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Army begins raising 5 Integrated Battle Groups along China border

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS): The Army on Wednesday formally started raising five integrated battle groups (IBGs) along the front with China to boost combat readiness.The IBGs have been tasked with responding and striking at targets within 24 hours of getting orders.

The concept upgrades the "Cold Start Doctrine", a military strategy developed after Operation Parakram following the 2001 Parliament attack.

Sources said each IBG would be headed by a Major General-rank officer. Five such officers had been posted to take charge of the IBGs, marking the formal raising of the new outfit.

With the government sanction letter for the Mountain Strike Corps' IBGs finalised on July 1, the raising, postings and administrative processes can now commence. The raising is likely to be completed by mid-2027. The IBGs will be stationed in two north-eastern states — Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh — that share a boundary with China. A Fire Support Group, that has long-range artillery guns and other firepower, will serve as the back-up for the IBGs.

The Mountain Strike Corps has two divisions — one tasked to Ladakh and the other to the North-East. The sources said the IBGs were currently being raised only in the North-East.

An IBG integrates combat formation to make the forces faster, more flexible and self-sufficient. An IBG is designed to be a compact unit with infantry, armour, artillery, engineers, signals, air defence and logistics support under one commander. It is meant to react quickly to threats and operate with less dependence on larger formations.

Govt Questions WhatsApp Username Rollout

Meta Assures Anti-Impersonation Measures

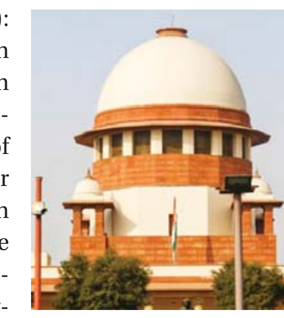
New Delhi, July 1 (GNS): After the Centre issued a notice to Meta over the proposed rollout of its username feature on WhatsApp, the Meta-owned company said that to protect against impersonation, "we've held the highest-profile names like public figures, government entities, celebrities and verified Meta accounts" so they can only be claimed by their legitimate owners.

The government earlier directed Kunal Shah-run WhatsApp to explain the username feature within three days and refrain from launching it until consultations with the government are completed. According to sources, the Centre sought a detailed explanation from Meta on the new feature and has directed the company to submit its response within three days. The government also asked Meta not to roll out the "usernames" feature in India until consultations on the matter are completed, the sources added.

In a statement, a WhatsApp spokesperson said that "We've announced the option for people to reserve their preferred username on WhatsApp". "The ability to use a username is not yet live and will roll out slowly later this year. To protect against impersonation, we've held the highest-profile names — think public figures, government entities, celebrities, verified Meta accounts — so they can only ever be claimed by their legitimate owners and lookalike derivatives of known names are held as well," said the spokesperson.

Users still require a phone number to use WhatsApp and we've built multiple layers of defence against scams into usernames. "Other users need to know the exact username to message you, we will limit how many new people an account can contact, block repeated attempts to guess someone's username key, and have systems to detect and remove activity showing common impersonation and abuse patterns," said the company spokesperson.

SC sets ITR guidelines for accident compensation



New Delhi, July 1 (GNS): The Supreme Court on Wednesday laid down broad guidelines for determining the income of deceased victims in motor accident compensation cases, holding that while the latest Income Tax Return (ITR) should ordinarily be relied upon for salaried persons, the average of up to the previous three years' ITRs should generally be considered for self-employed individuals, subject to the nature and circumstances of their business.

A bench of Justices Sanjay Karol and N.K. Singh said there can be no rigid formula for assessing annual income under the Motor Vehicles Act, observing that the overarching objective is to ensure "just and fair compensation" for victims and their families. Delivering its judgment in a motor accident compensation case arising from Odisha, the apex court said ITRs remain an important statutory indicator of income, but courts must also take into account the realities of different professions and businesses while computing compensation.

The ruling came in an appeal filed by the family of Manoranjan Pandey, who died in a road accident in May 2018 while travelling from Berhampur to Bhubaneswar.

VB-G RAM G Act Launches, Rural Wages Rise 10%

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS): The Viksit Bharat – Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission – Gramin (VB-G RAM G) Act, aimed at strengthening rural livelihoods with higher wages and guaranteed employment, came into force across India from Wednesday. With the commencement of the Act, eligible rural households will now have a statutory entitlement to 125 days of guaranteed wage employment. The Act seeks to make rural employment more effective, transparent and outcome-oriented while accelerating the creation of durable rural assets, conservation of natural resources, enhancement of agricultural productivity, livelihood promotion and women-led development, according to an official statement.

The Govt of India has notified the revised wage rates under the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 for all States, Union Territories and notified wage areas. As a result, no notified daily wage anywhere in the country will be below Rs 300. The national average notified wage has increased from Rs 298.8 per day to Rs 327.4 per day, reflecting an average enhancement of more than 10 per cent, the statement said. States such as Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh have witnessed wage increases ranging from 15 to 25 per cent. To ensure seamless and effective implementation of the Act from day one, the Govt has already released an interim allocation of Rs 95,692.31 crore to States and Union Territories to facilitate uninterrupted.

