

### 'People From All Walks Of Life Participated': PM Modi On Yoga Day Event In Kolkata



PM Narendra Modi participates in the 12th International Day of Yoga - 2026 celebrations at Kolkata. Photo: PIB

Kolkata, June 21 (GNS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who led the 12th International Yoga Day event in Kolkata on Sunday, appreciated the participation of people from "all walks of life" while also emphasising the theme 'Yoga For Healthy Ageing'. In a post on X, PM Modi said: "An exceptional Yoga Day programme was held at Kolkata's Red Road this morning, in which people from all walks of life participated, giving an important message on the vitality of Yoga in everyone's lives."

"This time, the theme was 'Yoga For Healthy Ageing' which emphasised the importance of Yoga in all ages to remain fit and healthy," he added.

While addressing the

event earlier in the morning, PM Modi urged people across the country to adopt yoga as a part of their daily lives, stressing that it promotes healthy living, a healthy mind, and long-term well-being.

"I feel so happy that the people of Kolkata today have overwhelmingly participated in that global festival. Remember, Yoga ensures that ageing does not impact the working potential of human beings. So, if you adopt Yoga as part of your daily life and also a part of your family, at your fifties you will feel as if you are in your thirties and in your seventies you will feel that you are in your forties," the Prime Minister said. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister also

narrated the rich connection between Yoga and Bengal and, more specifically, how Swami Vivekananda took Yoga to the global platform.

"Swamiji, in 1893, said that Yoga is the only way to liberation. He said that Yoga is joy and love. Swamiji then spoke about the development of mind and body through Yoga. This Yoga is the old culture of West Bengal," the Prime Minister said. According to him, it would be wrong to think that one needs Yoga just for his or her own well-being.

"Yoga also has a bigger role to play in building a beautiful future. So do not confine Yoga to a special day or a special occasion. Let it be a part of your daily life," PM Modi said.

### No right to comment on internal affairs: India slams Pakistan President's remark

New Delhi, June 21 (GNS): The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Saturday strongly responded to the Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari's comments on the demolition of religious sites in India, saying he does not have any standing to comment on the internal matters of India. "India categorically rejects the unwarranted comments made by the President of Pakistan. He has, in any case, no locus standi to comment on matters that are internal to India," the MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said while responding to media queries. Earlier on Saturday, Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari commented on the demolition of religious sites in India. The MEA called these comments "particularly absurd given Pakistan's own abysmal record on human rights, which is a matter of global commentary. Pakistan's long history of systematically targeting and victimising minorities across various faiths is notorious". It also noted that "given this reality, the Presi-



dent's remarks can only be read as a deliberate political attack, driven by Pakistan's national policies of bigotry and hatred".

On Friday, India firmly rejected "baseless and malicious allegations" by Pakistan, while dismissing references to the India's Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir made by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), reiterating that the region remains an "integral and inalienable" part of the country.

Speaking at the 62nd session of the Human Rights Council, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, Anupama Singh, said, "In-

dia is compelled to exercise its right of reply in response to the references made to it by Pakistan and the OIC. We categorically reject the baseless and malicious allegations made by Pakistan. We also categorically reject the references to Jammu and Kashmir made by the OIC. Pakistan's propaganda is designed to mask its domestic failures and support for terrorism. Its misuse of the OIC coordinator's role only reinforces deception. We have no desire to dignify such propaganda."

Singh also accused Pakistan of pursuing terrorism as state policy while simultaneously portraying itself as a victim of terrorism.

## NEET-UG Re-Test held smoothly Nationwide under tight security

New Delhi, June 21 (UNI) National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET-UG) 2026 re-examination was conducted across India and overseas on Sunday. There were massive security arrangements to ensure fair and smooth conduction of exam. It turned out to be one of the largest and most closely monitored examinations in the country's history. The retest was held after the National Testing Agency (NTA) cancelled the original May 3 examination amid an ongoing probe into allegations of question paper leakage.

More than 22 lakh candidates appeared for the re-examination, which was



conducted at 5,440 centres across 551 Indian cities and 14 overseas locations. The examination was held from 2 p.m. to 5.15 p.m., with additional compensatory time provided to eligible candidates with disabilities. According to officials,

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan kept monitoring the arrangements from the NTA headquarters in Delhi. He had earlier urged students to appear for the examination without anxiety.

According to the NTA,

the nationwide exercise involved nearly seven lakh officials, including examination staff, police personnel and observers, while over 95,000 examination rooms were placed under CCTV surveillance through more than 1.38 lakh cameras. More

than 51,000 signal jammers were also deployed to prevent electronic malpractice.

The re-examination was largely conducted peacefully across states. A common sentiment emerged from several regions that Biology was relatively easy and syllabus-based, Chemistry was moderate, while Physics proved to be the most challenging section. In Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, where over 1.37 lakh students appeared at nearly 400 centres, candidates described Physics as difficult and time-consuming. Similar feedback came from Tamil Nadu, where around 1.42 lakh aspirants took the

### 7 killed in Ammonia leak at Tiruvallur seafood unit, CM Vijay announces compensation



Chennai, June 21 (GNS): At least seven workers were killed and several others hospitalised after a suspected ammonia gas leak at a seafood export processing unit near Periyapalayam in Tamil Nadu's Tiruvallur district on Sunday, officials said.

According to police and official sources, the leak occurred at a private seafood processing and export facility in Kannigaipair village in the district where a large number of migrant workers were employed. Many of them reside within the premises. Around 120 workers, including women

from Assam, Odisha and Jharkhand, were reportedly within the factory premises when the incident took place. Authorities said the suspected ammonia leak originated from the unit's refrigeration or processing system and quickly spread across parts of the facility. Workers exposed to the gas began experiencing severe breathing difficulties, dizziness and irritation.

Some reportedly suffered bleeding from the mouth and nose, indicating the intensity of the exposure. Panic gripped the premises as workers rushed out in search of safety, while others

collapsed after inhaling the gas. According to government figures, 64 workers, including 60 women and four men, were affected in the incident. Emergency response teams, police personnel and local authorities reached the spot and launched rescue operations. The affected workers were initially shifted to nearby private hospitals for emergency treatment. Police sources had earlier reported that one worker had died while undergoing treatment. However, as rescue and medical efforts continued, the death toll rose to at least seven.

