people-to-people ties. "The government of France has now operationalised this agreement, and Indian nationals transiting through mainland France exclusively by air will no longer need a transit visa, with effect from 10th April, 2026," Jaiswal had said. A team of Yoga athletes from the United States is heading to India to participate in the maiden World Yogasana Championship to be held in Ahmedabad from June 4 to 8. The United States Yogasana Sports Federation (USYSF), in collaboration with the United States Yoga Association (USYA) and World Yogasana, has announced the official Team USA delegation for the championship, according to a press release issued by Yoga Association USA. Yoga Association USA and USYSF founder and president Balwinder Singh will lead the 11-member US contingent at the event, it said. The team, heading to India, was selected following quarterfinal trials held in Connecticut in April. Athletes in the delegation will compete in youth and senior categories, with participants ranging in age from 10 to 55 years. Ahead of their departure, members of the US Yogasana team visited the Consulate General of India in New York last week and met Deputy Consul General Vishal Harsh. The Consulate wished the athletes success at the championship. The event is expected to bring together athletes, officials, and representatives from over 60 countries, "advancing Yogasana as a globally recognised competitive sport while fostering international unity, wellness, and cultural exchange", the release said. Competitors will participate in seven official Yogasana categories, including artistic and rhythmic yoga divisions, where participants will be assessed on strength, flexibility, balance, endurance and precision under global standardised judging criteria.

## Rajapaksa allowed to testify online on forced disappearances



Colombo

Sri Lanka's former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa was on Tuesday allowed to testify online in a long-standing case about the disappearance of two rights activists in 2011. Rajapaksa was the chief bureaucrat in the Ministry of Defence under the presidency of his elder brother, Mahinda Rajapaksa, when the disappearances of human rights activists Lalith Kumar Weerajuru and Kugan Muruganandan were reported. Before their disappearance, Weerajuru and Muruganandan were reportedly planning to hold a press conference in Colombo on a protest to highlight human rights violations against Tamil civilians since the end of a military conflict in the island nation in 2009. The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) waged a

military campaign for a separate Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern provinces for nearly 30 years before its collapse. On Tuesday, Rajapaksa was granted permission to testify online without physically presenting himself at the magistrate's court in Tamil-dominated Jaffna. Earlier, during his presidential term from 2019-2022, Rajapaksa appealed to the Court of Appeal that he felt unsafe travelling to make the court appearance in Jaffna, the Northern Province's capital. The court upheld his plea. At the time of the right activists' disappearance, Rajapaksa was accused of overseeing abduction squads that whisked away rebel suspects, critical journalists, and activists, many of them never to be seen again. He previously denied any wrongdoing.

## EU strikes migration deal for more deportations, detention centres abroad

Brussels

The European Union (EU) has moved forward with a vast overhaul of its migration policy, aiming to ramp up deportations and ink controversial deals to build detention centres abroad, in what rights groups compare to the Trump administration's aggressive immigration policies. "The new regulation will speed up the return process and increase returns of persons who have no legal right to stay in the EU," said Nicholas Ioannides,

deputy migration minister for Cyprus, which holds the rotating presidency of the 27-nation bloc. The deal was struck between the EU's three main institutions — the European Commission, the European Council and the European Parliament — during a so-called "trilogue" on Monday evening. Critics compared the regulation to the immigration strategy of the Trump administration, which has struck a series of secretive agreements with nations around the world to deport thousands of people to countries that are not their own.



The United Kingdom also planned to deport migrants to Rwanda, but the plan was bogged down in legal red tape, and the new Government dropped the plan as soon as it came into power. "The Regulation is going to create a draconian detention and deportation machine," said Silvia Carter, spokesperson for the Brussels-based Platform for International Cooperation

on Undocumented Migrants. "Across the Atlantic, we see the violence and fear created by ICE's brutal immigration enforcement. Europe should be learning from the harms of that model, not building its own version of it." The provisional agreement will now head to the EU lawmakers and heads of state, where approval will likely be swift. EU member nations will soon be able to set up bilateral deals with countries outside the bloc to build deportation centres. At least five EU nations - Germany, Austria, the Netherlands,

Denmark and Greece - are already in talks with third countries, mostly in Africa, to host "return hubs" on the model of Italy's detention deal with Albania. The EU has continually tightened migration policies after right-wing parties took power in some countries in 2024. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, from the centre-right European People's Party coalition, has said that the new measures will prevent a repeat of the 2015 crisis caused by Syria's civil war, when about 1 million people arrived to seek asylum. (

## Pakistan forces kill 17 militants in Balochistan



Islamabad

Pakistani security forces have killed at least 17 militants in a series of operations in the restive Balochistan province in reaction to the deadly train attack of last week, the army said on Tuesday. At least 14 people were killed in a bomb attack by terrorists at a shuttle train in the military areas of the provincial capital Quetta on May 24. The banned Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) claimed responsibility for the blast. According to a statement issued by the army, after the train incident, the security forces conducted a series of

intelligence-based operations in Mastung, Nushki, Zehri, Khuzdar and Ketch districts of Balochistan. It said that during these operations, the troops effectively engaged multiple terrorist locations. Following intense and fierce exchanges of fire, 17 terrorists belonging to the BLA "have been sent to hell, giving a significant blow to the terrorist networks operating in these areas," it stated. It added that weapons, ammunition and a large cache of explosives and prepared improvised explosive devices have also been recovered from the terrorists. (

## Kenyan President defends US Ebola quarantine centre



Nairobi

Kenya's president on Monday defended the establishment of an Ebola quarantine facility by the US, a move that led to protests despite a court order blocking the plan. President William Ruto on Monday night said the US had a long-standing partnership with Kenya on health matters and that the quarantine facility at Laikipia Air Base was one of 24 facilities that had been established in the event of an Ebola outbreak in the country. Some Kenyans have opposed the Laikipia facility after the US last week said no American Ebola patient would be allowed to return home and that patients would instead be quarantined at the facility in Kenya. The US intends to commit \$13

million to the partnership with Kenya. The high court on Tuesday extended orders issued on Friday suspending the construction of the facility and the arrival of foreign patients. The case had been filed by the Law Society of Kenya and a constitutional watchdog, Katiba Institute, which cited Kenya's fragile health system as unable to handle foreign patients. Speaking for the first time on the matter, Ruto said he agreed to the establishment of the facility based on existing bilateral relations. "When President Trump asked the Government of Kenya to support them by having a centre at Laikipia Air Base, I gave the OK because it was an agreement and a partnership with friends who have worked with Kenya for 30-40 years," he said.

## Mette Frederiksen to start third term as Denmark's PM

Copenhagen

Social Democrat Mette Frederiksen is set to begin a third term as Denmark's prime minister, leading a centre-left coalition of four parties after two months of negotiations. Besides Frederiksen's own party, the new Government will include the centrist Moderate party of outgoing Foreign Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen, the Green Left (SF), and the Danish Social Liberal Party, the Danish Royal House said in a statement on Monday. It will be a government working for "the



people of Denmark, for the generations to come and for the animals," Frederiksen said Monday night. Animal welfare was one of several issues that were debated during the campaign. Frederiksen had called an early election in February, apparently hoping her party would receive a boost from her straight-talking image in the stand-off with US President Donald Trump over the future of the kingdom's semi-autonomous territory of Greenland. Neither left-leaning nor right-leaning blocs won a majority in Parliament after the March vote. Denmark's

system of proportional representation typically produces coalition Governments that are traditionally made up of several parties from either the left or the right. Frederiksen's ruling coalition was created after two failed attempts to form a Government, one by Frederiksen and another by outgoing Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen, who had sought to form a centre-right Government. The new Government's priorities will be presented on Tuesday, with the names of new ministers announced on Wednesday. The 48-year-old prime

minister has led the European Union and NATO member country since mid-2019. This time around, her party won 38 seats in the 179-seat single-chamber parliament, which was 12 fewer than in the 2022 elections. Frederiksen is known for strong support of Ukraine in its defence against Russia's invasion and for a restrictive approach to migration. In her second term, her support waned as the cost of living rose. But she enjoyed a bump in popularity as the Government navigated the crisis over Trump's designs on Greenland.

## Pakistan sees 27% increase in terror attacks in May: Report

Islamabad

Militancy-driven violence spiked 27 per cent in Pakistan last month compared to the preceding month, showing the deep prevalence of terrorism-linked threats to the country, according to a think tank report. Militant and terror groups regained momentum during May after a brief period of relative decline, said a monthly security assessment released on Monday by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS). According to the report, the country witnessed 128



terrorist attacks during May, compared to 101 attacks in April, representing a 27 per cent increase. In May, 71 civilians, 68 security personnel and six members of peace committees were killed, while 147 civilians, 35 security personnel and three peace committee members were injured. The report showed that compared to April, civilian fatalities increased from 37 to 71, representing a 92 per cent rise, while security personnel fatalities surged from 28 to 68, marking a 143 per cent increase. The report also showed a sharp increase in suicide attacks as the country witnessed six suicide attacks

during May, including four vehicle-borne suicide bombings. These attacks alone resulted in the deaths of 34 security personnel and 39 civilians. In comparison, only one suicide attack was recorded

in each of March and April, indicating a significant escalation in the use of suicide bombings by terrorist groups. Balochistan emerged as the most affected province during the month. The province

recorded 71 terrorist attacks, compared with 34 in April, representing a 109 per cent increase. The deteriorating security situation was further reflected in a surge in kidnappings. Of the 54 abductions

reported nationwide during May, 52 occurred in Balochistan alone. Despite the increase in terrorist activity, security forces intensified counterterrorism operations across the country. (PTI)

# Heat Waves Demand More Than Just Water For Proper Hydration; Electrolytes Intake Necessary: Experts

MUMBAI, Jun 3: When temperatures soar and heat waves become more intense, drinking water alone may not be sufficient to keep the body properly hydrated, particularly as excessive sweating leads to the loss of essential electrolytes, caution health experts.

Loss of water and important minerals from the body due to heat may lead to complications like dizziness, headache, muscle cramps, fatigue, they said.

In the summer season, the body loses not only water but also electrolytes such as sodium, potassium, calcium, and magnesium due to excessive sweating and electrolytes play an important role in ensuring proper functioning of muscles and nerves as well as regulation of fluid levels in the body, Sir H N Reliance Foundation Hospital Additional Director of Internal Medicine Dr Divya Gopal said.

"However, when water is taken without electrolytes following excessive sweating, dilution of electrolytes in the body might result in problems like fatigue, muscle cramps, headache, dizziness and thirst," she said. Therefore, she said, water intake alone may not be enough



to maintain proper hydration in the body during excessive heat or sweating. "In addition to water, electrolyte intake may also be necessary using various methods including oral rehydration solutions (ORS), lemon water with a little salt, coconut water, buttermilk, and well-balanced meals," added Dr Gopal. Saifee Hospital Head of Emergency Medical Services Dr Murtaza S Bagwala said that during extreme hot weather, dehydration can happen

and doesn't just mean feeling thirsty.

"When you sweat too much, you lose a lot of water and important minerals, such as sodium and potassium. If this is not taken care of, it can be harmful for several organs. One of the most common complications seen is severe weakness, dizziness, headache, muscle cramps, fatigue, low energy levels and difficulty concentrating," he stated.

Dehydration can cause low blood pressure and a fast heartbeat, and may even cause fainting as it gets worse, said Dr Bagwala.

He said that dehydration can be much more serious among vulnerable people, like the elderly, children or people with diabetes, heart disease or kidney disorders. It can cause confusion, heat exhaustion, heat stroke and exacerbation of existing health problems. Electrolyte imbalance can also cause irregular heart rhythms, sometimes causing palpitations," he added.

L H Hiranandani Hospital MD Associate Director, Internal Medicine and Metabolic Physician Dr Vimal Pahuja,

further noted that personal health conditions like diabetes, high blood pressure and heart conditions might aggravate dehydration levels during summers.

Conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and heart problems, along with their medications, can severely affect the body's fluid balance, he said. "The consequences of this drastic loss of body fluids clinically are disastrous. The reduction in the volume of blood flowing through the body results in profound hypovolemia. For a patient suffering from hypertension and heart disease, this can cause drastic changes, such as orthostatic hypotension, leading to dizziness, syncope and even falls," he said.

Moreover, inadequate supply of blood to essential organs may result in acute kidney injury. For patients taking SGLT2 inhibitors, this situation of extreme dehydration may cause euglycemic diabetic ketoacidosis, which is characterized by dangerously high levels of acidity in the bloodstream despite normal sugar levels, cautioned Dr Pahuja. (Agencies)



## 5 dead, 10 injured in Surat bus collision

Surat

At least five persons were killed and more than 10 injured after two Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) buses collided near Bardoli town in Gujarat's Surat district on Tuesday, police said.

One of the buses overturned and caught fire after the crash on National Highway 53 near Uva village in Bardoli taluka, trapping several passengers inside, officials said.

"Both buses belonged to the Maharashtra State Transport Corporation. At present, it is not clear whether it was a head-on collision or both buses were going in one direction.

After the accident, one of the buses overturned and caught fire," Bardoli Rural



police inspector PN Jadeja told reporters. While at least five people were killed on the spot, more than 10 others were injured in the accident and referred to hospital. Some passengers are feared trapped inside the bus which caught fire. Efforts were on to douse the fire and rescue people, he said.

Police teams from Surat and neighbouring Tapi district rushed to the spot after receiving information about the accident

## Mehbooba bowls fresh googly to trap J&K CM Omar Abdullah ahead of NC meet

Jammu

Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) President and former Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti Tuesday bowled a fresh googly to trap J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah ahead of the much-hyped meeting of the ruling party legislators in Srinagar on June 3.

In a surprise development, Mehbooba Mufti reached out to a wide spectrum of political and civil society leaders, urging them to set aside differences and jointly engage with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for initiating a sustained dialogue process on Jammu and Kashmir. She took a cue from the recent round of dialogue between the Ministry of Home Affairs and

the representatives of the Ladakh Apex Body (LAB) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA).

