



Centre, States should team up for India: PM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Asserting for a need to increase the speed of development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said if the Union Government and States work together like Team India, no goal is impossible. "We have to increase the speed of development. If the Centre and all the States come together and work together like Team India, no goal is impossible," Niti Aayog said in social media post quoting the Prime Minister who chaired the 10th Governing Council meeting of Niti Aayog. The theme of the Governing Council meeting is 'Viksit Rajya for Viksit Bharat@2047'.

"Viksit Bharat is the goal of every Indian. When every State is Viksit, then Bharat will be Viksit. This is the aspiration of its 140 crore citizens," Modi said. The council, the apex body of Niti Aayog, includes all State chief ministers, lieutenant governors of Union Territories, and several Union ministers. Prime Minister Modi is the chairman of Niti Aayog. "We should have the aim of making each State viksit, each city viksit, each Nagar Palika viksit and each village viksit. If we work on these lines, we will not have to wait till 2047 to become Viksit Bharat," Modi said. It was the first major meeting of the prime minister with chief ministers of all States and lieutenant governors of Union Territories after Operation Sindoor. The meeting was attended by 31 States and Union Territories of a total of 36, Subrahmanyam said, adding those who could not make it had prior commitments and informed the Council. The States which did not attend the meeting were Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar and Puducherry.

In the meeting Prime Minister mentioned that "Operation Sindoor should not be treated as a one-off initiative and we must adopt a long-term approach. The



Prime minister Modi interacting with chief ministers at the Niti Aayog meeting PTI

CMs and LGs praised Operation Sindoor for its precision and targeted strikes which led to destruction of terror infrastructure.

In one voice, they praised PM's leadership and the valour of the Armed Forces. They also praised the efforts towards Aatmanirbharta in the defence sector which have strengthened the defence forces and bolstered confidence in our capabilities.

The prime minister also suggested that States should develop at least one tourist destination per State at par with global standards and by providing all facilities and infrastructure. "One State: One Global Destination. It would also lead to the development of the neighbouring cities as tourist places," he said. Noting that India is getting rapidly urbanised, Modi said, "We should work towards future-ready cities." Growth, innovation and sustainability should be the engine for the development of India's cities, he added. Modi also emphasised the need to work towards the inclusion of women in the workforce. "We must make laws and policies so that they can be respectfully integrated into the workforce," he said. Modi asked the States

and Union Territories to remove policy bottlenecks to encourage investment and generate employment as he stressed that if the Union Government and States work together like Team India, no goal is impossible. Briefing reporters about the 10th Governing Council meeting of Niti Aayog, CEO BVR Subrahmanyam said that everyone present at the meeting unanimously supported Operation Sindoor, undertaken by India to destroy terror infrastructure in Pakistan. The PM said that India has emerged among top five economies of the world and 25 crore have escaped poverty. PM observed that Global investors are hugely interested in India. He encouraged the States to utilise this opportunity and make it easy for investments. Citing recent trade agreements with UAE, UK and Australia, he said States should utilise it to the optimum. Emphasising on skilling, Prime Minister said that NEP gives emphasis on Education and Skill. He said States must plan for various skills which are attuned to modern technologies like AI, Semiconductor, 3D printing.

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'20,000 Indians killed by Pakistan in four decades'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ United Nations

India ripped through Pakistan's "disinformation" at the UN on the Indus Waters Treaty, asserting that Islamabad violated its spirit by inflicting three wars and thousands of terror attacks on India that seek to hold hostage lives of civilians, religious harmony and economic prosperity.

"We are constrained to respond to the disinformation being carried out by the delegation of Pakistan with regard to the Indus Waters Treaty. India has always acted in a responsible manner as an upper riparian State," India's Permanent Representative to UN Ambassador Parvathaneni Harish said on Friday.

Harish was addressing the UN Security Council Arria Formula meeting organised by the Permanent Mission of Slovenia on 'Protecting Water in Armed Conflict - Protecting Civilian Lives'.

Harish highlighted four aspects to expose the "disinformation" by Pakistan, which spoke about India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty.

In the wake of the horrific April 22 Pahalgam attack in Jammu and Kashmir in which 26 civilians were killed, India had decided that the Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 would be held in abeyance with immediate effect until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism.

Harish noted that the UN meeting that India had entered into the Indus Waters Treaty 65 years ago in good faith.

Noting that the Preamble of the Treaty describes that it was concluded "in a spirit of good will and friendship," Harish said throughout these six and a half decades, "Pakistan has violated the spirit of the treaty by inflicting three wars and thousands of terror attacks on India."

The Indian envoy underlined that in the last four decades, more than 20,000 Indian lives have been lost in terror attacks, the most recent of which was the dastardly targeted terror attack on tourists in Pahalgam. Even as India has shown

Pakistan has violated the spirit of the [Indus Water] treaty by inflicting three wars and thousands of terror attacks on India.

— PARVATHANENI HARISH, INDIA'S PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO UN

extraordinary patience and magnanimity throughout this period, Harish said Pakistan's "State-sponsored cross-border terrorism in India seeks to hold hostage the lives of civilians, religious harmony and economic prosperity."

Harish pointed out that India has formally asked Pakistan to discuss the modifications of the Treaty on several occasions in the past two years but Islamabad continues to reject these.

"Pakistan's obstructionist approach continues to prevent the exercise of full utilisation of legitimate rights by India," he said. Further, Harish said that in the past 65 years, far-reaching fundamental changes have taken place not only in terms of escalating security concerns through cross-border terror attacks but also growing requirements for producing clean energy, climate change and demographic change.

"Technology for dam infrastructure has transformed to ensure the safety and efficiency of operations and water use. Some of the old dams are facing serious safety concerns," he said adding that Pakistan has continued to "consistently block" any changes to this infrastructure, and any modifications of the provisions, which is permissible under the Treaty.

He noted that in 2012, terrorists even attacked the Tulbul Navigation Project in Jammu and Kashmir. "These cynical acts continue to endanger the safety of our projects and the lives of civilians."

"It is against this backdrop that India has finally announced that the treaty will be in abeyance until Pakistan, which is a global epicentre of terror, credibly and irrevocably ends its support for cross-border terrorism."

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Indian fraudster extradited after six-year chase

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Alleged fraudster Angad Singh Chandhok, who had an Interpol Red Notice against him, was deported from the US on Saturday in an operation "closely coordinated" by the CBI, officials said.

He was brought to the Indira Gandhi International Airport where the CBI detained him and later put him under arrest, they said.

He was produced before a special court which sent him to judicial custody. Chandhok, who was wanted in a case of allegedly cheating Union Bank of India in 2014, had managed to escape to the US in 2016 with his family members to escape from the legal proceedings.

"The subject along with his family members: father Surendra Singh, mother Harleen Kaur and brother Harsahib Singh in criminal conspiracy with four other accused including bank officials had cheated the Union Bank of India causing wrongful loss to the bank," the CBI said in a statement.

They were declared proclaimed offenders and open-ended arrest warrants were issued against them by the court, it said.

In 2017, the CBI got the Interpol Red Notice against him which alerts all the member countries to locate and detain the wanted person.

"Efforts are continuing for return of family members of the subject, who are other wanted accused in this case. The return of the subject, main co-conspirator in the fraud, will help in starting the trial," the agency said.

While in California, US, with his asylum application pending, Chandhok got involved with a gang of tech scam perpetrators who were cheating American citizens including senior citizens of their savings. He had routed proceeds of crime to India through money laundering channels.

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Monsoon hits early in Kerala

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) announced the southwest monsoon has arrived in Kerala on Saturday, eight days ahead of its usual onset date of June 1. This year's onset in Kerala is the earliest in the last 16 years. The last time the monsoon arrived this early in the State was in 2009 and 2001, when it reached the State on May 23. The normal date for the monsoon's onset over Kerala is June 1. This early onset signals the beginning of the crucial four-month-long rainy season, vital to agriculture, water resources, and economic stability across the country. Surplus pre-monsoon rainfall and an early monsoon onset will help farmers, especially in the southern and central States, to sow summer crops earlier than usual.

In 2001 and 2009, the monsoon arrived in the southern State a week earlier. India saw 934.8 mm of rainfall in 2024, 108 per cent of the average and the highest since 2020.

The monsoon has covered Kerala and parts of neighbouring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, as well as parts of the northeastern State of Mizoram, the IMD said. Conditions are favourable for the monsoon's further spread into Goa, parts of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, the northeastern States, West Bengal, and the remaining parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu over the next two to three days.

IMD follows a set of criterion to declare monsoon onset. If, after May 10, at least 60 per cent of 14 stations — Minicoy, Amini, Punalur, Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Allapuzha, Kottayam, Kochi, Thrissur, Kozhikode, Thalassery, Kannur, Kudulu and Mangalore - report rainfall of 2.5 mm or more for two consecutive days, the onset of the monsoon over Kerala will be declared on the second day, provided the wind pattern is south-westerly and Outgoing Longwave Radiation (OLR) is low. OLR represents the total radiation going to space emitted by the atmosphere or extent of cloudiness.

However, the earliest recorded arrival was on May 11 in the year 1918. On the other hand, the record for the late onset was in 1972, when monsoon rains began as late as June 18. In the last 25 years, the most delayed arrival occurred in 2016, when the monsoon entered Kerala on June 9.

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Char Dham Yatra sees lull in footfall

PURNIMA BISHT ■ Dehradun

The Char Dham Yatra in Uttarakhand is witnessing a steep drop in the number of pilgrims this year. The recently concluded Mahakumbh in Prayagraj and heightened India-Pakistan tensions are likely key reasons behind the noticeable decline, according to officials and experts. In the first three weeks of the Yatra, pilgrim numbers have dropped by 21 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year.

The trend has persisted since the first week of the yatra this year. According to Dehradun-based Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation, a total of 10,91,406 pilgrims visited the Char Dham shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath between April 30 and May 20 this year. This is significantly lower than the 13,84,688 pilgrims recorded during the same three-week period in 2024, marking a decline of 2,93,282 visitors.

The general secretary of the Char Dham Teerth Purohit Mahapanchayat, Brijesh Sati attributed the lower footfall to a combination of factors including Mahakumbh. He said that the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj that concluded on February 26 after 45 days is a rare event that occurred after a gap of 144 years after the completion of 12 cycles of the 12-year Kumbh Mela. Over 60 crore people attended the Mahakumbh in 2025.

Tourism and Culture Minister Satpal Maharaj however said that Char Dham pilgrim numbers have started rising again after a brief lull.

According to SDC's data for May 14 to



Devotees arrive after the doors of the Madhyamaheshwar temple, one of the Panch Kedars, were opened, in Rudrapur district, Uttarakhand on May 21. The economic impact of the lull on locals, who rely heavily on the Yatra season remains a concern PTI

20, 2025 pilgrim numbers dropped by 27 per cent at Yamunotri, 26 per cent at Kedarnath and 20 per cent at Gangotri compared to the corresponding period in 2024. Badrinath was the only exception, recording a 17 per cent increase in pilgrim arrivals during the same seven-day period. This has been largely credited to the Pushkar Kumbh Mela, being held after 12 years.

Since many pilgrims are from the middle class, many will not have the resources for another major pilgrimage like the Char Dham Yatra in the same year, Sati said.

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He also stated that several pilgrims cancelled their online registrations after the Pahalgam attack and worsening India-Pakistan relations. "Although this year the administration introduced 25 per cent offline registration unlike last year, many were unaware of this option and did not travel even after the situation improved," he said. More than 31 lakh people have registered for the pilgrimage since its start on April 30 which translates to an average of 1.31 lakh registrations per day, according to officials.

Shubman Gill to lead Team India through Test transition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Batting star Shubman Gill was on Saturday handed India's Test leadership to steer through a "massive transition" phase starting with next month's tour of England that will be nothing short of a trial by fire for the relatively inexperienced 18-member squad announced here.

At 25 years of age, Gill will be India's fifth youngest Test captain after Mansoor Ali Khan Pataudi (21), Sachin Tendulkar (23), Kapil Dev (24) and Ravi Shastri (25).

He will have the swashbuckling but erratic Rishabh Pant as his deputy for the five-match series that will begin on June 20 in Leeds.

"Last year or so we have looked at Shubman (for leadership). We are hopeful he is the guy who is going to (take the team forward). It is a high pressure job but he is a terrific player," said chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar after announcing the squad, which offered no major surprises.

Gill has appeared in 32 Tests so far and averages a rather modest 35 for his 1893 runs with five hundreds and seven fifties at the top of the order since making his debut in 2020.

The 27-year-old Pant, on the other hand, is a bit more experienced with 43 Tests under his belt and a better average of 42.11 for his 2948 runs lower down the line-up. He has smashed six hundreds and 15 half centuries since coming into the side in 2018.

"Pant is one of our best batters in Test



Indian cricketers Shubman Gill and Rishabh Pant during a Test cricket match between India and Bangladesh, in Chennai PTI

cricket over the last four-five years. A wicketkeeper can see the game well and that's why he is Shubman's deputy," Agarkar added while explaining the big-hitter's role.

The selectors' decision on the team's leadership was on expected lines following the retirement of senior stars Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, both of whom called it quits within a week of each other earlier this month.

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Wife's privacy wins over husband's moral outrage in Delhi court

RAJESH KUMAR ■ New Delhi

Upholding the right to privacy of the wife and her alleged lover, New Delhi district's Patiala House court has rejected a plea filed by a husband, Major in the Indian Army, seeking CCTV footage of a hotel over the allegations that his wife was having an affair.

"... the right to privacy and to be left alone in a hotel would extend to the common areas as against a third party who was not present there and has no other legally justifiable entitlement to seek the data of the guest. Same would hold good for the booking details," civil judge Vaibhav Pratap Singh said while rejecting the plea.

The court observed that hotels must protect the confidentiality of their guests.

The petition also raised concern over the wife and her alleged lover's right to be heard, he said, noting that they were not named in the lawsuit despite being central to the case. The judge said it was question-

able if the hotel could be compelled to release the footage without making the alleged couple parties to the lawsuit.

"The dated idea of a man stealing away the wife of another man, without ascribing any role or responsibility to the woman, is to be rejected. It takes agency away from women and dehumanises them. The plaintiff, while conveniently having entered into a settlement with his wife, is only pursuing a remedy against her alleged paramour, as if the wife is not to be blamed but only the alleged paramour is and that if not for him, the otherwise successful marriage would have endured. The Plaintiff's selective blame and pursuit of the paramour fails to acknowledge that adultery may not be the cause of a marriage's failure — it may merely be a symptom," the court said.

Citing the novel "The End of the Affair" by Graham Greene, the court said that even the Indian Parliament has given its imprimatur to the said jurisprudence when, while doing away with the colonial



penal law, it enacted the The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and did not retain therein the offence of adultery, showing that the "modern day Bharat has no place for gender-condescension and patriarchal notions."

It is not even relevant for these proceed-

ings whether the adultery has been allegedly committed by the wife or the husband. If the shoe were on the other foot, the law would still remain the same and be applied equally.

The court dismissed the plaint of the husband seeking a mandatory injunction

against hotel, seeking a direction to it to provide booking details and CCTV footage of the common areas. It was his case that the wife, with whom he was involved in a marital dispute and divorce, visited the hotel with her alleged paramour.

The judge observed that hotels generally owe a duty of confidentiality to their guests and are required to protect the privacy of their records, including booking details and CCTV footage. Furthermore, the judge said that courts are not meant to serve as investigative bodies for private disputes or as instruments for collection of evidence in internal proceedings, especially when no clear legal entitlement to that evidence exists. The court noted that the Army Act, 1950 and the extant rules provide specific procedures for handling complaints and presenting evidence, and the husband must take the remedies to call witnesses.

The court cannot, therefore, be used to bypass or supplement these internal mechanisms, it added.

That was terrorist attack in Pahalgam, not conflict in Kashmir: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The recent confrontation between India and Pakistan was not a "conflict in Kashmir," External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has asserted, saying such a description would be like putting the perpetrator and the victim of the Pahalgam attack at the same level. The "horrific" strike in Pahalgam was aimed at creating a "fear psychosis," destroying Jammu and Kashmir's tourism sector and was meant to "sow religious discord," he said.

Jaishankar made the remarks during an interactive session at the German Council on Foreign Relations in Berlin late last evening.

When asked about the "international implications of the conflict in Kashmir," he responded: "First of all, this was not a conflict in Kashmir, this was a terrorist attack." "And a terrorist attack which is part of a pattern which has not only targeted the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, but other parts of India as well," Jaishankar said.

"It's very important to clarify because when you project it as a conflict, you're really putting the perpetrator and the victim, without meaning to, at the same level." "So this is a horrific, particularly brutal terrorist attack because it was meant to create a fear psychosis and destroy the tourism economy of Kashmir, which is the mainstay," he said.



Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during an interaction with representatives of the Indian community, in Germany

The external affairs minister was in Berlin in the third and final leg of his three-nation tour of the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany.

Under Operation Sindoor, India carried out precision strikes on nine terror infrastructures early on May 7 in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack.

Following the Indian action, Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10. The Pakistani attempts were strongly responded to by the Indian side.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on May

10 announced that India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect.

In his remarks, Jaishankar said India targeted "terrorist headquarters and terrorist centres" in Pakistan in response to the Pahalgam attack.

"What we were responding to was terrorism and when we respond to such an attack, I think there was a lot of international understanding," he said.

Jaishankar also referred to a statement issued by the UN Security Council, that

said people who did it should be brought to justice.

"And that is exactly what we did on May 7. So we targeted terrorist headquarters and terrorist centres. And our campaign is against terrorism," he said.

"Now, the terrorists in this case happened to be located in the country next door because that country next door has for many, many years used terrorism as a kind of a tool," he said.

"When it comes to terrorism, I think today there's virtually no country which would say I approve of what is done or no country which would say I don't condemn what was done," he added.

Jaishankar said even Germany recognises India's right to defend itself against terrorism. He also pitched for greater cooperation between India and Europe in the Indo-Pacific.

"The Indo-Pacific has its own set of issues, security is one of them. But I would actually point to a different concept, which is how do we give countries in the Indo-Pacific more choices."

"That if countries in the Indo-Pacific have a single choice, they're railroaded along a certain path and they develop their dependencies," he added.

"One part of what we are trying to do in the Indo-Pacific is to give different countries different options in various domains - telecom, digital infrastructure, space-based applications or health choices," he said.

Another life lost due to COVID-19 in Maharashtra

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ Mumbai

The COVID-19 claimed one more life in Maharashtra on Saturday, taking the total number of deaths in the latest incidence of pandemic cases since January this year to four.

In the latest incident, a 21-year-old patient suffering from high diabetes — who had been admitted to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Hospital on Thursday, tested positive COVID-19 on Friday.

The patient died this morning," Hospital superintendent Dr Aniruddha Malgaonkar said.

There have so far been four COVID-19 linked deaths in Maharashtra since January this year. Earlier, there were three COVID-19 linked deaths in the State. While the first deceased had a nephrotic syndrome (a kidney disorder where excessive protein is excreted in the urine, leading to low blood protein levels, swelling and potentially high cholesterol) with hypocalcaemia seizure, while the second was a cancer patient. The third patient had suffered brain stroke (Cerebrovascular disease).

The fourth COVID-19 triggered death came on a day when 47 more patients tested positive for Coronavirus. With the fresh active cases, the total number of positive cases registered since January 2025 has risen to 257.

According to a statement put out by the State Public Health department, as many as 7,144 swab samples have been exam-

ined clinically for coronavirus since January, of which 257 tested positive for the infectious disease.

Of them, Mumbai accounted for a maximum of 213 patients, while the remaining patients were from Pune, Thane, and Kolhapur.

Of the 47 patients who tested positive for COVID-19 on Saturday, 30 are undergoing treatment in hospitals of Mumbai, seven in Pune, six in Thane, three in Navi Mumbai and one in Nagpur.

"The rise in COVID-19 cases is not seen only in Maharashtra, but this trend is being witnessed in other states and even other countries as well," the statement said. It may be recalled that the first case of COVID-19 pandemic was reported from Maharashtra on March 9, 2020.