### BJP will form government in Punjab, says Nitin Nabin

CHANDIGARH, June 21 (GNS): BJP National President Nitin Nabin on Sunday expressed confidence that the party would eventually form a government in Punjab, saying the BJP was determined to strengthen its base in the state. Speaking to the media in Jalandhar during his three-day visit to Punjab, Nabin said, "Just as the BJP achieved victory in Bengal, we will fight hard in Punjab and make the lotus bloom here too. The trust people have in Prime Minister Narendra

Modi will certainly bring about change in Punjab, and the state will move forward while upholding its security and culture."

His visit is being seen as part of the BJP's efforts to expand its presence in Punjab.

Addressing a gathering after participating in the 12th International Yoga Day celebrations at Lovely Professional University (LPU), Phagwara, Nabin said the BJP would continue efforts to eliminate the drug menace from the state.

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### SC urged to order FIR, independent investigation into Bhojpur encounter

New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) A representation has been submitted before the Supreme Court seeking it take suo motu cognisance of the alleged encounter killing of Bharat Bhushan Tiwari in Bihar's Bhojpur district and directions for the registration of an FIR, an independent investigation, and strict compliance with the apex court's guidelines governing police encounter deaths.

Addressed to Chief Justice of India (CJI) Justice Surya Kant, the representation was filed by advocate Narendra Mishra, who urged the apex court to order a court-monitored probe, preferably by

the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) or a Special Investigation Team (SIT), into the June 17 incident in Bilauti village under Shahpur police station limits.

The representation contended that the incident has raised "serious questions regarding the rule of law, constitutional protections, and compliance with the guidelines laid down by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in cases involving police encounters".

According to the representation, family members and villagers have alleged that Tiwari had surrendered before the police and thrown away his pistol, and

that videos circulating in the public domain purportedly suggest circumstances indicating surrender before the shooting. "The family has consistently maintained that the deceased was unarmed at the time of the shooting and that the incident was not a genuine encounter but an extrajudicial killing," it said.

The representation claimed that no criminal history or previous FIR against the deceased has been publicly disclosed and described him as a graduate who was locally known for raising issues relating to floods, erosion, and public grievances through social media.

# Trump's tariff war has opened up fresh opportunities to India

By Subrata Majumder

With Trump's tariff war escalating, a new plank is established for India to be the hub for global supply chain. Caught in the crossfire of highest hike in tariff by 245 percent on import from China by Trump administration, China will lose its hegemony in supply chain. Eventually, new opportunity will open up for India to bid challenge to China as well as Vietnam – the extension of Chinese workshop.

The confidence built up for India to be alternative to China and Vietnam for supply chain is evident from the recent trend of India's exports to USA. USA emerged the biggest destination for India's exports of electronic goods and auto parts. Exports of electronic goods to USA boomed to US\$ 10.5 billion in 2023-24, from US\$ 1.6 billion in 2018-19, registering a growth by 593.3 percent and that of auto components, it boosted to 1.9 billion in 2023-24, from US\$1.2 billion in 2018-19, recording a growth by 46.6 percent. In terms shares, USA accounted for 33.8 percent of India's total exports of electronic goods and 24.2 percent of auto component exports in 2023-24.

Factors attributed to these growth were the fall out of Trump's tariff war against China in his first term of Presidency, coupled with fall out of COVID 19



pandemic. Walmart has shifted focus from importing goods from China to increasingly partnership and imports from India. Reuter reported "Walmart was importing more goods to USA from India, and reducing its dependence on China as it looks cut costs and diversify its supply chain".

The telecom CISCO has also made decision to start manufacturing in India, stating "fueled by rapidly growing digital economy, India is focal point of innovation and business for CISCO". With the onset of COVID 19, a dramatic change was drawn in the global landscape of manufacturing for supply chain. China, which topped in manufacturing, receded in its hegemony. Foreign investors were flying out of China and shifted to South East countries. Eventually, Vietnam emerged an alternative for China.

Given the changes in global landscape for manufacturing of supply chain,

Indian policy makers refurbished Make in India. They lend a second thought in the concept and shifted focus on supply chain manufacturing. Eventually, PLI (Production Link Incentive) scheme was overhauled. It expanded with more doses of incentives. The expanded PLI worked well. Manufacturing boomed.

Electronic sector experienced a galloping growth in India. Production reached US \$ 101 billion in 2023-24, from US \$ 48 billion in 2017-18. It comprised of US\$ 86 billion worth finished products and US\$ 15 billion worth electronic components. Alongside, India pitched a faster growth in auto components industry. It has shown steady growth by 9.8 percent in 2023-24. Imports too increased. But, the industry maintained a surplus trade balance between exports and imports.

No doubt, China was the biggest supplier of components and intermediates for supply chain manu-

facturing in India. But, the dependence on China was receding with the growth in domestic production. Shares of imports of electronic goods from China declined to 37.2 percent in 2023-24, from 41.9 percent in 2020-21 and that of auto components decelerated to 23.4 per cent in 2023-24 from 30.3 percent in 2020-21.

According to Nikkei Asia, "India can be the bigger winner in the supply chain shift from China". Till now India does not have manufacturing plant for semiconductor devices. Recently, three companies have decided to manufacture semiconductor in India. They are Micron Technology, USA, Renesas Electronics, Japan, in partnership with Star Microtech, Thailand and Tata Electronics Pvt Ltd, in partnership with Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation, Thailand (PSMC).

In the realm of China losing its strength in global power for supply chain,

Vietnam emerged alternative to China. Vietnam emerged the 6th biggest exporter to USA. Vietnam's rising strength to dump in American market relied on Chinese imports.

China was the biggest stake holder in value addition of Vietnamese made goods, meant for export to USA. According to a study, value addition by Chinese materials in Vietnamese made goods was nearly 30.4 percent in 2022. This demonstrates that more than one-third of value addition in Vietnamese goods exported to USA were by Chinese supply chain.