In her communication to Chief Minister Omar Abdullah, Mufti wrote, "I had sought an appointment with you, but due to your preoccupation, it has not been possible." Therefore, I am taking the liberty of writing to you since time is running out and we cannot afford to delay things any further. Recent breakthroughs achieved by the Leh Apex Body & Kargil Democratic Alliance with the Centre offer an important lesson - only dialogue can deliver meaningful outcomes."

Cornered, Omar Abdullah responded to PDP president Mehbooba Mufti over her recent letter seeking a united political outreach to the centre, saying her communi-



cation created an impression that she had been awaiting an appointment for a long time, which was "clearly not the case". In a post on X, CM Omar Abdullah said that Mehbooba Mufti had spoken to him on Saturday and requested a meeting. He stated that he informed her that he would be in Pahalgam on Sunday and would get in touch on Monday or Tuesday to fix a meeting.

"Mehbooba Mufti Sahiba, we spoke on Saturday when

you asked to meet. I told you I was in Pahalgam on Sunday & would get in touch on Monday or Tuesday to fix to meet," Omar Abdullah wrote.

The Chief Minister said Mufti's letter gives the impression that she had been waiting for an appointment "for weeks on end", which, he maintained, was not the reality. Omar Abdullah further noted that since Mufti's letter had already been placed in the public domain, he would also issue his response through the same route after consulting senior colleagues in the National Conference.

"Be that as it may, your letter to me is now in the public domain, and I will be sending you a reply, similarly routed, once I've consulted my senior party colleagues," the Chief Minister added.

## CM Suwendu to launch Annapurna Yojana

Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari will formally inaugurate the state's Annapurna Yojana on Wednesday, in which women beneficiaries will get ₹3,000 a month, according to an official order.

Annapurna Yojana, one of the key promises made in the BJP's election manifesto, will replace the previous TMC Government's 'Lakshmi Bhandar', under which beneficiaries used to get a maximum of ₹1,500 per month. "The chief minister will inaugurate Annapurna Yojana on June 3," an order issued by the state secretary said on Wednesday.

The Women and Child Development and Social Welfare Department directed district administrations to make necessary arrangements to ensure that the programme is conducted smoothly across the state.

The order said that beneficiaries of the scheme would participate virtually from block and municipal-level venues. "The CM's programme will be connected through a virtual conference at all Blocks/Municipalities. District Magistrates are requested to ensure that the programme is done properly," it said. MLAs would be invited to attend the programmes in their respective areas. As part of the launch event, sanction letters will be distributed to selected beneficiaries immediately after the inauguration.

According to the order, 100 beneficiaries of the Annapurna Yojana from each block, municipality and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation will receive sanction letters on the day.



## Will not contest in Trichy by-election: VCK chief

Chennai

VCK chief Thol Thirumavalavan on Tuesday announced that he will not contest from the Tiruchirappalli East Assembly constituency vacated by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay, clarifying that he has no desire to become a minister in the TVK cabinet.

The Viduthala Chiruthalga Katchi founder stated that he would not contest any by-elections and would not be influenced by anyone. His remarks come following speculations that the TVK's ally leader will make it to the Assembly from the Tiruchirappalli East



seat that was won by Vijay in the April 23 Assembly polls.

After his victory from two constituencies, Vijay vacated Tiruchirappalli East and retained the Perambur constituency in Chennai. "I am

saying this 100 per cent: I will not contest in any by-elections, nor will I be influenced by anyone," Thirumavalavan said in a video message and revealed that he was offered a chance to contest from the constituency, which was vacated by Vijay, as per ECI norms, with the promise of a ministerial berth upon his victory. "I have denied it from my side, and I thank Chief Minister Vijay for the offer," he said.

Thirumavalavan's VCK, along with the Left parties and IUML, had extended support to the Vijay-led TVK in forming the Government, while the Congress had joined Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam in

a post-poll pact.

Explaining that his support to the TVK was extended only after consulting DMK president M. K. Stalin, he stressed that the support was mainly to prevent the implementation of the President's rule in Tamil Nadu. "I have been the harshest critic of Vijay before the election and even accused him of attempting to divide the minority votes and hindering the progress of the Secular Progress Alliance," the VCK chief said and rejected the TVK offer, stating that he was not power-hungry and has always been committed to safeguarding the DMK-led alliance.

## Andhra CM seeks Centre's intervention over laterite mine classification changes

Amaravati

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Tuesday urged the Centre to take immediate steps to address issues arising from changes in the classification of laterite mines.

In a letter to Union Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy, the chief minister sought inter-

vention to protect pending mining lease applications affected by the recent decision to classify laterite with 20 per cent or more aluminium content as bauxite instead of a minor mineral.

"I request the Union Government to provide a saving clause for laterite and allow the pending applications to be processed under the earlier rules with a relaxation period of two years,"

Naidu said in an official release.

The chief minister said the Centre's decision has brought the mining lease process in Andhra Pradesh to a standstill, forcing the state government to temporarily keep on hold 402 applications that were earlier processed under the minor mineral category.

He said the pending applications comprise 19 Letter of



Intent applications, 113 government land applications, 255 forest land applications and 15 patta land applications. Naidu noted that hundreds of applicants had already spent crores of rupees towards application fees, land purchases and forest clearances under the earlier regulatory framework.

He recalled that when minerals such as mica, quartz,

feldspar and barytes were reclassified from minor minerals to major minerals in the past, the Centre had provided a saving clause and sought similar relief for laterite.

The CM said such a relaxation would prevent financial losses to hundreds of applicants and help avoid potential legal disputes arising from the change in classification.

## Congress' Wajed Ali named Leader of Opposition in Assam Assembly

Guwahati

Senior Congress leader Wajed Ali Choudhury has been named Leader of the Opposition in the Assam assembly, an official communique said on Tuesday.

In a Facebook post, the Assam Legislative Assembly said Choudhury has been entrusted with the role of LoP by Speaker Ranjeet Kumar Dass. On May 26, the Congress had named Choudhury as the leader of its Legislature Party in Assam, and Joy Prakash Das was appointed deputy leader of the Congress Legislature Party.

The NDA, comprising the



BJP, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF), secured a sweeping mandate in the assembly polls, winning a record 102 seats in the 126-member House. The BJP alone bagged 82, while AGP and BPF won 10 seats each.

The Congress and Rajior Dal, who were part of a six-party opposition alliance, won 19 and two seats, respectively. The AIUDF and Trinamool Congress fought separately as single entities and have two and one MLAs, respectively.

## Haryana revises PG policy for in-service Govt doctors

Chandigarh

Haryana has revised its policy for in-service doctors pursuing postgraduate medical education to address faculty shortages in government medical colleges and ensure the availability of specialist doctors in hospitals, officials said on Tuesday.

Additional Chief Secretary of Health and Family Welfare in the Medical Education and Research Department, Sumita Misra, said under the amended policy issued by the Department of Medical Education and Research (DMER), in-service doctors who obtain postgraduate degrees in clinical specialties while in government

service will no longer be required to execute a medical education bond and will continue serving in their parent departments.

The decision is expected to strengthen specialist healthcare delivery across Haryana, an official statement said.

The amendment modifies provisions of the government's 2022 policy relating to incentivising in-service doctors for pursuing postgraduate studies under the reservation quota available in Haryana's medical colleges, it said.

According to the revised policy, in-service doctors who complete postgraduate courses in pre-clinical and para-clinical disciplines by availing reservation benefits in state medical colleges



will be required to serve for three years in medical education institutions functioning under the DMER.

After completing the mandatory tenure, these doctors will be given the option of permanent absorption in the Medical Education and Research Department, creating a dedicated pathway for developing teaching faculty in government medical colleges.

The move comes at a time

when Haryana has rapidly expanded its medical education infrastructure with the establishment of new government medical colleges, increasing the demand for qualified teachers in subjects such as Anatomy, Physiology, Biochemistry, Pharmacology, Pathology and Microbiology.

The notable aspect of the policy is the exemption granted to doctors pursuing postgraduate studies in clinical branches. Such doctors, along with Haryana Civil Dental Service (HCDS) officers, will not be required to furnish a Medical Education Bond and will continue their services in their respective parent departments after completing their higher studies.

## EDITORIAL

Cracks In Trinamool:  
Will Bengal Go The  
Maharashtra Way?

W A major question is now quietly being discussed across West Bengal's political circles: Is the Trinamool Congress starting at a split? Could Bengal witness a Maharashtra-like political scenario where a ruling party eventually breaks into factions, much like the Shiv Sena or the NCP?

The discussion may appear speculative, but recent developments in the Trinamool Congress have made such questions impossible to ignore. There is now open gossip, internal distrust, visible rebellion, and growing distance between sections of the leadership and the party's grassroots representatives. Naturally, this has led to wider political speculation over whether the TMC could eventually face an organisational rupture.

The conversation has intensified since the results of the recent assembly elections. Since the declaration of the results on May 4, several MPs, MLAs, councillors, and district-level leaders have publicly voiced dissatisfaction with the party leadership. Interestingly, most of their criticism has not been directed primarily at Mamata Banerjee herself, but rather at Abhishek Banerjee and the growing influence of organisations like IPAC within the party structure.

Many leaders are now openly saying that the traditional political culture of the Trinamool Congress has changed. According to them, decision-making has become increasingly centralised and heavily dependent on consultants, survey systems, and external political strategists. Several leaders feel that the organic political connection between the party and ordinary workers is weakening. The internal discomfort became more visible during the meetings called by Mamata Banerjee with party MLAs. Reports suggest that attendance gradually declined from one meeting to another. The first meeting saw relatively strong participation, but attendance reduced in the second meeting, and fell even further during the third. Officially, many absent MLAs cited health concerns, personal engagements, or security-related excuses. However, politically, many observers believe the real

reason was different: several MLAs no longer wanted to remain visibly close to the current leadership structure.

At the first meeting itself, Mamata Banerjee reportedly asked MLAs to stand up and publicly express support for Abhishek Banerjee. That incident itself revealed the growing nervousness within the party leadership regarding internal dissent.

Meanwhile, disciplinary action against dissenters has only intensified tensions further. Two MLAs were expelled from the party after allegations emerged regarding forged signatures connected to legislative communications. However, the expelled leaders strongly denied the allegations and claimed that their signatures had been digitally manipulated using computer technology. They alleged that documents were circulated without their knowledge and that false communications were shown in their names.

The matter became even more embarrassing for the party because allegations of forged signatures and manipulated letters soon turned into a public political controversy. Questions began to emerge regarding internal coordination, organisational transparency, and the functioning of the legislative party itself. According to the sequence of events, on May 18, 2026, Abhishek Banerjee reportedly wrote to the Principal Secretary of the Assembly seeking formal recognition regarding a legislative resolution. Later, on May 20, a response was sent stating that a meeting of opposition legislators had taken place where MLAs raised their hands in support of making Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay the leader of the opposition.

However, controversy erupted because several MLAs later claimed they had neither attended such a meeting nor signed any resolution. This raised serious procedural questions. If signatures were indeed forged, then how many legislators were actually involved? Was the resolution genuinely passed? Or was there manipulation somewhere within the system?

## Prepare Now For Heat, Water And Crop Risk

Mohid Sharma

Andhra Pradesh and Telangana may be heading into a season where heat, lightning, water stress and crop risk intensify together. But we can prepare now. The India Meteorological Department's first-stage forecast says the 2026 southwest monsoon is most likely to be below normal at 92 per cent of the long-period average, with El Niño development during the season being a key reason for concern.

In our region, a delayed or weaker monsoon does not just mean less rain. It can also mean a longer spell of heat and humidity before the rains set in, more uncertainty for sowing, and rising stress on water, crops and health. The first people to feel this are farmers and agricultural workers. June is not a waiting room between summer and monsoon. It is when fields are prepared, seeds are readied, borewells are watched anxiously, and livelihoods depend on timely rain.

If the monsoon is delayed, many workers remain outdoors through a longer spell of intense heat and humidity. That exposure itself is a health risk. The heat risk is already there. In Andhra Pradesh, APSDMA has alerted that temperatures crossed 40°C in 200 mandals, with 44.7°C in Kadapa district, 44.3°C in Nellore district, and 44.2°C in Tirupati district. Rayalaseema is already under heatwave warning. In Telangana too, temperatures have reached 44.4°C in Jagtial and around 44.3°C in Adilabad, Mancherial, Nalgonda, and Nizamabad.

Heat in our region does not arrive alone. As humidity builds before the monsoon and the atmosphere turns unstable, thunderstorms become more frequent. Telangana is already seeing thunderstorm, lightning, and gusty-wind warnings even as the heat remains high. Coastal Andhra is also swinging between hot, humid weather and thunderstorm risk, while Rayalaseema stays under heatwave alert.

That is why lightning must be taken far more seriously. The same farmers waiting for rain, working in open fields, or taking shelter under a lone tree can suddenly become vulnerable to lightning. Nationally, lightning caused 2,560 deaths in 2023, making it one of India's biggest weather killers. Andhra Pradesh recorded 99 lightning deaths that year, the highest among the southern states, while Telangana recorded 47.

This is the sequence we should prepare for now. A developing El Niño raises the risk of a delayed or weaker monsoon. That stretches the heat deeper into June. Outdoor workers remain exposed just when labour demand is high. The same pre-monsoon transition can also bring thunderstorms and lightning, adding another fatal risk in the fields. And if rainfall then turns patchy or inadequate, the next blow is water stress, followed by sowing disruption and crop loss.

Reservoir levels are already a warning sign. Mid-April



reporting put Srisaillam at 15.62 per cent of gross capacity and Nagarjunasagar at 47.14 per cent. The water levels of these reservoirs matter for irrigation, drinking water planning, and power management if the monsoon stumbles. A weak or delayed monsoon does not stop at the farm gate. It can tighten water access in towns and villages, unsettle crop decisions, and later show up in food prices and rural incomes.

