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India, Seychelles to widen coop in defence, e-payment, space

Seychelles , June 28 (GNS) India and Seychelles on Sunday said the two countries are widening cooperation in areas such as defence, maritime security, digital payments, space, healthcare, agriculture and education.

The decisions were announced following a bilateral meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Seychelles President Patrick Herminie. The package of outcomes, announced after delegation-level talks during Modi's three-day state visit, reflects the expanding partnership between India and the Indian Ocean island nation. According to the Ministry of External Affairs, the outcomes included an extradition treaty, an agreement on cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space, an agreement to advance UPI-based digital payments in Seychelles, an umbrella line of credit agreement with the Export-Import Bank of India and an agreement for preliminary preparations for a new Seychelles National Hospital.

On the defence and security side, the two countries announced the gifting of a fast patrol vessel to Seychelles, the handover of 10 utility vehicles and five patrol boats to the Seychelles Defence Force and the completion of the refit of ship PS Zoroaster for the Seychelles Coast Guard.

Other development initiatives included the handover of six ambulances, 500 metric tonnes of rice and 8,500 metric tonnes of cement. The two sides also launched a commemorative logo to mark 50 years of diplomatic relations and held a virtual ground-breaking ceremony for a professional and technical education centre, the MEA said in a series of posts on X. India and Seychelles also signed an agreement between NPCI International Payments Ltd and the Central Bank of Seychelles to advance UPI-based digital payments in the island nation and deepen economic and technological cooperation. An agreement between HLL Lifecare Ltd and Seychelles' Health Ministry under the Jan Aushadhi scheme aims to improve access to good quality and affordable Indian medicines. Another memorandum of understanding provides for preliminary preparations for the new Seychelles National Hospital, the MEA said.

Sonam Wangchuk begins hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, joins CJP protest over exam accountability

New Delhi, Jun 28 (GNS): Climate activist Sonam Wangchuk on Sunday began a hunger strike at Jantar Mantar, joining the Cockroach Janata Party (CJP) protest demanding accountability over alleged irregularities in examinations and seeking the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan.

Before sitting on the fast, Wangchuk, along with CJP founder Abhijeet Dipke, visited Rajghat and paid tribute to Mahatma Gandhi. The protest began with the gathering observing a two-minute silence.

Hundreds of protesters, mostly youth and students, gathered at Jantar Mantar as Wangchuk started his hunger strike. Several farmer leaders were also present at the protest site.

Explaining his decision to join the protest, Wangchuk said education had been close to his heart for the last 40 years and that he could not remain silent when young people raised concerns over the education system. "I have been forced to sit here, I am not doing this happily. I am sitting on a fast in support of both issues. Many people ask me, you were doing a movement in Ladakh, why are you with CJP now. Education, which is the issue here, has been close to my heart for the last 40 years, since I was a student," he said.City & Local Guides

"I did engineering, but never took a job because I felt the key to all generations is in education. When some youth raise their voices on issues with the education system, how could I have remained silent? It was natural for me to support them," Wangchuk added.

He said the focus should be on using education to "build children's lives and give direction to the nation". Referring to his work in Ladakh, Wangchuk said protecting the Himalayas was everyone's responsibility as billions of people depend on water originating in the region.

"I wish the government had shown sensitivity, we would not have had to go through this and sit here in such heat," he said. Wangchuk said that in the absence of accountability, peaceful protest was the only option available in a democracy. "When there is no accountability, we are forced to take the only way possible in a democracy -- peaceful protest, and we will do that," he said. He also praised the protesters, saying that many youths were observing hunger strikes despite the heat, and appealed to people to make it a community hunger strike and observe at least a day-long fast.

Wangchuk was released from Jodhpur prison in March 2026, after spending nearly six months in detention under the National Security Act for his involvement in the Ladakh statehood protest that had turned violent. Earlier, Dipke had appealed to farmers, students and organisations to join the protest and support the call for accountability.

'Made in India' tag denotes national duty, says Piyush Goyal

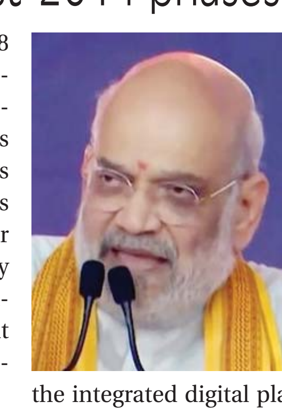
New Delhi, June 28 (GNS) Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has said that the 'Made in India' label symbolises the country's reputation and dedication to quality. He emphasised that quality is not just a corporate metric, but a national duty. Goyal cited the international success of Florence Shoe Company, located in Tamil Nadu, as an illustration of how Indian entrepreneurs are enhancing Brand India's reputation through top-notch manufacturing.

During a business plenary session in London on Saturday, Goyal recounted the story of Florence Shoe Company founder Aqeel Ahmed Panaruna. He claimed that an international consumer saw a high-end Hugo Boss shoe at Cairo Airport, looked at the label and discovered that it said "Made in India".

The shoe was manufactured in Ambur, Tamil Nadu, by Panaruna's firm. "When you label a product 'Made in India', you are representing a country," he stated. In a social media post, Goyal stated that quality is a national requirement for business owners like Aqeel, not merely a corporate statistic.

"His work has not only put Indian craftsmanship on global shelves for iconic brands, but has also driven large-scale rural employment, championed women's empowerment in manufacturing and pioneered sustainable zero liquid discharge technologies," Goyal said.

Shah: India's history split into pre- and post-2014 phases



GANDHINAGAR, June 28 (GNS) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said future historians would divide the country's journey into two phases -- before 2014 and after 2014 -- and asserted every rupee released by the Narendra Modi government reaches the targeted beneficiaries in full.

Invoking Mahatma Gandhi's idea of "Ram Rajya", he insisted good governance was not limited to announcing schemes or allocating budgets, but ensuring that every eligible citizen actually received the intended benefits.