It is argued that success of Vietnam in American market was mainly due to backdoor entry of Chinese exports to USA to avoid high USA tariff imposed on China during the first term of Trump's Presidency.

In the bid of Trump's vehement challenge to tariff offenders, a new opportunity has opened for India to emerge alternative to Vietnam in the global supply chain. Vietnam has been abused as one of the biggest offenders, inviting second highest hike in USA import tariff. It is accused as extension of Chinese workshop.

To this end, a complimentary partnership with China bode well for India to capitalize supply chain market in USA, incurring lower tariff hike. At present, Chinese investment in India is restricted and barred

# Political fault lines shift in Bihar

The Bihar polls at the end of the year are pretty unpredictable. Currently, there will be no cakewalk for the BJP, RJD, Congress or the JD(U). The churning is quietly taking place in Bihar politics. There could be a potential shift in power dynamics. The BJP, playing second fiddle to the Janata Dal (United) for the past two decades, is eyeing a lead role. The RJD wants to form the government. Two crucial power groups are in the fight. On one side, the NDA and, on the other, the Mahagathbandhan, which comprises the RJD, Congress, and the Left parties. Intra-party and inner-party dynamics are in full swing. The NDA and Mahagathbandhan are making calculated moves for a high-stakes political showdown. Encouraged by consecutive victories in states where the odds were against it, a revitalised BJP has now set its sights on Bihar after winning Delhi. Bihar's caste politics is interesting. Backward classes comprise 63.13 per cent of the population, and the upper caste is only 15.52 per cent. Other Backward Classes comprise 27.12 per cent of the backward class category, while the Extremely Backward Class population numbered 36 per cent. Dalits comprise almost 19.65 per cent and Yadavs account for 14.26 per cent. Kurmi, Nitish Kumar's Kurmi caste, also categorised as OBC, is 2.87 per cent of the population. In the last Assembly polls, upper castes, around 15 per cent of the population, dominated ticket distribution in many parties. BJP gave 47.3 per cent of its tickets to upper caste candidates, whereas Congress gave 40 per cent of its seats to upper castes. In the 2020 Bihar assembly elections, the Mahagathbandhan did not win a simple majority in the 243-member legislative assembly, missing it by just 12 seats. The RJD was the largest party in the House but could not form the government. For the 2025 polls, JD(U) has confirmed Nitish Kumar as the chief ministerial face. The well-known poll expert Prashant Kishor predicted that Nitish Kumar would end his political career. The RJD has opted for its leader, Tejaswi Yadav. Congress has not opened its cards yet. A series of meetings between Congress and the RJD, which began this month, continues. The Janata Dal (United) party and the BJP coalition currently rule Bihar. Nitish Kumar's deteriorating health, caste balance, and the functioning of the alliance make Bihar politically unpredictable. Even if the BJP chooses Nitish, his health issues could significantly impact the election outcome. The JD(U) wants to bargain for more seats with the BJP. In 2020, the JD(U) ran for 115 seats but only won 43. In contrast, the BJP ran for 110 seats and won 74. The Mahagathbandhan, which consists of RJD, Congress, and some smaller parties, pose stiff opposition. The RJD and top Congress leaders met in Delhi last week to advance the alliance. Political realignments since 2020 — the VIP joining the MGB, the LJP aligning with the NDA and the Rashtriya Lok Samata Party merging into the JD(U) — complicate the poll picture. A key development since 2020 has been the change in the power equation within the NDA, with the BJP emerging stronger. The BJP has strategically cultivated non-dominant other backward classes (OBCs) and non-dominant Dalit communities. Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited Bihar for two days. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit Bihar.

RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav made a surprising announcement, stating that he is open to reconciling with his socialist ally, Nitish Kumar. In response to this mischievous statement, Nitish remarked that he had inadvertently aligned with the RJD. Tejaswi Yadav, however, asserted that there is no place for Nitish in the Mahagathbandhan. Many believe that Nitish, known for his U-turns, could switch sides. The INDIA opposition bloc has appointed Tejaswi Yadav, the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) leader and former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister, as head of its coordination committee for the upcoming Bihar Assembly elections. This decision was made during a meeting of the six alliance partners in Patna on April 17. The Congress and Left parties in the Mahagathbandhan are worried that the RJD will wait until the last minute to finalise seat-sharing agreements. The Congress party is unhappy with the weak constituencies it was given in 2020. It only won 19 out of the 70 seats it contested in the last election. The CPI(ML), which did well in 2020, wants a larger share of seats. Since 2005, the RJD has had difficulty regaining power, except for short periods in 2015 and 2022. Currently, Tejaswi Yadav has two main tasks. First, he needs to expand the support beyond its core groups of Muslims and Yadavs to include other castes. This involves a stronger grassroots campaign, as the traditional voting trends are changing. The Congress has not developed younger leadership in Bihar. Its old core groups of Muslims and Dalits have shifted to other parties. The party has launched the 'Samvidhan Leadership Programme' to eye marginalised communities.

The main parties face challenges both within their groups and from outside, and a significant political change is expected. A point to note is that Nitish Kumar's EBC is intact and challenges the RJD-Congress alliance. There could be many more changes before November; they would be interesting to watch. In politics, one week is said to be long. Six months is really long.

The Bihar Assembly elections are expected to be a defining political battle, with shifting alliances, caste equations, and leadership questions making the contest highly unpredictable. The outcome may not only decide the next government in Patna but could also reshape the political influence of major players at the national level. For the BJP, Bihar represents an opportunity to move from being the junior partner in the NDA to the dominant force, while the RJD is determined to return to power by expanding its social base. The role of smaller parties and regional leaders could prove crucial in a closely fought election. Parties such as the Vikassheel Insaan Party (VIP), Lok Janshakti Party factions, and other regional groups may influence the final arithmetic by cutting into traditional vote banks. In Bihar's multi-layered caste politics, even a small shift among Extremely Backward Classes, Dalits, or non-dominant OBC groups could change the direction of the election.