This is why both states must shift from response to preparedness. We already know enough to act. IMD issues heatwave warnings, district-level alerts, and thunderstorm and lightning forecasts. APSDMA and state systems are active. But the last mile is still weak. Too often, water is arranged after distress becomes visible. Crop advisories arrive after sowing windows are missed. Lightning awareness rises only after deaths are reported.

Preparedness now should be practical. Farmers and labourers need altered work hours, shaded rest points, drinking water access, and stronger public messaging on heat illness. Every village needs repeated lightning

safety campaigns before the thunderstorm season peaks. Agricultural departments should issue contingency advisories on sowing windows, crop choice, and irrigation planning if rains delay. Water managers should already be reviewing reservoir operations, groundwater status, and drinking water plans for vulnerable mandals.

A warming climate is turning the pre-monsoon and monsoon transition in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana into a season where heat, lightning, water stress, and crop risk intensify together. The question is no longer whether we can forecast enough to prepare. The question is whether our institutions are willing to act before losses begin. We are at that moment to prepare for longer heat, more lightning danger, tighter water conditions, and crop stress. Responding only after these risks begin to unfold is not management. It is failure by delay.

Roxy Mathew Koll is a climate scientist at the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology and a lead author of recent IPCC reports.

Why India Became The Hottest Country:  
Key Mistakes At Its Core

C P Rajendra

India's current status as one of the hottest countries can be attributed to several broad factors, including the absence of cloud cover, low wind speeds, and a high-pressure system that traps heat near the surface.

A heat dome has developed over northern and eastern India, trapping hot air that expands vertically into the atmosphere, while high pressure pushes it back towards the ground. To make matters worse, the Western Disturbances, originating in the Mediterranean region — which typically bring snow to the hills and rain to the plains — have weakened.

As of April 2026, real-time data and reports from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) indicate that 95 to 98 of the world's 100 hottest cities are located in India. This extreme heat is driven by a combination of climate change and a "heat dome" over the country. Cities such as Banda (Uttar Pradesh), Prayagraj (Uttar Pradesh), and various locations in Rajasthan regularly record temperatures exceeding 45°C.

A heat wave is officially declared when the maximum temperature reaches at least 40°C in the plains or 30°C in hilly regions. In India, heat waves usually occur between March and June, and in rare cases may extend into July. On average, five to six heat wave events occur each year over the northern parts of the country.

Individual events can last for weeks, occur consecutively, and affect large populations. In 2016, for example, severe heat wave conditions affected Bihar, Jharkhand, Gangetic West Bengal, Odisha, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, West Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. The peak month of the heat wave over India is May.

A persistent high-pressure system — often called a "heat dome" — is locked over the Indo-Gangetic plains and central India. This traps warm air, prevents cloud formation, and forces hot air downward through a process known as subsidence, preventing any significant cooling. The weather systems that typically bring winter and spring rains to northern India were weakened in 2026, leading to a lack of pre-monsoon showers and an increase in dry heat.

On top of all these factors, rapid, unplanned urbanisation has replaced green spaces with concrete, asphalt, and glass. These materials absorb immense heat during the day and release it slowly at night, keeping urban areas warmer than surrounding rural ones. Added to this, reduced tree cover diminishes natural evapotranspiration, which would otherwise cool the air.

Human-induced global warming acts as a multiplier, and the potential 2026 "Super El Niño" effect is causing reduced rainfall and higher temperatures. The combination of high temperatures and increased humidity — often a 10% rise over the past decade — makes the heat index significantly higher.

As a result of climate change, global temperatures — along with the frequency and intensity of heatwaves — are expected to rise throughout the 21st century. High air



temperatures can affect human health and lead to additional deaths. Extended periods of high daytime and nighttime temperatures create cumulative physiological stress on the human body, exacerbating the leading causes of death worldwide, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and renal disease.

Heatwaves can acutely impact large populations over short periods, often triggering public health emergencies, resulting in excess mortality, and causing cascading socioeconomic consequences, such as reduced work capacity and labour productivity.

Hybrid Disaster

Experts often describe the situation in India as a "hybrid disaster" — a combination of global climate trends and localised policies that prioritise concrete development over environmental management. Rapid, unplanned urbanisation has replaced green spaces with concrete, asphalt, and glass. These materials absorb large amounts of heat during the day and release it slowly at night, keeping urban areas warmer than surrounding rural regions. Reduced tree cover also limits natural evapotranspiration, which would otherwise help cool the air.

Yes, scientific analysis increasingly indicates that the extreme heatwaves experienced in India are partially man-made, or at least heavily exacerbated by human activity. Although India has historically faced hot summers, recent studies show that the intensity, frequency, and duration of these heat events are direct consequences of climate change and rapid, unsustainable urbanisation. Data reveal that urban areas are warming 45% faster than rural areas.

Trees play a critical role in moderating local temperatures. Through evapotranspiration — the release of water vapour from leaves — tree cover can cool the surrounding environment by up to 10 degrees Celsius, in addition to sequestering carbon. However, deforestation, reduced

vegetation, and the destruction of water bodies remove these natural cooling agents, further intensifying local heat.

While certain aerosols can temporarily mask warming, studies suggest that regional pollution patterns contribute to the overall dysfunction of climate systems, thereby enhancing heat stress. Despite our understanding of these mechanisms, trees continue to be felled mindlessly across India.

Cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Mumbai, Delhi, and Chennai have turned into heat islands, driven by unchecked urban expansion and the systematic destruction of green cover and wetlands. Shrinking urban water bodies — such as lakes, ponds, and rivers — significantly impact a city's microclimate by removing the natural "air conditioning" provided by evaporative cooling. As these water bodies shrink due to urbanisation, the surrounding land absorbs more heat, leading to higher surface temperatures — a phenomenon known as the Urban Heat Island (UHI) effect.

Water bodies take longer to warm up in summer and longer to cool down in winter compared to land. This high heat capacity allows them to act as "cold sources". They cool the air through evaporation (the conversion of liquid water to vapour), which consumes significant amounts of heat in the form of latent heat of vaporisation. This process can create a localised cooling effect that lowers temperatures for up to 800 meters or one kilometre away.

Furthermore, the destruction of natural drainage systems — including wetlands and their connecting channels — directly contributes to the severity of floods. The loss of water-absorbing wetlands has reduced their capacity to store water for dry seasons, while the vanishing habitat has led to a significant decline in both migratory birds and local species. For the Versova-Dahisar (Versova-Bhayandar) phase of the Mumbai Coastal Road project, the

Bombay High Court and the Supreme Court have approved the removal of over 45,000 mangrove trees. Specifically, approximately 45,675 mangroves are affected, with plans to cut down 9,000 trees and transplant or relocate more than 36,000 others.

The Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project requires clearing over 53,000 mangrove trees in Maharashtra for its high-speed rail corridor. While initial reports cited 53,467 trees, this number was later reduced to roughly 21,997-32,044, depending on design updates.

One million trees have been marked for felling in the tropical forests of Great Nicobar Island to develop the area into an international shipping centre. These forests play a critical role as moisture-rich precursors to the southwest monsoon that hits the Indian mainland.

The 900km+ Char Dham road widening project in the Uttarakhand Himalaya has led to the felling of over 56,000 trees across various stretches, with many already cut, according to data accessed in 2021.

The Ken-Betwa River Interlinking Project is a major infrastructure initiative designed to divert "surplus" water from the Ken River in Madhya Pradesh to the water-deficient Betwa River in Uttar Pradesh. Reports suggest that around 23 lakh (2.3 million) trees would be cut down.

Some reports have indicated that the number of trees affected could range from 3 to 4 million. Concerns have been raised that such extensive tree loss could affect local rainfall patterns in the already dry Bundelkhand region.

Loss of Wetlands

According to National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) data between 1979 and 2024, Hyderabad lost 61% of its lake area, with nearly 40 of its 185 notified lakes drying up or disappearing due to rapid urbanisation and encroachment. The total area of the analysed lakes shrank from 40.35 sq. km to just 16 sq. km. Some water bodies, such as the 254-year-old Bam Rukn-ud-Dowlah, have been severely encroached upon.

In Bengaluru, the built-up area jumped from 27% to 86% over the past three decades. Bengaluru's lakes have shrunk dramatically due to rapid urbanisation. Studies show water bodies and wetlands decreased from 64 sq. km in 1965 to 55 sq. km by 2018. Over 800 lakes have vanished, and nearly 80% of the remaining 183 are heavily polluted, severely impacting the city's now 10-million-plus population and its groundwater.

Chennai's wetlands have experienced drastic shrinkage over the past few decades, with estimates indicating a loss of 85% to 90% of their original area due to rapid, often illegal urbanisation. This reduction has severely diminished the city's ability to manage floodwaters and recharge groundwater, contributing to increased disaster vulnerability. Chennai lost a significant number of its water bodies — especially in the southern and western suburbs — due to encroachment and the construction of infrastructure, including roads, IT parks, and residential complexes.

The East Kolkata Wetlands, a vital Ramsar site often called the "kidneys of Kolkata", have lost approximately 63.4% of their area between 1991 and 2025. During this period, the wetlands shrank from roughly 91.2 sq. km to just 33.4 sq. km, driven by urbanisation, illegal real estate expansion, and conversion into agricultural land.

# Green Revolution To Hybrid Wheat - Breaking Genetic Barriers For The Future Of Food

Appa Rao Podile

Post-independence, India faced severe food shortages and heavy dependence on grain imports, also through special arrangements under schemes like PL-480, as the country struggled to feed its growing population. That changed dramatically with the arrival of high-yielding wheat varieties during the Green Revolution, led by scientists such as M. S. Swaminathan and Norman Borlaug. By combining improved wheat genetics, irrigation expansion, fertilizers, and better farm practices, India transformed from a food-deficit nation into a largely self-sufficient one, for sure, in wheat production.

The Green Revolution showed the power of plant breeding to change a nation's destiny. Wheat yields increased dramatically, and food security improved for millions. But today, the world faces a new challenge. Global population continues to grow, climate change creates unpredictable weather, and agricultural land is shrinking due to urbanization and environmental degradation. Farmers must now produce more food from less land, often under harsher conditions.

Modern agricultural biotechnology, including genomics, precision breeding, and newer hybrid systems, emerged as the next major tool to meet global food demand. One of the biggest scientific challenges has been the development of hybrid wheat, a goal researchers have pursued for decades. Now, a major breakthrough may signal a turning point.

Hybrid crops are created by crossing two genetically different parent plants. The first generation (called F1 hybrids) often shows "hybrid vigor," meaning, higher yield, robust growth, better disease resistance, improved stress tolerance etc., Hybrid maize (corn) revolutionized global agriculture in the 20th century. Farmers quickly adopted it because yields increased dramatically, often by 20-30% or more. Scientists hoped wheat would follow the same path. But wheat proved far more difficult.

Wheat Complex Genetics of Wheat has Been the Core Challenge Wheat is genetically complicated. Modern bread wheat (*Triticum aestivum*) contains six sets of chromosomes, scientifically called 'hexaploid'. In simple terms, wheat carries three similar but slightly different genomes combined into one plant. This causes several problems. Many genes exist in multiple copies. It is harder to predict how traits will combine. Some gene copies can cancel or weaken others.

Gene interactions become unpredictable. Imagine trying to edit three versions of the same instruction manual at once without creating confusion. That is what breeders faced when working with wheat. Whereas, in simpler crops like maize, genetics is easier to manage. In wheat, the complexity increases the risk that hybrid plants will not perform consistently.

Green Revolution To Hybrid Wheat - Breaking Genetic Barriers For The Future Of Food

A farmer inspects flattened wheat crops after heavy rains and a hailstorm in a field at village Verka, Amritsar, on Wednesday,

April 08, 2026 (IANS)

Self-Pollination in Wheat is Another Barrier Unlike maize, wheat naturally self-pollinates. Its flowers are structured so that fertilization usually happens before the flower even opens. This makes cross-pollination rare. To create hybrid wheat, breeders must, prevent the female parent from producing pollen (male sterility), ensure pollen from the chosen male parent fertilizes it and synchronize flowering times precisely. This process is technically difficult and expensive. Even small mistakes can result in non-hybrid seeds.

The Economics Problem Even when hybrid wheat plants showed promise, adoption remained low for variety reasons such as wheat requires large amounts of seed per hectare. Hybrid seed production was expensive. Yield gains were often modest (5-15%). Farmers were unsure whether benefits justified higher seed costs. Therefore, for decades, hybrid wheat could not reach commercial scale.

Fertility and Stability Issues As wheat has six chromosome sets, pairing during reproduction must be perfectly balanced. When breeders cross two different wheat lines, chromosomes may not align correctly, fertility can decrease, grain production may drop or performance may vary across environments. For a hybrid system to succeed, it must be stable year after year, in different climates and soils. This stability has been one of the biggest scientific hurdles.

X-TERRA Hybrid Wheat - A Breakthrough Syngenta announced in 2026 that its hybrid wheat platform, X-TERRA, had been officially registered in France. This is one of the first scalable commercial hybrid wheat systems in Europe. The company is preparing for expansion into the United Kingdom and other European countries.

X-TERRA is Different 1. Modern Genomic Tools: Today's breeders can scan the entire wheat genome using advanced DNA technologies. This allows them to identify important genes faster, predict which parents will combine well and also reduce trial-and-error breeding. Instead of guessing, scientists can make 'data-driven' decisions.

2. Improved Male Sterility Systems: Efficient hybrid production requires reliable male sterility systems. Syngenta has developed improved systems that reduce self-pollination, increase hybrid seed purity and improve production efficiency. This helps lower seed production costs.

3. Focus on Yield Stability: Rather than only chasing maximum yield, X-Terra hybrids emphasize consistent yield across seasons, strong root development, disease resistance and tolerance to environmental stress. This is especially important as climate change increases droughts, heat waves, and irregular rainfall.