The largest number of COVID-19 cases (68,631) was recorded in the country on April 18, 2021.

Maharashtra was a hotspot that accounted for nearly 22.35 per cent of the total cases in the country and it accounted for 30.55 per cent of all deaths.

As of 10 May 2021, Maharashtra's case fatality rate was nearly 1.49 per cent. Pune was the worst-affected city in Maharashtra, with a staggering 930,809 cases recorded as on May 10 2021.

About half of the cases in the state emerged from the Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR). The total number of cases in Maharashtra reported till May 2022, was 78,87,086, involving 1,47,860 deaths and 77,35,751 recoveries.

Sharpshooter of Jitender Gogi gang arrested in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A sharpshooter of the Jitender Gogi gang wanted in a murder case in Rajasthan was arrested following a brief exchange of fire in Delhi's Rohini area. Based on a tip-off, the accused, 32-year-old Vikas alias Saka was intercepted near Barwala Chowk on Friday. When signalled to stop, he opened fire at the police team and was shot in the leg in retaliatory fire before being arrested, he said.

"Vikas was wanted in a May 2025 murder case in Khairthal Tijara area of Rajasthan, where he and his associates allegedly strangled and mutilated a man from their native village Bupania in Jhajjar, Haryana, before burning the body to destroy evidence," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Amit Kaushik said.

They even severed the man's hand to eliminate a tattoo that could aid identification, the officer said, adding that a case is registered at Kishangarh Bans police station, Rajasthan.

Acting on specific intelligence about the accused's movement in the area, a trap was laid near Barwala village and around midnight, he was spotted on a motorcycle, the officer said.

"Instead of stopping, he opened fire at the police team. In self-defence, the team retaliated fire, injuring him in the

leg. Vikas was immediately overpowered and taken to the hospital," he added.

A pistol, three bullets, a stolen motorcycle, a mobile phone and a dongle were recovered from his possession, the DCP said.

Police said Vikas is a habitual offender with several cases registered against him in Haryana — including arms

Based on a tip-off, the accused, 32-year-old Vikas alias Saka was intercepted near Barwala Chowk on Friday night. When signalled to stop, he opened fire at the police team and was shot in the leg in retaliatory fire

offences, assault, and a 2014 murder case in Beri, Jhajjar.

He was also allegedly hired by an accused lodged under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) to carry out a contract killing in Bawana, Delhi, they said.

"Vikas dropped out after class 10 and gradually became involved with local gangsters before joining the Gogi gang. He was known to be armed and dangerous," DCP Kaushik said.

The accused is under arrest, and further investigation is ongoing in coordination with Rajasthan Police, he added.

Jharkhand police neutralise JJMP supremo, second in command

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Daltonganj

Security forces in Latehar on Saturday morning gunned down the chief of the splinter group of naxals JJMP (Jharkhand Jan Mukti Parishad) Pappu Lohra and his close associate Prabhat Ganju at Ichabar under the Latehar police station limits.

Another ultra was injured who is undergoing treatment under the protection of the police when the report last came in. A cop too sustained bullet injury in his shoulder. SP Latehar Kumar Gaurav confirmed the killing of Pappu Lohra and his close associate Prabhat Ganju besides injuries to one more cop and one more naxal.

The injured ultra has been identified as Ashish Kumar while the injured cop is Awadh Singh read the press note of the SP Latehar.

Pappu Lohra carried a reward of rupees 10 lakhs while Prabhat Ganju carried a reward of 5 lakhs.

Pappu Lohra was the most dreaded face of the JJMP. Police have recovered one Insas rifle, 20 empty cartridges, two pouches, three back bags, one shoulder bag, tarpaulin and plastic sheet. Sources said Pappu Lohra was offered to surren-



The action squad of Latehar Police that neutralised JJMP commander and his deputy in Latehar on Saturday

der but he chose to die fighting.

IG of police Palamu zone Sunil Bhaskar described this encounter as one of the biggest achievements of the Latehar police and state police Jharkhand.

The IG went on to say Pappu Lohra was a force to reckon with and now with

his neutralisation the JJMP outfit has lost its teeth.

Pappu Lohra was a man of tactical skill and knew his job well to dodge the police over the last more than one decade but this Saturday his luck and skill failed him and his second in command Prabhat Ganju.

Centre, States should team up for India: PM

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He said that we can become the Skill Capital of the world because of our demographic dividend. Prime Minister said that a Rs 60,000 crore scheme for skilling has been approved by GoI. States must focus on modern training infrastructure and rural training hubs to enhance Skilling.

PM cited cyber security as a challenge as well as an opportunity. Hydrogen and Green Energy were emphasised by him as arenas of immense potential and opportunities. He said that G20 Summit helped India to be recognised as a global tourist destination but States should leverage the opportunity. PM also emphasised on the huge strength of India's Nari Shakti. He urged to change laws for women so that they can join the growth trajectory. He observed that there should be reforms in public and private sectors for working women with focus on their ease of working. Modi also encouraged States to Interlink Rivers within States to battle water scarcity as well as floods. He appreciated Bihar which has recently started Kosi-Mochei connection grid. He also appreciated Aspirational Districts Programme which has been a success through collective efforts.

Indian fraudster...

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He operated a "long-running and complex money laundering network, in which he created and used shell companies to move millions of dollars stolen from Americans through an online tech support scheme, and later an online travel fee scheme," US Department of Justice had said in 2022.

Chandhok was sentenced in 2022 to six years imprisonment by a Rhode Island court on money laundering charges.

The justice department said Chandhok, who had at least five others (mostly Indian students in the US) working at his direction, was in direct contact with high-ranking international members of the scheme. Chandhok had pleaded guilty in

the case.

"According to information presented to the court, Chandhok's criminal activity spanned two years, during which time he 'cleaned' at least 1.5 million dollars. The government's evidence showed that in just one month he laundered nearly USD 930,000," the justice department said.

The CBI as the national central bureau for Interpol in India coordinates closely with all law enforcement agencies in the world for cooperation and assistance via Interpol channels.

"Since, 2021, over 100 wanted criminals have been returned to India through coordination via Interpol channel," CBI's spokesperson said.

Char Dham Yatra sees lull in footfall

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Sati said that the mid-May to mid-June phase is typically the peak of the Char Dham Yatra before the monsoon sets in after June 15. Thousands of local people earn their livelihood during this short window and a sustained low turnout could affect their earnings.

However, Sati remains hopeful that the number of pilgrims will potentially rise in the coming days.

A senior police official involved in Char Dham Yatra preparations also said that this year's lower turnout has made traffic and crowd management significantly easier for police, with no major congestion or parking issues reported so far. He also acknowledged improved planning and execution by the administration.

However, he added that if pilgrim numbers remain low throughout this season, the Char Dham Yatra may see a significant surge in 2026 as those who skipped this year's visit may plan their pilgrimage next year.

Many stakeholders also opined that while the reduced crowds have eased logistical challenges, including traffic and parking in the narrow hill routes, the long-term economic impact on locals who rely heavily on the Yatra season remains a concern.

Many small businesses, hoteliers, porters, mules' operators and shopkeepers in the Char Dham circuit earn a substantial part of their annual income during these few months. Despite the current lull, many stakeholders remain optimistic and believe that if weather conditions remain favourable and no further geopolitical disturbances occur, footfall could gradually increase in the coming weeks.

'20,000 Indians killed by Pakistan...

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It is clear that it is Pakistan which remains in violation of the Indus Waters Treaty."

Earlier in the day, Harish delivered a strong response to Pakistan at a UNSC open debate on 'Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict', calling out Pakistan's "grossly hypocritical" behaviour and asserting that a nation that makes no distinction between terrorists and civilians has no credentials to speak about protecting civilians.

After Pakistan's Ambassador

at the UN Asim Iftikhar Ahmad raked the Kashmir issue and spoke about the recent conflict between the two nuclear-armed countries, Harish slammed Pakistan's baseless allegations and said India experienced decades of Pakistani-sponsored terrorist attacks across its borders.

"This has ranged from the horrific 26/11 attack on the city of Mumbai to the barbaric mass murder of innocent tourists in Pahalgam in April 2025. The victims of Pakistani terrorism have been predomi-

nantly civilians since its objective has been to attack our prosperity, progress and morale. For such a nation to even participate in a discussion on the protection of civilians is an affront to the international community," Harish said.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the Pahalgam attack, which claimed 26 lives. India launched 'Operation Sindoor' under which it carried out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir in

the early hours of May 7, following which Pakistan attempted to attack Indian military bases on May 8, 9 and 10.

The Indian side responded strongly to the Pakistani actions. The on-ground hostilities ended with an understanding on stopping the military actions following talks between the directors general of military operations of both sides on May 10. Harish told the UN Security Council that Pakistan has repeatedly used civilian cover to advance the cause of terrorism.

Monsoon hits early in Kerala

Continued from >> P1

Over the last few years, the monsoon set in over the southern state on May 30 last year; June 8 in 2023; May 29 in 2022; June 3 in 2021; June 1 in 2020; June 8 in 2019; and May 29 in 2018, IMD data showed.

On 10 May, the IMD had predicted the monsoon's arrival over the Kerala coast by May 27. In its initial monsoon forecast released on 15 April, the IMD projected a high probability of above-normal seasonal rainfall throughout the country. It expects the 2025 southwest monsoon to exceed 105% of the long-period average (LPA), with a model error margin of ±5%.

The IMD has indicated an 89% overall probability of normal to above-normal monsoon rainfall. There is a strong 59% probability of above-normal rainfall, a 30% chance of normal rainfall, and only an 11% likelihood of below-normal or deficient monsoon rainfall. The LPA for seasonal rainfall from June to September, based on data from 1971 to 2020, is 87 cm (870 mm). The IMD had earlier indicated favourable conditions for an early onset, supported by neutral El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean

Dipole (IOD) conditions, both key drivers of monsoon behaviour. The early onset is likely to result in increased rainfall activity across Kerala in the coming day.

The monsoon is crucial for India's agriculture sector, which supports the livelihood of about 42 per cent of the population and contributes 18.2 per cent to the country's GDP. It is also essential for replenishing the reservoirs critical for drinking water and power generation across the country. A timely and adequate monsoon is crucial for Indian agriculture, as it directly impacts crop yields, farmer incomes, and overall economic stability.

Meanwhile, as per IMD weather bulletin released on May 24 that the country is witnessing a diverse set of weather phenomena - from extremely heavy rainfall in southern and western regions to northwest conditions in the north and northeast. Delhi and surrounding areas like Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan are experiencing above-normal temperatures, IMD said. A rise of 2-4 degrees Celsius in maximum temperatures is likely over Northwest India in the next two days, followed by stabilisation.

Shubman Gill to lead Team India...

Continued from >> P1

A notable exclusion was pacer Mohammed Shami, who was deemed not fit enough for the long series that will end only in the first week of August.

"He has been trying to get fit for the series but he has had a little bit of a setback last week...And he has got some MRIs done. I would like to mention, I don't think he was going to be available for all five Tests. I don't think his workload is where it needs to be," Agarkar said.

"It's just the medical guys who told us that he's been ruled out of the series. Unfortunately, we were hoping that he's available for some part of the series at least. But if he's not fit at the moment, it's very difficult to be waiting. At the moment he is not fully fit," he added in the press conference. Among the notable inclusions were young left-hander B Sai Sudharsan and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh, who earned their maiden Test call-up.

"Sai has not been picked based on IPL, he has shown the right temperament and has the game to succeed at the top level...We have been looking at him for a while," Agarkar said, referring to the IPL's top scorer this season with 638 runs at an average of 53 so far for Gujarat Titans.

Like Sudharsan, Arshdeep too has experience of playing in county cricket.

Shubman Gill to lead Team India...

Continued from >> P1

The left-arm pacer, who has been picked ahead of Khaleel Ahmed, is India's leading wicket-taker in T20 cricket but proving himself in the traditional format will be a much tougher challenge.

The squad also features Karun Nair, who returns to the national set-up after eight years. Having last played in 2017, Nair was dropped from the team soon after becoming the second triple centurion in Tests from India.

From the tour of Australia, Harshit Rana and Sarfaraz Khan have been dropped even though the latter had claimed to have addressed some of his fitness concerns by shedding considerable weight.

Besides Gill, Bumrah was another strong contender for captaincy but the selectors decided to hand over the leadership responsibility to the batter from Punjab. There were also questions over Bumrah's fitness and Agarkar acknowledged that the star pacer's availability for the full series is a concern.

"I don't think he's available for all five Tests as far as, again, (from what) the physios and the doctors have told us," Agarkar said on Bumrah.

"Whether it's four or three (Tests), we'll see how the series goes and how his body can take the workload. Needless to say, how important he is. So, even if he's

Shubman Gill to lead Team India...

Continued from >> P1

fit for whether it's three or four Tests, he's going to win us a few Test matches," he added. The chosen one, Gill, has a massive challenge at hand, both as a leader and batter. His rare batting talent is undisputed but he is yet to prove himself in Test cricket, especially in SENA (South Africa, England, New Zealand and Australia) countries. He averages 14.66 in three Tests in England. As a captain, he has not got a lot of experience in domestic cricket but has been leading IPL franchise Gujarat Titans for the past couple of seasons.

"It is a massive transition. Both Rohit and Virat were around for a long time," added Agarkar, who said deciding Kohli's replacement at number four would be a call taken by the team management comprising Gill and head coach Gautam Gambhir.

A heavy scorer in domestic cricket, Abhimanyu Easwaran has found a place in the extended squad as a reserve opener. He has been picked in the past as well but could never feature in the playing eleven. With doubts over Nitish Reddy the bowler, the selectors have picked another fast bowling all-rounder in Shardul Thakur, who last played for India in December 2023. Thakur was part of India's previous trip to England where he smashed back to fifties in the Oval Test that India won by 157 runs.

Fires claim three lives in Capital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In two separate fire incidents in Delhi, three people were injured in a house blaze in the Lahori Gate area, while a massive fire and explosion led to the collapse of a factory building in Bawana on Saturday, said officials.

The first incident occurred around 3:40 am on Friday when a fire broke out at a residence on Shradhdhanand Marg in the Farsh Khana area, under Lahori Gate. According to a Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official, five fire tenders were immediately dispatched to the site. The blaze was traced to a cluster of 15 electric meter boards located on the building's ground floor, which also set a parked motorcycle on fire.

Firefighters managed to bring the fire under control by 4:50 am. Three residents were injured and rushed to LNJP Hospital. Among the victims was 13-year-old Master Anas, who suffered 50 percent burn injuries. Nabi Ahmed, 18, sustained 45 percent burns, while 30-year-old Shahnavaz received 40 percent burn injuries. The cause of the fire is yet to be determined, and further investigation is ongoing.

In a separate incident, a massive fire broke out at a plastic bottle manufacturing factory in Sector 2 of the Bawana industrial area early Saturday. The Delhi Fire Services received a call at 4:48 am, and 17 fire tenders were deployed to tackle the blaze. According to DFS chief Atul Garg, the fire rapidly engulfed the multi-storey building, followed by a powerful explosion that caused the structure to collapse.

Thick black smoke was seen rising from the site, and the explosion caused panic among residents in the nearby areas, prompting many to rush out of their homes. Fortunately, no injuries or fatalities have been reported so far in the factory fire.

Divisional Fire Officer Ashok Jaiswal said that the intensity of the blaze was so powerful that the building collapsed under



Debris of a factory building that collapsed due to an explosion following a fire at Bawana industrial area in New Delhi on Saturday

its impact.

"It contained chemicals, plastic, and inflammable material. There are no casualties. Right now 17 fire tenders are at the spot. The fire has been extinguished. There is debris inside the basement, we are clearing it," Jaiswal said. The cause of the fire incident was not immediately known at the time this report was filed.

Locals said that the fierceness of the fire and the black smoke along with the sound of a loud explosion were heard by people far away.

The blaze comes two days after a huge fire broke out in a factory in Baba Na area of the national capital leading to damage of property worth lakhs of rupees.

Rescue and firefighting operations faced

delays due to debris from the collapsed building. Police have launched a probe to find out what triggered the fire and the subsequent explosion.

The building's structural integrity and adherence to safety protocols are being examined. Operations are underway to extinguish the flames completely and clear the debris.

Police busts international drug trafficking syndicate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Police have busted an international drug trafficking syndicate, arresting five individuals, including the alleged kingpin, and recovered narcotics worth approximately ₹5 crore, officials said on Saturday.

The arrests were made following two separate but interlinked operations and the recovered drugs include high-grade opium, charas, and crude heroin, smuggled from Nepal and northeastern India, according to officials.

The accused have been identified as the kingpin Jasmer Singh (52), Raj Kumar (47), Kala (50), Mohan Lal (45) and Sanjay Rawat (43). According to Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Amit Kaushik, "The gang was involved in smuggling high-grade opium, charas, and crude heroin under the guise of legitimate activities such as tourism, textile trading, and road construction work."

The operation has led to the seizure of a total of 7 kilograms of opium, 3.53 kilograms of charas, and 625 grams of crude heroin.

The first operation took place on April 15 near the Burari Authority area in Delhi. Acting on a tip-off, a police team intercepted a car in which two suspects, Jasmer Singh and Raj Kumar, were waiting. Both are residents of Haryana and, upon inspection, the vehicle was found to contain 5.12 kilograms of opium and 3.53 kilograms of charas.

The drugs were ingeniously hidden inside the petrol tank and roof cavity of the car to evade detection.

The interrogation of the duo led to the arrest of two more alleged members of the syndicate. Kala, a resident of Muzaffarnagar in Uttar Pradesh and Sanjay Rawat from Shamli were taken into custody shortly afterward. An additional 1.87 kilograms of opium was

recovered from their possession, further exposing the depth of the operation.

On April 29, a second operation led to the arrest of Mohan Lal in the Burari area. A native of Churu district in Rajasthan, he was already wanted in an NDPS case. He was allegedly caught transporting 625 grams of crude heroin, concealed in a secret cavity in his car. Investigators believe Mohan was introduced to the drug trade after incurring financial losses in his small business ventures. He is reported to have started sourcing drugs from Manipur and delivering them across various states, posing as a worker in road construction projects and traveling with a woman to avoid arousing suspicion.

The police disclosed that the accused used encrypted communication through social media accounts linked to Nepalese phone numbers to coordinate their activities. This allowed them to bypass Indian surveillance mechanisms and maintain secrecy in their operations.

Jasmer Singh, who is believed to be the ringleader, had previously served a jail sentence in Nepal between 2011 and 2019 in a narcotics case. He reportedly met Kala during his imprisonment and the two resumed drug smuggling soon after their release. In 2021, Jasmer was also arrested in Haryana for similar offences, highlighting his repeated involvement in narcotics trafficking.

All accused have been booked under various sections of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act. Police say that investigations are ongoing and further arrests are likely, as they continue to trace the syndicate's wider network of associates and financiers.

Efforts are also being made to identify the cross-border links of the cartel and investigate the financial channels used to fund the illegal trade.

Assembly committees bound by law, not handicapped: Speaker Gupta to Atishi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Assembly speaker Vijender Gupta said the existing powers of the committees within the boundaries laid down by the Constitution and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) Amendment Act, 2021 is sufficient to fulfill its duties and there need be no apprehension that the Committees will be handicapped in its workings. Responding to AAP leader and former Chief Minister Atishi's letter, Speaker Gupta acknowledged Atishi's concerns but placed the blame for the current restrictions on what he described as the "vindictive manner of working" by the previous regime, which, he argued, compelled Parliament to amend the Act. Gupta asserted that earlier, Assembly Committees were allegedly used to "browbeat the bureaucrats and interfere in their working," leading to the present legal boundaries.

Gupta said that, as per the 2021 Amendments, "none of the Committees, including the Financial Committees, will be examining matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct any inquiries in matters of administration till the Parliament in its wisdom reviews the amendments." He emphasised that the



Assembly or its Committees should not interfere in trivial administrative issues, and that the Speaker retains the prerogative to decide whether an issue falls within day-to-day administration—a decision that cannot be questioned. Addressing Atishi's interpretation of the PAC's powers, Gupta disagreed with the notion that the PAC can examine matters beyond appropriation accounts. He cited established parliamentary procedure, stating, "The PAC is the extension of the Assembly which examines such issues. I am sure it's not your case that the Parliament and all the State Legislatures are wrong in considering the Reports of the C&AG other than

the Appropriation Accounts."