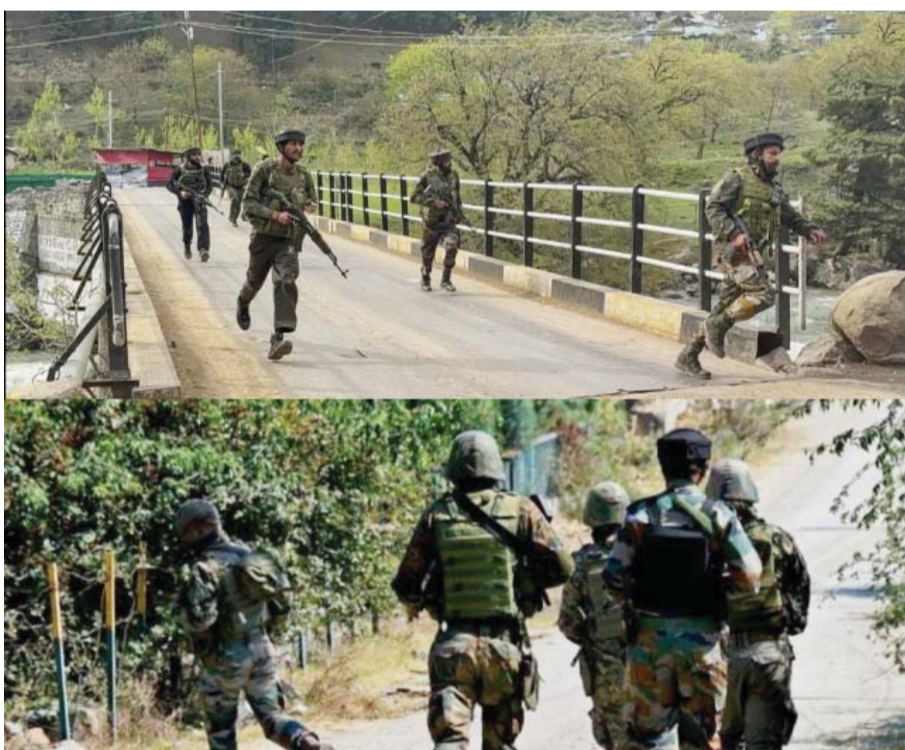
For Nitish Kumar, the challenge will be maintaining his long-standing appeal among EBC voters while managing alliance pressures from the BJP. His political credibility, governance record, and health concerns are likely to remain central issues during the campaign. The BJP, meanwhile, will attempt to strengthen its outreach among communities that have historically not been part of its core support base. For Tejaswi Yadav, the biggest challenge is transforming the RJD from a party strongly associated with Yadav and Muslim voters into a broader social coalition capable of attracting EBCs, Dalits, and sections of youth. Employment, migration, education, and development are likely to become major campaign themes as voters assess the performance of the current government.

# Pahalgam attack and the gathering of war clouds over South Asia

M K Bhadrakumar

There have been incipient signs of late that all is not quiet on the western front, as India and Pakistan marked the anniversary of the ceasefire understanding of February 25, 2021 on the Line of Control (LoC) and other parts of the international border. True, the ceasefire never really meant any fundamental shift in Pakistan's state policy of sponsoring and waging a proxy war against India. Delhi, nonetheless, has been a stakeholder in the ceasefire agreement for as long as possible, even as its focus was on the Line of Actual Control with China. Pakistan, too, had its hands full, faced with a looming default crisis, internal security issues, and the deepening political instability that followed the overthrow of the Imran Khan government, which was masterminded by the military.

At any rate, the first major breach of the ceasefire agreement came on April 1, when Pakistan Army intruded into Indian territory and opened fire along the LoC in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district and our troops "responded effectively in a controlled and calibrated manner" while reaffirming commitment to the ceasefire agreement. That was a deliberate attempt to undermine the remarkable stability that was achieved in the Kashmir zone since 2019 after the abrogation of Article 370 and reorganisation of Jammu



and Kashmir. The surge in terrorist activities has been "an issue of concern" for some time, to quote army chief General Manoj Pande. The south of the Pir Panjal range, which connects Kashmir Valley with Rajouri and Poonch via Mughal Road, has historically been a hotbed of militancy between 1997 and 2003. Hilly features, tough terrain, dense foliage and the prevalence of natural caves on Pir Panjal (where the army's footprint is lighter) make the region an attractive sanctuary for terrorists to carry out surprise attacks.

Intelligence gathering is a big challenge, as the terrorists, mostly foreigners, avoid making contact with civilians and stick to guerrilla tactics, making it difficult for security forces to

gather information about their movement. Possibly, the deployment of troops out of the region to Ladakh following the tensions with China emboldened the terrorists to move in. The hill station of Gulmarg lies in the Pir Panjal range.

That said, there is also the 'big picture' to be weighed in. The incursion on April 1 in Poonch sector, which was indeed a grave provocation by the Pakistani military, came in the downstream of the US administration's green-lighting of the extradition of Tahawwur Rana, a key plotter of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks, to India. It was on February 13, during a joint press conference with PM Narendra Modi, that President Donald Trump personally announced Rana's extradition to India. Can

it be a coincidence that the terrorist strike on Pahalgam on April 22 coincided with the visit by Vice President JD Vance to India?

It must be a matter of exceptional concern to the General Headquarters of Pakistan Army in Rawalpindi that Delhi's policy of 'zero tolerance' toward terrorism is getting unprecedented support today under the stewardship of the FBI by Kash Patel and Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard. Pakistan has put on a brave face and washed its hands of Rana, a Canadian citizen. But things are not as simple as that once he begins to narrate how the terror ecosystem operates in Pakistan under the direct supervision of the military leadership. These are early days.