Hybrid Wheat Matters a Lot

The global context today is different from the 1960s. During the Green Revolution, expanding irrigation and fertilizer use played a major role in yield increases. Today water resources are limited, fertilizer costs are high, climate variability is increasing, and arable land is shrinking. Agricultural



Biotechnology must now deliver gains that are sustainable and efficient.

Hybrid wheat could contribute by improving nutrient use efficiency, strengthening root systems, enhancing stress resilience and stabilizing yields under unpredictable weather. Just as improved wheat varieties helped India achieve food self-sufficiency decades ago, new breeding technologies may help the world meet future food demands.

Remaining Challenges

Although X-Terra represents major progress, some of the following questions remain:

Will hybrid wheat consistently outperform the best conventional varieties?

Can seed costs remain competitive?

How will hybrids perform in hotter or drier regions?

Can hybrid systems scale globally, including in Asia and Africa?

Hybrid wheat may not replace conventional varieties immediately. But it opens a new pathway, one that could improve yield stability, enhance resilience, and help secure the future of one of the world's most important staple crops. From the Green Revolution to genomics-assisted breeding, the story of wheat continues. And once again, innovation in plant science may determine how successfully humanity feeds itself in the decades ahead.

Green Revolution To Hybrid Wheat - Breaking Genetic Barriers For The Future Of Food

A farmer inspects damaged wheat crops after heavy rain on the outskirts of Jalandhar on Wednesday, April 8, 2026 (IANS)

Prof. Appa Rao Podile is the former Vice Chancellor of the University of Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

With a new government taking shape in West Bengal, one of its defining challenges will be reviving the state's economic momentum. The recent election reflects not merely a political shift, but a public demand for jobs, industrial growth and stronger development outcomes.

For a state that once stood at the centre of India's industrial economy, this moment offers an opportunity for economic renewal.

Yet West Bengal's growth story has remained slower than its potential for decades. Despite its strategic location, major ports, freight corridors and access to eastern and northeastern markets, the state has struggled to emerge as a manufacturing and investment powerhouse in the way Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka or Tamil Nadu have. Between 2011-12 and 2023-24, West Bengal's economic growth consistently trailed several leading industrial states, while manufacturing's share in the state economy remained relatively stagnant.

No major industrial economy can grow without reliable and affordable power. While West Bengal has achieved near-universal electrification and improved electricity access, concerns around power reliability, industrial tariffs, ageing thermal assets and transmission constraints have continued to affect its competitiveness. Several industrial and logistics hubs across the state continue to remain heavily dependent on coal-linked power systems vulnerable to fuel disruptions and rising operational costs.

# Small Reactors, Big Aspirations: India's Path Toward 100 GW Nuclear Capacity

Yadav Gupta

The recently enacted Shanti Bill 2025 marks a pivotal evolution for India's nuclear sector. Small Modular Reactors are poised to become a cornerstone technology for the country's energy future. This legislation, which received Presidential approval in December 2025, repeals the Atomic Energy Act 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act 2010, fundamentally transforming India's nuclear development landscape by opening the sector to private participation for the first time since independence.

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) represent an evolution in nuclear power technology, emerging from decades of nuclear engineering experience. While the concept gained widespread popularity in the early 2000s, its roots trace back to naval nuclear propulsion systems developed in the 1950s and 1960s. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) began officially tracking SMR development in 2000, and by 2010, several countries were actively pursuing SMR designs as solutions to climate change and energy security concerns.

The term "Small Modular Reactor" typically refers to advanced nuclear reactors with power outputs up to 300 megawatts, approximately one-third the capacity of conventional nuclear plants. The push for SMRs accelerated after the 2011 Fukushima disaster, with designers incorporating active mechanical systems capable of operating without human intervention or features with enhanced passive safety standards.

From a technical perspective, SMRs differ significantly from conventional nuclear reactors in their design philosophy and construction methodology. Most SMR designs have electrical power outputs ranging from 50 to 300 megawatts electrical (MWe). The cost structure of SMRs compared to conventional nuclear power presents both advantages and challenges.

Initial capital costs for a single SMR module typically range from three to six billion dollars, with per-megawatt costs often higher than for larger reactors due to economies of scale. The Levelized Cost of Electricity (LCOE) for SMRs is estimated to range between \$60 and over \$100 per megawatt-hour, depending on deployment design and scale, though these figures remain uncertain due to limited commercial deployment. Cost reductions are expected through learning curves as more units are built, with some analyses suggesting costs could decrease by 20-30% after the first several units.

From India's strategic perspective, SMRs align with the country's energy security and development needs. India aims to achieve 100 gigawatts of nuclear capacity by 2047, with SMRs designed for three specific applications: repurposing retired coal plants, providing captive power to energy-intensive industries like steel and cement, and supplying electricity to remote areas without grid connectivity. India's diverse geography creates situations where traditional large reactors are impractical but energy demand is critical.

SMRs with capacities of 55-200 megawatts can serve specific markets while contributing to decarbonization



goals and the 2070 net-zero commitment. The Shanti Bill directly facilitates SMR deployment through several mechanisms. It allows private companies to participate in plant operations, electricity generation, equipment manufacturing, and nuclear fuel fabrication, while maintaining government control over sensitive fuel cycle operations such as enrichment, reprocessing, and heavy water production. The legislation establishes a graded liability framework with capacity-based limits ranging from Rs. 100 crore to Rs. 3,000 crore, replacing the previous flat ceiling, which reduces financial uncertainty for investors.

The bill grants statutory recognition to the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, transforming it from an administrative body into an independent regulator with clear legal authority and parliamentary accountability—crucial for investor confidence and international cooperation. Specifically, for SMR deployment, these changes mean private companies can now finance, build, and effectively

operate small nuclear facilities with clear regulatory pathways and manageable liability exposure.

India's Bhabha Atomic Research Centre is developing three SMR types: the 200 MW Bharat SMR for hydrogen production, a 55 MW SMR, and a 5 MW thermal high-temperature gas-cooled reactor. The BSMR-200 uses pressurized water reactor technology with slightly enriched uranium and enhanced passive safety features. The government has allocated approximately \$2.5 billion for SMR development, targeting five operational units by 2033. Lead units have been proposed for Tarapur in Maharashtra. Despite global scepticism about SMR cost-competitiveness, India's manufacturing capabilities and lower labour costs may offer competitive advantages. The modular approach aligns with "Make in India" and could position India as an SMR technology exporter. Major private groups like Tata Power, Reliance, Adani, JSW Energy, and Naveen Jindal Group have expressed interest, with the Adani Group indicating plans for eight 200 MW

units totalling 1.6 gigawatts of capacity. For energy-intensive industries, captive SMR production offers stable baseload power with zero emissions and predictable costs. The bill's initial removal of supplier liability led to controversy but may attract international technology partners who previously declined to engage with India's nuclear sector. This facilitates access to advanced reactor designs and manufacturing methods, accelerating India's learning curve for SMR deployment.

SMRs can offer applications beyond electricity generation: hydrogen production through the 5 MW thermal reactor supporting India's Green Hydrogen Mission, desalination in coastal areas, process heat for industries, and power for data centres. Railways have expressed interest for electrification needs. Indigenous SMR capability will reduce fossil fuel import dependence and enhance energy security. Let us hope this successful deployment can position India as a technological power offering solutions to developing nations.

# Advances and emerging treatments for cancer



New Delhi: Researchers presented very early but promising data that leading weight-loss medications like Ozempic and Wegovy could have a potential impact on cancer.

Cancer researchers highlighted several treatment breakthroughs during their annual summit in Chicago that concluded Tuesday, including preliminary but encouraging data on potential benefits of weight loss medications.

Here is an overview of the latest developments from the American Society of Clinical Oncology's (ASCO) annual meeting:

**Major strides in pancreatic treatment**  
Among the more than 7,000 studies presented, one on pancreatic cancer gained particular acclaim.

Focused on one of the deadliest forms of cancer, the clinical trial represented the first significant breakthrough against the disease in decades.

The treatment, which was developed by the American start-up Revolution Medicines, involves a new molecule named daraxonrasib.

It demonstrated significantly greater efficacy than standard chemotherapy in patients suffering from an aggressive yet common form of the disease.

Half of the patients studied survived for more than 13 months — double the time observed in patients in the chemotherapy group.

"I think this represents, I would say, an unprecedented paradigm shift in how we're treating advanced pancreatic cancer," said oncologist Monty Pal.

The research kindles hope for other potential new treatments as well, as the molecule targets a protein implicated in several types of cancer.

Until recently, the protein had not responded to therapies.

**Could Ozempic impact cancer?**  
Presented very early but promising data that leading weight-loss medications like Ozempic and Wegovy could have a potential impact on cancer.

These medications that mimic a gastrointestinal hormone (GLP-1) were originally developed to treat diabetes and may offer benefits in other areas,

particularly in terms of cardiovascular health.

Many American patients suffering from obesity and diabetes use these drugs and are, due to underlying conditions, at higher risk of developing certain cancers. Based on that premise, US researchers sought to determine whether these medications could prevent cancer from progressing from an early stage to a metastatic stage.

Their results showed a 38 to 50 percent reduction in disease progression across four types of cancer — lung, breast, colorectal and liver — in patients taking GLP-1 agonists compared to those taking conventional diabetes treatments.

The data is encouraging, but still requires confirmation through randomized clinical trials, said study author Mark Orland, who added "it's just the start."

**Better-targeted treatments**  
Studies that were presented focused on paring back cancer treatments.

One re-evaluated the benefit of axillary lymph node dissection, which is a surgical procedure involving the removal of armpit lymph nodes in some patients with breast cancer.

The new clinical trial showed that forgoing the surgery — which carries significant side effects — "is safe for patients with breast cancer that has spread" to just one or two lymph nodes.

"We are probably way over performing actually lymph node dissections, and causing long term side effects in our patients when it's unnecessary," said Julie Gralow, ASCO vice president, as she praised the findings.

**Personalizing prostate cancer approach**  
Researchers also found notable an international trial focused on prostate cancer, which is the most common cancer to strike men and the second-leading cause of cancer deaths.

The new study has the potential to transform management of patients carrying genetic mutations, who tend to develop more aggressive forms of the disease.

Researchers tested a combination of treatments in these patients: enzalutamide to block the hormonal signals fueling the tumor, and talazoparib to short-

circuit the DNA repair mechanism within the cancer cells.

For patients carrying the BRCA2 gene mutation, which can lead to one of most aggressive forms, the addition of talazoparib reduced risk of tumor progression or death by 65 percent.

The results are "exceptional" and "a major step forward" said French-Moroccan professor Karim Fizazi, who coordinated the study.

**Blood tests: not there yet**

Some studies highlighted the potential value of liquid biopsies, especially when it comes to early detection of treatment resistance.

There has also been hope that blood tests could play a role in early detection of cancers that don't have a standard screening protocol.

One study examined the potential benefit of a blood test called Galleri — which vows to detect 50 types of cancer before symptoms appear — but its results failed to garner unanimous support.

Based on data from more than 140,000 United Kingdom patients the results, while encouraging in some respects, failed to demonstrate a reduction in late stage diagnoses for 12 types of cancer.

The World Health Organization on Tuesday voiced concern about the "scale and speed" of an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which has killed an estimated 131 people, and warned it could be lengthy.

The WHO has declared the surge of the highly contagious hemorrhagic fever an international health emergency and called an emergency meeting on the crisis.

No vaccine or therapeutic treatment exists for the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola responsible for the latest outbreak of the disease, which has killed more than 15,000 people in Africa in the past half-century.

With the new outbreak largely concentrated in difficult-to-access areas in the east hit by longrunning conflicts, few samples have been laboratory-tested and figures are based mostly on suspected cases.

"We have recorded roughly 131 deaths in total and we have around 513 suspected cases," Congolese Health Minister Samuel Roger Kamba said on national television early Tuesday.

"The deaths we are reporting are all the deaths we have identified in the community, without necessarily saying that they are all linked to Ebola," he added.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said he was "deeply concerned about the scale and speed of the epidemic", against which the UN health agency is examining whether any candidate vaccines can be used.

Speaking from the DRC, Anne Ancia, the WHO's representative, told reporters in Geneva that a vaccine candidate called Ervebo was among those being looked at but it was likely to take at least "two months for it to be available".

It could still be useful, she added, since "I don't think that in two months we will be done with this outbreak".

The DRC's deadliest Ebola outbreak, between 2018 and 2020, claimed nearly 2,300 lives from 3,500 cases.

The epicenter of the new cases is in northeastern Ituri province on the border with Uganda and South Sudan.

As a gold-mining hub, it sees people regularly crisscrossing the region and has been plagued by clashes between local militias for years.

## Diet for stronger knees



Mumbai: It often starts small: slight stiffness when getting up, a buckling sensation while moving, or fatigue after a long walk. Over time, these subtle signs can weaken your knees. Regardless of age, maintaining knee strength is essential. It does not always have to begin in the gym; it can start right at home. Before looking at the foods that support knee health, let us understand the common causes and early signs of knee weakness.

**Causes of knee weakness**

Knee weakness can result from a sedentary lifestyle, injuries, or underlying conditions such as osteoarthritis. Excess body weight can place additional stress on the knees, while poor nutrition may affect muscle and bone health.

**Other contributing factors**  
include ageing, improper posture during exercise, and unsupportive footwear, all of which can make everyday movement unstable or place extra strain on the joints.

Early signs to watch out for: Mild stiffness, especially after resting.

A feeling of instability while walking.

Discomfort when climbing stairs.

Occasional swelling or tenderness. Early fatigue or reduced strength during routine movements.

**Eating right for healthy joints**  
A 2022 review published in the Clinics in Geriatric Medicine highlights the role of nutrition in managing knee and hip osteoarthritis. It emphasises that dietary choices can support health through mechanisms such as weight management, reduced

inflammation and improved antioxidant activity.

The study also notes that fibre-rich diets and dietary patterns such as the Mediterranean diet may help manage osteoarthritis symptoms.