Gupta further referenced the authoritative treatise 'Practice and Procedure in Parliament' by MN Kaul and SL Shakhder, noting that the PAC's functions extend "beyond the formality of expenditure to involving losses, nugatory expenditure and financial irregularities." However, he reiterated that these powers must be exercised within the contours of the law as amended.

Atishi, in her letter dated May 6, 2025, had raised alarm over what she termed an "anomalous situation" created by the 2021 amendment. She argued that the Act has severely curtailed the powers of the Assembly's Financial Committees, rendering them unable to effectively oversee executive accountability. Atishi cited the crucial role these committees have historically played, from resolving waterlogging issues and investigating corruption in cooperative banks to restoring diagnostic services in Mohalla Clinics. She warned that, under the amended law, the Assembly "shall not make any rule to enable itself or its committees to consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the Capital or conduct inquiries in relation to the administrative decisions," effectively stripping the committees of their oversight function.

CMs from different states unanimously appreciated Operation Sindoor: CM Gupta

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Saturday said that her counterparts from various states "unanimously" appreciated Operation Sindoor and congratulated the armed forces and Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a meeting of the NITI Aayog.

Rekha Gupta, who attended her first meeting of the NITI Aayog's Governing Council after taking charge as the chief minister of the BJP government in February this year, highlighting her government's core priorities—cleaning the Yamuna River, enhancing infrastructure, and providing piped water to every household. She declared Pollution-Free Delhi as the next priority.

The Chief Minister said that it was a very good experience as she learnt a lot by listening to other states. "The best part of the meeting for me was that all the chief ministers unanimously and in one voice appreciated Operation Sindoor and congratulated the armed forces and the prime minister," she said after the meeting held at Bharat Mandapam. It was pleasing to see that entire India is united, the chief minister added. Delhi CM said Delhi being the national capital, car-

ries a heightened responsibility. People from every Indian state have made Delhi their home, and providing them with quality civic services is a duty. Upholding the spirit of 'Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat', Delhi has started celebrating State Days of all Indian states. She also called for greater cooperation from neighbouring states such as Haryana, Punjab, and Uttar Pradesh to accelerate regional development. She described Delhi as a city nurtured by history and culture, now aiming to shape a glorious future.

"Looking ahead to 2047, the Chief Minister outlined a clear vision: access to nutritious food, clean drinking water, inclusive and quality education, universal healthcare, skill development, high-tech research, waste-free ecosystems, and heritage conservation. The Delhi Government is actively pursuing these goals," she said. The government is also expanding healthcare infrastructure by constructing new hospitals to make affordable, accessible, and quality health services a reality for every resident.

Rekha said Delhi's water supply strategy includes a comprehensive, phased plan for piped water access to every household. New Water Treatment Plants (WTPs) are being set up. Yamuna reju-

venation and rainwater harvesting are the top priorities. All works are being undertaken under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi with utmost commitment. "Yamuna is envisioned not just as a clean river but as a symbol of cultural renaissance. Government is planning 40 new decentralised STPs to clean all major drains before they enter the river. The Chief Minister sought strong support from the Centre and neighbouring states to collectively restore the Yamuna's glory," she said Rekha said that it was a wonderful first NITI Aayog meeting for her, as several states shared their good practices and also received guidance from Prime Minister Modi.

Rekha also announced that Delhi will host its first-ever Investor Summit under the leadership of PM Modi, unlocking investment opportunities and placing Delhi firmly on the global investment map. Plans for a new tourism circuit and strengthened support for Start-up India and Stand-up India are also underway.

Ahead of attending the NITI Aayog meeting, the chief minister earlier in the day accused the previous Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) regime of not raising the issues of Delhi's interests before the Centre's policy think-tank for years.



Centre approves ₹800 crore for Delhi Jal Board under AMRUT scheme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a major financial boost, the Central government has recently approved ₹800 crore for the Delhi Jal Board under the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) scheme to provide sewer connections in slums and unauthorised colonies across the city. A meeting was held earlier this month between the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) officials and the apex committee on the AMRUT scheme under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs where funds were approved under the Yamuna cleaning project.

According to the proposal, around 13,000 new sewer connections in the slum areas will be provided under the AMRUT scheme for holistic improvement of the Yamuna river. "The Union Territory (Delhi) was also advised to work holistically for Yamuna rejuvenation and sewerage management and to have a clear sludge processing strategy to work out its reuse," an official document said.

Currently, the DJB is unable to treat the entire amount of sewage generated by the city to increase its overall sewage treatment

capacity by connecting all households to sewerage treatment infrastructure. In the first budget of the new BJP Government, water and sewerage sector has been given one of the biggest shares of ₹9,000 crore. Delhi Chief minister Rekha Gupta has allocated ₹500 crore for repair of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) in the budget, this covers the two projects.

The DJB currently has 37 STPs and out of these 18 are under upgradation projects to increase the overall treatment capacity of sewerage treatment in the city, said officials. For the past few years, the DJB has been working on the Interceptor Sewer Project, which entails trapping all drains and diverting the wastewater flowing in them to the nearby STP. However, there are some drains where trapping is not possible like the Najafgarh drain, eventually the wastewater enters Yamuna.

"Through this fund we plan to increase our overall sewerage capacity in the next few years. For the past few years, the department has been trying to provide sewer connections in all areas so that there is no untreated sewage flowing openly in the drains and eventually landing in Yamuna," said a DJB official.

NCRTC MD reviews Shatabdi-Modipuram corridor progress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

National Capital Region Transport Corporation (NCRTC) Managing Director Shalabh Goel conducted a detailed inspection of the under-construction section between Shatabdi Nagar and Modipuram on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namo Bharat Corridor. Accompanied by Directors and senior officials of NCRTC, Goel assessed the 17 km stretch, focusing on operational readiness, quality and safety standards.

Traversing the route on a trolley, the MD reviewed both up and down lines, inspected the viaduct, and examined ongoing finishing works at two Namo Bharat stations—Begumpul and Modipuram.

Trial runs in this section are already in advanced stages, with civil construction completed and finishing work progressing rapidly. Shri Goel expressed satisfaction with the pace and quality of work, commending contractors and urging



them to maintain momentum. He emphasised strict adherence to safety protocols and timelines, encouraging coordination between NCRTC teams and contractors to ensure a seamless execution. Special attention was given to

Begumpul station, an underground facility situated in a bustling market area of Meerut. Measuring 246 meters in length, 24.5 meters in width and around 22 meters deep, Begumpul is among the corridor's largest stations. Designed to serve

both Namo Bharat and the Meerut Metro, the station is in its final stages of finishing. During the inspection, Goel reviewed the interchange systems and commuter flow arrangements to ensure a smooth and integrated travel experience.

At Modipuram, the last station on the corridor, the team reviewed the rapid progress of finishing work and PEB (Pre-Engineered Building) construction. Located on the National Highway, Modipuram station will feature a Foot Over Bridge (FOB) to facilitate safe pedestrian crossing. The civil structure of the FOB is nearly complete, with finishing work set to begin shortly.

NCRTC plans to develop the station as a major transit hub, offering integrated access to autos, taxis, and buses. Following the inspection, officials returned along the down line. Goel reiterated confidence in NCRTC's ability to deliver the project on schedule, highlighting the organisation's commitment to quality and timely completion.

Spurious drug supplier nabbed in Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Delhi Police has arrested a man from West Bengal who had been evading arrest for more than three years in a high-profile case involving the supply of spurious cancer medicines, an official said on Saturday.

Sabir Alam, was declared a proclaimed offender and was arrested after receiving a tip-off that he was on his honeymoon in Rani Ganj, West Bengal, the official said. The case first came to light in November 2022 when four people were arrested for possessing fake cancer drugs, he added. The subsequent probe uncovered a major illegal pharmaceutical racket, leading to the arrest of 14 peo-

ple, including two doctors, the official said. A manufacturing unit in Haryana's Sonapat and a warehouse in Tronica City, Uttar Pradesh, were also raided and large quantities of counterfeit medicines seized, he said. "Alam played a key role in the syndicate, coordinating the distribution of fake cancer medication in Kolkata and facilitating cross-border shipments to Bangladesh, where the medicines were allegedly supplied to Dr Rasel," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Harsh Indora said. The accused also managed cash collections from unsuspecting patients and transferred the proceeds to co-accused, including Dr Pabitra Narayan Pradhan and Shubham Manna, after keeping his share, the police said in a statement.

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Will not be silenced by terrorism, says Tharoor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, who is leading a multi-party delegation to five countries, has asserted the mission would be to give the world the message that “we will not be silenced by terrorism” and that “we don’t want the world to look away either”.

Tharoor made the remarks late last night just before his delegation left for a visit to Guyana, Panama, Colombia, Brazil and the United States.

In a video message posted on X, Tharoor said, “I’m heading off to five countries leading an all-party delegation to Guyana, Panama, Colombia, Brazil and the United States and the reason we are going is to speak for the nation, to speak about this horrendous crisis we were subjected to in which our country was attacked by terrorists in the cruelest possible way.” The Thiruvananthapuram MP said the delegation is a mission of peace and hope, and will one day remind the world that India stands for all the values “we need to preserve in the world today.” “We need to speak up with clarity and conviction for our country, for our response and to give the world the message that we will not be silenced by terrorism and we don’t want the world to look away either,” the MP from Thiruvananthapuram said.

“We don’t want indifference to triumph over the truth. It’s a mission of peace. It’s a mission of hope. And it’s a mission that will one day remind the world that India stands for all the values we need to preserve in the world today of peace, of



A multi-party delegation led by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor before leaving for a visit to Guyana, Colombia, Panama, Brazil and US to convey India's message on terror in New Delhi

democracy, of freedom and not of hatred, killing and of terror. Jai Hind,” he said in his video message.

Tharoor also posted pictures of the delegation members at the airport before boarding the flight.

The delegation led by Tharoor comprises Shambhavi (LJP-RV), Sarfaraz Ahmed (JMM), G M Harish Bhalayogi (TDP), Shashank Mani Tripathi (BJP), Bhuvaneshwar Kalita (BJP), Milind Deora (Shiv Sena), Tejasvi Surya (BJP) and former diplomat Taranjit Sandhu. It will travel to Guyana, Panama, Colombia, Brazil and the US.

India’s multi-party delegations to different countries will emphasise Pakistan’s links to terrorism, including the 9/11 attack in the US and assert that the recent

conflict was triggered by the Pahalgalam terror strike and not Operation Sindoor as alleged by Islamabad.

After the briefing by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri to four of the seven parliamentary delegations here on Friday, delegates said they will work to bust the Pakistani narrative of projecting India as the aggressor by underscoring the links of Pahalgalam terrorists to the country.

Three delegations were briefed by Misri on Tuesday and are already on tours of their destinations.

The delegation, which is led by Tharoor, visiting the US is likely to underscore Pakistan’s links to al Qaeda, which was behind multiple terror strikes across the world, including the 9/11 attack in the North American country.

Time to stand united against terror: Sule

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

NCP-SP leader Supriya Sule on Saturday said she will convey to world leaders India’s firm resolve to fight against terrorism and its supporters and there was no room for politics on the issue of Operation Sindoor as she leads a multi-party delegation to four countries, starting with Qatar.

Sule, the working president of the NCP-SP, is leading a delegation comprising BJP leaders Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Anurag Thakur and V Muraleedharan, Congress leaders Manish Tewari and Anand Sharma, TDP leader Lavu Sri Krishna Devarayalu, AAP leader Vikramjeet Singh Sawhney, and former diplomat Syed Akbaruddin to Qatar, South Africa, Ethiopia and Egypt. “This is not about politics, this is about India. The attack on innocent tourists at

Pahalgalam was an attack on the soul of India. Our response to it was measured, to send a clear message of zero tolerance to terror,” Sule told reporters here.

On attempts to politicise the issue by the Congress, Sule said NCP-SP chief Sharad Pawar had made it clear on behalf of the party that this was not a time to indulge in politics or resort to criticism.

“We all have some tough questions for the government, but this is the time to stand united with the government. This is the time to show that India is united and has zero tolerance for terrorism. This is not a time to indulge in political brickbats. This will be our policy whoever is in power — Nation first, State next, then party, followed by family,” Sule said.

The delegation will first travel to Qatar, which is considered to wield influence in the West Asian region and has a role as a

mediator in regional conflicts.

The Sule-led group will travel to South Africa, which holds the current G-20 Presidency and then head to Ethiopia, which is also the home to the African Union. The delegation will visit Egypt, an influential country in the Arab world.

Sule said the Ministry of External Affairs had chalked out a detailed programme for the 10-day visit during which the delegation will meet a cross-section of the leadership of the respective countries.

“This is a time to tell the world that India is united against terrorism and its sponsors,” Sule said.

India’s multi-party delegations to different countries will emphasise Pakistan’s links to terrorism and assert that the recent conflict was triggered by the Pahalgalam terror strike and not Operation Sindoor as alleged by Islamabad.

Justice BV Nagarathna to become part of Collegium after Justice AS Oka’s retirement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Justice BV Nagarathna, in line to become the first woman Chief Justice of India, is set to become a member of the Supreme Court Collegium after the retirement of Justice Abhay S Oka.

Being the fifth senior most judge now, Justice Nagarathna will officially become part of the collegium on May 25 and will be part of it until she retires as Chief Justice of India on October 29, 2027.

The Collegium will now comprise Chief Justice Bhushan Ramkrishna Gavai, Justice Surya Kant, Justice Vikram Nath, Justice J K Maheshwari and Justice Nagarathna.

According to Supreme Court sources, CJ

Gavai is likely to convene his inaugural collegium meeting on Monday to address vacancies in the top court and make crucial appointments in several high courts. After Justice Oka’s retirement, there will be a vacancy of three judges in the top court. Under the collegium system, which came into existence in 1993 after a Supreme Court judgement, five top judges of the Supreme Court recommend the appointment, transfer and elevation of judges to the Supreme Court and the 25 high courts.

The Government can return the recommendation to the collegium under this system. It usually accepts the recommendation if it is reiterated by the collegium. But there have been cases when the government has

returned the file again or has not responded to the recommendations.

Justice Nagarathna, born on October 30, 1962, is the daughter of former CJI ES Venkataramiah.

She enrolled as an advocate on October 28, 1987, in Bangalore and practised in the fields pertaining to the Constitution, commerce, insurance and service.

She was appointed as an Additional Judge of the High Court of Karnataka on February 18, 2008 and became a permanent Judge on February 17, 2010.

She will have a tenure as an apex court judge till October 29, 2027 and may have a tenure of over one month as the first woman CJI after September 23, 2027.

BJP slams Rahul for calling Pakistan Army’s ‘act of terror’ in Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch ‘tragedy’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The BJP on Saturday slammed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for calling the Pakistan Army’s “act of terror” in Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch a “tragedy”, accusing him of rubbing salt on the wounds of the victims of cross border shelling and giving a cover fire to Islamabad with his remark.

Rahul is more suited for the role of the “leader of Pakistani propaganda” than the Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, the BJP charged and asked the Congress leader to stop doing “comedy in the name of tragedy”.

This came after Gandhi met the victims of the cross-border shelling by Pakistani troops in Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch and described the

damage caused as a “big tragedy”, pledging to highlight their plight at the national level.

Taking serious exception to the Congress leader’s remark, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla said, “Rahul Gandhi in his statement said that what happened in Poonch was a tragedy. Rahul Gandhi is calling (Pakistan Army’s) act of terror an act of tragedy.”

The entire country is shocked and upset with his remarks, he told reporters here.

The BJP spokesperson said the Pakistani Army with its “terrorist mindset” rained bullets and killed unarmed innocent civilians, including in Poonch.

They also fired at Gurudwara and the devotees, who were performing puja there, he added.

“Rahul Gandhi indulges in white washing, calls an act of terror an act of tragedy,” Poonawalla charged said “you have rubbed salt on our wounds”.

This came after Gandhi met the victims of the cross-border shelling by Pakistani troops in Jammu and Kashmir’s Poonch and described the damage caused as a “big tragedy”

The BJP spokesperson alleged that the Congress and Gandhi family have “always whitewashed” Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India and gave a “cover fire” to Islamabad’s criminal actions.

“The Congress did so by blaming Hindutva for the 2008 Mumbai terror strike, gave a clean chit to Pakistan in the Samjhauta Express blast case calling it Hindutva terror, Randeep Surjewala (Congress leader) had given clean chit to Pakistan calling Pulwama terror strike an insider job and job of home grown terrorists,” he said.

Within 24 hours of the Pahalgalam terror strike last month, Robert Vadra, Rahul Gandhi’s family member and husband of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, had put its blame on Hindutva, Poonawalla charged.

“Rahul Gandhi and his family always provide cover fire to Pakistan’s terrorism, Pakistan’s misdeeds and Pakistan’s criminal actions,” the BJP spokesperson alleged.



SC orders cadre review in all Central Armed Police Forces

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court (SC) has directed to conduct a cadre review, which was due in 2021, in all the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), including ITBP, BSE, CRPF, CISF and SSB, to be carried out within six months.

A bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan on Friday directed the Department of Personnel and Training to take an appropriate decision within three months of receipt of action taken report from the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding cadre review and review of existing service rules/recruitment rules.

The court’s direction came on a batch of pleas seeking Non Functional Financial Upgradation, cadre review and restructuring and amendment of recruitment rules to eliminate IPS deputation.

“Keeping in mind the twin objectives of service mobility of the cadre officers of CAPF, ...removing stagnation on the one hand and the operational/functional requirement of the forces on the other hand, we are of the view that the number of posts earmarked for deputation in the cadres of the CAPFs up to the level of Senior Administrative Grade (SAG) should be progressively reduced over a period of time, say within an outer limit of two years.

“This will bring in a sense of participation of the cadre officers belonging to the CAPFs in the decision-making process

within the administrative framework of the CAPFs thereby removing the long-standing grievances of the cadre officers,” the bench said.

The court said the role of CAPFs is crucial for maintaining security at the borders of the country as well as for discharging internal security duties.

There are various issues connected with the deployment of CAPFs, including coordinating with the state governments and the state police force, it said.

The court said the Centre has taken the view that presence of IPS officers in each of the CAPFs is vital to maintain the character of each of them as a unique central armed force.

“This is a policy decision. Of course, individual officers belonging to the IPS or the association of IPS officers cannot have a say as to how much the deputation quota should be and how long the deputation should continue. They are there on deputation by virtue of the policy decision of the Central Government manifest through the service rules/recruitment rules of the CAPFs.

“Having said that, we cannot also be oblivious of the grievance expressed by officers of the CAPFs as highlighted supra. Their dedicated service upholding the security integrity and sovereignty of the nation while safeguarding our borders and maintaining internal security within the country cannot be ignored or overlooked,” the bench said.

Presidential Retreat in Dehradun to open for public from June 24

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

In a first, the Presidential Retreat in Dehradun — Rashtrapati Niketan — will open for public viewing from June 24, the President’s office announced on Saturday. Opening of the 186-year-old 21-acre estate is part of the initiative to increase citizen engagement with the President and heritage of the Rashtrapati Bhavan, it said.

Under this initiative, since 2023, Rashtrapati Bhavan, Rashtrapati Nilayam, Hyderabad, and Rashtrapati Niwas, Mashobra, were opened up for public visits six days a week.

From February 2025, the change of guard ceremony also started at the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan in a new format with increased seating capacity. The ceremony is a long-standing military tradition conducted weekly to allow a fresh group of the President’s Bodyguards (PBGs) to take charge. President Droupadi Murmu will visit the Rashtrapati Niketan in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, on June 20 to overview the preparation of opening of the estate for public, a statement issued by her office said. She will also lay the foundation stone for Rashtrapati Udyan, a 132-acre ecological park, on the occasion.