Although the extradition treaty of 1997 stipulates India must ensure that Rana will not be tortured, will be provided adequate protection in prison, and will only be tried for the offences for which he has been extradited—limiting India's legal options—the fact remains that he has been under US detention for the past 16 years alongside David Headley. A second aspect of immense relevance here collaterally is the belligerent outburst, out of the blue, by Pakistan's army chief General Asim Munir on April 17 during a diaspora event in Islamabad. At the meeting that was attended by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, senior ministers and Pakistani elites living abroad, Munir described Kashmir as Pakistan's 'jugular vein' and exhorted overseas Pakistanis to pass on the country's story to their children, emphasising their forefathers believed that Hindus and Muslims were different in every aspect of life. Can it be a coincidence that Munir's inflammatory rhetoric came against the backdrop of the current dissonance within India over the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025, which is putting the spotlight on properties donated by Indian Muslims over centuries? Third, it is both symbolic and consequential that the Kashmir issue figured in the talks between the foreign secretaries of Pakistan and Bangladesh in Dhaka on April 18, marking the resumption of such consultation after 15 years.

## Gyan Post: A Vital Channel for Universal Education – Scindia



New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) The northeastern states should work towards ensuring energy security and given the hydro-power potential, including pumped-storage in the region, they should make efforts to effectively utilise that potential, Union Power Minister Manohar Lal said.

In his address at the 'Regional Conference of the Power Sector' in Gangtok, Sikkim, the minister underlined the importance of a future-ready, modern and financially viable power sector to fuel the country's growth on its journey towards becoming a developed nation, according to a Ministry of Power statement. He emphasised the importance of power in achieving the goal of 'Viksit Bharat,' adding that the regional conference would help in identifying specific challenges and solutions

in respect of power sector of the northeastern states. The minister mentioned that despite the minor gap of 0.1 per cent in meeting current power requirements, efforts must continue to meet future demands. Since 2014, power generation has increased significantly, and various modes of generation, including thermal, hydro, atomic, and renewable energy, must be advanced, he added. Addressing environmental concerns and moving towards non-fossil power is essential for achieving the target of Net Zero Emissions, according to Manohar Lal.

He mentioned that through government schemes like RDSS and PM-JANMAN, difficulties in the distribution sector are being addressed, and left-out households are being electrified. The min-

ister highlighted that the distribution sector faces challenges due to poor tariff structures, suboptimal billing and collection, and delayed payments of government department dues and subsidies.

"It is essential to reduce the AT&C losses and the gap between Average Cost of Supply and Average Revenue Realised, to ensure that the distribution sector becomes viable. To achieve that, it is essential that the tariffs are cost-reflective," Manohar Lal stated. Sikkim Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang-Golay highlighted the key steps taken by the state towards improving the quality and reliability of power supply. He also highlighted the proposed plan for further improving the power sector, requesting for interventions from the Central government on various issues concerning the state.

## Aadhaar e-KYC Hits 44.63 Crore in March 2025, Easing Business



New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) In a clear sign of its growing adoption and utility, Aadhaar number holders carried out more than 2,707 crore authentication transactions in 2024-25 including 247 crore such transactions in March alone. Aadhaar has been an enabler of digital economy and the increasing adoption shows its growing role across sector including banking, finance, telecom, and for the smooth delivery of benefits under various government schemes and services.

The total number of authentication transactions in March 2025 (246.75 Cr) is higher than the transactions clocked during the same period last year as well as in February 2025. Since inception, the cumulative number of authentication transactions have crossed over 14,800 crore.

The AI/ML based Aadhaar Face Authentication solutions developed in house by UIDAI has been witnessing significant growth. In March more than 15 crore such transactions took place, indicative of the growing usage, adoption of this authentication modality and how it is

benefiting Aadhaar number holders seamlessly. More than 100 entities both in government and private sector are using face authentication for smooth delivery of benefits and services.

On 21 April, UIDAI received the prestigious Prime Minister's Award for Excellence in Public Administration. This was presented under the Innovation category for UIDAI's Face Authentication modality.

Aadhaar e-KYC service continues to play a crucial role in improving customer experience and adding ease of doing business in sectors including banking and non-banking financial services.

The total number of e-KYC transactions (44.63 Cr) carried out during March 2025 is over 6% more than the numbers during the same period last year. The cumulative number of e-KYC transactions has touched 2356 crore as on 31 March 2025.

Similarly, 20 lakh new Aadhaar numbers were generated in March 2025 and over 1.91 crore Aadhaars were updated successfully following submissions from Aadhaar number holders.

## MoU strengthens Strategic Partnership to step up Investor Awareness



New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) In a significant move to enhance investor education and protection, the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA), under the aegis of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited (KMBL), one of India's premier financial institutions. This strategic partnership aims to amplify the dissemination of critical investor awareness messages through Kotak Mahindra Bank's extensive physical and digital network across the country.

The collaboration will see IEPFA's curated investor education content being prominently featured on Kotak Mahindra Bank's ATMs, kiosks, websites, mobile apps and social me-

dia platforms. Digital banners, short films, and educational videos produced by IEPFA will be showcased to raise awareness on responsible investing, financial fraud prevention, and the protection of investor's rights. This initiative is designed to be rolled out during the current financial year 2025-2026, with no financial obligation on IEPFA. The partnership leverages Kotak Mahindra Bank's widespread domestic presence of 2000+ branches and 3000+ ATMs, ensuring impactful outreach to diverse segments of the population.

Under the leadership of Smt. Anita Shah Akella, CEO of the Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority (IEPFA) and Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, IEPFA continues to drive inno-

novative collaborations for financial empowerment. Smt. Samiksha Lamba, Deputy General Manager, IEPFA, and Mr. Vishal Agarwal, Senior Vice President and Head at Kotak Mahindra Bank, exchanged the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), reinforcing trust in our financial ecosystem.

Since its inception, the IEPFA has conducted several Investor Awareness Programmes aimed at increasing financial literacy and empowering investors to protect themselves from financial fraud.

The Investor Education and Protection Fund Authority, established under the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Government of India, safeguards investor interests by promoting financial literacy and protecting investor rights.