"The best dietary pattern for maintaining healthy joints and improving knee strength is a Mediterranean-style, plant-forward, anti-inflammatory diet. It emphasises fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and healthy fats such as olive oil or traditional oils in moderation," says Suparna Mukherjee, clinical nutrition and dietetics, Narayana Health City, Bengaluru.

**Key food groups for joint health**  
A diet that supports stronger knees should include:

Calcium-rich foods such as milk, curd, ragi and sesame can help support bone density.

Vitamin D sources such as sunlight, eggs and fortified foods aid calcium absorption.

Protein-rich foods, including pulses, dairy and eggs, can help maintain muscle strength around the knee joint.

Anti-inflammatory foods such as flaxseeds and walnuts may help reduce joint inflammation.

Vitamin C-rich foods such as amla, citrus fruits and capsicum, which support collagen formation and cartilage health.

"Overall, a balanced diet rich in whole grains, fruits and vegetables, along with weight management, is essential. Studies suggest these nutrients improve bone health and may help slow the progression of osteoarthritis,"

## In a flash: Seven-minute cancer jab launched in India

Chennai: Imagine a cancer treatment lasting just seven minutes. Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche has made this possible, introducing a subcutaneously injectable version of an immunotherapy drug in India that significantly cuts down delivery time compared to intravenous drug administration. Branded as Tecentrig, the injection uses a drug called atezolizumab and is currently approved for cases of non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). According to the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF), India recorded 81,748 new cases of lung cancer (of which 22,778 were women) and 75,031 lung cancer-related deaths in 2022.

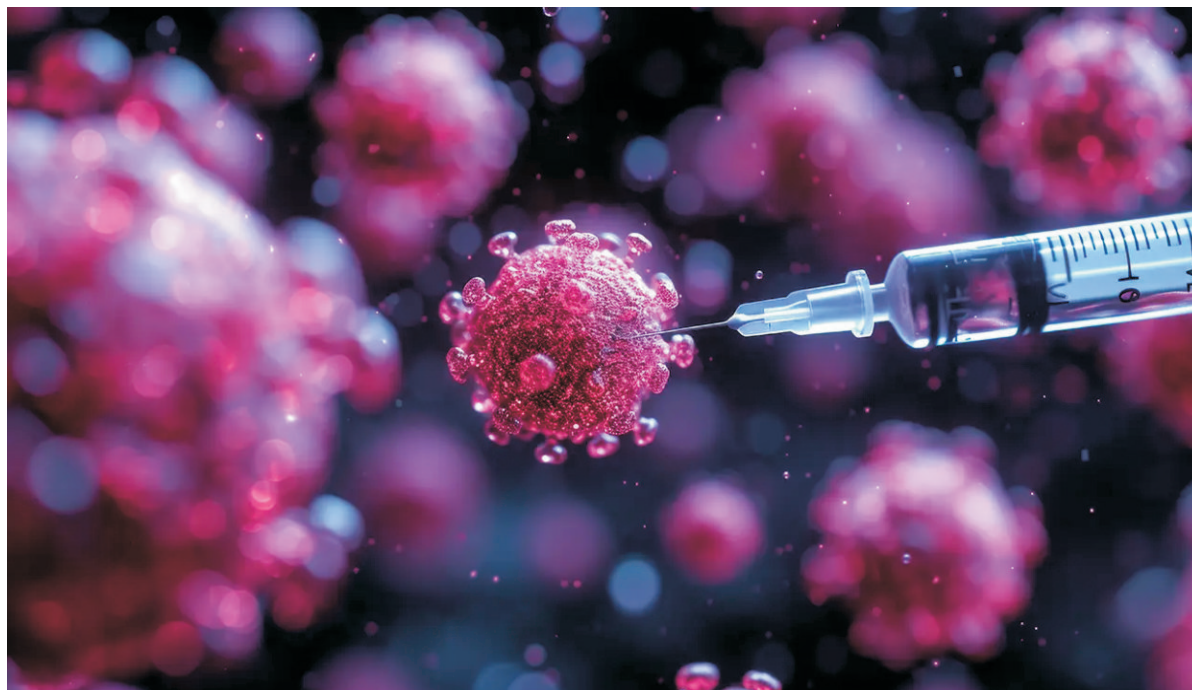
However, though time-efficient, doctors point out the injection's high cost and emphasize strict adherence to the treatment schedule instead. Currently, a single dose of atezolizumab injection costs Rs 3.7 lakh. Also, it does not provide increased medical benefits compared to the same drug administered through an IV.

**What is the seven-minute injection all about?**

Atezolizumab is a lab-engineered antibody that blocks a protein called PD-L1 present on the surface of the cancer cells. These cells use this protein to evade the immune system. Once PD-L1 is inhibited, the immune cells can detect and neutralize cancer cells with increased precision. While atezolizumab is widely available as an IV infusion, the new injection significantly reduces delivery time. "In the injection form, it takes seven minutes, and in the IV formulation, it takes just about 30 minutes. The change in drug delivery does not come with any additional benefits. The treatment is the same without any extra clinical benefits, but the price increases when given in injection form," explains Dr Somashekhar S P, global director of the Aster International Institute of Oncology, Bangalore. Notably, the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK rolled out the seven-minute injection back in 2023, becoming the first nation to adopt this formulation.

**Atezolizumab: Not a wonder drug**

In an interaction with Happiest Health, Dr Amol Akhade, consultant medical oncologist at Fortis Hospital, Mulund, Mumbai, said that atezolizumab is neither new nor a wonder drug. "In the IV form itself, atezolizumab is not a strong immunotherapy drug compared to other immunotherapy drugs, and I do not prefer it. I prefer pembrolizumab or nivolumab [which are available in subcutaneous forms, but not in India], which are more effective than atezolizumab. It is used predominantly for lung cancer, but in other solid tumors, such as cancer of



the kidney, breast, colon or head and neck, this drug has failed," he mentioned, adding that the company marketing this as the 'seven-minute drug' is influencing the general population.

**The cost factor**

According to Dr Somashekhar, adherence to the complete treatment regimen should take priority over shortening treatment duration at higher prices. A single dose of the injection costs Rs 1.2 lakh more than a bottle of the IV formulation. He says that cancer medications are administered based on the height and weight of the individual, as well as the severity of the cancer.

"The newly launched drug has six fixed doses. Typically, a person treated for NSCLC needs six vials, and in some cases, 12 vials. This means that the treatment cost goes up by Rs 10-12 lakh a year, but the treatment outcome is the same — just the time taken for drug delivery is reduced. The same drug in IV form takes about 30-40 minutes at a lesser price," explains Dr Somashekhar, who practices in Bangalore. He also points out that unlike the

IV infusion, the injectable form of atezolizumab can cause side effects like skin redness or pain and stiffness at the injection site.

"It would be horrible if somebody exhausts their savings for these seven-minute shots and is then left without funds for the rest of the treatment," remarks Dr Somashekhar, asserting that the Indian government should not waste money to buy this drug formulation.

**Insurance concerns**

Opting for the seven-minute injection may also deprive an individual of insurance claims or cashless services at medical facilities, cautions Dr Somashekhar. "Insurance claims are majorly applicable for certain daycare procedures and hospitalizations. The cancer treatment given in the subcutaneous injection form may not be covered in the same or considered a daycare procedure. This needs to be analyzed, considering the cost factor of cancer treatment," he says.

While granting permission to Roche in a meeting held on 17 July 2025, the Central Drugs Standard Control

Organization (CDSCO) directed the pharma company to conduct Phase IV clinical trials in India, including individuals across all three NSCLC treatment scenarios.

**Takeaways**

Swiss pharmaceutical giant Roche has introduced a subcutaneously injectable version of an immunotherapy drug in India that cuts down delivery time to just seven minutes. Though time efficient, doctors say that the injection, currently approved for cases of non-small cell lung cancer, is highly expensive and does not provide added benefits compared to the IV formulation of the same drug. It's been six years since the COVID-19 pandemic brought the world to a standstill. However, many are still reeling from the after-effects of the viral infection. Known as long COVID — which refers to health problems persisting after a COVID-19 infection — one of the most common complications of the syndrome is breathlessness. To address this, a study recently published in The Lancet Digital Health highlighted an initiative found to significantly reduce long COVID symptoms: the ENO Breathe program.

Developed by clinicians at Imperial College London in collaboration with the English National Opera, this online breathing and well-being program makes use of singing techniques to address the effects of long COVID.

**ENO Breathe program: Better breathing in six weeks**

The cohort study included 1,413 individuals aged 18 and above from 51 UK-based National Health Service (NHS) long COVID clinics who had been diagnosed with breathlessness due to the syndrome. The six-week program combines breathing retraining and singing techniques with mental health support to treat people dealing with breathlessness.

It showed promising results, with participants reporting that ENO Breathe reduced respiratory symptoms and anxiety while improving health-related quality of life (HRQOL).

Shedding light on the program, Nicholas Hopkinson, professor of respiratory medicine at Imperial College London and the senior author of the study, said, "Breathlessness is one of the most common symptoms that people with long COVID experience. The ENO Breathe programme is designed to help people with the condition to learn how to control their breathing better. Our research shows that it is effective, and the programme has already benefitted more than 1,000 people recruited from post-COVID clinics across the UK."

# Need To Stand Up: Shweta Tripathi On Made In Heaven Dowry Scene Amid Twisha Sharma Case

Mumbai: Shweta Tripathi has carved a niche for herself by taking on diverse roles across projects - from her performance in Masaan to her strong presence in Mirzapur. In Made in Heaven, she played Priyanka Mishra, a bride who takes a stand against dowry and refuses to go ahead with her wedding, a character that continues to resonate with audiences.

Now, clips from an episode of Made in Heaven have resurfaced on social media amid discussions surrounding the Twisha Sharma death case.

On May 12, Twisha Sharma was allegedly found hanging at her in-laws' residence in Katara Hills, Bhopal. Her family later accused her husband and in-laws of dowry harassment, leading to demands for a detailed investigation.

The Made in Heaven episode, titled The Price of Love, explores dowry practices in contemporary Indian society. It follows the wedding of Priyanka Mishra (played by Shweta Tripathi) and Vishal Srivastava (played by Ravish Desai), where the groom's family raises dowry demands of Rs 2 crore and a flat in Delhi. After negotiations, the bride's father agrees to pay Rs 4 crore instead.

The narrative takes a turn when wedding planner Tara (played by Sobhita Dhulipala) reveals the arrangement to Priyanka. When confronted, Vishal admits he was aware of the demands and says, "The money is for us only." During the wedding ceremony, Priyanka calls off the marriage, stating, "I'm not going to pay anyone to marry me," before walking away. The episode was widely praised for its portrayal of dowry-related pressures.

When asked about the clip, especially in light of recent discussions around the Twisha Sharma case, Shweta Tripathi told NDTV, "The dowry thing, because hamare ghar pe ye discussion hua tha and I knew and my parents have already said that ki 'Education is the most important thing.' Jo ladka hai who will marry me, I mean, it was before I got married; hamari soch hi ye thi, padhai sabse zyada important hai. Baki caste, religion, colour, height, and jo bhi sare checklist hote hai, woh nahi tha. Ye tha ki bas ladka padha-likha hona chahiye.



Job aap padhe likhe hote ho, you figure out a way to earn your living. Jo padhai karte hai, culturally aware hote hai, unke alag growth hoti hai. Woh soch is more important."

(At home, we had these conversations. My parents always said education is the most important thing. Before I got married, our thinking was that education matters the most. Caste, religion, colour, height, and other checklists were not important. The only thing was that the person should be educated. When you are educated, you find a way to earn a living. Education brings awareness and growth - that mindset matters more.)

Speaking about the choices made by her Made in Heaven

character, the actor said she could connect with the role. "I think Made in Heaven is the right thing that happened. It was shot also beautifully. Everything made it work, and it was something that I believe in. Toh woh andar se aaya. I didn't have to try. Priyanka Mishra, my character, usko jo lagta hai woh mujhe bhi lagta hai ki main paise deke nahi karne wali hoon shaadi kisi se. It was easier for me to do it because it was a set." (It was something I genuinely believe in, so it came from within. I didn't have to try. I also feel, like Priyanka, that I wouldn't marry someone by paying money. It was easier because I was performing on a set.)

Recalling a real-life interaction, Shweta shared that during a visit to Patna, a hotel staff member spoke to her

about the show and related it to her own experience.

"She said, 'Maine aapka Made in Heaven dekha and woh bohot achchha tha,' and then she said, 'Mere sath bhi yehi hua,' and I was like, 'Oh, aapne kya kiya?' and she replied, 'Woh itna asan nahi hota.' I was like, 'Oh my god.' But I hope kahin ladkiyon ko shakti milegi ye episode dekhke. Bas at least ye thought toh ayega, you need to stand up, aaj nahi toh kal."

(I met someone who said the same thing happened to her but also said it isn't that easy in real life. I hope this episode gives some strength to women - at least the thought that they should take a stand, if not today then someday.)

The actor, also known for her roles in Mirzapur, Masaan, Raat Akeli Hai, and Yeh Kaali Kaali Ankhein, said she follows her instincts when choosing projects.

"Mujhe lagta hai ki aapka intent aur choice sahi hai na, toh automatically cheezein fall into place chahe woh Masaan ho, Mirzapur ho. Main koi maths lagati nahi hoon ki main ye karungi, isse ye hoga, usse woh hoga. Main woh karti hoon jo mujhe achchha lagta hai, and these are the morals, these are the ethics I have grown up with."

(I feel that if your intent and choices are right, things automatically fall into place, whether it's Masaan or Mirzapur. I don't plan things in a calculated way. I do what feels right to me, based on the morals and ethics I've grown up with.)

Made in Heaven Season 1 began streaming on Amazon Prime Video on March 8, 2019.

The very first thought echoed by Robby Grewal's Made in India: A Titan Story plants a seed of endless hope and introduces the journey of one of the greatest revolutionary inventions India has ever witnessed. Inspired by journalist Vinay Kamath's bestselling book Titan: Inside India's Most Successful Consumer Brand, this is the story of Titan's rise - a relentless dream of Xerxes Desai, the maverick who built the groundbreaking enterprise of Titan Watches, 'Made in India', from scratch.