The Rashtrapati Niketan, earlier known as Rashtrapati Ashiana, was used by the President’s Bodyguards for the training of PBG horses. This heritage building now showcases a curated selection of artwork and offers a glimpse into its rich legacy.

“Visitors will have the opportunity to view the stables and horses of the President’s Bodyguard. The Lily Pond, Rockery Pond, Rose Garden and Pergola will also be points of attraction for the visitors,” the statement said. In addition to the Rashtrapati Niketan, people can also visit the Rashtrapati Tapovan, a 19-acre dense forest trail on the Rajpur Road.

The Tapovan offers a serene escape into nature with a rich canopy of native trees, winding trails, wooden bridges, elevated machans for birdwatching and quiet spots for reflection and meditation, it said.

Congress calls NITI Aayog ‘Ayogya body’

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Calling the NITI Aayog an “Ayogya body”, the Congress on Saturday hit out at the Centre and said the NITI Aayog meeting was yet another exercise in “hypocrisy and diversion”.

Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, said the governing council of the NITI Aayog will meet under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday to reportedly review the progress on the so-called “Viksit Bharat” goal. “What sort of Viksit Bharat will it be if those in power themselves destroy the bonds of social harmony by their malicious words and deeds,” Ramesh asked in a post on X.

The Congress leader continued, “What sort of Viksit Bharat will it be if those in power subvert Parliament, judiciary, universities, media and Constitutional and statutory authorities to fulfill their nefarious goals?”

“What sort of Viksit Bharat will it be if the values that India always stood for are systematically assaulted in full glare of the world?”

“What sort of Viksit Bharat will it be with sharpening economic disparities and inequalities even as wealth continues to accumulate in the hands of a few?”

Ramesh also asked what sort of Viksit Bharat will it be if India’s glorious diversities are “deliberately sought to be insulted and erased”.

Today’s meeting of the NITI Aayog — an ‘Ayogya’ body if ever there was one — is yet another exercise in hypocrisy and diversion

— JAIRAM RAMESH, CONGRESS LEADER

“What sort of Viksit Bharat is it where not only is freedom of speech under threat but freedom after speech is also endangered,” he asked.

“Today’s meeting of the NITI Aayog — an ‘Ayogya’ body if ever there was one — is yet another exercise in hypocrisy and diversion,” Ramesh alleged.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Saturday chair the 10th governing council meeting of the NITI Aayog, which will focus on states, with a view to make India a developed nation by 2047, an official

statement said. The theme of the meeting is ‘Viksit Rajya for Viksit Bharat@2047’. It will be the first major meeting of the prime minister with the chief ministers of all the states and Union Territories after Operation Sindoor.

“In line with his commitment to take all the states together as ‘Team India’ for a Viksit Bharat, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will chair the 10th Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog on May 24, 2025.

“The Governing Council meeting will discuss the approach on Viksit Rajya for Viksit Bharat @2047,” NITI Aayog said in a statement.

The idea of Viksit Rajya for Viksit Bharat is a call for states to craft bold, long-term, and inclusive vision documents aligned with national priorities yet grounded in local realities, the statement said. “These visions must include time-bound targets,” it said.

The statement also said that states must leverage their unique geographic and demographic advantages while focusing on human development, economic growth, sustainability, technology and governance reforms.

Plastic-for-meals, pads-for-waste: Rural India reimagining sanitation solutions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

India’s path to reaching the milestone of having 77 per cent of its villages as ODF Plus Model has been quietly paved by local experiments — from plastic-for-meals drives to tourism-funded waste management systems.

A village can attain ODF Plus Model status once it sustains its open defecation-free position, has arrangements for both solid and liquid waste management, observes visual cleanliness, and displays ODF Plus information, education and communication messages.

Going by official data, more than 5.10 lakh villages have arrangements for solid waste disposal while over 5.26 lakh have systems for liquid waste management. More than 1,200 biogas plants are registered and over 6.38 lakh vehicles have been deployed for waste collection.

Yet, beyond these statistics, it is the local leadership and community-led initiatives that are shaping how rural India is managing its waste.

With plastic waste being a significant

hindrance to sanitation, Suman Dangri of Karnal district in Haryana has adopted an ingenious way to solve the problem — bringing 500 grams of clean, recyclable plastic and get a hot meal in return.

She and her self-help group launched the initiative with a ₹50,000 loan and have since collected over 1,500 kilograms of plastic and served more than 3,000 meals. Running the programme at the Atal Kisan Mazdoor Canteen in Bhushli village, Dangri said the idea was born out of necessity. “Plastic is everywhere and people are hungry. We found a way to tackle both.”

A similar social initiative is unfolding in Uttar Pradesh’s Sonbhadra district. Here, women are trying to address plastic pollution and menstrual hygiene together. Christened ‘Mera Plastic, Meri Jimmedari’, women of the Unchadeeh village panchayat are given a pack of sanitary pads for every two kg of plastic waste they collect.

Initiated by Archana Tripathi, the village head, the program has seen support from health workers and school teachers

who are encouraging women and girls to collect used plastic items.

“It’s a small effort but it helps break taboos around menstruation while reducing plastic litter,” Tripathi said.

Going by official data, more than 5.10 lakh villages have arrangements for solid waste disposal while over 5.26 lakh have systems for liquid waste management

In neighbouring Ghorawal block, Parmeshwar Pal, a village head, has taken on the task of collecting plastic waste in an e-rickshaw daily while urging locals to reduce single-use plastic. “It’s not a glamorous work, but it starts conversations and changes habits,” he said.

In the hill state of Uttarakhand, a revenue-backed waste management model has emerged in Sirasu village along the Ganga river.

Once lacking basic sanitation, the vil-

lage is now an ODF Plus Model site that funds its cleanliness drive through tourism. Since 2018, the local panchayat has charged ₹1,000 for pre-wedding photo shoots and rented out tents and lighting equipment to generate ₹50 lakh revenue over the years.

The funds are used to maintain toilets, operate plastic waste collection centres, and improve infrastructure for the growing number of tourists. “The photo-shoots bring money that keeps the village clean,” said a member of the village panchayat.

Community spirit and wisdom have transformed Niuland district’s Ghokito village, just a kilometre from Kubhoto town in Nagaland, into an ODF Plus Model Village that has 86 household and a population of just over 500.

At the heart of Ghokito’s waste management lies a simple yet powerful practice: backyard farming.

Kitchen scraps like vegetable peels and leftovers are cooked with wheat bran and green leafy vegetables to create feed for pigs, raised by nearly every household.

This turns waste into a resource for the livestock and reduces landfill waste.

Children also play a vital role in Ghokito’s sustainability efforts.

Every week, students from the village’s Sunday School collect plastic waste from homes and by-lanes, segregating it for sale to a recycling network. The earnings fund their ministry activities, creating a cycle of community benefit.

Cleanliness in Ghokito is a culture, not a one-time effort. A water and sanitation committee conducts monthly inspections to ensure toilets are clean and functional, with special attention to the hygiene of migrant workers.

Although the Central government has focused on infrastructure push with over 1,825 rural plastic waste units set up, the stories from Bhushli, Ghokito, Unchadeeh, and Sirasu highlight a shift in approach: local solutions for local problems.

“Whether through informal barter or leveraging tourism, rural India’s waste crisis is being tackled in ways that go beyond policy documents,” a senior official said.

Rahul meets victims' families affected by shelling in Poonch



MOHIT KANDHARI ■ Jammu

Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, on Saturday visited Poonch to meet the members of the families affected by the cross-border shelling by Pakistan and also consoled students of Christ Public School, Poonch, which lost two of its students to the indiscriminate shelling.

Poonch faced the maximum brunt of the shelling, losing 13 precious lives, including five school-going children. 12-year-old twins Zain Ali and Urwa Fatima, a seven-year-old girl, Maryam Khatoun and 13-year-old Vihaan Bhargav were among the kids killed in the shelling.

During his hour-long visit to the grief-

stricken town, Gandhi met with students, offering words of comfort and resilience. "Work hard, play harder, and make lots of friends in school," he advised, encouraging the young students to channel their grief into determination and community. "You miss your little friends. I'm very sorry about that."

"You've seen a bit of danger, you've seen a bit of a frightening situation. But don't worry, everything will come back to normal. And your way of responding to this problem should be that you study really hard, you play really hard and you make a lot of friends in school. Okay? Will you do that? Good," Gandhi told the students of Christ School. The school, though not directly damaged in the May 7-10 shelling,

has been profoundly affected by the loss of its students, leaving the community in mourning. Rahul also visited the families of those who lost their lives in the shelling and inspected damage to the houses and religious places, including a Gurdwara, a Madarassa and a famous temple.

Some residents sought Gandhi's intervention in enhancing the compensation for their damaged houses.

"It is a big tragedy. Many people lost their lives. They (Pakistan army) have hit civilian targets directly. I talked to the people and tried to understand their problems, and they have asked me to raise their issue at the national level, which I will do," Gandhi told reporters.

Later, in a post on X, he said, "Today I met the families of those who lost their lives in shelling by Pakistani troops in Poonch. Damaged houses, scattered belongings, moist eyes, and painful stories of losing loved ones — these patriotic families bear the biggest burden of war with courage and dignity every time. Salute to their courage."

"I stand strongly with the victim families — I will definitely raise their demands and issues at the national level," Gandhi added.

Accompanied by party leaders, including AICC General Secretary in charge of the party's Jammu and Kashmir affairs Syed Naseer Hussain, AICC general secretary GA Mir, J and K Congress chief Tariq Hameed Karra and former ministers Vikar Rasool Wani and Lal Singh, Gandhi paid obeisance at the Singh Sabha Gurdwara.

Assam CM meets top industry leaders, seeks fulfilment of investment commitments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma met top industrialists here and sought fulfilment of their commitments made at an investment summit held in Guwahati in February. The Chief Minister met Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal here on Friday evening and asked him to operationalise the group's investment commitment made during the Advantage Assam 2.0 investment summit, an official release said. Agarwal said the group is wholly committed to Assam's growth journey and is keen to expand its footprint in the state's hydrocarbon sector.

Later, Sarma took to 'X' and wrote, "Today in New Delhi, I met the very enterprising Chairman of Vedanta Group Shri Anil Agarwal Ji". "We spoke on operationalising the group's investment commitment made during Advantage Assam 2.0. Vedanta is keen to expand its footprint in the state's hydrocarbon sector," he said. The chief minister also met the Managing Director of ITC Hotels, Anil Chadha, and discussed with him the potential of investment in the hospitality sector. Chadha told the chief minister that his group is very keen on exploring opportunities in the hospitality sector in Assam, the release said.

Informing about the development, Sarma's officer wrote in 'X', "Shri Anil Chadha, MD, ITC Hotels called upon CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in New Delhi today. They discussed the potential of investments in Assam's hospitality sector as Chadha expressed keen interest in explor-



Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (left) with Vedanta Group Chairman Anil Agarwal (right)

ing opportunities for expansion in the state." The Advantage Assam 2.0 has secured investment commitments worth ₹5.18 lakh crore over the next five years. The chief minister, who is closely monitoring the investment commitments made by different companies during the Advantage Assam 2.0, will hold one-on-one meetings with the industry honchos in the national capital on May 26.

"The Chief Minister has started individual discussions with the companies about how to go about realising the investment on the ground, what kind of incentives they might need, the land they would need. We will prepare the preparatory roadmap over the next six months," a senior official privy to the development said. "If even a significant portion of the

pledged investments materialises, Assam could emerge as a leading industrial hub in the Northeast and beyond," the official said.

Therefore, the focus now shifts to implementation and execution, ensuring that these investments translate into job creation, infrastructure development, and long-term economic benefits for the state. To achieve this goal, the government of Assam plans to carefully analyse investment proposals in the current financial year and work toward a comprehensive roadmap within the next six months.

"The roadmap will focus on addressing key challenges such as land allocation, ease of doing business, and incentive structures to ensure that projects move from paper to reality," the official added.

Shirui Hills flag row: Meitei organisation Arambai Tenggol rejects provocation claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Imphal/New Delhi

Following widespread condemnation by Manipur-based Tangkhul Naga organisations regarding the display of Meitei's seven-coloured flag and raising of slogans atop Shirui hill peak by members of Arambai Tenggol, the Meitei organisation on Saturday asserted that misleading content on social media had created unnecessary confusion.

It emphasised that the act should not be interpreted as a territorial claim or provocation.

The controversy erupted after a photo went viral on Friday night, showing Arambai Tenggol members in traditional attire holding the Meitei's seven-coloured flag while raising slogans such as "Long live Manipur" and "Mother Shirui be blessed."

The image, originally posted by a

Facebook page named 'Manipur Stylish,' was accompanied by a caption that read: "We, the Arambai Tenggol, raised the SALAI TARET Flags as a bold declaration that Arambai Tenggol stands strong across every corner of our land. This is our sacred soil - no other community has the right to stake any claim over the land of Manipur." This caption sparked outrage among members of the Tangkhul Naga community, who viewed it as inflammatory and disrespectful. Arambai Tenggol's clarification came after Tangkhul Naga apex student body Tankhul Katamnao Long strongly condemned the incident, which took place at the venue of ongoing 5th State-Level Shirui Lily festival in Ukhrul district.

In a statement, Arambai Tenggol said, "It is deeply unfortunate that the Tangkhul Katamnao Saklong has been misled by inaccurate and misleading information circulated by a Facebook page. In

sensitive matters such as this, we believe it is imperative to verify the authenticity of sources before arriving at hasty conclusions." "Misinterpretation of such events only fuels division, and it is evident that certain elements are working with the intent to disrupt peaceful coexistence between the Meitei and Naga communities" it said. It also clarified the symbolism behind the event and the flag.

"Shirui Lily is the state flower of Manipur, symbolising the collective identity of the state and not belonging to any single community. The event was officially organised by the state government and participants were merely engaging in cultural celebration within the framework of the state's initiatives," it said.

"The image in question, showing members holding the Salai Taret (Seven Clan) flag, is being unnecessarily politicised," it said, adding the flag symbolises the unity and peaceful coex-

istence of indigenous clans of Manipur and is a regular feature at expeditions, sporting events and cultural occasions whether in India or abroad. "Displaying this flag in Shirui Hills does not, and should not, be construed as a territorial claim or provocation, it added. "Carrying the flag in the United States, Europe, or the Himalayas does not imply ownership of those regions, its presence here signifies cultural continuity, not confrontation," it said.

The organisation also asserted that slogans in the viral video footage does not contain any content that disrespects or

threatens any community.

"We urge TKS and all concerned individuals to examine the context of the video with care and objectivity. The valley of Manipur and Arambai Tenggol, embrace and honour the spirit of peaceful coexistence among all indigenous communities who respect the unity and integrity of Manipur," it said. "We hold deep respect for the indigenous Tangkhul community, their customs, and their sacred hills. Our intent was never to offend or incite, but only to stand in solidarity with our traditions, just as others do across our diverse state and nation, we appeal to all

communities to view our actions as part of a peaceful cultural expression, an expression protected under law and essential in a democratic, pluralistic society like Manipur," it said.

Condemning Arambai Tenggol for the incident, Tangkhul Katamnao Long said, "The Shirui Lily Festival is a solemn celebration of our rare endemic flower, our land and the enduring spirit of the Tangkhul Naga people" and "to carry out this kind of symbolic aggression in sacred Tangkhul territory is a calculated attempt to disrupt peace and politicise a neutral cultural platform."

SP slams DGP after probe shifted to CBI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Shimla

After the Himachal Pradesh High Court transferred the probe into Vimal Negi's death to the CBI, the head of SIT in the case, Superintendent of Police of Shimla Sanjeev Kumar Gandhi, hit out at the Director General of Police on Saturday, claiming he filed the affidavit questioning the SIT investigation with an ulterior motive and accusing the state police chief and his staff of misconduct.

In an unprecedented move, SP Gandhi levelled a litany of allegations against DGP Atul Verma at a press conference and said he would prefer to quit rather than tolerate insults.

There was no immediate reaction from the DGP. "We had carried out the investigation with full honesty and integrity and the status report and affidavit presented by the DGP in the court was very irresponsible and it has happened as senior police officers posted in the police headquarters hold a grudge against me," the SP said.

He said he would again approach the court with facts and documents and also

expose how the DGP Verma filed the affidavit with "ulterior motives". The judgment delivered by the High Court on Friday said that "the Court is of the considered view that in this case, there is an exceptional situation which requires that the matter be investigated by the CBI as the Director General of Police, has raised grave concerns about the mode and manner in which the investigation is being carried out in his status report".

Vimal Negi who was posted as General Manager and Chief Engineer in Himachal Pradesh Power Corporation Limited had gone missing on March 10 and his body was found on March 18. His wife Kiran Negi had alleged his superior officials had been misbehaving with him for the past six months.

Targeting the DGP's staff, Gandhi told reporters that during the ongoing campaign launched by the Shimla police against the drug mafia, it came "to notice that a member of the personal staff of the DGP had links with Sanjay Bhuria gang" allegedly involved in the drug trade. He also claimed that a false report was submitted "at the behest of the DGP Atul Verma" in the Vinay

Aggarwal case. Aggarwal was booked for allegedly carrying out extortion in industrial areas of Himachal Pradesh. Gandhi alleged that the "involvement of DGP personal staff have also been found in leaking of a confidential document report from the CID department following which an FIR was registered in the case and I have no hesitation in saying that pressure was built to obstruct the investigation on several occasions."

Alleging that a conspiracy was being hatched against him by the DGP Office for a long time, he said that efforts were made to project a simple gas leak blast at an eatery in Shimla as a terrorist activity with the claim that RDX was found. He alleged it was done by "manipulation" of the National Security Guard (NSG) by former DGP Sanjay Kundu and senior officers in the Police Headquarters.

However, the final report said that there was no RDX and it was a gas leak blast, he said. Two persons were killed while over ten had sustained injuries in the blast that occurred in the eatery located in Middle Bazaar adjacent to the fire brigade office in the heart of Shimla city on the evening of July 18, 2023.

PM Modi lays foundation stone of two projects and inaugurates three projects of POWERGRID in Rajasthan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gurugram

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stones of two projects and inaugurated three projects of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), a Maharatna CPSE under Ministry of Power.

The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stones for Transmission System for Evacuation of Power from Rajasthan REZ Ph-IV (Part-2: 5.5 GW) (Jaisalmer/Barmer Complex); Part B and Part-E being implemented by POWERGRID Sirohi Transmission Limited and POWERGRID Mewar Transmission Limited (subsidiaries of POWERGRID) respectively at an event held at Bikaner in Rajasthan.

Furthering the vision of electricity for all and clean energy, three POWERGRID transmission projects — Transmission System for Evacuation of Power from Neemuch Solar Park (1000 MW) being implemented by POWERGRID Neemuch Transmission System Limited (PNTL),



PM Modi laying foundation stones of two projects and inaugurated three projects of Power Grid Corporation of India Limited (POWERGRID), Maharatna CPSE under Ministry of Power. PIONEER PHOTO

Transmission System for Evacuation of Power from REZ Phase-IV (Part 1) (Bikaner Complex) — PART E being implemented by POWERGRID Bikaner Transmission System Limited and Augmentation of Transformation capacity by 1x500 MVA 400/220 kV (6th) at Fatehgarh-II PS (PG) to cater N-1 Contingency, were also dedicated to the nation.

As of 30th April 2025, POWERGRID has commissioned and is operating 283 Sub-stations and 1,80,239 ckm transmission lines and 5,64,961 MVA of transformation capacity. With the adoption of the latest technological tools and techniques, enhanced use of automation and digital solutions, POWERGRID has consistently maintained over 99.81 per cent transmission system availability.