## Rajiv Ranjan Singh Urges Infrastructure, Sustainability in Fisheries at 2025 Meet

New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) While inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for key fisheries projects worth Rs. 255 crores at the Coastal States Fisheries Meet in Mumbai today, Union Minister Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh highlighted the creation of the Regional Fisheries Council, progress under schemes like the Blue Revolution, Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), Fisheries Infrastructure Development Fund and emphasized on tapping India's vast marine resources. The coastal States Fisheries Meet saw extensive participation from across all coastal states and UTs across the country. The event was graced by

Ministers of State for Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel and Shri George Kurian. Dignitaries attending the event also included Nitesh Neelam Narayan Rane, Minister of Fisheries, Government of Maharashtra, Raghavjibhai Patel, Minister of Fisheries, Government of Gujarat, Shri. Nilkanth Halarnkar, Minister of Fisheries, Government of Goa, Mankala S Vaidya, Minister of Fisheries, Government of Karnataka, along with officials from the Department of Fisheries, State Fisheries Departments, ICAR Institutes and Bay of Bengal Programme (BoBP). In his address, Shri Rajiv Ranjan Singh, emphasized on developing infrastructure



in Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Islands, enhancing value addition in exports, promoting conservation measures in the fisheries sector while discourag-

ing harmful fishing practices. Key initiatives including deploying artificial reefs, creating climate-resilient villages, providing safety transponders, sanctioning Kisan

Credit Cards, and supporting women's empowerment through mariculture and seaweed farming, underlining the importance of Centre-State cooperation for the

sector's growth were also outlined by the Union Minister.

Prof. S.P. Singh Baghel, said that the significant progress made under the Blue Revolution and PMMSY, as lead to India becoming the second-largest fish producer globally. The substantial investments made in infrastructure and livelihoods through schemes like PMMSY and PMMKSY, which have led to a doubling of fish production and a rise in exports were also highlighted by him. Prof. Baghel spoke about the role of innovative farming methods, development of digital platforms, and empowerment of women in the sector. He stressed the need for continued cooperation between

the Centre and states to promote sustainable practices, enhance marine culture, and position the fisheries sector as a key contributor to the national economy. George Kurian, laid emphasis on the need for strong collaboration between the Centre and States in advancing the fisheries sector. Highlighting the Blue Revolution and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of the "blue chakra" symbolizing the ocean economy's vast potential, the Minister of State noted that various departmental initiatives have strengthened the sector, improved nutrition and is driving economic growth for nearly 3 crore people in the country.

## Sustained efforts from all stakeholders essential to achieve the broader vision

New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) In a strong call for collective responsibility, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology; Earth Sciences and Minister of State for PMO, Department of Atomic Energy, Department of Space, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh today emphasized that the promotion of Hindi in government work is not just the task of a few departments but a shared responsibility of the society.

Speaking at the "Hindi Salahkar Samiti" meeting organized by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, Dr. Jitendra Singh said that while notable progress has been made in expanding the use of Hindi, sustained efforts from all stakeholders are essential to achieve the broader vision.

Reflecting on the progress made over the last decade



under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, Dr. Jitendra Singh noted that the government's commitment to promoting Hindi had helped bridge many long-standing gaps. He pointed out that historically, despite being the mother tongue for many, Hindi did not enjoy the formal acceptance in official communication it deserved. "Earlier, receiving or sending letters in Hindi was rare, and even recipients were hesitant to accept Hindi correspondence. That mindset has gradually changed," he remarked.

Dr. Jitendra Singh stressed

that changing societal attitudes toward Hindi is key to its broader acceptance. He cited examples from South India, where the new generation, regardless of political narratives, is increasingly eager to learn Hindi. "The children of the third generation are embracing Hindi naturally, indicating a positive cultural shift," he said.

Highlighting the international perspective, the Minister remarked that countries like France and Germany have preserved their languages and did not have to suffer the irony of being part of the Com-

monwealth framework. Similarly, India's efforts to promote Hindi must be rooted in pride and consistent practice rather than mechanical translation exercises. He emphasized that translation should aim to preserve the spirit and technical essence of communication rather than merely replacing English terms with Hindi ones.

Dr. Jitendra Singh also touched upon practical challenges faced in promoting Hindi, such as the lack of qualified teachers in certain regions and administrative hurdles.

## Gold climbs Rs 200 to Rs 99,400/10 gm amid US, China standoff

New Delhi, June 21 (GNS) Gold prices climbed Rs 200 to Rs 99,400 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday following fresh buying by stockists and jewellers and a weak dollar, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

The precious metal of 99.9 per cent purity took a U-turn from the historic Rs 1 lakh-mark and declined Rs 2,400 to Rs 99,200 per 10 gram on Wednesday. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity also increased Rs 200 to Rs 98,900 per 10 grams against the previous close of Rs 98,700 per 10 grams. US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent on Wednesday said the current trade standoff between the US and China could continue for a while.

Adding to this, there were reports that President Donald Trump signalled that China may receive a new tariff rate in the next "two



to three weeks" while countries that are currently in the negotiation phase might see reciprocal tariffs come in if negotiations are not going the way he wants. According to commodities market experts, remarks by Trump and Bessent help revive demand for the safe-haven bullion following a corrective slide from the all-time peak.

Meanwhile, silver prices appreciated Rs 700 to Rs 99,900 per kg on Thursday. The white metal had settled at Rs 99,200 per kg in the

previous close. In futures trade, gold contracts for June delivery bounced Rs 1,046, or 1.1 per cent, to Rs 95,768 per 10 grams on the Multi Commodity Exchange. "Gold opened with a strong gap-up of over Rs 1,000, hitting Rs 95,700 on MCX, as Comex gold held firm above \$ 3,300. The renewed upside came after a sharp shift in the Trump administration's tone — indicating that tariffs may still remain a central part of the conversation before any concrete trade talks

with China begin.

"This delay in diplomatic progress, coupled with uncertainty around China's official response, continues to keep risk sentiment elevated," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst, Commodity and Currency at LKP Securities, said. Notably, China has yet to issue a strong or clear stance on the trade discussions, which adds to the geopolitical fog, Trivedi added. Globally, spot gold rose \$ 47.16, or 1.43 per cent, to \$ 3,335.50 per ounce. "Gold prices rose after a short-lived correction triggered by profit booking as the metal hit record highs but quickly rebounded as President Donald Trump's frequent shifts in trade policy unsettled investor sentiment. "This resulted in uncertainty around the US economic outlook which has boosted demand for gold as a safe-haven asset."