He was steadfastly backed by the legendary leader and mentor JRD Tata, who wanted the world-class craftsmanship associated with Tata to inform the birth of an

## Influencer Dharna Durga Reacts To Trolls Over Maa Behen Casting: "What Else Can You Do Sitting At Home?"



New Delhi: A paparazzi video from the promotions of the Netflix film Maa Behen is going viral, and not for the reasons the makers would have hoped.

During a recent promotional event for Maa Behen, actors Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri, and debutant Dharna Durga came together for a photo-op. But as the session progressed, paparazzi called for solo pictures of Madhuri and Triptii.

Dharna, a popular content creator with over 1.8 million followers who is making her Bollywood debut with the film, quietly moved aside as the two actors continued posing. The moment soon went viral online, triggering conversations about whether content creators face prejudice and added scrutiny when stepping into mainstream cinema.

The viral clip has reignited a larger debate around influencers and digital creators entering Bollywood, with many questioning whether filmmakers cast them for talent or simply for their follower count.

Speaking to NDTV during the promotions of Maa Behen, Dharna and director Suresh Triveni addressed the criticism head-on. When asked whether content creators are increasingly being cast because of their social media following, Triveni strongly pushed back against the perception. "I think that's very unfair," he said.

"The word 'influencer' is a marketing term. Marketers use creators as influencers. Madhuri ma'am is also an influencer; Ravi sir is also an influencer.

They influence style, culture, and much more."

Triveni argued that creators who perform online are already artists and actors in their own space.

"In her case, she is a creator who performs. She does the beauty parlour aunty, the kirtan aunty, and many such characters," he said.

When NDTV pointed out that this essentially makes creators actors, Triveni agreed.

"Inherently they are actors. So if they have followers, they should not live with guilt." The filmmaker also dismissed the idea that Dharna was cast merely because of her online popularity.

"I am not so insecure that I am looking at, 'Oh, they have this many million followers, so I will cast them.' In my film, I have Madhuri Dixit, Triptii Dimri, and Ravi Kishan. I don't need those small tricks. She has been cast for the part. As simple as that." Dharna, meanwhile, said she has chosen not to let trolling affect her.

"I am just ignoring them because whatever they want to say, let them say. I have already lived my dream. I am living it," she told NDTV.

"If you want to say something, go ahead. You will speak anyway; what else can you do sitting at home?"

June 4. BN Tiwari, the president of the Federation of Western India Cine Employees' (FWICE), on Wednesday announced that it had dropped the non-cooperation directive against Dhurandhar star Ranveer Singh on "request of CINTAA and IMPAA".

The announcement came a day after Ranveer Singh issued a legal notice to the film workers' body over its action over his last-minute exit from Don 3, directed by Farhan Akhtar.

At a press conference held in Mumbai on Wednesday, FWICE Chief Advisor Ashoke Pandit said that its legal team will respond to the legal notice sent by Ranveer Singh. "The legal letter came to us yesterday and it was requesting us to remove the non-cooperation directive," he said.

"We appeal to Ranveer to come and sit with us and find a solution. We celebrate his stardom... We don't have any authority to ban anyone. We are hopeful that there will be a positive reaction from Ranveer," he added.

Ranveer Singh exited Don 3, directed by Farhan Akhtar, following the release of Dhurandhar back in December. In a press conference on May 25, FWICE announced that it had issued a non-cooperation directive against the actor.

Several film celebrities, including Kangana Ranaut, Ram Gopal Varma, Padmini Kolhapure, Poonam Dhillon, Nikhil Dwivedi, and Sanjay Gupta, have weighed in on FWICE's action against the actor.

## Sushmita Sen Shares First Post After Lalit Modi's Viral 'Gold-Digger' Defence



New Delhi: Businessman Lalit Modi's recent viral interview, in which he spoke about his relationship with Sushmita Sen, has taken the internet by storm. Not only did he defend her by saying she is not a "gold-digger" and that he was a "kept boyfriend", he also revealed why they had to part ways. Now Sushmita Sen's first social media post since the much-talked-about interview has surfaced.

Sushmita Sen took to Instagram to flaunt her new pair of "sexy" red slippers.

She wrote, "I take roads less travelled by... in the most comfortable & sexy slippers!! Love it when a man keeps his word. Thank you, my generous friend @stuartjapparr for the lovely gifts from your brand @piedaterrevenezia."

She added, "I begin by showing off the red-hot ones!!! Love love love them!!! 'Sole to Sole' See you in #venice, #sharing #gifts #friends & gratitude. I love you guys!! #duggadugga."

When asked about Sushmita Sen's post shutting down trolls who called her a gold digger, Modi told Humans of Bombay, "Sushmita is very beautiful, a very well-to-do lady. She has more diamonds than anybody I have known on this planet. She's a very wealthy lady. She has done it on her own. There was a time when I went out with her and didn't have to pay for anything. She paid for everything. I was like a kept boyfriend. She's a remarkable, self-made lady. If we can say, Sushmita was not a gold digger, Lalit was a diamond digger. And she was the diamond."

"She would never accept anything from anybody. So when people called her a gold digger, that was completely wrong," he said.

Sushmita Sen shared a long post on her Instagram addressing trolls who called her a "gold digger" in 2022. An excerpt from the post read, "I dig deeper than gold... and

I've always (famously) preferred diamonds!! And yes I still buy them myself!!" Sushmita added, "The so-called intellectuals with their idiosyncrasies...the ignorant with their cheap and at times funny gossip. The friends I never had and the acquaintances I've never met... all sharing their grand opinions and deep knowledge of my life and character... monetising the 'gold digger' all the way!!! Ah these geniuses!!!"

In a 2023 interview, Sushmita referred to her relationship with Lalit Modi as "just another phase".

Amid the ongoing controversy after the Federation of Western India Cine Employees (FWICE) issued a non-cooperation directive against Ranveer Singh over his sudden exit from Don 3, the Producers Guild of India has also issued a statement addressing the "growing instances of talent, directors and technicians" going back on their commitments at the "eleventh hour". The producers body has strongly condemned such practices that cause "disruption to the process of content development".

Official Statement The Producers Guild of India stated, "We, the Producers Guild of India, have also received formal complaints from our members, Excel Entertainment Private Limited and Panorama Studios International Limited, regarding these issues arising just days before the commencement of principal photography." They continued, "No member of the industry should indulge in such behaviour that has, in these cases, led to substantial financial loss to our member producers as well as to other verticals in the industry. Such actions by any industry member have serious and far-reaching consequences and undermine the spirit of trust, professionalism and mutual respect on which the film industry is built."

## BUSINESS

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# India must challenge USTR's proposed 12.5 pc tariff on India under Sec 301 investigations: GTRI

NEW DELHI, June 3: The proposed 12.5 per cent tariff on India by the US Trade Representative (USTR) under Section 301 investigations goes beyond the scope of the provision, and New Delhi should challenge the ambit of the probe, think tank GTRI said on Wednesday.

The 12.5 per cent tariff exceeds the USA's WTO commitment. The US Trade Representative has proposed to impose 12.5 per cent additional duties on 54 countries, including India, for failing to prohibit the import of goods produced with forced labour.

The action follows investigations launched against 60 countries over what the USTR described as their failure to impose and effectively enforce bans on imports made with forced labour.

"The current investigation exceeds the scope of Section 301, which deals with market-access barriers faced by the US firms in the country being investigated and not what it imports and from where", the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said. It added that the investigation is not based on allegations that Indian exports are produced using forced labour. Rather, the USTR action focuses on whether countries prohibit imports made with forced labour in third countries.

GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said India must argue that the United States is attempting to impose its preferred import-control framework on other countries through unilateral trade measures, which is outside the scope of section 301.

"India may also argue that concerns regarding forced labour, particularly in countries such as China, are often product-specific and that the US itself remains a major importer of



many of the products at issue. Hence, broad country-wide tariff actions are an inappropriate response when the problem could be limited to a few products," he said. GTRI also views these tariffs as part of a broader effort by Washington to increase pressure on India, as both sides are

negotiating a bilateral trade agreement.

India should be prepared for additional Section 301 tariffs in areas such as excess capacity, it said.

The Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) launched two separate Section 301 investigations on March 11

and 12, 2026, covering 60 economies over concerns related to forced labour and excess industrial capacity.

USTR has now issued its findings in the forced labour investigation and proposed additional tariffs on imports from 54 economies.

The proposal includes a 10 per cent tariff on imports from Canada, Ecuador, the European Union, Indonesia, Mexico, and Pakistan, and a 12.5 per cent tariff on imports from 48 other economies, including India and China.

Pakistan and Indonesia are India's competitors in the trade front. The measure remains a proposal and has not yet been finalised.

Lower tariffs have been proposed for textiles, although specific rates have not yet been finalised.

The proposal has now entered the consultation phase. Interested parties can submit requests to appear at hearings and summaries of testimony by June 22, 2026, while written comments are due by July 6.

USTR is scheduled to hold hearings on July 7.

A final decision is expected in late June or July, potentially before the expiry of the temporary Section 122 tariffs (10 per cent) on July 24, 2026.

Once finalised, the tariffs could take effect almost immediately.

The investigation is not based on allegations that Indian exports use forced labour, but on whether India restricts imports linked to forced labour in third countries.

## Trade pact with Oman strengthens India's energy security: Experts



New Delhi

The free trade agreement with Oman will strengthen India's energy and economic security in the volatile Gulf region, according to experts.

The trade agreement between the two countries was implemented on June 1.

"First, it strengthens India's energy and economic security in a volatile region. Oman has long been one of India's most reliable partners in the Gulf," think tank CRF President Shishir Priyadarshi said.

He added that as India remains heavily dependent on imported oil, gas and petrochemicals, deeper economic integration with Oman helps create a more stable and predictable framework for a relationship that is vital to India's energy

needs. The US-Iran war and the subsequent closure of the Strait of Hormuz have led to disruptions in supply chains across sectors, including agricultural goods and energy products.

Oman can also serve as a manufacturing, logistics and re-export hub for Indian businesses to West Asia.

"So, the significance of this free trade agreement is larger than bilateral trade numbers. It is about securing critical economic relationships, creating new opportunities for the Indian industry, and signalling that India intends to be a leading player in shaping the next phase of global trade and connectivity," Priyadarshi added.

Echoing similar views, International trade expert and Hi-Tech Gears Chairman Deep Kapuria said the operationalisation of the



trade pact will help India in expanding its market share not only in Oman but also in the entire West Asia region.

"With zero-duty market access for all its exports to Oman from the date of entry of this trade deal, along with streamlined regulatory pro-

cedures, reduced compliance requirements, Indian exporters are well positioned to expand their presence across multiple product segments in Oman," he said.

He added that though Oman is a relatively small market, it offers export opportunities across all key sectors such as engineering, pharma, agriculture, food processing, marine products, textiles, chemicals, electronics, Gems and Jewellery among others.

The trade pact with Oman holds strategic significance for India, as much of Muscat's coastline lies outside the Strait of Hormuz, unlike other Gulf nations, enabling it to remain a reliable trade and energy gateway for India even during regional conflicts, disruptions, or geopolitical instability, think tank GTRI said.

## OYO-PARENT PRISM SECURES SEBI'S NOD TO LAUNCH ₹6,650-CR IPO

New Delhi

Prism, the parent firm of global travel tech unicorn Oyo, has secured clearance from markets regulator Sebi to raise ₹6,650 crore through its initial public offering (IPO), people familiar with the development said on Tuesday.

The proposed public offering is expected to value the company at \$7.8 billion, they added. Oyo's parent entity Prism filed the preliminary IPO papers with Sebi in December 2025 through the confidential route.



The filing followed shareholders' approval at an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held on December 20, 2025, where the company received consent to raise up to ₹6,650 crore through a fresh issue of equity shares.

Prism opted for the confidential pre-filing route, which allows the company to engage with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) for initial feedback on its draft document without it being publicly disclosed.

As the next step, the company is expected to file a public Updated Draft Red Herring Prospectus (UDRHP-1) in early July, which will be open for public comments for 21 days, people familiar with the development said.

They said that Prism is currently evaluating market conditions and broader listing timelines while preparing to file its UDRHP-1.

## No intention to hike retail prices: Mother Dairy Chairman

New Delhi

Mother Dairy, which hiked milk prices by ₹2 per litre last month, on Tuesday said there is no "intention" currently to further increase the retail price in view of comfortable supply situation.

Mother Dairy, one of the leading fresh milk suppliers in India, sells around 55 lakh litre of milk per day across many States.

On May 14, the company increased consumer prices of its liquid milk variants by ₹2 per litre to partly offset rising input costs.

At a press conference, Mother Dairy Chairman Meenesh Shah said the company increased milk prices last month after a gap of one year because of the increased input cost.

But, as of now, we have no intention to increase the consumer price," said Shah, who is also the Chairman of National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). Mother Dairy is a wholly owned subsidiary of the NDDB.

He asserted that the milk supply situation and procurement of milk from farmers in the country are comfortable now. On concerns related to supply of



fodder in view of IMD's forecast of below normal monsoon, Shah said there should not be any problem in the total availability of fodder.

He said there could be problem in some states, but that could be compensated by other parts of the country.

Shah said the country's milk production is expected to rise 4-6 per cent this fiscal year from around 250 million tonnes in the previous year.

The NDDB Chairman noted that the growth in milk production annually is in line with rising consumption and asserted that there would not be any issue in meeting this growing demand for dairy products over the next 10-15 years.

Shah said the Government has taken various measures to boost milk production through improvement of animal health and their productivity. More dairy cooperative societies are being formed across the country.

Last month, Mother Dairy had said the "revision in prices has been necessitated in view of the sustained increase in farmer procurement prices, of around 6 per cent over the past one year, despite continued efforts to limit the impact on consumers".