He was speaking after launching the pilot project of the PM-Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT) in Gandhinagar, saying the integrated digital platform would ensure that pregnant women, mothers and children receive all eligible government benefits through continuous monitoring and timely intervention. Addressing the gathering, the Lok Sabha member from the Gujarat capital described 2014, the year when Modi assumed office as PM, as a "historic turning point" in independent India's history.

Punjab AAP Sikh MLAs, ministers to appear before Akal Takht today

Amritsar, June 28 (GNS) Ending days of speculation, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Sunday announced that all Sikh ministers, MLAs and the Speaker of the Punjab Vidhan Sabha belonging to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) government would appear before the Akal Takht on Monday to present the government's stand on the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act.

Accompanied by AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal after a closed-door meeting with Sikh legislators and ministers here, Mann reiterated that the Akal Takht was the supreme temporal authority of the Sikh community and said every directive issued by it would be obeyed "in true letter and spirit".

"The Akal Takht is above everything for me. Its command is, was and will always remain supreme for me and my family," Mann said, adding that all those summoned would appear "as humble Sikhs" and present both their individual stand and the government's position.

He recalled that he had previously appeared before the Akal Takht even at the cost of skipping a function attended by the President of India, saying, "My reverence for the highest Sikh temporal seat is evident from the fact that I even skipped the President's programme to appear before it."

Nationalisation to privatisation what SBI, LIC and Air India tell us about public sector policy

A K Bhattacharya

About seven decades ago, the Indian government under Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru nationalised three major entities. One of them — State Bank of India (SBI) — is celebrating the 70th anniversary of its reincarnation this month. The second — Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) — will mark 70 years of nationalisation in 2026. And the third should have celebrated its 70th anniversary of nationalisation two years ago, but could not do so as it was privatised just a year before turning 70 as a nationalised outfit. This was Air IndiaThe trajectory of these three enterprises that embarked on their individual journeys over the last seven decades tells the story of how Indian governments over the years have looked at the ownership pattern of economic entities — and what could determine the future of their ownership pattern. A close examination of the key factors at play would be instructive.

A common factor uniting the three entities is that they all belonged to the services sector. One was providing aviation services and the other two were providing financial services — offering banking and life insurance facilities to customers. They were all touching the lives of people in ways many heavy industries or manufacturing companies would not. The government's approach to their ownership was perhaps influenced by that realisation. Interestingly, Nehru's nationalisation was largely focused on taking over businesses operating in the services sector, in contrast to his daughter Indira Gandhi, who nationalised not just banks and general insurance companies, but also companies in the industrial or mining sector, like textiles and coal.

Looking back, the strategy behind nationalising the Imperial Bank of India and renaming it SBI seems to have paid off. Over the past seven decades, SBI has grown stronger, retaining its status as the country's largest commercial bank. From a national point of view, SBI has also played a major role in helping the government of the day to manage many crises and achieve its governance goals.

These included SBI meeting the credit needs during the India-China war in 1962 through a special scheme; shipping 20 tonnes of confiscated gold to a Swiss bank to help India procure $240 million in May 1991; raising $1.6 billion under the India development bonds scheme later that year to bail the country out of its precarious balance of payments situation; and launching the Resurgent India Bond scheme in 1998 to raise $4.2 billion from non-resident Indians to bolster the government's foreign exchange reserves.

It also took the lead in promoting the government's financial inclusion plan by opening Jan Dhan accounts, the largest among all banks. And when the government launched the controversial electoral bond scheme in 2018, which permitted anonymous donations to political parties, it was once again SBI that was authorised to operate it till the country's apex court declared it unconstitutional in 2024.

Yet, questions have been raised about the governance structure of SBI. Should the government, as its majority shareholder, continue to play a key role in appointing its top management, including the chief executive, or should it allow the regulator, the Reserve Bank of India, to treat it like any other private-sector bank and decide on its leadership? This has been a bone of contention once in a while between the regulator and the government.

With over 57 per cent of its equity being owned by the government and the rest widely held by the public, SBI, has never been a candidate for privatisation or even further disinvestment. The country's top bank is treated as a strategic asset and all governments have believed in retaining its status as a public sector entity. There is little doubt that SBI's ownership pattern will remain unchanged, even though the debate over the nature of regulatory oversight and procedures for appointing its top management is likely to continue.

LIC, India's largest life insurance company, will complete 70 years as a nationalised entity in January 2026. In 1956, the Nehru government promulgated an ordinance to nationalise as many as 245 Indian and foreign insurers operating in the life insurance sector and merge them into a single entity — LIC. The government justified the decision on the grounds that there was widespread corruption in the sector and life insurance services to the people were adversely affected.

In a quiet operation, C D Deshmukh, the finance minister at that time, chose to address the nation on All India Radio to announce the government's decision to nationalise the life insurance industry and create LIC. For a little over 40 years, LIC enjoyed a monopoly over life insurance services in India, until other private sector players were allowed into the market after 1999. But LIC has continued to retain its number one status in the life insurance sector over the past 25 years.

IAF needs a transformation. Bring in 5G fighters, fast-track Tejas Mk2, upgrade AMCA to 6G

Lt Gen H S Panag (retd)

A hundred and four years after Italian General Giulio Douhet theorised that air power would emerge as the decisive factor in winning wars, he was proven right. In 48 days, air campaigns turned out to be the predominant instruments for achieving political and military aims, from India's Operation Sindoor to Israel's Operation Rising Lion to the United States' Operation Midnight Hammer.

The Indian Air Force's (IAF) performance in Operation Sindoor stands out, as it was facing an adversary with near parity. It was also constrained by nuclear thresholds, while the Israeli and US air power was applied uncontested.

However, India's principal adversary is China, and in relative terms, Pakistan is a mere irritant. The adversaries are strategic partners, too. For the last 40 years, India's strategy has been to maintain (and when necessary, impose) an "offensive deterrent" against Pakistan, and a "dissuasive deterrent" against China.