# NEET-UG Re-Test held smoothly across Telangana and Andhra Pradesh

Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) NEET UG 2026 re-examination was conducted in a peaceful and smooth manner in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh on Sunday. More than 1.37 lakh students appeared in the exam in the Telugu states. There were mixed reactions from students after the exam. While some students said the test was relatively easy compared to the exam held on May 3, others said it was tougher.

Most of the students found physics section of the test tough. They rated Chemistry as moderate while Biology was manageable. Over 72,000 students appeared in the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET-UG) re-exam at 208 examination centres spread across 24 cities in Telangana. In neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, more than 65,000 students appeared in the examination at 185 centres located in 27 cities.

Elaborate arrangements were made for the exam held from 2 p.m. to 5.15 p.m. Candidates with disabilities were allowed to write the exam until 6.20 p.m. Candidates started reporting at the centres from 11 a.m. until 1.30 p.m. No candidate was allowed to enter the premises after 1.30 p.m. Authorities allowed the students into the exam centres after thorough checking and Biometric verification.

The exam was conducted in pen-and-paper Optical Mark Recognition (OMR) mode. Authorities made extensive arrangements to conduct the exam in smooth, transparent and



fair manner in view of the cancellation of NEET held on May 3 due to question paper leak. State-owned Road Transport Corporations in both Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had announced free travel for candidates taking the test upon producing their hall tickets. Police had made tight security arrangements around the exam centres. Additional personnel were deployed to regulate the vehicular traffic.

At a couple of places, police officers came to the

rescue of the candidates who had reached the wrong centres. Osmania University Police Station Inspector Mahesh Kumar Goud helped a candidate reach her examination centre on time after she mistakenly arrived at the wrong venue within the Osmania University limits.

The inspector gave her a lift in his official vehicle and ensured she reached the correct examination centre before the test began. A police constable of Trimulgherry Police Station escorted a candidate and his father to

the exam centre after they arrived at the wrong venue. Heartbreaking scene was witnessed at an exam centre in Hyderabad as a candidate broke down after she was not allowed for arriving after 1.30 p.m. The candidate's father touched the feet of security personnel, pleading them to allow her to take the test. He said that he could not locate the exam centre in time due to technical glitch.

Telangana Transport Minister Ponnab Prabhakar said that Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TSRTC) provided free transport facility for students appearing in the NEET re-exam. He alleged that the Central government failed miserably in conducting the exam properly last month, resulting in question paper leakage. He said cancellation of the exam caused severe hardship to students across the country. He said the Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan should have resigned, owning moral responsibility.

# Mosque demolitions in Rajasthan must be stopped: Owaisi

Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) AIMIM president and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi on Sunday alleged that mosques, dargahs and other Muslim religious structures were being selectively targeted for demolition in Rajasthan's border districts and called upon Union Home Minister Amit Shah to intervene and halt the exercise.

In a post on social media platform X, Owaisi claimed that a series of demolitions had taken place in the districts of Bikaner, Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer, affecting several Muslim places of worship. He described the actions as "discriminatory and targeted" and urged the Centre to take immediate steps to stop them.

Owaisi said he had spoken to AIMIM's Bikaner district president, Shafi Jameel Qasmi, who informed him that four mosques in Bikaner and nine mosques and dargahs across Phalodi, Jaisalmer and Barmer had already



been demolished. He further alleged that notices had been issued to hundreds of other religious sites in the region. Among the structures facing action, Owaisi said, is the approximately 250-year-old dargah of Hazrat Mahmood Shah Jilani located on the Ramgarh-Tanot Bypass Road in Jaisalmer.

According to Owaisi, authorities have cited national security concerns as the basis for the demolitions. However, he questioned the justification, claiming that residents of the affected areas had no involvement in activities

that could pose a threat to national security.

"Only Muslim places of worship are being targeted," he alleged.

The AIMIM chief also referred to allegations by authorities that some of the structures had been built on grazing land. He claimed that in cases where documents showed the structures were situated on private property, the grounds for action had reportedly shifted to the absence of necessary permissions or approvals.

Tagging Union Home Minister Amit Shah in his post, Owaisi urged the Centre to review the matter and stop what he described as illegal demolitions. There was no immediate response from the Rajasthan government or district authorities to Owaisi's allegations. The claims could not be independently verified, and officials have not yet issued a statement addressing the specific allegations raised by the AIMIM leader.

# TG Govt to oppose VBG RAM G Act, explore legal options



Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) A Cabinet Sub-Committee constituted by the Telangana government on has decided to formulate a joint action plan with opposition-ruled states and explore legal and constitutional options to challenge the proposed VBG RAM G Act-2025, citing concerns over its impact on rural employment and states' rights.

The meeting on Saturday, chaired by Irrigation and food and civil supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy and attended by Ministers Seethakka, Tummala Nageswara Rao and Dr Vivek Venkataswamy, reviewed the implications of the proposed legislation on the Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, local bodies and the agricultural sector. The committee expressed concern over the proposed 60-day employment break,

stating that it could adversely affect rural workers' livelihoods and reduce employment opportunities. Members also opposed the reported move to remove Mahatma Gandhi's name from the employment guarantee scheme, stressing that his name should remain associated with the landmark programme.

The sub-committee criticised the Centre's proposal to place a 40 per cent financial burden on states without consultation, terming it contrary to the principles of cooperative federalism. It also resolved to consult legal experts and coordinate with states such as Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Jharkhand and Punjab to formulate a common strategy, including the possibility of jointly approaching the Supreme Court.

# KTR accuses Congress of betraying Telangana people

Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) Working President K T Rama Rao (KTR) on Sunday launched a scathing attack on the Congress government during his 'Basti Bata' programme in Hanuman Nagar of Rajendranagar constituency, alleging that the ruling party had deceived the people of Telangana by failing to fulfil its election promises.

Referring to Rajendranagar MLA T Prakash Goud's switch to the Congress, KTR said the MLA had betrayed the people of the constituency but asserted that the BRS had suffered no setback, with party leader Karthik Reddy taking responsibility for strengthening the organisation in the segment.