Mother Dairy had said the price revision represents only a partial pass through of increased costs. It passes on nearly 75-80 per cent of its milk sales realisation to farmers.

## West Bengal Govt holds pre-Budget talks with industry associations

Kolkata

The West Bengal finance department on Tuesday held a pre-Budget consultation meeting with industry chambers and trade associations, with stakeholders pitching for measures to boost investment, ease of doing business and infrastructure development ahead of the first budget of the BJP's maiden Government in the State.

The meeting, chaired by Additional Chief Secretary (Finance) Prabhat Kumar Mishra, was attended by representatives of major industry bodies including the Bharat Chamber of Commerce, CREDAI, ASSOCHAM, CII and several other chambers and trade organisations.

Senior State Government officials, including Commissioner of State Tax Khalid Anwar, were present at the meeting.

According to finance department sources, the Government sought sug-



gestions from industry and trade bodies before finalising the Budget proposals.

"The meeting was primarily consultative in nature. Representatives from various chambers and trade bodies shared their views and expectations from the upcoming Budget across sectors," a finance department source told PTI.

Issues raised during the

discussions included investment incentives, development of the Haldia industrial region, promotion of solar energy projects, simplification of trade licence procedures, strengthening of the single-window clearance mechanism, solid waste management, and concerns relating to the real estate and construction sectors, the source said.

## RBI likely to maintain status quo in June, hike rates twice in FY27: Economists

Mumbai

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is likely to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged in the June monetary policy review, according to a PTI poll of economists and treasury heads. Most of the respondents expect the Central Bank to resume policy tightening later in FY27 amid mounting inflation risks.

Of the respondents surveyed, 11 expect the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) to maintain the status quo on rates in the upcoming policy to be announced on Friday, while four foresee a 0.25 per cent hike.

"Pause because headline inflation remains below the 4 per cent target. The RBI has

policy space to wait to see the second round impact on inflation from the fuel price hike. Flexible inflation target provides policy space to look through the first round impact of supply side shocks," said Gaura Sengupta, economist at IDFC First Bank.

The MPC will meet between June 3 and June 5 to decide on the Central Bank to resume policy tightening later in FY27. The Central Bank has reduced the repo rate by 1.25 per cent since last year to aid growth. Economists attributed the likelihood of a near-term pause to the RBI's preference to assess the impact of recent fuel price increases and geopolitical developments before taking further policy action.

Despite expectations of a pause in June, the majority of respondents see the policy



rate moving higher over the course of FY27. Most participants expect at least two rate hikes during the fiscal year, while some anticipate more than two increases if inflationary pressures intensify. Only a handful expect a single rate hike. "We now think the MPC is likely to begin hiking from

the June meeting, as domestic inflation risks are rising, alongside higher global yields; a few Asian central banks have already delivered surprise hikes. Our FY27 rate hike forecasts face upside risk of 0.25-0.50 per cent if pressures on commodity prices, rupee sustain," said Anubhuti Sahay,



head, India economic research at Standard Chartered Bank, India.

The poll showed a broad consensus that the RBI is likely to revise its inflation projections upward in the upcoming policy review.

Most respondents expect FY27 consumer price inflation

estimates to be raised to around 4.9-5.5 per cent, following the rise in global crude oil prices and the recent increase in domestic petrol and diesel prices.

ICRA chief economist Aditi Nayar said inflation could rise to around 5 per cent in June as higher fuel prices begin

feeding into consumer prices, although the extent of second-round effects remains uncertain. Several respondents said the Central Bank may prefer to wait for greater clarity on whether the inflationary impact proves to be temporary or persistent.

Alongside higher inflation projections, many respondents expect the RBI to marginally lower its FY27 GDP growth forecast to reflect the risks posed by elevated energy prices and uncertainty stemming from geopolitical tensions in West Asia. While the expected revision to growth projections is seen as modest, economists believe higher input costs and weaker global demand conditions could weigh on economic activity if crude oil prices remain elevat-

ed for a prolonged period. On liquidity, most respondents do not expect any major measures in the June policy, though they said the RBI is likely to reiterate its commitment to maintaining adequate liquidity conditions in the banking system and ensuring money market rates remain aligned with the policy corridor.

Some respondents also expect the Central Bank to review administrative and regulatory measures related to the rupee and foreign exchange market, while maintaining its focus on orderly market conditions. Others believe no significant action may be required, given the expected boost to system liquidity from the RBI dividend transfer.

# Battle of the bat pack: 'Good headaches to have,' says Edwards

Mumbai: Charlotte Edwards expects England's batting headaches to get more complicated - in a good way - as she backed Nat Sciver-Brunt to return from injury in time for England's first match of the T20 World Cup. England open their campaign against Sri Lanka in Birmingham on June 12 and Sciver-Brunt hasn't played internationally since the ODI World Cup last October after suffering a calf tear playing domestically on April 29. They are due to play warm-up games against Australia (June 8) and India (June 10) in Cardiff, where they hope to have allrounder Sciver-Brunt available, although she is likely to play as a batter at the World Cup. "That makes tonight even more exciting, doesn't it, that we've got Nat Sciver-Brunt adding to this lineup," Edwards said on Tuesday night in Taunton after England beat India by six wickets to win the T20I series 2-1 when asked how confident she was that Sciver-Brunt would be fit for the World Cup opener. "I am very confident. She's training this week and



Saturday and doing her running and she'll be playing hopefully in the first warm-up game next week. All good with her. I'm not sure she's going to be bowling so it'll be in a batting role for us, hence why we've been managing some workloads throughout this series. Freya Kemp didn't bowl tonight, so it's really positive going into next week." Edwards described England's win over India, in which they equalled their joint-second-highest chase in T20Is (181) - also their best on English soil - as the "perfect" game heading into a World Cup. Without Sciver-Brunt, England have won T20I series against New Zealand and India, both 2-1, with a number of batters stepping up in unfamiliar roles. Most notably, Alice Capsey scored 74 not out opening against New Zealand before surpassing that as her best T20I score with a match-winning 82 off 43 balls batting at No. 4 to clinch the series on Tuesday. Capsey shared a 137-run stand for the fourth wicket with Heather Knight, whose 70 not out off 42 ended a drought

stretching back to May last year, when she scored her previous international fifty, against West Indies. She subsequently tore her hamstring and only returned for the 50-over World Cup late last year. Danni Wyatt-Hodge has scored 29 and 5 in her two innings this season since returning from maternity leave and opening partner Sophia Dunkley hasn't looked settled all summer, while Amy Jones scored 67 at No. 3 in the series opener with India. All that gave Edwards flexibility throughout her top six, which also includes Kemp, who struck an unbeaten 39 and took 2 for 15 in the series-levelling second match in Bristol. It also gave her plenty to consider over the next ten days. "They're good headaches to have," she said. "We're in a really good position in terms of people [being] in form so I'm going to be taking some time away - the players are going home for a few days - and then we'll reset again on Saturday in Cardiff." "I'm a big believer of your top six.



## Atiqa Mir secures most dominant career win

Thessaloniki (Greece)

Eleven-year-old Atiqa Mir reinforced her status as India's leading racer on the world stage with the most dominant performance of her career in Round 2 of the Champions of the Future Academy Program, making a clean sweep of qualifying, heat races and the finals.

understandably got emotional when the Indian national anthem as she stood atop the podium. Atiqa is aiming to become the first female in Formula 1 since the early 1990s. She won Round 2.2 by a more than 2.6 seconds, a massive margin in motorsport considering all 25 drivers were running on the same equipment.

Atiqa, the first Indian to be supported by the Formula 1 Academy, set the benchmark in a highly competitive field in the OK-NJ category (age 12-14). It is remarkable what she has managed to achieve in her first season in this category, giving the more experienced drivers (mostly male) a hard time on the track.

Born in Mumbai with family roots in Jammu and Kashmir, Atiqa bagged the pole position in qualifying with a record time of 56.77, almost three tenths ahead of the second place driver, demonstrating skill well beyond her age and experience.

Be it the qualifying, heats or the two finals, Atiqa was in a league of her own throughout the weekend. With her sensational show, she became only the third driver to in the series' history to sweep the qualifying, heats and finals.

In Heat Race 1, Atiqa dominated the race from start to finish. In Heat Race 2, she bossed the field again, winning by more than a second ahead of her nearest competitor, putting her in P1 grid position for the final. In the gruelling 15 lap final, Atiqa took control of the race at the start and demonstrated a racing masterclass, pulling away to a 3.9 seconds advantage in merely eight laps.

While she led with admirable poise and calm on track all through the week, the little girl in her

## Atul Wassen sees shades of young Tendulkar in Vaibhav Sooryavanshi

New Delhi

Former India pacer Atul Wassen sees shades of a young Sachin Tendulkar in Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, saying the teenager's maturity, audacity and fearless approach remind him of the batting great's early days during India's 1989 tour of Pakistan.



He is a one in a million generational talent. Can you imagine the maturity and audacity of this boy? He reminds me of 16-year-old Sachin Tendulkar.



(during the 1989 tour of Pakistan). God has blessed him with X factor along with the game & power," Wassen told PTI in an exclusive chat on Tuesday.

A 16-year-old Tendulkar had made his international debut against a fiery Pakistan

bowling attack that included Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, Abdul Qadir and Imran Khan in 1989.

was a star in the making. "Though he has a long way to go. I hope everything falls into place just like it did for Sachin. The same God gifted X factor talent I see in Sooryavanshi."

Tendulkar impressed everyone with his straight and on-drives. The grace and timing with which he struck those boundaries showed

the teenager with expectations of record-breaking feats at such an early stage of his career. "It will be unfair to put the burden of breaking records. He should not be thinking or made to think about the records. He should aspire to become complete players like Tendulkar, Rahul Dravid and Virat Kohli. "They took their game to a higher and higher level with longevity. There will be a time when you have to change your game. "During challenging times, if he can go back to the basics and ethos of the game then he will emerge as a great player. So it all depends upon who all mentor him and how. Guys like (Anil) Kumble and Dravid can keep in good stead." (PTI)

## Patidar to lead Gwalior Cheetahs in MPL 2026

Gwalior

Having successfully led the Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) to back-to-back IPL crowns, Rajat Patidar is set to lead JKC Sports-owned Gwalior Cheetahs in the Madhya Pradesh League (MPL) T20.



Patidar will captain a side eager to make a breakthrough after reaching the semifinal in 2025 but narrowly missing out on a place in the final.

The Gwalior team will enter the new season with a balanced squad featuring a mix of experienced campaigners and promising young talent.

Among them is Mangesh Yadav, the leading wicket-taker from the 2025 edition with 14 wickets, while the side will continue to benefit from the

guidance of head coach Aditya Srivastava, under whose captaincy Madhya Pradesh ended a 69-year wait for the Ranji Trophy title in 2022.

## French Open: Marta Kostyuk Creates History With Entry Into Semi-Finals



London: Marta Kostyuk, the best player on clay this season and a vocal supporter of Ukraine amid the war with Russia, will play her first major semifinal at the French Open against a Russian. Kostyuk won an intense all-Ukraine quarterfinal against Elina Svitolina 6-3, 2-6, 6-2 on Tuesday. That set up Kostyuk against Russian teenager Mirra Andreieva, who thumped Romanian veteran Sorana Cirstea 6-0, 6-3. Kostyuk leads Andreieva 2-0 on the tour; the second win in the Madrid final a month ago. Kostyuk didn't shake hands at the net, following protocol for Ukrainians with opponents from Russia and its ally Belarus since the war started four years ago. We had a very difficult night again in Ukraine, especially in Kyiv, so many people dead," Kostyuk said. Svitolina added, "I want to give this match to Ukrainian people and to their resilience. Slava Ukraini! (Glory to Ukraine!)" Russia launched hundreds of

drones and dozens of missiles against Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities overnight, killing at least 18 civilians and wounding more than 100 others, authorities said on Tuesday. "I found out early in the morning. I have a couple of friends that told me about it, who are there," Svitolina said. "Just very sad that we all have to really put up with this heaviness and pain every single day, and scared moments not knowing what's going to bring the next day." Svitolina will leave Roland Garros to look after the daughter she has with French tennis player Gael Monfils, but will be cheering Kostyuk on from a distance. "I will be watching the match and definitely cheering for her, hopefully that she can get the title," Svitolina said. "It's going to be massive for Ukraine." No. 7-seeded Svitolina got off to a slow start but worked her way back, matching No. 15 Kostyuk's power from the baseline.

## FIH Women's Nations Cup: Lalthantluangi, Dabas earn maiden call-ups

New Delhi

Young defenders Lalthantluangi and Shilpi Dabas will once again be a part of Salima Tete-led national team which will take part in the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand scheduled to begin in Auckland from June 15 to 21. India have been placed in Pool A of the tournament alongside Japan, United States and Uruguay, with Pool B comprising hosts New Zealand, Chile, Korea and France.

Thursday, June 18. The semi-finals are scheduled for Saturday, June 20 and the final on June 21.

Tete will continue to lead the side for the tournament. Savita and Bichu Devi Kharibam will provide the team with reliable and experienced options for goal-keeping.



In defence, seasoned Sushila Chanu Pukhrabam, Ishika Chaudhary, Nikki Pradhan and Jyoti will be joined by Lalthantluangi and Dabas, both of whom earned their maiden senior call-ups during the recently concluded tour of Australia and will be eager to continue their development at this level.

The midfield will be marshalled by Salima, who will draw on the expertise of Neha, Sunelita Toppo and

and Ishika besides seasoned attacking midfielders Lalremsiami and Sonam. Collectively they bring a blend of pace, creativity and clinical finishing to the forward line.

The Indian squad heads into the Nations Cup on the

back of a productive tour of Australia, where the side played a four-match friendly series in Perth in the lead-up to the FIH Hockey Women's Nations Cup New Zealand 2025-26.

The series provided the team with invaluable experience, giving Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne an opportunity to test the squad. India held the hosts to a 2-2 draw in the series after four competitive matches.