For the last 20 years, India's national security strategy has been to prepare for a simultaneous two-front war. Yet, in inflicting a psychological defeat on Pakistan, whose air capability is approximately 40 per cent of China's, the IAF was stretched to its limit. "By the skin of its teeth," I wrote. Imagine a situation where the collusion is more direct, as it is likely in the future.

During Operation Sindoor, glaring shortcomings became evident with respect to the IAF's capacity, technology, operational strategy, and tactics. It urgently requires a transformation.

Without delay, a strategic review must be carried out for the armed forces, with a special focus on air power. It must include a critical assessment of existing capabilities and a 25-year technological perspective to dovetail emerging technologies for future development of manned/unmanned air power. Clear timelines must emerge in terms of long-term, medium-term, and short-term requirements.

India needs to formalise its National Security Strategy and the contingent National Defence Policy to rapidly transform its armed forces. This will pave the way for a military strategy catering to threats across the spectrum of conflict. The political security doctrine spelled out in public speeches of the leadership must translate into a rational strategy.

Like the "new normal" with Pakistan's terrorism-driven proxy war, a clear strategy needs to be laid down against China's exploitation of the undemarcated Line of Actual Control (LAC) to assert its hegemony.

The National Defence Policy must also lay down concrete timelines: a short-term timeline of 2030, a medium–term timeline of 2040, and a long-term timeline of 2050. China's transformation model could be instructive in this regard.

India should have the capacity and capability to enforce deterrence on Pakistan as and when required. It should also be in a position to challenge China by 2035 and seek parity in military prowess by 2047. To achieve this, the defence budget must immediately surge to 4 per cent of the GDP for a decade, and be maintained at no less than 3 per cent thereafter.

The proposed budget increase of a meagre 0.6 per cent is like a drop of ink in the ocean. Even at the current suboptimal GDP growth rate of 6.5 per cent, the Indian economy will likely double by 2035, hitting $8 trillion. By 2047, it will be approximately $17.5 trillion. At 3–4 per cent of the GDP, the defence budget should correspondingly rise to $240–320 billion by 2035, and $525–700 billion by 2047.

Air power is best applied preemptively. And if it has to be applied reactively, it is best done with minimum loss of time. On the western front, this can be done either by keeping the adversary on tenterhooks for a prolonged period after red lines are crossed, or by striking within 24 hours of them being crossed. On the northern front, effective intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) can help preempt an attack by detecting unusual mobilisation in the relative proximity of the LAC. During Operation Sindoor, both these principles were violated. The adversary was given 15 days' notice, complete with rhetorical drum–beating, to prepare itself.

The application of air power has to be decisive from the word go, covering tactical, operational, and strategic level targets simultaneously. Gradual application only allows the enemy to seize the initiative with an overwhelming response. This happened on 7 May after the strikes on the terrorist hubs and during the air battle that followed, resulting in the loss of fighter aircraft.

It was clearly a case of a fundamental error of judgement when the IAF failed to carry out the Suppression/Destruction of Enemy Air Defence before or simultaneously with the strikes on terrorist hubs. Poor tactics and wrong assumptions about the enemy's intent and capability only compounded the problem. Whatever may have been the political constraints, nothing stopped the IAF from adhering to the fundamentals by orchestrating events. In a fast-moving air battle, who would know what actually happened. Look at the results achieved by Israel in the first 24 hours of Operation Rising Lion.

Opposition & the Dhankhar bombshell

A classroom is often imagined as a room where one teacher delivers the same lesson, at the same pace, to the same age group, and expects similar outcomes from every child. That image is neat, efficient, and deeply misleading. In reality, children differ widely in prior knowledge, language ability, home support, motivation, confidence, pace of learning, and the ways in which they understand ideas. An education system that ignores these differences does not create equality; it merely standardises disadvantage.

The phrase "one size does not fit all" is not a fashionable slogan in education. It is a statement of fact. In any classroom, some students learn quickly, some require repetition, some need visual support, some thrive through discussion, and some perform better after hands-on activity. There are also children who are gifted, children who are slow to process, children with learning disabilities, and children whose difficulties arise not from lack of intelligence but from poverty, language barriers, or emotional stress. To teach such a class as though every child were identical is to misunderstand both pedagogy and childhood itself.

Yet school systems, particularly in large public systems, often continue to operate as if uniformity were the goal. The curriculum is fixed, the timetable is rigid, the examination is common, and the classroom pace is dictated by an abstract "average" learner who rarely exists in real life. The result is predictable. Some children are left behind, some are bored, and many are trained not to learn deeply but to survive the system. When learning becomes a race governed by the fastest or the loudest, education loses its moral purpose.

The problem is not that teachers are unwilling to meet diverse needs. In most cases, they are already doing so with admirable patience and ingenuity. The real problem is that the system asks too much of teachers while giving them too little support. A single teacher handling a large class cannot be expected to individualise instruction for every learner without training, time, teaching aids, and a manageable pupil-teacher ratio. Inclusion cannot remain a policy slogan while classrooms remain overcrowded and assessments remain narrow.

What is needed is a serious shift from uniform teaching to differentiated teaching. This does not mean abandoning common standards or lowering expectations. It means reaching the same learning goal through different paths. A child who struggles with text may need oral explanation; another may need group work; a third may need advanced tasks that extend understanding. Differentiation is not an indulgence for weak students or an extra burden for teachers. It is the practical form of justice in education. This is where teacher preparation becomes crucial. Many teachers are still trained to complete the syllabus rather than diagnose learning gaps. They are taught to cover content, not to observe variation in learning styles. If teachers are to manage mixed-ability classrooms effectively, they must be equipped with methods of formative assessment, flexible grouping, remedial support, peer learning, and classroom adaptation. Teacher education must move beyond theory and prepare educators for the real classroom, not the idealised one.