Alleging that the Congress government had failed to implement its "Six Guarantees" and other promises made during the elections, KTR questioned the status of unemployment allowance, housing schemes and welfare commitments to women and farmers. He claimed that the Congress government



had halted key welfare initiatives introduced during the previous BRS regime, including Rythu Bandhu, while burdening the state with massive debt.

KTR also criticised the HYDRA demolitions, alleging that thousands of houses had been demolished in Hyderabad and that residents of Hanuman Nagar were living in fear of losing their homes and land titles. He accused the government of attempting to relocate long-time residents and seize valuable land. The BRS leader further alleged deterioration in law and order, threats to honest officials, and irregularities in land-related matters. He also criticised the Musi River development project and questioned the government's priorities.

# EC compromised, democracy under threat: Meenakshi

Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) AICC Telangana in-charge Meenakshi Natarajan on Sunday alleged that the Election Commission of India (ECI) acted in a partisan manner by rejecting her Rajya Sabha nomination from Madhya Pradesh, and accused constitutional institutions of being compromised.

Addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan alongside TPCC President and MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud, Natarajan said the Congress had sufficient MLAs to win the third Rajya Sabha seat in Madhya Pradesh, but her nomination was rejected on the basis of a legal notice that, she claimed, did not constitute a criminal case or require disclosure in Form-26.

She further alleged that while inconsistency in the treatment of similar cases in other instances, and said the Returning Officer wrongly recorded that cognisance had been taken, leading to the rejection of her nomination. Despite the Congress approaching the Election Commission before the scrutiny



deadline, no corrective action was taken, she added, prompting the party to approach the Supreme Court.

Natarajan said the Supreme Court later disposed of the matter on technical grounds after the election certificate had already been issued. She added that the party would now pursue an election petition to challenge the result.

Alleging collusion between the BJP, the Madhya Pradesh government and election authorities, she claimed the ruling party was attempting to undermine democratic institutions and move towards a "One Nation, One Party" system. She also dismissed reports of internal Congress divisions as "baseless conspiracy theories" and asserted that the party was united.

# SCR Marks International Yoga Day with Enthusiasm

Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) South Central Railway (SCR) celebrated the 12th International Day of Yoga at the Indoor Stadium, Railway Sports Complex, Secunderabad here on Sunday, with large-scale participation from railway employees, officials, scouts and guides, schoolchildren and yoga enthusiasts. SCR Additional General Manager Satya Prakash attended the programme as the chief guest. Principal Chief Personnel Officer Siddharth Kati, principal heads of departments and other railway officials also participated in the event. The yoga session was conducted under the guidance of Murari Mohan, renowned yoga teacher and State Coordinator of the Art of Living Society, Hyderabad.

The programme was also live-streamed through SCR's social media platforms to enable participation from railway employees across the zone.

This year's International Day of Yoga theme, "Yoga for Healthy Ageing," highlights the role of yoga in promoting longevity, mo-

bility, independence and holistic wellness, particularly as populations around the world continue to age. During the session, participants practised various asanas, pranayama and meditation techniques. Renowned Yoga Teacher Murari Mohan described yoga as a celebration of life and a means to detoxify the body, relieve stress and elevate the spirit. He said yoga is not merely a physical exercise but a path towards harmony of the body, mind and spirit, ultimately leading to self-realisation.

On the occasion, Satya Prakash administered the Yoga Sankalp pledge, encouraging participants to incorporate yoga into their daily lives for better physical and mental well-being. He also appreciated Murari Mohan for conducting the session and sharing insights on leading a stress-free life. Earlier, the participants watched the live telecast of the national International Day of Yoga celebrations held in Kolkata, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi joined thousands of yoga practitioners and addressed the gathering.

# Singareni Collieries denies disappearance of coal amid allegations of Rs 1,600 crore scam

Hyderabad, June 21 (GNS) The Singareni Collieries Company Limited (SCCL) on Sunday denied theft or disappearance of its coal, amid allegations of a Rs 1,600 crore coal scam.

The public sector company issued a clarification that there is no truth to the recent media reports.

The clarification came days after a letter written by Union Coal Minister G. Kishan Reddy to Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy, seeking an urgent probe into reports claiming that nearly 40 lakh tonnes of coal, worth around Rs 1,600 crore, had gone missing from the SCCL. Opposition Bharat Rashtra

Samithi (BRS) had alleged a massive coal scam in the company and demanded a thorough investigation. The company stated that all processes related to coal production, stockpiling, transportation, and sales are conducted with complete transparency and under the supervision of modern technological systems. It also outlined the coal transportation, security systems, and technical monitoring mechanisms currently in place at Singareni. "Every stage -- from the moment coal is produced at the mines until it reaches the consumer -- is digitally recorded. Approximately 85 per cent of



the coal is supplied via rail, while the remaining 15 per cent is transported by road. Coal allocations are managed through an integrated SAP-based system, with details such as the consumer, mine, quantity, and supply date recorded digitally in advance," the company said in a state-

ment. Senior officials from the Singareni Operations Department clarified that information regarding every tonne of coal is continuously monitored through Coal Net, SAP, and other online systems.

Senior officials from the Planning Department stated that every vehicle

transporting coal by road is weighed at electronic weighbridges. They added that real-time monitoring of vehicle movements is maintained through RFID-based boom barriers, GPS/GPRS tracking, and geofencing systems.

Officials from the Coal Transport department clarified that details regarding the loading and dispatch of every wagon are being digitally recorded. They stated that round-the-clock monitoring is being conducted using CCTV cameras, RFID systems, check-posts, flying squads, and security personnel at mines, coal handling plants (CHPs),

weighbridges, railway sidings, stockyards, and entry-exit points. They added that surprise inspections and special patrols are also being carried out continuously.

The Singareni management asserted that allegations regarding coal theft or disappearance are baseless, given the highly robust, multi-layered security framework -- comprising RFID, GPS, CCTV, Coal Net, electronic weighbridges, Singareni security, flying squads, hologram challans, and task force monitoring—under which the coal production and transportation process operates.

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