Chief coach Sjoerd Marijne underlined the importance of the team's preparations ahead of a crucial phase, beginning with the Nations Cup, followed by the FIH World Cup and the Asian Games.

"The Nations Cup is an important tournament for us. We want to go there

and play with ambition to set a standard for ourselves that we can build on," Marijne said.

"We have built on those aspects in the Argentina and Australia tours, which gave us good preparation as a team. Now it is about taking the next step and showing that level consistently across a full tournament. The squad is motivated and ready for the challenge," he said.

Sharing his thoughts on the squad selection, the chief coach added, "We have named a squad that has the right balance of experience and hunger. Players like Savita, Sushila, Nikki and Navneet have been in big tournaments before and know what it takes to perform under pressure.

## Indonesia Open: Sindhu advances to second round, Srikanth, Malvika exits

Jakarta

Two-time Olympic medallist PV Sindhu battled her way into the second round of the Indonesia Open with a straight-game win, while former world Number 1 Kidambi Srikanth suffered an opening-round exit on Tuesday.



Sindhu was made to work hard by Thailand's Busanan Ongbamrunphan before prevailing 25-23, 21-16 in a 51-minute women's singles round of 32 contest of the Super 1,000 badminton tournament.

The former world champion displayed her trademark attacking game to edge a closely fought opening game before carrying the momentum into the second to complete a straight-game win.

## National record holder KM Deeksha fails dope test

New Delhi

Women's 1500m national record holder and National Games silver medallist K M Deeksha has failed a dope test, according to sources.



The 27-year-old Deeksha, who has participated in just one competition this year in April, has tested positive for a banned substance. The nature of the substance and further details of her test is not known.

"Yes, it's confirmed that she has failed a dope test," a well-placed source told PTI without elaborating on the matter. Deeksha did not take part in the recent Federation Cup in Ranchi

which was mandatory for an athlete to get selected for the 2026 Commonwealth Games (July 23 to August 2) in Glasgow, unless he or she is exempted by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI).

The AFI gave "eligible athletes" another chance to achieve CWG qualification standards in their respective events during the Ludhiana-leg of the Indian Athletics Series scheduled for June 13. But the athletes should

have taken part in the Federation Cup for their performances in the Ludhiana event to be considered for CWG selection.

Deeksha, an athlete in the NADA's Registered Testing Pool, had clocked 4 minute 25.74 seconds to win the 1500m race at the Indian Open Athletics Series 2 in Jaipur on April 5. Her timing was also well outside the 4:05.09 seconds set by the AFI as qualifying standard for the CWG.

# Mandhana: 'Shafali and I have a huge role to play' at the T20 World Cup

Mumbai: Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana has put the onus on herself and her opening partner Shafali Verma to set things up for India at the upcoming T20 World Cup, after failing to give the team strong starts in the T20I series against England, which they lost 2-1 on Tuesday.



Mandhana and Shafali had opening partnerships of 19, 27 and 0 in the three games but Mandhana believes the two have a "huge role to play going forward" as India look to add the T20 World Cup trophy to their cabinet after winning the ODI World Cup at home in November last year.

"For me and Shifu, we are definitely timing the ball well but unfortunately we are not able to contribute in big ways for the team," Mandhana said after the third T20I, which India lost by six wickets. "But for both of us, we'll go back in the nets, keep working hard and make sure we come back stronger as an opening pair because both of us pride ourselves to give good starts and keep the momentum going. But unfortunately we could not do that in this series. We'll take it in our stride and try and work hard."

"Coming early and playing a series in England before the World Cup is definitely good to do in terms of preparations."

While Mandhana averaged just 13.33 in the series with a high score of 32, Shafali's average was 11.66, although with a much better strike rate of 152.17 compared to Mandhana's 114.28. It was only in the second game, in Bristol, where they both contributed with Mandhana scoring 32 off 25 and Shafali 22 off 14, in a chase of 169 before a collapse of 7 for 32 saw India fall short by 26 runs. Some of the better takeaways for India from the series was the form of Yastika Bhatia on return from injury, as she finished as the top run-scorer across teams with 119 runs, with one half-century. The decider on Tuesday also saw captain Harmanpreet Kaur score an unbeaten 56 off 40, although India's 180 for 5 wasn't enough against England.

"She batted amazingly well today,"

Mandhana said of her captain. "Harman, when she is at her best, it is a sight to watch. Today, she played all over the ground, really important innings under pressure today, especially when we needed that knock to get us to 180-plus. Really happy. I just feel everyone is definitely in good nick. It's good signs going forward for the World Cup that Jemi [Jemimah Rodrigues], Harman, everyone is looking really beautiful to watch from the outside. Hopefully, I can watch from the non-striker's end."

India weren't too far from a series win on Tuesday as they reduced England to 38 for 3 while defending 180, but Alice Capsey and Heather Knight put on a 137-run stand for the fourth wicket that took England home with nine balls to spare.

uldn't really take anything away from the partnership they had," Mandhana said. "I think they played really good cricketing shots. They played all around the ground. In hindsight, we would have been able to build pressure with a few dot balls, but we were not able to do that."

"As I said, for all of us, we will definitely look

at this game in a way where we can do better and not repeat these mistakes in the World Cup coming ahead. With our bowling, we'll go back to the drawing board, see which options can be better. We did that before this series, maybe we can go back again and now we know these conditions, what balls [need] to be bowled. I am sure those two-three things are going to help a lot of our players."

India's opening match of the T20 World Cup is against Pakistan on June 14 in Birmingham. They are pooled in Group 1 with Australia, South Africa, Bangladesh and Netherlands, and will also play two warm-up matches against West Indies (June 8) and England (June 10) before the start of the tournament proper.

"India-Pakistan doesn't need hype," Mandhana said. "We did play India-Pakistan at the Commonwealth Games in Birmingham and [it was] sold out. Not only India-Pakistan, I just feel we really need to hype up the T20 World Cup. We don't need to [do it for India vs Pakistan]; it's already hyped up. I am sure a lot of people are going to come and support us. Hopefully, we can put up a show

for them."

Quite what either side will ultimately take from this ODI series is debatable, but a patched-up Australia side can be proud of how they adapted to earn a decider against Pakistan in Lahore after being outplayed in the opening match. As a number of ESPNcricinfo feedbackers pointed out, it's been something of a throwback with a 1990s vibe around the scoring rates. In the first match, 200 wasn't enough for Australia, but in the second 231 certainly was.

Josh Inglis and Cameron Green put in the hard yards during the first half of the innings - it was especially hard work for Green, who battled for rhythm, but there was satisfaction in his gritty fifty which he acknowledged with a somewhat relieved punch of the air - and their innings allowed Matt Renshaw and latterly 19-year-old Oli Peake to play with a little more freedom.

Renshaw's form has been especially eye-catching, extending a strong introduction to Australia's white-ball set-up since late last year, while Peake's maturity was on show when he did not panic at being 6 off 15 balls and managed to dispatch vital late sixes.

With the ball, Nathan Ellis was ideal for the slow, grippy surface and produced a career-best performance. The spinners all played their role, with Matt Short's three wickets fitting into the bonus category; his delivery to slide past Salman Agha's outside edge was an excellent piece of bowling.

Ahead of the match, Pakistan coach Mike Hesson defended the home surfaces the team is playing on before being hoisted by their own petard. Arafat Minhas looks a very exciting find - with bat and ball - while Ghazi Ghoori has shown plenty of promise. But a lot of questions remain. Shadab Khan continued to labour with the ball, but his 71 kept Pakistan in the game although he may in the longer run have muddled the waters.

Pakistan have only lost one home bilateral ODI series since 2015 but, after the recent loss in Bangladesh, a defeat in the decider on

Thursday would add to the uncertainty around their game as a whole

Sahibzada Farhan has forged his reputation in T20s - domestically and internationally - but he's found life tougher in the early stages of his ODI career. He has made three starts in five innings but not been able to convert; in the first game of this series he gave it away when he picked out long-off. In the second match, he top-edged a sweep in the second over, having already lost his opening partner, and it left Pakistan on the back foot.

Matt Renshaw has been the most fluent batter on show in the first two matches in tough conditions. The left-hand batter has continued his impressive white-ball form with smart placement, good running and putting away the bad ball. His only blip has been falling on both occasions when Australia needed someone to close out the innings, although the two dismissals were against good deliveries. There is argument that he may be worth a go higher up the order. Team news: Labuschagne under pressure Pakistan have been unchanged so far and Shadab's runs will likely keep him in the XI given the balance he brings to the lower order. There is a clamour for Sufyan Moqim to play but it's tricky to see how he fits in unless they drop a batter or only play one quick. Pakistan (probable) 1 Sahibzada Farhan, 2 Maaz Sadaqat, 3 Babar Azam, 4 Ghazi Ghouri (wk), 5 Arafat Minhas, 6 Salman Agha, 7 Abdul Samad, 8 Shadab Khan, 9 Shaheen Afridi (capt), 10 Haris Rauf, 11 Abrar Ahmed

Australia's initial thoughts on this series may have been to give most players an outing, but their balance for the second match served them well so Liam Scott will likely have to wait for his debut. Labuschagne has missed out twice in the series - extending a lean time in ODIs - and is under increasing pressure but may cling onto his place for now. There could be consideration given to elevating Renshaw given his fine form.

## New Zealand home summer to start with blockbuster all-format India tour

New Delhi: The New Zealand men's team will kick off their international home summer later this year by hosting India for an all-format tour from October 22 to December 1. The tour of 12 matches will feature five T20Is, five ODIs and two Tests to be played across five major venues, making it the most number of international matches scheduled "for an in-bound tour in NZC history", a New Zealand Cricket statement said.



New Zealand will also host Sri Lanka for an all-format tour of three ODIs, three T20Is, and two Tests in late January and February to finish their home international summer that will see 42 days of international cricket

across eight cities. The Sri Lanka series will take place once New Zealand return from an away tour of four Tests in Australia scheduled for December-January. The India tour will begin in Christchurch's Hagley Oval for the first two T20Is on October 22 and 24. Wellington, Auckland

and Hamilton will then host the last three T20Is on October 27, 30 and November 1 respectively. After a two-day gap, the ODI series will begin on November 4 in Auckland, followed by the second ODI in Wellington (November 7), the third in Hamilton (November 10), and the last two in Mount Maunganui (November 13 and 15). The New Zealand women's team, meanwhile, will host Bangladesh for three T20Is and as many ODIs from December 10 to 23, their only series in the home summer. As the inaugural T20 Champions Trophy for women has been moved to February 2027 from its original window of June 2027.

## Osorio, Nelson score in Canada's win over Uzbekistan

Edmonton (Alberta)

Jonathan Osorio, making his 90th appearance with the Canadian national team, scored a second-half goal and Canada went on to defeat Uzbekistan 2-0 in a World Cup tune-up on Monday night.



Osorio, who came into the match to start the second half, scored his first goal for Canada since 2023 in the 58th minute with a blast that got past Uzbekistan goalkeeper Abduvohid Nematov. It was Osorio's 10th international goal.

Jayden Nelson, who also came off the bench, added Canada's second goal in stoppage time. Tani Oluwaseyi

assisted both goals. Canadian defender Moise Bombito was subbed out of the match in the 31st minute and later limped to the locker room with his lower left leg wrapped in ice. Bombito had not played for the national team since

final. Nelson, who was not named to Canada's World Cup squad, may have earned Flores' roster spot with his performance against Uzbekistan. Goalkeeper Maxime Crepeau played the first half and was replaced by Dayne St. Clair in the second in a pre-planned change for Canada. Coach Jesse Marsch named his World Cup squad on Friday.

Alphonso Davies was included on the team despite a hamstring injury that may keep him out of the opener. The Edmonton native looked on, but was not available for Monday's match. Canada opens the World Cup on June 12 in Toronto against Bosnia and Herzegovina in Group B.

## Injured Canada captain Alphonso rejoins team

Toronto

Alphonso Davies has joined the Canadian national team as it prepares for the World Cup, although he's not quite ready to play.



The left back injured a hamstring last month while playing for Bayern Munich in 1-1 draw with Paris Saint-Germain that knocked the German club out the Champions League semi-finals. On Monday, Davies was on the sideline when Canada beat Uzbekistan 2-0 in a rainy World Cup tuneup in his hometown of Edmonton, Alberta. The Canadian captain ran laps on the field before the game.

"It feels nice to get back on the pitch and do some running. I'm happy to be

home, I'm happy to be with the boys and support them, whether it's just on or off the pitch," said Davies, who joined the squad on Sunday. Davies, who has 15 goals in 58 games for Canada, was named Friday to its 26-player squad for the World Cup. He would not speculate about when he might be able to

play. Canada opens the World Cup on June 12 in Toronto against Bosnia and Herzegovina.

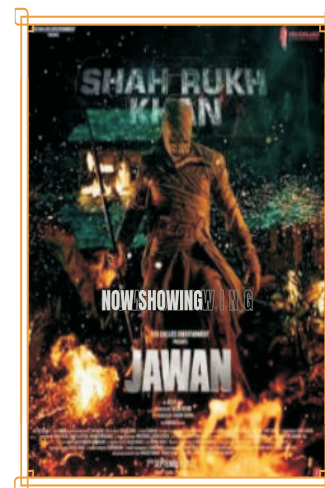
"We just have to see how everything goes over the next couple days," Davies said. "I'll just continue my rehab, my progression, and see how I'm feeling, day by day, step by step." Davies has

not played for Canada since March 2025, when he tore an ACL in the CONCACAF Nations League finals.

"It was tough. I mean, the last year was obviously an up-and-down moment for me, with the ACL that happened, with the low muscle injuries here and there, but at the end of the day I think I just have to keep my head down, keep working, can't let that affect me," he said. "Obviously, it was tough mentally and physically, but I'm feeling good now, and hoping to recover as quickly as possible."

Canada coach Jesse Marsch said Davies should not feel pressured to return too soon. "What we don't want to do is put him in a situation to suffer again and to be vulnerable again. (

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