Assessment, too, must be reconsidered. When the entire system values only memorisation under time pressure, it privileges one narrow type of learner. Children who understand well but write slowly, children who think creatively but do not fit the standard answer pattern, and children who need more time to process are all unfairly penalised. A more humane system would use varied assessment methods, including projects, oral tasks, portfolios, observation, and continuous feedback. Such approaches do not weaken standards; they reveal learning more honestly. There is also a deeper ethical issue. Uniform schooling often hides inequality by treating everyone the same. But equal treatment is not always equal opportunity. A child who comes from a supportive home, has access to books, receives tuition, and speaks the language of instruction at home begins far ahead of a child who has none of these advantages. If the school pretends that both are identical, it does not become impartial; it becomes blind. Fairness in education requires attention to difference, not denial of it.

The debate on inclusion must therefore be broadened. It should not be limited to children with disabilities, though their needs deserve urgent and serious attention. It must also include children with different abilities, learning speeds, and socio-economic backgrounds. An inclusive classroom is not one where every child is taught the same thing in the same way. It is one where every child is given a meaningful chance to participate, progress, and succeed.

Technology may offer useful support, but it is no substitute for thoughtful pedagogy. Digital tools can help teachers provide practice, adapt content, and monitor progress. However, technology alone cannot solve the core problem of overburdened classrooms and underprepared systems. Nor should it deepen inequality by privileging schools with better infrastructure while leaving others behind. Technology must serve inclusion, not replace it.

Ultimately, the challenge before education is not merely administrative. It is philosophical. Do we see children as identical units to be processed, or as distinct learners to be developed? The answer to that question determines the shape of the classroom, the training of teachers, the design of curriculum, and the nature of assessment. If education is to be meaningful, it must recognise that human beings do not grow in the same way or at the same speed. That is not a defect to be corrected. It is the reality that good education must respect.

A classroom becomes strong not when every child is forced into one mould, but when differences are understood as part of learning itself. True excellence in education lies not in uniformity, but in the ability to teach many minds without leaving any behind. Another important dimension is the role of language in shaping classroom inequality. In multilingual societies, the language of instruction often becomes a silent barrier rather than a bridge. Children who speak a different home language may understand concepts deeply but struggle to express them in the prescribed medium. When assessment rewards only linguistic fluency in one language, it confuses expression with understanding. A more sensitive system would allow translanguaging practices, early support in mother tongues, and gradual transition strategies so that language does not become a filter that excludes capable learners.

Equally significant is the emotional climate of the classroom. Learning does not happen in an emotional vacuum. A child who feels humiliated, anxious, or constantly compared is less likely to engage meaningfully with learning. Yet many classrooms still rely on fear-based discipline and public ranking systems that label children early as "bright" or "weak." Such labels tend to become self-fulfilling. A supportive classroom culture, where mistakes are treated as part of learning rather than failure, is essential for sustained intellectual growth.

Parental involvement also plays a decisive role in shaping learning outcomes, but it is often unevenly distributed. Some parents can actively support homework, guide reading, and engage with school processes, while others—due to work pressure, illiteracy, or lack of awareness—cannot provide the same level of support. Schools must therefore avoid assuming equal home support for all learners. Bridging this gap requires structured remedial systems within schools so that a child's progress does not depend solely on their home environment. Another overlooked factor is the pace of curriculum design itself. In many systems, the syllabus is overloaded, leaving little room for reflection, experimentation, or deep understanding. Teachers rush to complete content, and students rush to memorise it. This creates a cycle where surface learning replaces conceptual clarity. A more balanced curriculum would prioritise depth over breadth, allowing time for revision, exploration, and connection-

SBI raises Rs 25,000 crore, CET1 capital rises to 11.50 pc post QIP

Mumbai, June 28 (GNS): The State Bank of India on Monday announce the successful completion of the qualified institutional placement (QIP) of its equity shares, raising Rs 25,000 crore.

The equity shares were priced at premium to floor price of Rs 811.05 per share.

The capital will augment SBI's CET-1 buffer that will improve to 11.50 per cent from 10.81 per cent as on March 31, 2025, support calibrated credit growth across retail, MSME and corporate segments, the bank said in a statement. The book received robust demand and was oversubscribed 4.5 times, reflecting strong investor confidence in SBI's strategy and the outlook for India's banking sector.

Foreign investors accounted for 64.3 per cent of total demand. Marquee long term investors received 88 per cent of the final allocation, including 24 per cent of the issue size placed with foreign long-term investors.

"This landmark equity raise is a vote of confidence in SBI's solid fundamentals, prudent risk management and digital-first growth agenda. We are grateful to both domestic and international investors for their overwhelming support, which also speaks volumes about the current strength and future potential of the Indian economy," said C.S. Setty, Chairman, SBI.

Earlier in May this year, SBI's board gave the go-ahead for raising equity capital of up to Rs 25,000 crore during FY26. The objective was to boost SBI's Common Equity Tier 1 (CET1) capital ratio — which will bolster the bank's financial health.

SBI gave a dividend cheque of Rs 8,076.84 crore to the government for the financial year 2024-25. The public sector bank's net profit for the financial year 2024-25 shot up to Rs 70,901 crore.

The bank is celebrating its 70th year of operations with a balance sheet that has soared to Rs 66 lakh crore and the number of its customers surging past a staggering 52 crore.

Underground mining at Gondkhari: A sustainable boost to environment and local economy

Ahmedabad, June 28 (GNS): The development of Gondkhari Underground Coal Block near Nagpur will witness least disturbance to the villages and forests on the surface. The Ministry of Coal that awarded the block to Adani Power Limited through competitive bidding will produce two million tonnes of coal annually using underground technology. The block awarded to Adani Power Limited through competitive bidding forms part of the Coal Ministry's strategy to produce two million tonnes of coal annually in the country, using underground technology.

The project will set a precedent for environmentally conscious resource extraction. Unlike traditional open-cast mining, the Gondkhari project will ensure minimal surface disruption. Of the total 862.00 hectares, including 87.351 hectares of revenue forest land, will remain undisturbed as no infrastructure development or mining operations will occur on forest land. As a result, the underground mining project will prevent tree felling and forest degradation, which are the major concerns of the stakeholders today. The company will develop mine entries and infrastructure on privately acquired land, ensuring that forest patches remain intact.