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CBC/0801/13/0001/2526

Drones under large-scale Russian drone attack

Ukraine's capital came under a large-scale Russian drone and missile attack overnight and into early Saturday that left at least 15 people injured, according to Ukrainian officials. Explosions and machine gun fire were heard throughout Kyiv as many sought shelter in subway stations. The attack came hours after Russia and Ukraine began a major prisoner exchange of hundreds of soldiers and civilians, the first phase of a swap agreed on by the two sides at a meeting in Istanbul last week.

officials said, adding that Ukrainian forces shot down six missiles and neutralized 245 drones — 128 drones were shot down and 117 were thwarted using electronic warfare. The Kyiv City Military Administration said it was one of the most massive combined missile and drone attacks on the capital. "A difficult night for all of us," the administration said in a statement. The debris of intercepted missiles and drones fell in at least six city districts of the Ukrainian capital. According to the acting head of Kyiv's military administration, Tymur Tkachenko, six people required medical care after the attack and two fires were sparked in the Solomianskyi district of Kyiv. The Obolon district, where a residential building was heavily damaged in the attack, was the hardest hit. There were at least five wounded in the

area, the administration said. Yuriy Bondarchuk, a local resident, said the air raid siren "started as usual, then the drones started to fly around as they constantly do". Moments later, he heard a boom and saw shattered glass fly through the air. "The balcony is totally wiped out, as well as the windows and the doors," he said, describing the damage to his apartment as he stood in the dark of the night, smoking a cigarette to calm his nerves while firefighters worked to extinguish the flames. The air raid alert in Kyiv lasted more than seven hours, warning of incoming missiles and drones. Kyiv's mayor, Vitalii Klitschko, warned residents ahead of the attack that more than 20 Russian strike drones were heading toward the city. As the attack continued, he said drone debris fell on a shopping mall and a residential building in

Obolon district of Kyiv. Emergency services were headed to the site, Klitschko said. The prisoner swap on Friday was the first phase of a complicated deal involving the exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the first phase of the deal brought home 390 Ukrainians, with further releases expected over the weekend, which will make it the largest swap of the war. Russia's Defence Ministry said it received the same number of people from Ukraine. The swap took place at the border with Belarus, in northern Ukraine, according to a Ukrainian official who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak publicly. The released Russians were taken to Belarus for medical treatment, the Russian Defence Ministry said.

However, the exchange — the latest of dozens of swaps since the war began and the biggest involving Ukrainian civilians so far — did not herald a halt in the fighting. Battles continued along the roughly 1,000-km front line, where tens of thousands of soldiers have been killed and neither country has relented in its deep strikes. After the May 16 Istanbul meeting, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan called the prisoner swap a "confidence-building measure" and said the parties had agreed in principle to meet again. But Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Friday that there has been no agreement yet on the venue for the next round of talks as diplomatic maneuvering continued. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow would give Ukraine a draft document outlining its conditions for a

"sustainable, long-term, comprehensive" peace agreement, once the ongoing prisoner exchange had finished. European leaders have accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of dragging his feet in peace efforts while he tries to press his larger army's battlefield initiative and capture more Ukrainian land. The Istanbul meeting revealed that both sides remained far apart on key conditions for ending the fighting. One such condition for Ukraine, backed by its Western allies, is a temporary ceasefire as a first step toward a peaceful settlement. Russia's Defence Ministry said it had shot down 788 Ukrainian drones away from the battlefield between May 20 and May 23. Ukraine's air force said Russia fired 175 Shahed and decoy drones, as well as a ballistic missile since late Thursday.

Trump signs executive orders to boost nuclear power

President Donald Trump signed executive orders on Friday intended to quadruple domestic production of nuclear power within the next 25 years, a goal experts say the United States is highly unlikely to reach. To speed up the development of nuclear power, the orders grant the US energy secretary authority to approve advanced reactor designs and projects, taking authority away from the independent safe-

ty agency that has regulated the US nuclear industry for five decades. The order comes as demand for electricity surges amid a boom in energy-hungry data centers and artificial intelligence. Tech companies, venture capitalists, states and others are competing for electricity and straining the nation's electric grid. "We've got enough electricity to win the AI arms race with China," Interior Secretary Doug Burgum said. "What we do in the next five years related to electricity is going to determine the next 50" years in the industry. Still, it's unlikely the US could quadruple its nuclear production in the timeframe the White House

specified. The United States lacks any next-generation reactors operating commercially and only two new large reactors have been built from scratch in nearly 50 years. Those two reactors, at a nuclear plant in Georgia, were completed years late and at least \$17 billion over budget. At the Oval Office signing, Trump, surrounded by industry executives, called nuclear a "hot industry," adding, "It's time for nuclear and we're going to do it very big." Burgum and other speakers said the industry has stagnated and has been choked by overregulation. "Mark this day on your calendar. This is going to turn the clock back on over 50 years of overregulation of an industry," said Burgum, who chairs Trump's newly formed Energy Dominance Council. The orders would reorganise the independent Nuclear Regulatory Commission

to ensure quicker reviews of nuclear projects, including an 18-month deadline for the NRC to act on industry applications. The measures also create a pilot program intended to place three new experimental reactors online by July 4, 2026 — 13 months from now — and invoke the Defense Production Act to allow emergency measures to ensure the US has the reactor fuel needed for a modernised nuclear energy sector. The administration is focused on boosting nuclear as "affordable, reliable, safe and secure power," said Michael Kratsios, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. The executive orders send a signal that "America will build again," Kratsios said. Energy Secretary Chris Wright echoed that sentiment on social media, posting that more reliable, secure and affordable energy sources — like geothermal, nuclear and natural gas — are the key to remaining the world's energy powerhouse. Trump has signed a spate of executive orders promoting oil, gas and coal that warm the planet when burned to produce electricity. Nuclear reactors generate electricity without emitting greenhouse gases. Trump said reactors are safe and clean, but did not mention climate benefits. The order to reorganize the NRC will include significant staff reductions but is not intended to fire NRC commissioners who lead the agency.

'GCC supported India's counter-terrorism efforts'

There has been a marked shift in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries' stance on terrorism since the 2008 Mumbai attacks due to the widespread realisation that it is a common enemy of all and there is a need for collaborative efforts to combat the menace, the Indian envoy in the UAE has said. Sunjay Sudhir, India's Ambassador to the UAE, also hailed the visit of the all-party delegation led by Shrikant Shinde to the country to highlight India's stance on the issue. He termed the visit as very successful. "The narrative, our thoughts, our perspectives, were well received, very well reciprocated. And again, it was a clear reciprocity, a clear reiteration of the fact that in the UAE, we have a true strategic partner, a friend, whom we can rely on," the ambassador said. Ambassador Sudhir also highlighted a shift in the response by the GCC nations — Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — after the Pahalgam terror attack in comparison to the response they had shown after the Mumbai attack. "In 2008, after the Mumbai terror attack, the situation was quite different. The response of GCC countries was quite different. This time, it was very different. Our leadership was very actively engaged with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Qatar. It's the same GCC, but some things have changed

because of widespread realisation that terrorism is something which is a common enemy for humanity, for mankind and we need to work together to counter that," Sudhir said. The ambassador said that the UAE was perhaps the first country to issue a clear and categorical statement condemning the attack as an act of terror and calling for the elimination of terrorism in all its forms. The all-party delegation led by Shinde, during its two-day visit, held substantive discussions with senior UAE officials, including Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Minister for Tolerance and Coexistence and Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi, who chairs the Federal National Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Interior. "The way the delegation was received and the reciprocity of our perspective reflects the strength of our partnership," Sudhir said, adding that the UAE's response reaffirmed its commitment to countering terrorism as a common enemy of humanity. Reflecting on Prime Minister Modi's stern warning to Pakistan of severe consequences for sponsoring terrorism, the ambassador emphasised that India conveyed to the world that there is a limit to patience. "PM Modi has made it clear that there is a limit to patience. We come from the land of Mahatma Gandhi and Gautam Buddha, but nobody can take us for granted," he said, referring to Operation Sindoor as a testament to India's proactive stance.

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GOVERNMENT OF GOA PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT DIVISION VIII (BLDGs-SOUTH), FATORDA, MARGAO-GO. E-TENDER NOTICE No.: PWD/Div.8(B.S)/ASW/2001/10/2025-2026

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THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS CHANGE OF NAME I, Anil Kumar S/o Bansil Lal Khanna R/o C-92, Sector-41, Noida, declare that Anil Kumar and Anil Khanna are the same person and I have changed my name to Anil Khanna for all purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME I, Nirmal, W/o- JC-304054X Sub(DMT) Yacharappa Awari, R/o- VIII/PO-Holealur, Teh-Ron, Dist- Gadag, Karnataka- 582203 has changed my name from Nirmal to Nirmal Yacharappa Awari, vide affidavit dated 24/05/2025 before Notary Public Delhi.

CHANGE OF NAME I, Narendar Man S/o Jai Narayan R/O. House No. 229 Puna Udhan khera khurd, Post khera kalan, Dist: North West Delhi - 110082 have Changed my Name to Narendar Mann for all future purposes.

CHANGE OF NAME I, Ashvini K V, W/o- No.17001018F Nk Khandekar Gorakh Vishnu R/o- H. No. 1/43, Sadar Bazar, Delhi Cantt- 110010, have changed my name from Ashvini K V to Ashvini Gorakh Khandekar, vide affidavit dated 19/05/2025 before Executive Magistrate Delhi Cantt.

CHANGE OF NAME I, Gitanjali Mallik, Mother of No.15187168F NK(RST) Debasis Mallik, R/o- AT/PO- Kotagara, Dist- Dhenkanal, Odisha- 759026, declare that in my son's service documents my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 06/74/1974, whereas my correct D.O.B. is 28/07/1974, which may be amended accordingly.

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Chopra finishes 2nd in Poland

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Chorzow (Poland)

Star Indian javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra was not at his best as he managed a second-place finish, failing to hit the 85m mark in a rare outing in his illustrious career, at the Janusz Kusocinski Memorial meet here on Friday.

Chopra could only produce a best throw of 84.14m which came in his sixth and final attempt. He was at the third spot till the end of the penultimate round.

Germany's Julian Weber, who had beaten Chopra for the top spot in the Doha Diamond League on May 16 in a 90m duel, again emerged victorious with his second round throw of 86.12m. He an European champion in 2022 and silver-medallist in 2024.

Two-time world champions Anderson Peters of Grenada was third with a best throw of 83.24m. He was third in Doha also.

In fact, it was a repeat of the Doha top three finish, the only difference was that all three of them were below their best under overcast conditions after rain at the Silesian Stadium earlier in the day.

The 27-year-old Chopra had finally breached the coveted 90m mark with a throw of 90.23m in Doha though Weber had won the top spot with his last attempt of 91.06m. Peters had a best throw of 85.64m in Doha.

In fact, there were only 85m-plus throws in the whole competition, with Weber producing all of them. After his second round 86.12m, Weber had 85.03m and 85.11m in his fifth and sixth attempts.

Chopra, the reigning world champion, must be disappointed as since winning gold in Tokyo Olympics in 2021, he had produced below 85m throws in an event only five times before Friday.

He had 82.27m while winning gold at the Federation Cup in Bhubaneswar in May last year and 84.52m throw in



South Africa in April.

The double Olympic medallist India began with a foul and then had 81.28 in his second throw. But he struggled to get a big throw and he was seen consulting with his coach Jan Zelezny, the legendary and world record holder javelin thrower, who spoke to Chopra from the stands.

Chopra's third and fourth throws were fouls. He had 81.40m in the fifth round, which kept him at the third spot before the 84.14m effort in his last attempt took him to the second spot. He had just three valid throws out of six attempts.

Chopra was earlier slated to compete in the inaugural NC Classic -- an event to be hosted by him on May 24 in Bengaluru -- alongside several Indian and global stars, including Weber and Perers. But the event was postponed in the wake of military confrontation between India and Pakistan.

This Poland event is the third compe-

tion for Chopra this season. He started in South Africa at the Potch Invitational Track event -- a World Athletics Continental Tour Challenger competition -- in Potchefstroom on April 16, emerging on top with a modest throw of 84.52m.

Janusz Kusocinski Memorial is a World Athletics Continental Tour silver event. It is the oldest continuously held track and field meeting in Poland and one of the oldest in Europe. Since the first edition in 1954, organised on the initiative of friends of the legendary Olympic champion runner Janusz Kusocinski, the event has attracted the biggest names in the world of track and field.

After this event, Chopra is also set to compete at the Golden Spike 2025 athletics meet in Ostrava, Czech Republic on June 24. The next Diamond League which has men's javelin in the roster is in Paris on June 20.

Journey of passionate dad and son

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

There are Dads. And then there are obsessed Dads. When Lakhwinder Singh Gill, an affluent farmer from Chakh Khere Wala village, which is just 10km from the Indo-Pakistan border, decided to move to Mohali to give wings to his younger child Shubman's cricketing talent, he didn't have a Plan B in mind.

The boy was not even nine years old but the only 'toy' he ever played with was a cricket bat gifted by his grandfather Sardar Didar Singh.

Shubman Gill's story is as much about adhering to the 3 'Ds' (Discipline, Dedication and Determination) as it is about a pushy father, who was ready to move mountains to see his son wear that India cap.

And on June 20, when Shubman walks out wearing that navy blue India blazer over his whites alongside English counterpart Ben Stokes at the iconic Headingley, Lakhwinder can surely raise a toast. It would be for his heady 16-year journey to see that "another boy at another coaching camp" is polished to perfection to become India's next Test captain.

Not all sporting stories need to be sob stories. They could also be stories of resilience, obsession for excellence and the sacrifices made as a family for years.

Moving out of one's comfort zones, missing social gatherings for years, not having an outing as a family. From a distance, all of it might not look that difficult but monotony in pursuit of excellence certainly has a different ring to it.

"We had not attended any wedding festivities for years so that our son's focus on cricket doesn't waiver," Lakhwinder had told PTI when Shubman first came into national prominence with an Under-19 World Cup hundred against Pakistan in 2018. The Gill family had the resources from the beginning. Grandfather Didar could afford a makeshift pitch on his sprawling courtyard at his Fazilka home and the father

could risk shifting a family of four to Chandigarh -- far removed from a very comfortable life they had in the village.



Gill's story is a classic case of being at the right place at the right time and also doing his bit when it is absolutely necessary. Otherwise how in the world would former India seamer Karsan Ghavri, who was in Mohali in 2011 for a pace bowler's camp organised by PCA under the aegis of BCCI, find out that there were no batters who could face bowlers at the said camp.

"Kadoo bhai" (as he is known in Indian cricket circuit) took a walk with one of his assistants in close vicinity of the PCA Stadium and stopped by to watch an Under-14 game where a young boy's technique caught his attention.

He wanted to know more about the boy and approached the only other man around, who stood under the shade of a tree, watching the proceedings intently.

"Who's that boy? Any idea?" he asked the man and as fate had it, it was Lakhwinder watching his son bat.

"That's my son Shubman and he is 12 years old," the father had answered. The man with 100-plus Test wickets did-

n't waste one moment before telling Gill to report for pace bowler's camp the very next day. The result was a 12-year-old standing up to the likes of erstwhile India U-19 seamers like Sandeep Sharma with minimum fuss. Fast-tracking Gill into the Punjab U-14 side was then a matter of time after Kadoo bhai's strong recommendation.

Serendipity happened not once but twice for Gill. During India A's 2018 tour of England, MSK Prasad's selection committee was picking the next lot for the List A games. "Anmolpreet Singh had a great season and one of the five selectors was bent on putting him on that flight. Anmol had runs in domestic cricket and his choice would have been justified.

Now Rahul (Dravid), who was the NCA head and India A coach, had a request for the selectors," a former national selector recalled.

"Rahul, everyone knows, is polite to a fault. He had just one request for the panel. He said, 'please select this boy Shubman and accommodate Anmol for another A tour.' 'We couldn't turn down his request and Shubman within months of U-19 World Cup triumph was in India A team," he said.

Gujarat seeks top finish, CSK a consolatory win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Ahmedabad

Gujarat Titans would aim to secure a top-two spot while Chennai Super Kings would continue their planning for future when the two teams meet in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday.

With Royal Challengers Bengaluru losing to Sunrisers Hyderabad, the Titans still control their playoff destiny. A win against CSK will take them to 20 points and ensure a top-two berth, giving them two shots at making the final.

For CSK, already out of playoff contention, the focus will remain on building for the future as they look to test younger players and combinations in what has been a season of mixed returns.

The majority of GT's success with the bat has been built around the top three, comprising Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler, who would leave for national duty after the team's last league game on Sunday.

With Buttler not being available for play-offs, it is critical that the middle-order gets more time. Shahrukh Khan and Sherfane Rutherford got much needed runs under their belt against LSG and would be eager



to get another hit in the middle.

The bigger concerns for GT lie in the bowling department with star spinner Rashid Khan far from his best. He is in the middle of his most expensive IPL season but the team continues to keep the faith in him.

GT also need to improve in the pace department, specifically the fourth seamer option beyond Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj and Prasad Krishna. The issue might exacerbate when Rabada leaves for national duty following the league stage.

CSK, on the other hand, are likely to finish at the bottom of the table irrespective of what happens on Sunday afternoon. The game is another opportunity for youngsters like Ayush Mhatre, Urvil Patel and Dewald Brevis to make an impact.

SRH vs KKR: No context, only pride at stake

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Kolkata Knight Riders will have little motivation left when they take on another ousted outfit Sunrisers Hyderabad in an inconsequential IPL game here on Sunday. Call it irony, when KKR and SRH played their last match of the 2024 IPL, it was the grand finale where Shreyas Iyer's team had trumped Pat Cummins' men in a one-sided match. On Sunday however, both sides will only have bragging rights there for the taking with at best a sixth place finish in the offing.

SRH will start as favourites, having thrashed a fancied RCB by 42 runs on Friday night and will be more than game-ready unlike KKR, which last took the field against CSK on May 7 at the Eden Gardens.

Pat Cummins would like to finish this season on a winning note and their formidable batting line-up comprising Travis Head, Abhishek Sharma, Ishan Kishan, Aniket Verma would like to feast on a batting paradise at the Kotla. Ajinkya Rahane's men were supposed to play RCB on May 17, the first match post resumption but Bengaluru weather not only played spoilsport, it also ended their slim play-off hopes. With the four play-off spots already decided, the problem with a game like this is that it is more of a formality and tick in the box for broadcasters. But that won't stop the two teams from trying to win one last time and finishing on a happy note before the mandarins of both teams go back to the drawing board and take stock of what all went wrong during the season. For KKR, local curator Sujun Mukherjee's (a small time Bengal cricketer of 1970s) obstinacy in dishing out a belter certainly didn't help their cause.

Shoes are big to fill but an opportunity for others: Agarkar on Kohli, Rohit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Mumbai

Chairman of selectors Ajit Agarkar on Saturday conceded that the void left by the Test retirement of premier cricketers Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma is tough to fill, but hoped that other players will step up during the upcoming tour of England.

Rohit was the first to announce to retirement from Test cricket on May 7, while his long-time teammate Kohli followed suit on May 12.

"When guys like that retire, they are stalwarts of cricket...It is always difficult, (their) shoes are very big to fill. But one way of looking at it is, that it's an opportunity for others," Agarkar told the media after announcing India's 18-member squad for the five-Test series starting June 20. Young left-hander Sai Sudharsan and the seasoned Karun Nair have been brought in to replace the two superstars. Agarkar revealed that Kohli had reached out to him last month, possibly after the Champions Trophy, expressing his desire to quit Test cricket. "Virat



reached out (to the BCCI/selection committee) in early April, and he felt he had given everything he had. If he felt he could not be up to the standards that he has set, you have got to respect that. Needless to say, Rohit has been leading the team as well," Agarkar added. There have been intense speculations surrounding the future of both Kohli and Rohit in the traditional format after a series of underwhelming outings in the last year or so. The latest instance in that wob-

bling effort was the tour of Australia for the 2024-25 Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Kohli started with a bang, making a hundred at Perth but faded away quickly to end the tour at 190 runs from five Tests at an average of 23. Rohit, who joined the side after the first Test, was equally unimpressive, making just 31 runs from five Tests at an average of 6.2, besides standing down from the fifth and final at Sydney.

So, did the powers that be try to persuade Kohli and Rohit to stay back for the tour of England, considering the magnitude of the series?

Agarkar was quite blunt in his assessment of the situation, and said building a new side for the upcoming World Test Championship cycle (2025-27) took precedence.