This underground approach not only safeguards biodiversity but also aligns with the principles of ecological conservation. The Forest Diversion Proposal underscores the project's commitment to regulatory compliance, especially with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

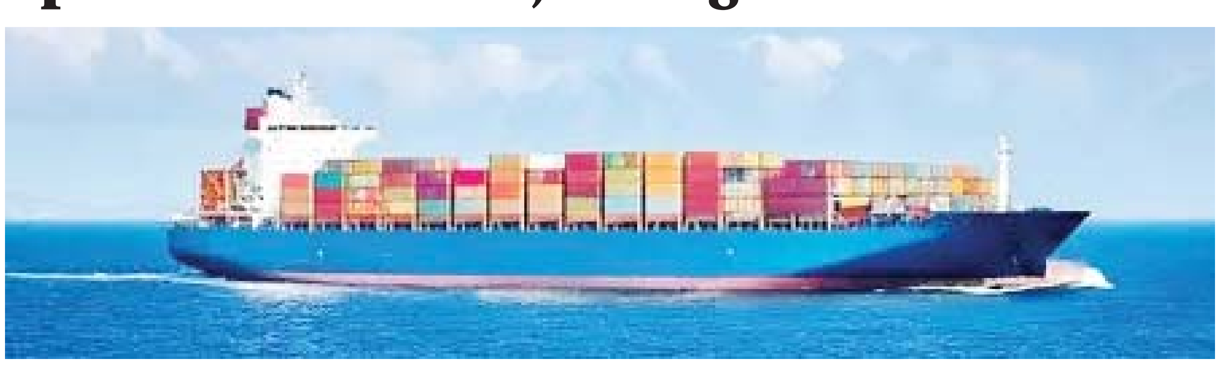
India's smartphone market grows 7 pc to reach 39 mn units in April-June

New Delhi, June 28 (GNS): Driven by easing inventory challenges and renewed vendor activity, India's smartphone market rebounded in the April-June period, growing 7 per cent year to reach 39 million units, according to a new report. The growth was primarily fuelled by fresh launches concentrated in the second quarter, following a cautious Q1 where vendors held back due to elevated inventory levels, according to Canalys (now part of Omdia).

"Heightened competition beyond the top five is reshaping India's smartphone landscape, as premium incumbents and designled challengers refine their playbooks," said Sanyam Chaurasia, Principal Analyst. Apple ranked sixth in Q2 2025, with the iPhone 16 family accounting for over 55 per cent of its shipments, while the iPhone 15 and 13 continued to drive demand across price tiers. According to the report, Vivo (excluding iQOO) led the market with 8.1 million units shipped and a 21 per cent market share. Samsung followed in second place with 6.2 million units and a 16 per cent market share.

OPPO (excluding OnePlus) climbed to third with 5 million units, edging past Xiaomi, which also shipped 5 million. realme completed the top five with 3.6 million units. "With limited organic demand, India's smartphone market in H2 2025 will hinge more on channel execution than product launches," stated Chaurasia. Brands are actively locking inventory with distributors and retailers through channel incentive programs ahead of the upcoming festive season in India. These include high-value rewards ranging from foreign trips to vehicle rewards –tied to performance during Monsoon sales, Durga Puja and Diwali cycles, the report said. Retail infrastructure upgrades are gaining pace, with improved booth setups, structured shelf placements and stricter quarterly targets .

Government to ensure country's interests are protected as India, US negotiate trade deal



New Delhi, June 28 (GNS): India and US are currently negotiating a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) which has not been signed as yet, as the government takes care of all the sensitivities associated with the free trade agreement (FTA) and ensures that India's interests are protected, the Parliament was informed.

Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Jitin Prasada, stated this in a written reply to the Lok Sabha. "Every FTA is unique and is based on specific dynamics of trade and is aimed at maximising benefits for both nations. India and US are negotiating a Bilateral Trade Agreement which has not been signed as yet," he added. "The govt of India takes care of all the sensitivities associated with the FTA and ensures that India's interests are protected. The FTA comes into force after signing and ratification by both the countries," he added. Intense discussions are currently on to reach an interim trade deal between New Delhi and Washington before the August 1 deadline. On the India-UK trade deal, the minister informed that Prime Ministers of India and UK have announced the successful conclusion of India-UK FTA negotiations on May 6. 2025.

"The FTA with the UK is a modern, comprehensive and landmark agreement which seeks to achieve deep economic integration along with trade liberalisation and tariff concessions. The FTA ensures comprehensive market access for goods, across all sectors, covering all of India's export interests," said Prasada in his reply. The FTA seeks to promote good regulatory practices and enhance transparency that are in sync with India's own focus on domestic reforms to enhance the ease of doing business.

Meanwhile, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal will accompany Prime Minister Narendra Modi to London for the signing of the free trade agreement between India and the UK this week.

At the invitation of UK Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, PM Modi will undertake an official visit to the United Kingdom from July 23 to 24. This marks his fourth visit to the UK. The agreement opens up massive export opportunities for India's labour-intensive sectors such as textiles, marine products, leather, footwear, sports goods and toys, gems and jewellery, and other important sectors such as engineering goods, auto parts and engines.

Mobile production surges by 146 pc to Rs 5.25 lakh crore in 4 fiscals, exports up 775 pc: Piyush Goyal

New Delhi, June 28 (GNS): The production of mobiles in India in value terms has increased by around 146 per cent from Rs 2,13,773 crore in FY 2020-21 to Rs 5,25,000 crore in FY 2024-25, the Parliament was informed.

During the same period, exports of mobile phones in value terms has increased by around 775 per cent from Rs 22,870 crore in 2020-21 to Rs 2,00,000 crore in 2024-25.

The government's PLI and national industrial corridor schemes have incentivized domestic manufacturing, leading to increased production, job creation and a boost in exports, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha. PLI Scheme has encouraged major smartphone companies to shift their production to India. As a result, India has become a major mobile phone manufacturing country.

Due to the PLI scheme, there has also been a significant reduction in imports of raw materials in the pharma sector. Unique intermediate materials and bulk drugs are being manufactured in India including Penicillin-G, and transfer of technology has happened in manufacturing of Medical Devices such as (CT scan, MRI etc.).

The PLI Scheme for White Goods is aimed at developing a robust component ecosystem for the Air Conditioners and LED Lights industry in India, with the goal of making the country an integral part of global supply chains. Following its launch, India has begun local production of key components such as compressors, copper tubes, heat exchangers, motors, and control assemblies for air conditioners, as well as LED chip packaging, drivers, engines, light management systems, and metallized films for capacitors in the LED segment.

This shift is significantly reducing import dependency and strengthening domestic manufacturing capabilities, the minister further stated. The government has also launched Make in India 2.0 initiative which presently focuses on 27 sectors implemented across various ministries/departments and state governments.

He further stated that the government has approved 12 new project proposals under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP) with total project cost of Rs 28,602 crore to facilitate manufacturing investments into the country. Besides Atmanirbhar Bharat packages provide investment opportunities under National Infrastructure Pipeline and National Monetization Pipeline, India Industrial Land Bank, Industrial Park Rating System, soft launch of the National Single Window System etc. to promote manufacturing, the minister added.

Blue Jet Healthcare's net profit falls 17 pc, shares hit 10 pc lower circuit

Mumbai, June 28 (GNS): Blue Jet Healthcare Limited on Tuesday reported a 17.18 per cent drop on sequential basis in its net profit for the April–June quarter (Q1) of FY26, with earnings falling to Rs 91.1 crore from Rs 110 crore in the previous quarter. Following the earnings report, the company's shares hit a 10 per cent lower circuit on Tuesday, closing at Rs 906.15 on the National Stock Exchange (NSE). Total expenses also jumped significantly by 16.89 per cent to Rs 240.1 crore, according to its stock exchange filing.

However, the company's revenue from operations rose to Rs 354.7 crore in Q1, up from Rs 340.4 crore in the previous quarter -- marking a 4.2 per cent growth. Total income also increased by 2.95 per cent to Rs 363 crore during the quarter, the company said in its regulatory filing.

Blue Jet's EBITDA for the quarter came in at Rs 121 crore, down 13.1 per cent compared to the March quarter. The EBITDA margin narrowed by over 700 basis points quarter-on-quarter, although the company noted an improvement in both EBITDA and margin when compared to the same period previous year.

Over the past five days, the stock has delivered a negative return of Rs 66.75 or 6.86 per cent. However, it has still gained Rs 49.9 or 5.83 per cent in the past month and Rs 347.4 or 62.17 per cent over the last six months. Since the beginning of 2025, the stock has risen by 57 per cent, as per the official data. Commenting on the quarterly results, Shiven Arora, Managing Director of Blue Jet Healthcare, attributed the performance to the ramp-up in the PI and API product categories.

He also expressed confidence in the company's growth strategy, backed by capacity expansion, strong R&D, and a solid pipeline of high-value products.

NPAs of public sector banks declined from 9.1 pc to 2.58 pc: Union Minister

New Delhi, June 28 (GNS): Gross non-performing assets (NPAs) of public sector banks have been steadily declining and have come down from 9.11 per cent of total loans in March 2021 to 2.58 per cent in March 2025, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance Pankaj Chaudhary informed Parliament. The total amount locked up in the gross NPAs of public sector banks has declined from Rs 6,16,616 crore in March 2021 to Rs 2,83,650 crore in March 2025, the minister said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

Comprehensive measures have been taken by the Government and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to recover and reduce NPAs. These include a change in credit culture that has come into effect, with the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) fundamentally changing the creditor-borrower relationship, taking away control of the defaulting company from promoters/owners, and debarring wilful defaulters from the resolution process. To make the process more stringent, personal guarantors to corporate debtors have also been brought under the ambit of IBC, the minister said. The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the Recovery of Debt and Bankruptcy Act have been amended to make them more effective in recovering bad loans.

Besides, pecuniary jurisdiction of Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) was increased from Rs. 10 lakhs to Rs. 20 lakhs to enable the DRTs to focus on high-value cases, resulting in higher recovery for the banks and financial institutions, he further stated.

Public sector banks have also set up specialised stressed assets management verticals and branches for effective monitoring and focused follow-up of NPA accounts, which facilitates quicker and improved resolution/ recoveries.

Deployment of Business correspondents and adoption of the feet-on-street model have also boosted the recovery trajectory of NPAs in banks, the minister said. He also pointed out that the prudential framework for the resolution of stressed assets was issued by RBI to provide a framework for early recognition, reporting and time-bound resolution of stressed assets, with a built-in incentive to lenders for early adoption of a resolution plan, which has helped in the recovery of bad loans.

As per RBI guidelines, banks have a board-approved policy in place for the valuation of properties done by professionally qualified independent valuers. RBI mandates banks to have a procedure for empanelment of professional valuers based on prescribed minimum qualifications and maintain a register of an approved list of valuers.

Centre has surplus stocks of rice and wheat to control inflation: Govt

New Delhi, June 28 (GNS): The Centre currently has surplus stocks of rice and wheat which exceed the buffer norm requirement for the public distribution system and social welfare schemes of the poor, the Parliament was informed on Tuesday.

The Centre's total stocks of rice and wheat at 736.61 lakh metric tonnes (MT) are well above the buffer stock requirement of 411.2 lakh MT for the two cereals as of July 1 this year, Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Nimuben Jayantibhai Bambhaniya told the Rajya Sabha in a written reply. The rice stocks are 377.83 lakh MT compared to the buffer norm requirement of 135.40 lakh MT, while wheat stocks at 358.78 lakh MT exceed the buffer stock need of 275.80 lakh MT, the minister said in a written reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha.