"When somebody takes a call (to retire), it is not up to me. Retirement is a personal call. It's a new WTC (World Test Championship) cycle, and you are looking at all scenarios to help build a team," he said while echoing the sentiments of head coach Gautam Gambhir.

Srikanth enters first final at Malaysia Masters

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Kuala Lumpur

Indian shuttler Kidambi Srikanth stormed into his first men's singles final of a BWF event in six years with a straight-game win over Japan's Yushi Tanaka at the Malaysia Masters Super 500 badminton tournament here on Saturday.

The 32-year-old, a 2021 World Championships silver medallist, dished out a superlative game, showing glimpses of his vintage self with sharp net play and attacking flair to outwit world number 23 Tanaka 21-18 24-22 in a thrilling contest.

"I'm pretty happy. It's been a while," Srikanth said after the win.

He will face second seeded Chinese Li Shi Feng in the summit clash on Sunday.

This is Srikanth's first final appearance on the BWF World Tour since finishing runner-up at the 2019 India Open.

A former world number one, Srikanth - currently ranked 65 - has endured a rough patch over the past few seasons due to form and fitness issues.

"Physically I've been feeling well, but also the fact that I haven't played too many matches last year, playing qualifying, so may be kind of lost that touch of playing matches. And yeah, somehow everything worked out this time.

"I've been working hard last month. It's just these wins, after a very long time, that is what has been my emotions," he added.

A naturally gifted player, Srikanth became the first Indian to win four BWF titles in 2017 and then led the country to its first-ever Commonwealth Games gold in the team event. But his struggles began soon after. Though he seemed in good touch in 2019, Srikanth missed the Tokyo Olympics due to a combination of injuries and the cancellation of qualifiers owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He continued to suffer minor injuries, particularly ankle-related ones, which affected his consistency. He recovered in time to



become the first Indian male shuttler to reach the finals of the 2021 World Championships in Spain.

He also played a pivotal role in India's historic Thomas Cup triumph in 2022, winning all six of his matches, before fading again.

Srikanth had reached the quarterfinals at the Thailand Open Super 300 earlier this year, while his last semifinal appearances came at the Swiss Open and Macau Open in 2023.

Over the past three months, however, he underwent intense training sessions, focused on fitness, and worked on injecting pace into rallies under the watchful eyes of coaches RMV Gurusaidutt and Parupalli Kashyap.

Asked about his plans going forward, Srikanth said: "I haven't really planned anything. It's just about being physically fit, being

injury-free, and then playing as many tournaments as possible. I don't really have a target of playing the next tournaments this year.

"So it's just about training and being physically fit and obviously if I play, I will obviously play to win. I really want to give myself enough time to recover, to train, and then play this time."

In the opening game, Srikanth committed a few errors while trying to counter Tanaka's pace and trailed 1-5.

With some fine straight slices and round-the-head smashes, the Indian closed the gap, but the Japanese kept a five-point cushion with a crisp cross smash.

Srikanth gradually constructed rallies and forced errors from the diminutive Japanese to make it 8-9, though Tanaka held a three-

point lead at the break.

The Indian levelled at 14-all and surged to 19-16 lead with a superb cross-court return. A down-the-line smash earned him two game points, and he converted to take the opener.

Tanaka again started strongly in the second game, leading 3-0 and 7-2 as Srikanth missed a few chances.

But like in the first game, Srikanth defended with aggression, narrowing the deficit to 8-9 and levelling scores with a sharp net kill.

Tanaka made soft errors as Srikanth moved ahead 13-10, but the Japanese fought back to make it 17 all.

After an intense battle, Srikanth earned a match point off a net error, but Tanaka saved it to leave the scores level at 20-20.

'Rather have this now than in an eliminator'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Royal Challengers Bengaluru opener Phil Salt sees a silver lining in their defeat against Sunrisers Hyderabad and says they rather have a loss like that in the league stage than in the IPL play-offs. Chasing 232, opening duo of Salt (62) and Virat Kohli (43) provided RCB a blistering start but rest of the batting faltered as RCB were bundled out for 189 in 19.5 overs. RCB are already through to the play-offs, and Salt said the defeat shouldn't dent their confidence.

"That's one way of looking at it. The other way of looking at it is, you don't mind having this game not in the play-offs. So, yeah, you can take it as a disappointment or you can take it for what it is," he said at the post-match press conference.

"We're qualified, we've lost a game. No one likes to lose games of cricket. I'm hating the fact we've lost, as will everybody else in an RCB shirt. You'd rather have that now than you would in an eliminator, let's say. "So, we're going to get an opportunity to pick the bones out of it and have a look at things we did well and things we didn't do so well and come back." Following the loss, RCB's hopes of a top-two finish now depend on other results. Even a win in their final league game against Lucknow Super Giants will only take them to 19 points. Salt said the team isn't overly concerned about its final league position.

"I can't sit here and tell you that we prefer to finish first, second, third or fourth. We've qualified for the play-offs, and once you're in the play-offs, you've got to go and play in a carefree manner and do what you can to win the trophy," he said.

Salt had missed RCB's match against Chennai Super Kings on May 3 due to



fever. The IPL was subsequently paused for a week owing to the India-Pakistan conflict, and RCB's next game against Kolkata Knight Riders was washed out.

The Welshman said he is just glad to be back on the field. "It's a funny one. Obviously, when you're ill, you sit in your bed and wonder if you're ever going to feel better again and you think about all the things that you took for granted when you were healthy. "As a group, we've not played cricket until tonight in three weeks or so and I don't think I've played in a month, which is a long time. So, more than anything else, I'm just glad that, I'm healthy and I'm feeling good and I'm playing another game of cricket."

SRH assistant coach Simon Helmot said the team is determined to secure a spot in the top half of the standings.

SRH, who began the season with a bang, slipped to eighth with seven losses and five wins from 13 matches.

Their ultra-aggressive approach often backfired, and Helmot admitted the team struggled to build consistent partnerships.

Where Summer Breathes Softly and So Does Style

Bask in effortless style with light, breezy outfits that capture the true spirit of summer, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

Readers, summer is here, can you tell? The mangoes are finally ripe, watermelons dripping with juice, and the sun refuses to back down. So why shouldn't your wardrobe join the celebration? It's time to dress like the season itself. Summer dressing is all about embracing ease and comfort without losing style. We've already explored the pastel colours of spring, soft lilacs and mint greens, but now it's time to turn up the volume with brighter, more vibrant shades. Think white long skirts paired with vivid tops like a fiery red or bright orange crop that pops against the clean white. This contrast feels fresh and effortless, just like the season itself.

A simple white skirt combined with a bold, colourful top stood out not overdone, just right for the heat and the mood. Scarves made a comeback too, not just tied around the head but worn as tops, like in the 90s. Loose T-shirts remain a staple, soft, oversized and perfect for balancing out parallel pants or wide-legged trousers. This is the go-to look for many Gen Z stars on social media, combining comfort with street smart style. Don't forget your bag; a small, practical crossbody or a chic woven basket bag adds that final touch while delicate jewellery catches the light without feeling heavy.

Summer beauty is natural and effortless. Dewy skin, a touch of blush that mimics a sun-kissed glow and lips tinted with a sheer balm. Hair moves freely, loose waves or tied back with scarves, embracing the casual vibe of the season. Summer dressing is about feeling as good as you look.

- SPRING/SUMMER 2025 TRENDS**
- Tank tops return with bold cuts and fresh styling.
 - Dark romance adds lace, black and drama to summer looks.
 - Skirts over trousers and shorts bring layered flair.
 - Tulle wraps add a soft, dreamy finish.
 - Sporty dressing is sharper, smarter, and more wearable.
 - Plaid gives outfits a playful, teen-inspired twist.



FEELS LIKE SUMMER

Summer marks a shift in mood, in light and most of all, in fashion. As the temperature rises, people instinctively reach for pieces that breathe, that flow, that feel like a soft sigh against the skin. That is exactly what Pretty Pixie's Summer 2025 collection offers, a wardrobe that dresses the body and soothes the spirit. The collection brings together comfort, craftsmanship and climate-conscious fashion. Created by Hemanshu Sachdeva and Prashant Jain, the collection stands out for using 100 per cent natural fibres and waterless digital printing, a meaningful move in an

industry long criticised for its waste. It reflects a strong intention to create beauty without environmental compromise. The clothes speak in a language of soft laces, easy cottons and elegant trims. The florals appear in subtle forms, on delicate layers and clean silhouettes that feel as good as they look. Designed for year-round wear, each garment is created to reflect grace and inner strength. The overall mood is romantic yet wearable, making these pieces ideal for both work and leisure. This collection reflects what summer fashion should be: conscious and everyday life.

PRETTY PIXIE'S COLLECTION SHOWCASES A FLORAL DESIGN LANGUAGE, FEATURING POETIC PRECISION INSPIRED BY WOMEN'S STRENGTH WITH LUXURIOUS LACES AND HAND-FINISHED TRIMS

Sparkle Your Own Way



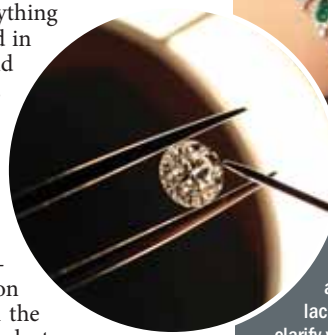
BY TEAM VIVA

Not all diamonds are created equal and nor are the Certification Labs who authenticate them "Better be a diamond with a flaw than a pebble without." — a sagacious quote attributed to the philosopher Confucius underlines the fact that the true worth of anything can only be found in its authenticity and unique qualities, even with its imperfections.

As Dinesh Lakhani, Global Director, Kiran Germs, notes, ever since the diamond certification began in India in the early 1970s, the industry has experienced a significant transformation in both the processes and the products. New exploration techniques, Blockchain technology that authenticated the supply-chain and the ever-growing customer demand have increased the need for third-party, sophisticated valuation methods.

Sophistication grows in diamond grading, given their high and consistent investments in upgrading the technology and training to ensure accuracy, technical finesse and compliance with international standards, big labs like IGI & GIA, the pioneers with decades of experience and expertise, have always set high standards in diamond certification. Labs, such as IGI, also focus on nurturing grading professionals through rigorous training processes. In recent times, diamond grading has become so intricate that it deals with everything from the shape, measurements, fluorescence and any likely enhancement or treatment that it may have undergone in the past.

Therefore, the easiest approach to verify the authenticity of your unique gemstone is to have a grading report from trustworthy laboratories, which follow strict guidelines and reliable outcomes, thus increasing the customer confidence in their credentials. In fact, only a technically sound lab can give you an accurate, unbiased evaluation of the



ONLINE TRUST
Expert certification becomes far more important as we increasingly shop online with e-commerce platforms offering all sorts of fine jewellery. As you lack any personal interaction to clarify your doubts or concerns, digital certificates provide a safe and trustworthy way to confirm the quality and authenticity of a diamond. These digital certificates are tamper-proof, accessible from anywhere, helping the jewellers maintain the integrity of the diamond's information, ensuring the promised values.

diamond's 4Cs, that make it invaluable, its brilliance, and sparkle, distinctive qualities such as its polishing, treatments, finish, and proportions. The certificates give customers an idea about the potential resale value or the upgrade and the insurance cover that they may want to get. However, the biggest factor here is the sheer confidence that these documents give the consumers, a stamp of trust, about the authenticity and quality of the stones that they are buying.

IGI is also part of the elite Responsible Jewellery Council, which oversees responsible supply chains, human rights and due diligence across the sector. GIA's campuses and programs are recognised by Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC) These accreditations help all stakeholders including consumers be assured of the quality and practices of these institutions. Every stone is guaranteed and graded correctly, ensuring it simply shines with validated authenticity.

EXCELLENCE MATTERS

The diversity of the process also makes the expert certification labs more relevant than other industry resources such as jewellers who offer their own certificates which often found to lack the same level of objectivity as those provided by the independent labs such as IGI. Large independent labs are accredited by industry standardisation bodies. IGI has ISO 17025 accreditation, which is considered the single most important standard for calibration and testing laboratories across the globe covering all laboratory environments.

The Osama Story Retold with Unmatched Intensity

With narration from those who lived it, the series revisits the world's most intense manhunt with unfiltered emotions, says **ABHI SINGHAL**



RATING
★★★★★

There are an immense number of documentaries when it comes to the terrorist Osama Bin Laden, including Bin Laden: Dynasty of Terror, Hunting Bin Laden, Manhunt: The Inside Story of the Hunt for Bin Laden, Zero Dark Thirty, and many more. Now, Netflix has released the third instalment of its American Manhunt series titled *American Manhunt: Osama bin Laden*. This new series lands a significant impact, standing out as one of the best-produced and most compelling depictions among the many.

What sets this series apart is its authenticity. The docuseries features the actual individuals involved in the operation to neutralise Osama bin Laden, the most wanted terrorist and Islamic extremist in modern history. *American Manhunt: Osama bin Laden* delivers the raw, unfiltered emotions of the operatives and commanders, capturing the intensity and enormity of the mission that spanned more than a decade.

The cast includes Tracy Walder as herself, CIA Counterterrorism Operations; Michael Morell, President's Daily Briefing; Gina Bennett, CIA Counterterrorism Analyst; Ben Rhodes, White



House Strategic Communications Advisor; Leon Panetta, CIA Director; and many other respected figures from the intelligence community. The three-part series unfolds with a gripping sense of realism. Each episode is powerful and

impactful, beginning with a deep dive into the events of 9/11, how the attacks were orchestrated, and the massive loss of life that followed. The narrative then transitions, from the halfway mark of the first episode, into the methodical and relent-

less manhunt that the United States launched to capture bin Laden.

Episode two explores in greater depth the setbacks, frustrations, and persistent efforts of the American forces and intelligence agencies. What adds to the documentary's emotional weight are the firsthand accounts from CIA staff and military commanders, who speak candidly about their experiences, the sleepless nights, the adrenaline, and the high-stakes decision-making that defined their pursuit.

Wrapping up the story in just three episodes, it manages to cover over a decade of events with remarkable precision and depth. The third and final episode is particularly striking, featuring reflections from Navy SEAL Robert O'Neill, who is believed to have fired the fatal shot that killed bin Laden. His insights into the fear of possibly never returning home add a deep layer to the final moments.

EXCLUSIVE VISUALS
Recreated or might be original visual shots of Osama Bin Laden are in the docuseries. The one's while he walks in his Abbottabad compound in Pakistan. It is a gripping, humanised documentary that deserves to be seen.

SUGGESTED BINGES

Nine Perfect Strangers Season 2
OTT - Amazon Prime Video
Cast - Henry Golding, Annie Murphy, Christine Baranski



Fear Street: Prom Queen
OTT - Netflix
Cast - India Fowler, Suzanna Son, Fina Strazza



Fountain of Youth
OTT - Apple TV+
Cast - Eiza González, Domhnall Gleeson, Arian Moayed



Heartbeat
OTT - JioHotstar
Cast - Deepa Balu, Anumol, Charukesh, Amit Bhargav



Our Unwritten Seoul
OTT - Netflix
Cast - Park Bo-young, Park Jin-young

Get in touch at vivacity@dailypioneer.com



"The clearest way into the Universe is through a forest wilderness"
— John Muir

SMOKE SIGNALS FROM THE WILD

India's summer heat not just scorches streets every year, it's also searing through some of the country's richest forest ecosystems, displacing wildlife and destroying decades of ecological growth, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

Each passing summer in India seems hotter than the last. Heat waves scorch plains and hills alike and the mercury's relentless rise isn't just an urban discomfort but it fuels a grave environmental crisis in the country's rich forest belts. The summer months, particularly from March to June, have become a tinderbox season when the dry, moisture-deprived forest floors become a bed of fire waiting for a spark.

India's geographical diversity from the Himalayas to the Western Ghats and the Eastern forests makes it particularly vulnerable to forest fires. Rising temperatures, prolonged dry spells and increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns often linked to climate change, aggravate the intensity and frequency of these forest wildfires.

Forest Fires: Summers and unusual activities lead the way to wildfires and displacement and destruction of wildlife.

Forest fires are not natural disasters in most cases—they are man-made or climate-induced. As flames engulf vast forest stretches, wildlife is forced to flee, often into human habitations or hostile terrain. Their habitats are lost, breeding cycles are disrupted, and food chains are dismantled.

Species that are endemic or already endangered face an even greater risk of extinction. With each blaze, not only are trees charred, but entire ecosystems are razed.

"Increasing forest fires in India severely affect the survival of wildlife by destroying habitats, disrupting food chains, and increasing mortality rates. Forest fires directly destroy the key habitats, and at times niches of species, which might be endemic to certain regions. Forest fires also cause disruption in the ecosystem balance, leading to the loss of pollinators and decomposers, which might slow down the

forest recovery. At times, habitat loss might force species to move towards human settlements in search of food, leading to human-animal conflicts," said *Dr G Areendran, Director-Tech for Conservation, Coordinator- ENVIS (MoEF & CC) for WWF-India.*

Forests are more than trees and are dynamic ecosystems where flora and fauna co-exist in intricate harmony. India is home to about 8% of the world's biodiversity, sheltering over 500 species of mammals, 1,300 bird species and thousands of varieties of plants and insects.

Flora, the forest vegetation, is not just a habitat but also a food source and a climate stabiliser. Trees regulate temperature, maintain groundwater tables, and absorb carbon dioxide. Fauna, including apex predators, pollinators, herbivores and decomposers, play a critical role in maintaining the ecological balance. The destruction or disturbance of this delicate equilibrium due to forest fires create cascading ecological consequences.

Warning Is Fiercely

As the *International Day for Biological Diversity* was just marked on May 22, the 2025 theme, 'Be Part of the Plan,' should be taken into action in the most serious way possible. India's forests are not just scenic backdrops but vital ecological assets. Every wildfire is a signal from nature that our systems are stretched, our safeguards insufficient. While the government has taken key steps, including deploying technology and community participation, the scale of the challenge requires sustained national commitment. As biodiversity withers, so does our own resilience as a species. Will India be able to lower the wildfires this season?

PROGRESS MADE AND THE ROAD AHEAD

- Setting up of National Action Plan on Forest Fires (NAPFF)
- Forest Fire Alert Systems: Enhanced use of ISRO satellites and Forest Survey of India (FSI) data.
- Van Agni Portal: Initiative by the Government of India that allows ground-level staff and citizens to report fires in real-time.
- Training for Community-Based Fire Management
- Reforestation Efforts Under CAMPA (Compensatory Afforestation Programme Management and Planning Authority).

When we talk about What More is Needed? *Dr G Areendran, Director-Tech for Conservation, Coordinator- ENVIS (MoEF & CC) for WWF-India* told that, "The biggest gaps observed are limited real-time data on forest fire incidences, inadequate resources for forest fire mitigation and the need for deeper stakeholder (local community) engagement in combatting and reducing incidents of forest fires." Some Steps that we can look at:

PREVENTION IS BETTER: Firebreaks should be strengthened, clear inflammable undergrowth, and there must be control access during summer.

TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION: Use of drones, AI-based prediction models and automatic fire detection cameras must be put in use as soon as possible.

POLICY RIGOR: Enforcement of accountability for man-made fires, with strict legal penalties must be prioritised.



NOT SO LONG AGO

In January 2025, Southern California experienced a series of devastating wildfires, with the Palisades and Eaton Fires being among the most destructive. The Palisades Fire ignited on January 7 in Los Angeles County, fueled by hurricane-force Santa Ana winds, and burned over 23,000 acres, destroying 6,837 structures and resulting in 12 fatalities. Simultaneously, the Eaton Fire erupted in the San Gabriel Mountains, consuming 14,021 acres, destroying 9,418 structures, and causing 18 deaths. Collectively, these fires led to the evacuation of over 180,000 residents and caused damages exceeding \$50 billion.