CM Revanth Reddy dares BRS, BJP to debate on performance

Hyderabad, June 28 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy said on Sunday that the state government is ready to hold a special session of the Assembly and Legislative Council to debate the performance of the 10 years of BRS rule, the BJP's 12-year dispensation at the Centre and the two-and-a-half years of Congress government in the state.

Addressing a public meeting after laying foundation stones for a slew of development projects in Nalgonda, the Chief Minister said that the government is ready to convene special sessions of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council and debate the performance of the three political parties in power.

He also dared BRS and BJP to debate on their manifestos. The Chief Minister demanded that the opposition parties write a letter to the Speaker and the Council Chairman for convening a special session. In a scathing attack on the Opposition for obstructing the Musi Rejuvenation Project, CM Revanth Reddy reaffirmed that he would complete the project.

He warned that those who create hurdles for the Musi project will be dumped in the same river. He stated that pollution from the Musi River was causing women in Nalgonda to give birth to children with eye and limb deformities. The CM launched a broadside at BRS President K. Chandrasekhar Rao and BRS leaders K.T. Rama Rao and Harish Rao for spreading "canards" against the government. "Not a single woman was given a ministerial post during the first five-year rule of BRS, and women have not forgotten this," he said.

CM Revanth Reddy ridiculed the claims by BRS leaders that they will come back to power.

"How should we deal with those who listen to private phone conversations between husbands and wives? Should such a monstrous sinner return to power? Should those who amassed crores by leaking question papers return? Should the leaders who had the poor beaten up for demanding ration cards return to power?" he asked.

The Chief Minister also questioned the opposition for not constructing houses for the poor.

"KCR built a 1,000-acre farmhouse in Gajwel, KTR in Janwada, and his daughter built farmhouses in Shankarpalli. Had houses been provided over the last 10 years, 25 lakh poor people would have received homes. The BRS leaders dreamt of only 'Gadi' (feudal mansions) and farmhouses. The Congress government provided 4.5 lakh houses to the poor. 'Indiramma Houses' represent the self-respect of the poor," he said.

Lotus will bloom in TG soon, says Nitin Nabin

Hyderabad, June 28 (GNS) BJP national president Nitin Nabin on Sunday said that the day of the party's Lotus blooming in Telangana is not far away and called upon the party cadre to work hard with the objective of bringing the party to power in the state.

He urged them to take inspiration from the party's victory in the recent elections in West Bengal and take a pledge to bring the BJP to power in Telangana.

He was speaking at the inauguration of the Ranga Reddy Rural District party office and the virtual inauguration of party offices in nine districts at an event held in Shamshabad.

Stating that the BJP national general secretary and the party in-charge for West Bengal, Odisha and Telangana played a key role in the

BJP's victory in West Bengal, the BJP chief asked him to make double the efforts in Telangana. "For a long time, those who remained in power here treated it as a means for personal gain. We want to clearly tell them that in the coming days, BJP workers are ready to struggle on the streets to uproot this government. We struggled in West Bengal, we made sacrifices, we worked hard, and our workers endured hardships. But through that struggle, we also achieved success, and the lotus bloomed in West Bengal." He remarked that every region is getting saffronised and that the day is not far when Telangana too will be saffronised.

The BJP chief claimed that it was the BJP which uprooted the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government, but the advantage was taken by the Congress party. He accused the Congress party of compromising on national interests and stated that BJP cadres have the power to dislodge the Congress government. He said that BJP workers were ready to overthrow the "corrupt and anarchic" Congress government in Telangana. The BJP chief called upon party cadres to strengthen the organisation at the grassroots level in the state. "We all must take a firm pledge. We have to reach every mohalla, every street and every town. We must take the leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party, its ideology, its policies and its intent to the people. Today, our policies and our intentions are clear before the public," he said.

He claimed that the Narendra Modi-led government at the Centre is serving the people of Telangana through various welfare schemes. He, however, said Telangana cannot develop unless it gets a double-engine BJP government. Stating that Telangana holds special significance for the BJP, he recalled that in 1984, when the party had only two MPs, one of them was from Telangana. "Today, we also remember that in 1984, when the Bharatiya Janata Party had only two Members of Parliament in the entire country, one of them was from the Telangana region. Those who say that the BJP is an outsider party should look at this fact," he said. He asserted that people across the country are witnessing a model of good governance under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The BJP has been continuously working in the service of the people of this country with dedication and speed. We believe that BJP workers function with the ideology of 'Nation First, Party Next, and Self Last'..." Nitin Nabin said the BJP was marching ahead with the spirit of nation first and that its goal is to achieve 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

Telangana police crack sensational murder case involving four family members

Hyderabad, June 28 (GNS) Police in Telangana's Nalgonda town have solved the sensational murder case involving four members of a family with the arrest of four accused on Friday. According to the police, the prime accused, along with his wife, a friend and a jeweller, conspired to commit the crime due to a personal grudge, financial distress and the intention to rob cash and gold ornaments.

Using CCTV footage, technical evidence and scientific investigation, the police solved the sensational case within three days, said Nalgonda district Superintendent of Police Sharat Chandra Pawar.

The bodies of Mohammed Sultan (45), his wife Haseena (38), their son Muzammil (20) and daughter Apsara (14) were found in a decomposed state on June 22 at their house in Telangana Colony in Nalgonda town. Police investigations revealed that Syed Aslam, a relative of the victims, brutally killed the family on June 20. Police also arrested his wife, Tabassum, and two others, Sohail and Hemanth Kumar, who allegedly assisted them.

According to the police, Haseena had given a loan of Rs 1 lakh to her sister's daughter, Tabassum, and Aslam a year ago. Recently, Aslam approached Haseena and Sultan seeking another loan of Rs 1 lakh. Haseena refused to extend a fresh loan and asked Aslam to repay the earlier amount.

Aslam and Tabassum subsequently developed a grudge against Haseena and Sultan and allegedly conspired to kill them.

Police investigations revealed that Aslam plotted the murders after watching videos on YouTube. He allegedly lay in wait outside Sultan's house in the early hours of June 20. He attacked Haseena when she stepped out of the house. Hearing her screams, Sultan and Muzammil came outside, but Aslam allegedly stabbed them to death as well. Aslam did not spare 14-year-old Apsara, who was inside the house. The girl was reportedly hiding under a bed, but the assailant dragged her out and killed her. The accused then allegedly looted cash and jewellery from the house and escaped.

The bodies of the victims were recovered by the police after neighbours complained of a foul smell emanating from the house.

Initially, it was suspected to be a case of suicide. However, after the post-mortem examination, police said the family had been murdered.

After questioning several relatives, police cracked the case and arrested Aslam, his wife and two others.

Police seized a Mahindra Marazzo car, Rs 30.04 lakh in cash, five tolas of melted gold, a knife allegedly used in the murders, three mobile phones, blood-stained clothes, and land and bank documents from the accused. All the accused were produced before a court, which remanded them to judicial custody.

Man dies by suicide over fear of deletion in SIR

Hyderabad, June 28 (GNS) A 51-year-old man died by suicide allegedly due to fear of his name being deleted in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls and possible consequences for the family including two mentally challenged children.

Under severe mental distress over his name not found in 2002 voter list and anomalies in the documents, Sheikh Mujbil Rehman, a cab driver, hanged himself at his residence in Bharat Nagar, Borabanda in the early hours of Sunday. According to the family members, he was worried about the future of his wife and three children including two with intellectual disabilities. Showing copies of various documents Rehman had prepared, his nephew Imam told media that he he had spent Rs.1.5 lakh for the same. As he had different spellings of his name in different documents like Aadhaar and passport, he was anxious about the legal complications after deletion of his name from the voter list.

Imam said Rehman was running around various offices for last one months to make corrections in the documents. There were also anomalies in the documents with regard to the date of birth. Rehman also did not find the name of his parents in 2002 list for mapping, further heightening his anxieties. The deceased's family members said he was mentally distressed after hearing from others about the possible consequences of deletion of name from voter list.

Rehman's wife said he had been very tense for last few days as he was unable to make the required corrections in the documents and was worried that this may result in their two mentally unsound children losing their pension and the family losing benefits of other welfare schemes.

According to her, he woke up around 2 a.m. and after drinking some water went to bed again. An hour later, he woke up again and when she enquired if he had to go for work, he did not reply and returned to bed. She said around 4.30 a.m. their son woke up and cried loudly on seeing his father hanging.

TRS to launch land rights agitation on July 2: K. Kavitha

Hyderabad, June 28 (GNS) Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) President K Kavitha on Sunday announced that the party would launch a major land rights agitation at Uppal Bhagayath on July 2 to demand implementation of the Congress party's promise of providing 250 square yards of land to Telangana movement activists.

Speaking after hoisting the Telangana Rakshana Sena flag at Uppal Pista House Cross Roads, Kavitha described Uppal as a stronghold of the Telangana movement and said the aspirations of the statehood struggle remained unfulfilled even after the formation of Telangana. She appealed to activists from across the state to participate in large numbers in the proposed agitation.

She said the Telangana Rakshana Sena was committed to protecting the interests of movement activists, women and students and promised free education and healthcare if the party came to power. She also accused the Congress government of failing to fulfil its promises and criticised it for remaining silent over alleged insults to the Telangana dialect.

Kavitha also targeted corporate educational institutions, alleging that they were neglecting local employment opportunities and demanding that the government issue a G.O. directing major corporate schools and hospitals to procure milk exclusively from Mother Dairy, Mulkanoor and Vijaya Dairy. She further alleged that the BRS had failed to raise issues concerning Telangana's interests. Asserting that her party would fight for the rights of Telangana people and movement activists, Kavitha said the TRS would contest all divisions in Uppal and work towards winning the Uppal Assembly constituency while continuing.

Responsible AI leadership key to harnessing AI's full potential: KL University Vice President

Hyderabad, June 28 (GNS) Emphasising that responsible leadership is as important as technological expertise in the age of Artificial Intelligence (AI), KL Deemed to be University Vice President Er. Koneru Lakshman Havish on Sunday said AI is transforming every sector and creating unprecedented opportunities, but its benefits can be fully realised only through ethical and responsible leadership.

Addressing the inaugural session of the AI Leadership Summit-2026, organised by KLH Global Business School in collaboration with the IIT Kharagpur Alumni Association (Hyderabad Chapter) and Astravian AI, Havish said the university aims to strengthen academia-industry collaboration while nurturing innovators, entrepreneurs and AI leaders capable of delivering ethical solutions to real-world challenges. He said events such as the AI Leadership Summit seek to bridge the gap between industry and academia and prepare future-ready professionals equipped with both technical competence and strong ethical values.

Senior industry leaders participating in the summit observed that Artificial Intelligence has evolved beyond a technological innovation to become a key driver of economic growth, educational transformation, scientific advancement and governance. They stressed that AI should be deployed through robust governance frameworks, Responsible AI practices, human oversight and close collaboration between educational institutions and industry.

The experts also called for universities to move beyond conventional teaching methods by adopting AI-driven, project-based learning aligned with industry requirements. They shared insights on AI-powered financial services, smart banking, fraud detection, predictive analytics, insurance technologies, retail innovation, AI adoption in enterprises, startup opportunities and ethical AI regulation. The summit brought together technical experts, entrepreneurs, researchers and senior executives from leading organisations, including Deloitte Consulting, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bank of America, Thoughtworks, Novartis, JPMorgan Chase, Survey of India, BHEL, Techbulls, Deeptrack AI, Optificial Labs, Tavant, Codrix AI, Ashland, Serene Business Solutions, Optmize Systems, KITS Warangal, the University of Hyderabad and JNTU Hyderabad.

University Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr N Venkatram, Dean of Skilling Dr Srinath, Dean of KLH Global Business School Dr Anand Bethapudi, faculty members, industry experts and researchers attended the event.

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