6.7

Million hectares of tropical primary forests were burnt in wildfires in 2024 globally

MAJOR WILDFIRES IN INDIA: A WAKE-UP CALL

2016 UTTARAKHAND FOREST FIRES

Area Affected: approximately 4,538 hectares

Duration: April-May 2016

Cause: Heatwaves and drought

Impact: Hit tourism and damaged habitats in Jim Corbett and Rajaji reserves

Wildlife: Likely led to displacement, especially of larger mammals and bird species

Response: Deployment of NDRF and IAF helicopters, review of fire lines and warning systems

2019 BANDIPUR FOREST FIRES, KARNATAKA

Area Affected: approximately 4,419 hectares

Duration: 21-25 February 2019

Cause: Human sabotage by using fire to scare away tiger which later spread and became massive

Impact: Spread to Mudumalai National Park, destroying over 10,000 acres

Wildlife: Core areas affected, species like elephants and leopards displaced

Response: IAF deployed, community training initiated, enhanced surveillance

2020 UTTARAKHAND FOREST FIRES

Area Affected: approximately 71 hectares

Cause: Dry weather

Impact: Pauri Garhwal district lost forest cover

Wildlife: Displacement likely minimal but recurring fires raised concerns

Response: Special forest fire teams, satellite monitoring used

2020-21 DZÜKO VALLEY WILDFIRES (NAGALAND & MANIPUR)

Area Affected: approximately 200 acres

Duration: 29 December 2020 - 11 January 2021

Cause: Suspected human activity

Impact: Damaged old-growth forest in ecologically fragile zone

Wildlife: Disruption of habitats for endangered Blyth's tragopan and Dzükou Lily

Response: NDRF, IAF and army deployed, joint state collaboration

2021 SIMLIPAL FOREST FIRES, ODISHA

Area Affected: One-third of the Simlipal Reserve

Duration: February - April 2021

Cause: Dry spells, poaching and traditional land clearing

Impact: Threat to species like Royal Bengal tiger, elephant; honey production affected

Response: Six-member task force, drone monitoring, tribal fire-fighting practices supported

2024 FOREST FIRES IN UTTARAKHAND AND ODISHA

Area Affected: Over 10,000 fire points in Uttarakhand

Cause: High temperatures, stubble burning, Mahua flower collection

Impact: Extensive habitat loss, increased emissions

Wildlife: Significant displacement, although not quantified

Response: Entry bans, NAPFF protocols activated, fire alerts enhanced

HOW ARE HUMANS AFFECTED?

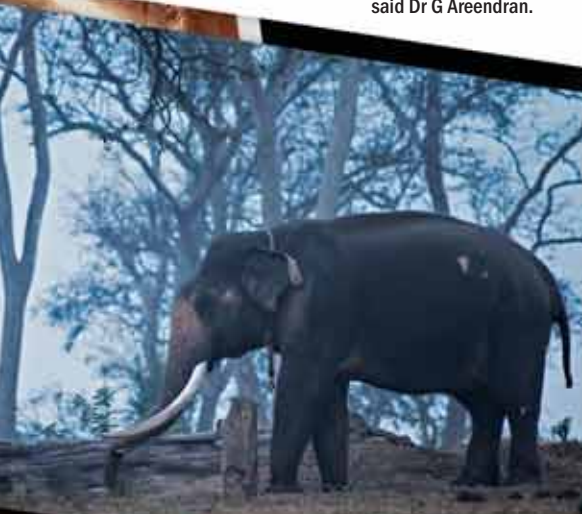
The destruction of forests and displacement of fauna isn't an isolated ecological crisis — it has profound effects on human lives too.

● **Loss of Livelihood:** Tribal and rural communities dependent on forest produce, honey collection and ecotourism suffer economic setbacks.

● **Rising Zoonotic Diseases:** Wildlife displacement leads to closer human-animal contact, increasing disease transmission risks.

● **Air Quality:** Forest fires release massive carbon emissions, worsening air quality and climate change.

"The loss of wildlife species due to forest fires affects human communities as their is disruption of ecosystem balance, weakening of food chains, which further causes environmental degradation. This loss affects local livelihoods, recreational activities and other industries that depend on healthy forest ecosystems." said *Dr G Areendran.*



"FOOD IS NOT RATIONAL.
FOOD IS CULTURE, HABIT, CRAVING
AND IDENTITY"

— JONATHAN SAFRAN FOER



CLASSIC MANGO SHAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup ripe mango pulp
- 1 cup chilled milk
- 1-2 tsp sugar (optional)
- Ice cubes

RECIPE: Blend all ingredients until smooth. Serve chilled.

TIP: For extra richness, add a scoop of vanilla ice cream or a few soaked saffron strands while blending. This timeless shake is quick to make and always hits the spot. It's perfect as a breakfast drink or a midday refresher. Garnish with chopped mango or a mint leaf for a fresh finish.

POPULAR VARIETIES

India grows over 1,000 mango types. Famous ones include Alphonso (Hapus) from Maharashtra, Dasherri from Uttar Pradesh, Kesar from Gujarat, Langra from Bihar, and Banganapalli from Andhra Pradesh.

MANGO DRY FRUIT SHAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup mango pulp
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tbsp chopped dry fruits (almonds, cashews, pistachios)
- 2 dates (optional, for sweetness)
- Ice cubes

RECIPE: Blend all till rich and thick. Top with more chopped nuts.

TIP: Soak the dry fruits in warm milk for 15-20 minutes before blending to make the shake smoother and creamier. This shake is a powerhouse nutrition, combining the natural sweetness of mangoes with the crunch of nuts. Ideal for kids, fitness lovers, or anyone looking for a healthy summer indulgence. Top with slivers of almonds and a pinch of cardamom powder for a royal finish. Serve chilled.



DIGESTIVE AID:
MANGOS CONTAIN ENZYMES LIKE AMYLASE THAT HELP BREAK DOWN AND DIGEST FOOD EFFICIENTLY

JUICY TIMELINE

Mangoes are a seasonal stars in India, typically available from March to July. Early varieties like Safeda and Banganapalli arrive as soon as March-April, mainly in southern regions. The peak mango season is during May and June, when the most popular and sweetest varieties like Alphonso and Kesar are harvested. Some mangoes, such as Langra and Chausa, are late bloomers and keep the mango season going into July. The quality and yield of mangoes greatly depend on climate.

MANGO BANANA SHAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup mango pulp
- 1 ripe banana
- 1 cup milk
- 1 tsp honey
- Ice cubes

RECIPE: Blend everything until creamy. Garnish with banana slices.

TIP: Use a frozen banana to make the shake naturally thick and chilled without needing too much

ice. This shake is a perfect mix of tropical flavours and natural energy, making it great for breakfast or post-workout. The banana adds balance to the tang.

MANGO COFFEE SHAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup mango pulp
- 1/2 tsp instant coffee
- 1 cup chilled milk
- 1 tsp sugar
- Ice cubes

RECIPE: Blend until frothy. Serve with a dusting of coffee powder on top.

TIP: Dissolve the coffee in a tablespoon of warm water before blending to enhance the flavour and avoid bitterness. This unique shake is a fusion of fruity sweetness and bold coffee kick, perfect for coffee lovers who want a refreshing twist. It's an energising summer drink that feels awakening. Garnish with chocolate shavings for added flair. Serve cold for a delightful experience.



SUMMER FAVOURITE

Consumed fresh, in shakes or desserts, mangoes are a seasonal treat people eagerly await every season for their favourite fruit. The mango is also loved by kids and they enjoy it raw.

VITAMIN POWERHOUSE: PACKED WITH VITAMIN C, A, AND ANTIOXIDANTS, MANGOS BOOST IMMUNITY. **CULTURAL SYMBOL:** IN INDIA, MANGOS SYMBOLISE PROSPERITY AND ARE USED IN RELIGIOUS RITUALS TOO

MANGO SHAKE WONDERS

The aam-licious season is on the go already. Beyond eating fresh mangoes, blending them into shakes offers a delicious, healthy way to enjoy this king of fruits, writes **ABHI SINGHAL**

The summers are in and with it comes the king of fruits — mango! Juicy, sweet, and bursting with flavour, mangoes are the ultimate treat to beat the heat. Whether eaten fresh, added to desserts, or blended into shakes, mangoes have a special place in every heart. For many of us, mangoes aren't just fruits — they're a nostalgic summer memory, a reminder of carefree childhood days and family get-togethers.

What better way to enjoy it than in a chilled mango shake? Rich, creamy and satisfying mango shakes are the perfect blend of taste and energy, ideal for hot afternoons or a quick treat on-the-go. From classic styles to creative fusions, there's a mango shake for every mood. These five easy and delicious mango shake varieties celebrate the love we all share for this golden summer delight.

MANGO COCONUT SHAKE

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup mango pulp
- 1/2 cup coconut milk
- 1/2 cup normal milk
- 1 tsp jaggery or sugar
- Ice cubes

RECIPE: Blend until smooth. Garnish with shredded coconut. **TIP:** Use chilled coconut milk for a more refreshing and tropical flavour. This shake offers a subtle nutty twist and is ideal for dairy-light or vegan-friendly options.



Spice-Stained Fingers, Happy Bellies

From rotisserie chicken to salads to cheesecakes and apple pies, the menu of Boston Chicken in Delhi offers something for every craving, says **ABHI SINGHAL**

The Boston Chicken has officially expanded into the national capital, bringing its signature taste to the heart of Delhi that is Connaught Place. It is set to redefine the casual dining experience, offering a menu crafted to delight the palate with bold marinades, perfectly cooked meats, and signature bowls.

At the core of the offerings is its legendary non-vegetarian menu, featuring dishes such as the Rotisserie Chicken, fiery Jamaican Jerk Chicken, and aromatic Royal Tandoori Chicken. Each dish reflects the brand's unwavering dedication to quality and flavour. The menu also includes an array of tempting wings, inspired by both American and Indian flavours. Savour the classic Original Wing Sauce, take on the heat of Fiery Hot and Fiery Garlic Wings, or enjoy the punchy flavours of Mango Habanero and Korean BBQ Wings.

Beyond its signature chicken, Boston Chicken India caters to a variety of tastes with a well-curated vegetarian menu. The creamy mushroom soup offered a rich, velvety blend of mushrooms, cream, garlic, and herbs, delivering pure savoury comfort. The Tomato Burrata Salad was a refreshing mix of ripe tomatoes, creamy Burrata cheese, basil, and olive oil-bursting with freshness. In the DIY Pasta section, those open to new flavours might enjoy the Aglio Olio Pasta: a simple yet aromatic combination of al dente spaghetti, garlic, olive oil, chilli flakes, and fresh parsley, packing a punch of flavour.

Among desserts, the New York Cheesecake leans

VEGETARIAN CONSIDERATIONS

Vegetarian options such as the spiced potato burger and the Wild Mushroom and Feta Sandwich further showcase the brand's inclusive approach to dining. To round off the experience, diners can enjoy indulgent desserts like the decadent Apple Pie and New York Cheesecake, alongside refreshing beverages ranging from Classic Fresh Lime Soda to Spicy Guava. With a robust digital presence and a growing base of loyal patrons, Boston Chicken India is well on its way to becoming a go-to favourite across the country.

on the sweeter side, perfect for those with a sweet tooth. For a subtler option, the Red Velvet or Blueberry Granola Cake in a Jar might be more suited. Other highlights include the hearty Philly Chicken Cheese Steak, comforting Creamy Dreamy Mac 'n' Cheese, and flavourful pasta dishes.

The food is committed to bringing its distinctive blend of American comfort to Indians.

FACT SHEET

New Delhi Outlet
Address: Ground Floor, Malhotra Building, F-30, Radial Road, Block F, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001
Cost For two: ₹ 1600+ taxes
Timings: Monday-Sunday, 11.30 am to 11.30 pm

Indulge in a dining with ambience



BY TEAM VIVA

Its gates tucked away in the Green Park, Odella has made a grand entrance into the capital's culinary scene as a multisensory experience where food, art, and culture exist in perfect harmony. It invites diners to indulge in an exquisite celebration of taste, refinement, and imagination. At the core of this experience is a globally inspired menu that marries classic culinary techniques with innovative flair. For vegetarians, highlights include the smoky *Gucchi Galouti*, a delicate mushroom-based take on the traditional kebab; the indulgent *Truffle Parmesan Arancini*, crisp on the outside and molten within; and the zesty *Jackfruit Enchiladas*, packed with punchy flavours.

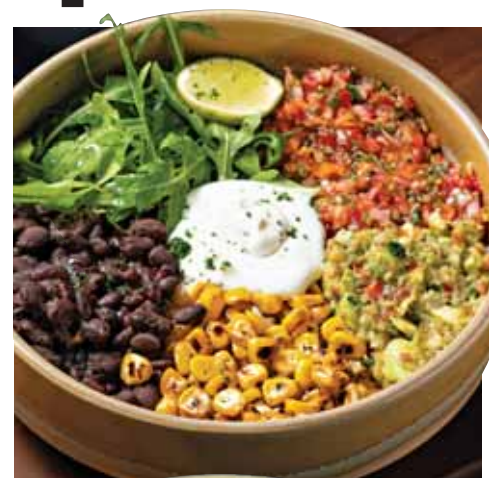
The meat and seafood lovers are equally well catered for. The *Nakhre Murgh* offers a rich, spiced profile with a touch of theatrical flair, while the *Mansa Ghee Roast* delivers

slow-cooked comfort with depth and intensity. Among the seafood offerings, the *Truffle Rock Shrimp Tempura* impresses with its crisp texture and umami notes, while the *Sambal Seabass* sings with bold, tangy heat and delicate balance.

No fine dining experience is complete without a decadent finale. The *Biscoff Tres Leches* is a luxurious reimagination of a classic, while the *Burnt Cheesecake*, perfectly caramelised on top offers a satisfyingly indulgent close to the meal.

The experience is further elevated by signature cocktails, each one a story in a glass. The *Venice Sunset*, *Cape Route* deliver a truly global profile. For a tropical twist, the *Pandan Parador* features coconut fat — washed bourbon and pandan cordial, while the *Seville Heat Wave* combines tequila, bell pepper, jalapeño and mango purée, finished with a tangy tajin rim for a fiery finish.

Beyond the menu, Odella is a tribute to elegance drawing on opulence.



PANKAJ KUMAR takes a walk down the Mussoorie's labyrinth lanes and discovers the simplicity of hill life and its quiet charm

Postcard from Mussoorie

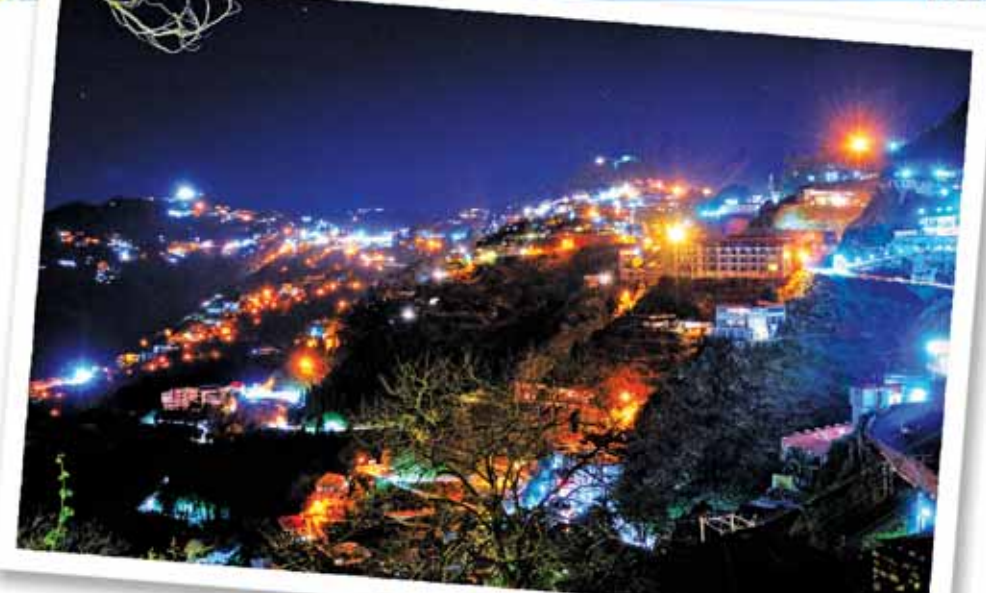
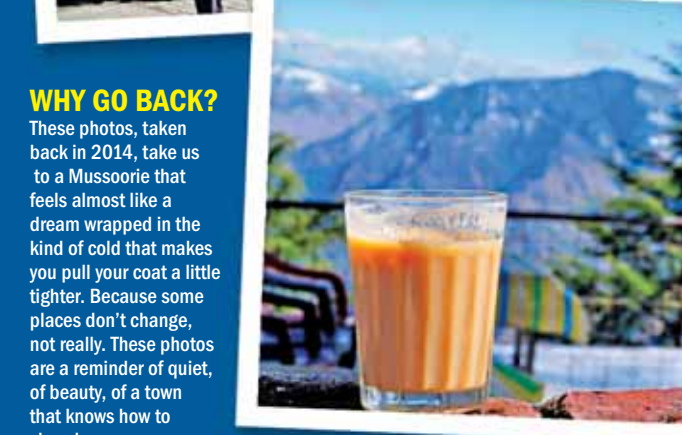
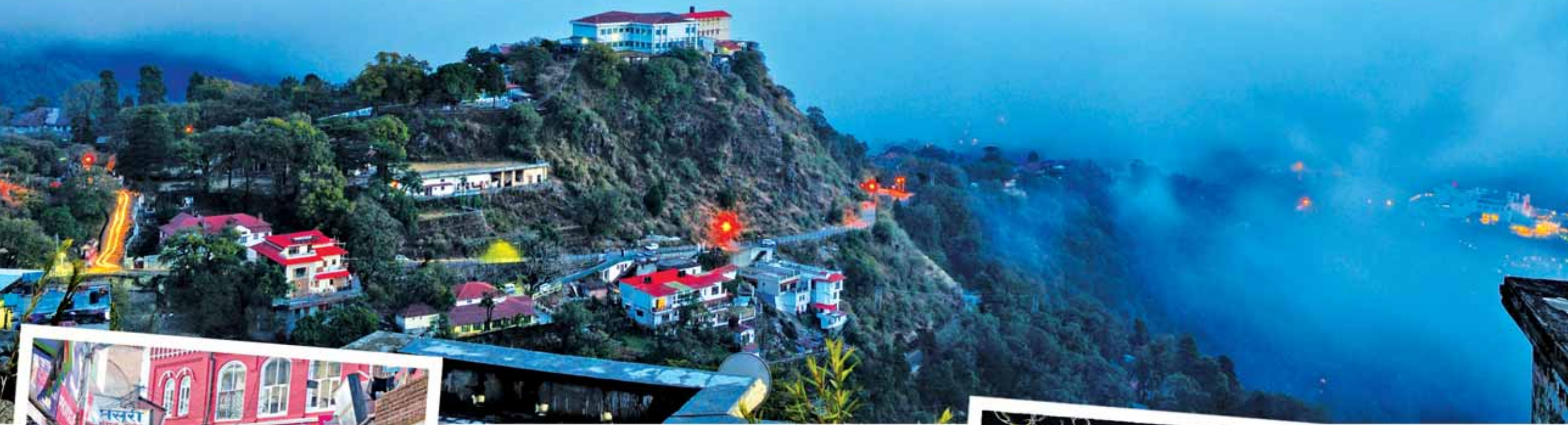
Every hill station has its postcards. It speaks through morning fog, wooden railings, old bungalows and quiet faces passing by with familiar smiles. The hills around Mussoorie are shrouded in clouds that drift low, hiding the landscape and giving the entire scene a dramatic, almost magical feel. In one of the most striking photographs, it feels as if the viewer is standing inside the clouds themselves.

Among the town's familiar spots is *Char Dukan* captures the heart of Mussoorie's everyday charm. It's a place where locals and visitors pause to enjoy a quiet moment, sharing stories over warm drinks or snacks. The soft colours and rustic textures of *Char Dukan* fit naturally into the calm surroundings, making it a timeless part of the town. The hills around Mussoorie hold a quiet strength. From *Lal Tibba*, the highest point, you can see how vast the mountains stretch, even when clouds roll in and hide the view. On such days, the silence itself feels important. Mussoorie's churches stand quietly among the trees, like old friends who have watched over the town for years. The *Kellogg Memorial Church* rises steadily, its stone walls strong and calm. Not far from

there, *St Paul's Church* sits on a hill, its presence familiar to anyone who has spent time here. These buildings remind you of the history work into the hills, the stories carried by generations who have lived here. The *Mall Road*, with its shops and cafes, moves at its own easy pace. It is quiet but offers enough life to remind you the town is waking and breathing. People stroll

slowly, stopping to look at small shops or simply enjoy the cool air. The street lamps light up as the evening falls, giving the road a quiet glow. One special part of Mussoorie is *Ivy Cottage*, the home of *Ruskin Bond*. It feels like the heart of the town itself. Seeing his home is like stepping into one of the lanes of storybooks and full of quiet wonder. The house sits surrounded by trees, peaceful and calm, much like the writer who has long captured the spirit of these hills in his words. Nearby is the old house of *Sir George Everest*. Though it shows signs of age, the house holds a steady dignity. There is a feeling here that no matter where you come from, you are part of the place for a little while. This is Mussoorie, a town with calm, small moments of hills, homes and people. It stays with you long after you leave, like a quiet song you find yourself humming.

FROM THE TOP OF MUSSOORIE HILLS, THE NIGHT SHOWS MANY SMALL LIGHTS SHINING IN THE DARK. THE LIGHTS TWINKLE, SPREADING ACROSS THE TOWN LIKE TINY STARS. IT FEELS CALM AND PEACEFUL, AS IF THE WHOLE PLACE IS QUIETLY RESTING UNDER THE WIDE, STARRY SKY



WHY GO BACK?

These photos, taken back in 2014, take us to a Mussoorie that feels almost like a dream wrapped in the kind of cold that makes you pull your coat a little tighter. Because some places don't change, not really. These photos are a reminder of quiet, of beauty, of a town that knows how to slow down.

INTO THE WILD: BIRDWATCHING & FARM-TO-TABLE LIVING AT AAHANA RESORT, CORBETT

What if your balcony opened to a lush green forest and the distant calls of exotic birds? At Aahana Resort near Jim Corbett, this dream comes true. Spread across 14 acres and home to around 200 bird species, this resort offers a tranquil yet immersive nature experience for families. Wake up to the sights and sounds of the Oriental Pied Hornbill, Red Vented Bulbul, Rufous Treepie, and even peacocks. Kids can go on early morning birdwatching walks within the property, no extra travel required. The highlight for culinary enthusiasts is the "Farm to Table" concept. Guests are invited to pick fresh ingredients from the resort's organic garden and watch them turn into delicious meals right in front of their eyes, thanks to the skilled in-house chefs. It's an experience of discovery and flavour, all wrapped into one peaceful setting.



The Unforgettable Summer Vacation Getaways

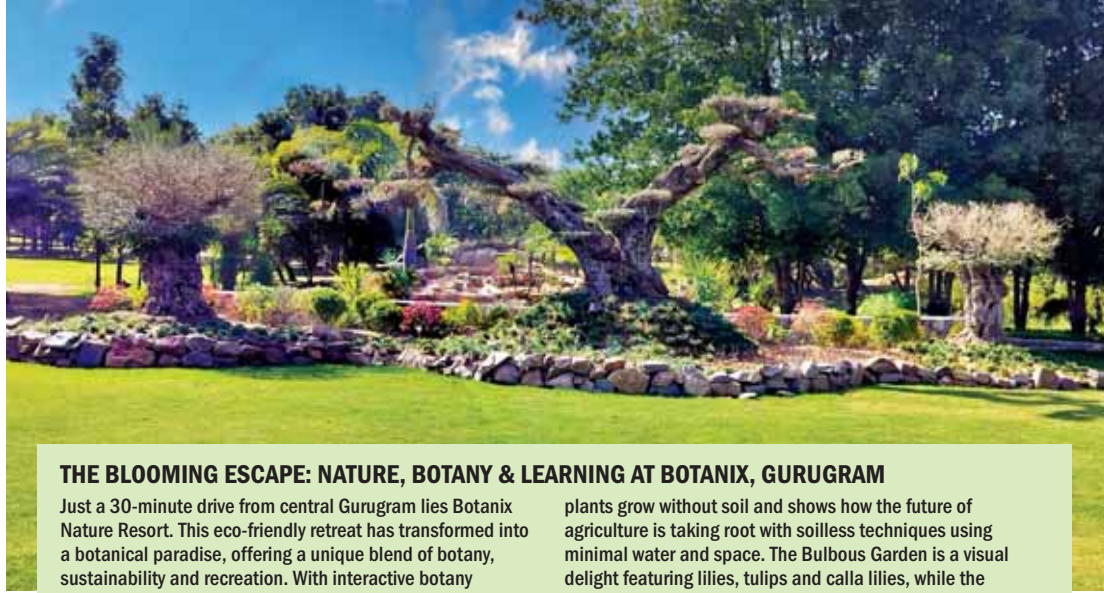
DIVYA BHATIA

Summer holidays are here, and travel plans are in full swing. While some families head to the cool mountains and others to the calming beaches, one thing remains the same, travel planning can be both exciting and overwhelming. With limited time and endless to-dos, the thought of squeezing in a relaxing, fulfilling getaway might feel impossible. Add to that the challenge of keeping kids entertained and engaged, and it becomes even trickier. But what if you could have a full-fledged, activity, packed experience without burning your leaves or taking time off from work?

If you're in Delhi, these hidden gems are just a short 4-5 hour drive away and are perfect for weekend trips that feel like month-long breaks. Whether it's stargazing, living the rural life, spotting exotic birds, or enjoying breakfast on an island, these escapes will leave rejuvenated. And the best part? Your children will never complain about "not doing enough" again.

Lakeside Bliss: Stargazing & Floating Breakfasts

Stargazing in Delhi might be a dream, but what if you could lie under a sky full of stars, observe constellations through a telescope, and actually learn about them? At *Kiyo Stays* by The Lake



THE BLOOMING ESCAPE: NATURE, BOTANY & LEARNING AT BOTANIX, GURUGRAM

Just a 30-minute drive from central Gurugram lies Botanix Nature Resort. This eco-friendly retreat has transformed into a botanical paradise, offering a unique blend of botany, sustainability and recreation. With interactive botany classes, horticulture sessions, vegetable gardening and nature games, kids can understand how plants grow and engage in hands-on farming. Imagine witnessing an 800-year-old bonsai tree or working in a hydroponic garden where

plants grow without soil and shows how the future of agriculture is taking root with soilless techniques using minimal water and space. The Bulbous Garden is a visual delight featuring lilies, tulips and calla lilies, while the Bonsai Garden offers a tranquil setting to admire the beauty of miniature trees. The highlight? Classes on botany for kids and families, teaching how plants grow, with opportunities to work on a farm and plant your own vegetables.

Hill, this dream becomes a reality. Nestled in the tranquil hills of Uttarakhand's Kumaon region, this thoughtfully curated collection of mountain homes across Bhimtal, *Naukuchiatal*, and nearby hamlets offers a welcome escape from the city's chaos. It's the kind of place where time slows down, and simple joys take center stage.

Among the many memorable experiences here, one that truly stands out is breakfast at the *Aquarium Island Café* — a quaint floating café where guests are gently rowed across *Bhimtal Lake* to enjoy their morning meal amidst serene views and gently rippling waters. Evenings bring a different kind of magic as guests gather around a bonfire and embrace

the spirit of *Ukiyo* — the Japanese art of living in the moment. Whether you're indulging in local flavors, gazing at a starlit sky or watching the sun dip behind the hills, every experience here is designed to soothe the soul and refresh the senses.

Each of these destinations can be explored over a weekend, meaning you can plan multiple escapes across the summer. With just a short drive and an open mind, you'll find that adventure, education, and relaxation are all within reach.



RURAL CHARM REIMAGINED: VILLAGE LIFE AT RURAL SENSE FARM STAY

Sometimes, we crave to reconnect with our roots — but without travelling too far. Just outside Delhi, Rural Sense Farm Stay offers an immersive village experience wrapped in rustic charm and modern comfort. Stay in mud-walled huts with thatched roofs, windows styled like village jharokhas, and wake up to views of open farms.

There are goats, cows, and other friendly animals to feed — a delight for children. Here, you're invited to return to basics: feed goats and cows, milk them, churn butter, grind flour on traditional equipment, or cook rotis on a chulha. Lounge on a Manji under the open sky or take part in farming activities that double as natural workouts. Whether you're relaxing or getting your hands dirty, it's the kind of digital detox that leaves you feeling connected to your family, to nature, and to your roots. The best part? It's pet-friendly, so your furry family members can tag along too.



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19
This is the week to clear personal debts and any financial obligations. You could be in a position to offer emotional or financial help to someone close to you, perhaps during a family gathering like a wedding. Supporting charities may also come into focus. During the middle of the week, some of you could chase after pleasure through entertainment and excessive food consumption but set no clear goals for themselves. Reminder: remain undistracted and focused on what needs your attention. You'll be the most sought after if you want to be a decision maker who attracts abundance, prosperity, and great health. To make that happen, a goal-based approach, combined with staying authentic, is absolutely essential.
Lucky number 13 | Lucky colour Beige
Lucky day Friday



LEO July 23-Aug 22
You tend to have a commanding influence, often making things happen however you want them to. Your energy tends to fill the room and can get things moving swiftly. Too much energy can sometimes foster distance or conflicts, especially with peers or people around you. You may actively find yourself in disputes or differing sentiments being voiced in your direction. Efforts are best directed to the more constructive issues at hand instead. Support in the form of the Divine is now available, leading to blessings regarding health, success or even authority. You are doing great, but you can enhance your accomplishments by ensuring balance in your surroundings. Take note that allowing your dominance to spiral out of control may endanger the status you have personally worked hard to achieve.
Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Rust
Lucky day Monday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 19
This week, you may sustain a minor injury that requires medical attention during a specific timeframe, resulting in a healing phase. Although you will need nurturing, you are lucky to have a devoted partner who admires and cherishes you. Your partner can help you heal as they assist you and provide devotion through spiritual avenues. Vows may prove helpful at this period as they, along with mantra chanting, assist you in attaining serenity of the mind in the balanced sphere, which is necessary for you to retain faith. You will be inclined to indulge and articulate it. At this stage, nurturing powerful family associations will trigger you to contemplate fragments of cells. You can adhere to affection and detach from mediocre moralities.
Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Gray
Lucky day Monday



TAURUS April 20-May 20
This week, you might notice that you're cherishing the impact and power that come with the role you occupy. This is the influence of your words, posture, and how you interact with fellow workers. Your leadership and organizational skills are in the forefront, and thus, you are earning respect at your workplace. You relate with people in a heartfelt manner which enables you to appreciate their needs. Nonetheless, tread carefully because there may be people that are unhappy with your style and approach, trying to sabotage you or outsmart you. Because of such competition, any contract or meeting may not achieve the anticipated outcomes. By the end of the week, it seems you might be stressed because you're doing a lot by yourself.
Lucky number 27 | Lucky colour Aqua
Lucky day Sunday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22
This week brings success in different areas of one's life and monetary and emotional gains. Other income streams add to one's feeling of security while helping them enjoy material success. Happiness includes family life and entertainment, luxuries, and fulfilling desires. These all bring joy and contentment. Around the middle of the week, one can receive messages about emotional fulfillment through love texts, engagements, or growing relations with existing partners. With all this joy, one may also have to deal with a lack of affection, confusion, restlessness, and unsettling you. Towards the end of the week, one will look for peace, try to alter their views, and go with the current change. Striving to hold onto irrelevant customs is no longer helpful; letting go will allow you to embrace fresh ideas.
Lucky number 30 | Lucky colour Fuchsia
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19
It may seem like this week will be overly emotional, as you may start to feel more 'sentimental' because the situations you face do not align with your desires. You may feel compelled to give others help and care, while emotional unrest may leave you feeling agitated, resulting in inner chaos. Paying attention to health may add to the stress, especially for women with hormonal imbalances or thyroid problems. Meanwhile, financial responsibilities require caution, and stricter budgeting will serve you well, as spending less will work in your favour. From midweek on, maintaining balance will help the most, as persevering through challenges requires a steady approach. Focus on healthy habits, both in diet and lifestyle. By the end of the week, expect to experience positive shifts in your career.
Lucky number 29 | Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20
Reap the rewards of your hard work this week, but tread carefully as some challenges may arise. Expect a phase filled with rampant rivalry and harsh criticism, full of vocal confrontation. Around the middle of the week, a more toxic opponent who lacks morals and principles may show up, as their aura is devoid of life and drains all positivity. While facing unethical conducts to act immorally can be alluring, staying true to your morals is the best option. Thereafter, truthfulness reluctantly blessed you with happiness, where ease would let you bask in its glory, though not before you celebrated the positivity you never thought you could achieve. Your recognition shall soar as your reputation climbs to staggering heights, filling you with euphoric positivity.
Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Mahogany
Lucky day Wednesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22
There's a lot of almost miraculous goodwill coming your way next week in the form of enjoyment and achievement. You're now at the stage of being appreciated, where your internal progress translates to external benefits because of your effort and genuine commitment. The cosmos aligns with your endeavours. You shine with your effortless sense of poise and deep-seated virtues of equity and kindness, which are the hallmarks of effective leadership. Your insight and the healing dimension of your personality that influences people far beyond the immediate environment of home and work make you a unique asset. Towards the end of the week, however, watch for possible financial or health issues that might crop up. Be sure to adopt measures that would safeguard your health and overall safety.
Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Ivory
Lucky day Friday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18
Your critical decision-making skills will be tested early this week, requiring you to detach yourself emotionally. The consequences of your decisions will matter significantly to you or someone important in your life. Conflict at your workplace is possible, particularly in competitive situations. Try to stay out of conflicts and take a more accommodating stance. Toward mid-week, a superior's negative evaluation may leave some of you feeling depleted, frustrated, and vitally low. Meditative, yogic, and spiritual practices can help ground you and empower you with rejuvenated self-confidence and mental clarity in these mentally trying times. Toward the end of the week, you will feel your internal mental state shifting toward an increasing sense of serenity and positivity. Get ready for some good news — perhaps about romance or marriage.
Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Moss Green
Lucky day Wednesday



CANCER June 21-July 22
The month starts with some quite fast-paced events; feelings will not be welcome in this context. A new project at the office may open a new door, but it will demand Decisive action and skilful execution, where Agile soft skills and clear logic are needed. Focused rationality and step-by-step structured actions will ensure achievement. You can expect some movement in your finances. Feel free to extend charity-type help where you can provide services free of cost. Powerful negative emotions can cloud objective judgment. Towards the week's closing, you can look forward to a strategic alliance and partnership contract, which you will receive firmly and well in advance. Expect deepening emotional investments, and for people looking for relationships, they will start uncovering a newfound desire to pair up.
Lucky number 22 | Lucky colour Plum
Lucky day Saturday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21
With your strained work schedules, deadlines can be pretty demanding, and it is evident that you are committed to giving your best. However, it is essential to note that both academic and professional work is beginning to drain your energy levels. You need to disconnect and recharge yourself. Failing to rest adequately runs the risk of developing mental and emotional burnout, which can make one feel cranky. Focus on your wellbeing, particularly around the middle of the week, when most women suffer some form of cycle-related disturbance. Take proactive steps to deal with burnout, including but not limited to medical examinations and even allowing yourself some idle time. Be mindful of power struggles in professional environments and with bosses or senior colleagues.
Lucky number 25 | Lucky colour Bronze
Lucky day Sunday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20
This week comes with a wave of youthful vitality and considerable potential for development. Not having well-established goals along with focus may stop your efforts from producing the desired outcomes. Focus your creative energies on more meaningful pursuits after properly setting goals. From your family, neglecting health issues can result in having to devote more time and energy towards caregiving, which can prove to be costly in the long run. Midweek may bring some challenges in emotional relationships and financial matters, causing some distressing emotions. Your inner fire and mental fortitude will be crucial in facing and overcoming these hurdles. Towards the end of the week, opportunities and blessings might be coming your way, which from your perspective might be ignored as you are caught up in your own life.
Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Ice Blue
Lucky day Monday

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THOUGHTFUL INSIGHTS



Dr. Tanu Jain

Whether through grief of profound loss, or through the quieter struggles of daily life, I've learnt that true peace comes not from chasing but from resting in faith

When the Search Ends, the Journey Begins



Have you ever found yourself endlessly searching - for new opportunities, fresh avenues, new ways to "win" at life? Striving relentlessly for success, clarity, happiness? Yet despite all this chasing, you may find... no real results. We push, we pull, we try harder, and yet doors remain closed. How often do we see failure in one direction and still keep going down the same path, refusing to pause and truly ask: Is this really meant for me?

In those moments, we might even feel frustration toward the Divine, questioning why things aren't falling into place. We get so tangled in our own struggle that we don't realise: sometimes, being stuck is a sign — not of failure, but of redirection. Perhaps that path is not yours to take. Perhaps life is urging you to stop fighting the current, to stop swimming against the tide. This is where true wisdom lies: in letting go. Taking a deep breath, stepping back, and allowing nature, or the Divine, to take its course. It's about cultivating patience, surrendering the ego's constant demand for control, and trusting that there's a higher rhythm at work.

As the Bhagavad Gita (18.66) powerfully reminds us: "Abandon all duties and surrender completely to Me. I will liberate you from all sins; do not grieve." This is the ultimate call to surrender — to stop clinging, stop searching frantically, and allow yourself to rest in divine trust. The spiritual journey truly begins when we stop striving to force life into a mould and instead

accept what is with grace and clarity. A powerful real-life and legendary example that illustrates how stopping the chase and surrendering led to true breakthrough is that of Gautama Buddha: Buddha's own life is the ultimate example. He searched everywhere — through intense asceticism, knowledge, and external practices — for enlightenment. But true awakening came only when he stopped the extreme searching, sat in stillness under the Bodhi tree, and surrendered. It was in that quiet acceptance

that enlightenment arose. Lord Mahavir, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism, famously renounced all material possessions and family ties in pursuit of spiritual truth. His renunciation was not a mere rejection of wealth but a profound surrender to the divine will. He realised that searching for external success and accumulating worldly gains only leads to suffering. Through deep meditation and self-discipline, he attained Keval Jnana (omniscient knowledge) and taught his followers to relinquish attachment to the material world. Mahavir's journey emphasises that true peace begins when you stop searching externally and surrender to the wisdom of the soul.

Myriad of Jain examples beautifully mirror the idea that surrendering our relentless search for external success and embracing detachment from worldly desires leads to true peace. Just as Lord Mahavir, Acharya Bhadrabahu, and others showed, when we stop searching for happiness outside of ourselves and instead turn inward with patience and trust, we open ourselves to the wisdom that transcends suffering. Their lives inspire us to pause, reflect, and realise that sometimes the path begins when we stop searching and start letting go. The real path — the one that leads us home to ourselves — often begins when we stop searching externally and turn inward. It begins when we let go of forced agendas and allow life's deeper wisdom to surface. Surrender is not weakness; it is the highest

strength, the quiet power of trust. If you find yourself in a season of striving with no peace, remember: sometimes the greatest progress comes when you simply pause. Let go. Trust. The universe, after all, knows the way better than we do. Looking at the life of Steve Jobs it reminds me that after being ousted from Apple, Jobs admitted it was a devastating blow. But instead of forcing his way back, he let life unfold — starting NeXT and Pixar. Only later did the full circle happen, leading him back to Apple, where he made his most legendary impact. Sometimes, the detour IS the real path.

I've walked this path myself. There was a time when I, too, kept pushing — searching for answers, for direction, for something that felt just out of reach. But it was only when I allowed myself to pause, surrender, and trust the flow of life that clarity began to dawn. Whether through grief, like losing my father and facing that profound loss, or through the quieter struggles of daily life, I've learnt that true peace comes not from chasing but from resting in faith.

If you find yourself striving endlessly, may I gently offer: stop for a moment? Let go of the tight grip. Trust that the universe has its own divine timing and path for you. Often, the real journey begins when we stop searching — and start simply being.

— The author's views are personal. (The author is a civil servant at the Ministry of Defence and a spiritual speaker)