Vikram Misri's Tenure Extended By A Year Amid Global Challenges

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS): Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri's tenure has been extended by a year beyond its scheduled end in mid-July, it was announced on Wednesday. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the extension of service for the 1989 batch Indian Foreign Service officer for a period of one year beyond his original tenure ending on July 14, 2026 — that is, up to July 14, 2027, or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

The order, issued by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, invokes provisions of Fundamental Rule 56(d).

Misri, a seasoned diplomat with extensive experience in key bilateral and multilateral assignments, has been at the helm of India's foreign policy apparatus since his appointment as Foreign Secretary in 2024. His tenure has coincided with a period of intense global geopolitical flux, including ongoing tensions in West Asia and Ukraine, evolving dynamics in the Indo-Pacific, India's assertive role in the Global South, and critical neighbourhood engagements with China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh.

Sources indicate that the extension reflects the government's confidence in Misri's leadership and the need for continuity in steering India's foreign policy during a crucial phase.

Misri, who has served in Pakistan, Europe, and the US and has been the Ambassador to Myanmar and China, has played a pivotal role in strengthening strategic partnerships with the United States, Quad nations, and European countries, while navigating complex economic diplomacy and diaspora welfare issues. His steady hand has been particularly valued in crisis management, such as the evacuation of Indian nationals from conflict zones and advancing key defence and technology collaborations. The move comes at a time when India is preparing for high-profile diplomatic engagements, including the events as its present tenure of Chair of BRICS, potential G20-related follow-ups, and bilateral summits.

Centre, Arunachal Govt coordinate to tackle flood crisis: Shivraj Singh Chouhan

Itanagar, July 1 (GNS): Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who is on a two-day visit to Arunachal Pradesh to assess the flood situation, on Wednesday assured that the Centre and the state government are working in close coordination and will together help the state overcome the ongoing crisis.

Chouhan, along with Union Parliamentary and Minority Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju and Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu, on Wednesday conducted an aerial survey of the flood-affected areas in Kayi Panyor district and other parts of the state.

Officials said that in Pasighat, Arunachal Pradesh, a detailed review of the situation in flood-affected areas and relief efforts was conducted by the Union Minister in the presence of Rijiju, Khandu, state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) President Kaling Moyong and senior officials. Later, in a series of posts on his social media platform X, Chouhan said that for the past two days, they had been continuously among the flood-affected people. He added that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Centre stood shoulder to shoulder with every affected family. He expressed confidence that this difficult time would pass, and every possible effort for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction would be made with complete sensitivity and commitment.

He stressed that the Centre and the state government together would steer Arunachal Pradesh through the crisis.

Navies of India and Malaysia discuss strengthening engagements, maritime cooperation

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS): The Indian Navy and Royal Malaysian Navy on Wednesday held discussions focused on strengthening bilateral engagements, enhancing maritime cooperation and collaborative pursuit towards maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

The discussions were held during the 11th edition of Indian Navy and Royal Malaysian Navy Staff Talks that concluded in New Delhi on Wednesday.

"11th Edition of Indian Navy and Royal Malaysian Navy Staff Talks were successfully concluded on 01 Jul 26 at New Delhi, India," the spokesperson for Indian Navy posted on X.

"Co-chaired by RAdm Srinivas Maddula, ACNS (FCI) and RAdm Dato' Pahlawan Mohd Fadzli Kamal bin Mohd Mohaldin, Assistant Chief of Staff (Ops & Trg), Royal Malaysian Navy, the talks focused on strengthening bilateral engagements, enhancing maritime cooperation and collaborative pursuit towards Maritime Security in the IOR," it added. In May, Indian Navy's oceanographic research vessel, INS Sagardhwani, visited Malaysia's Port Klang and held a successful engagement with the Royal Malaysian Navy.

"The port call enabled productive interactions between the two sides through a series of professional and scientific interactions," the Indian Navy stated.

Personnel of the Royal Malaysian Navy warmly welcomed the ship on its arrival on May 13.

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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.

The future of education depends on building systems that are flexible enough to respond to the needs of every learner. This requires moving beyond the idea that success can be measured only through marks and rankings. Schools must focus on developing curiosity, problem-solving ability, creativity, communication skills, and confidence. When children feel valued for their individual strengths, they are more likely to engage meaningfully with learning.

Parents and communities also have an important role in creating inclusive learning environments. Education cannot be the responsibility of teachers alone. Supportive families, community involvement, and awareness about different learning needs can significantly influence a child's progress. A child's ability to learn improves when the environment around them encourages exploration rather than fear of failure.

School leadership must also become a driving force for change. Principals and administrators need to encourage innovative teaching practices, provide opportunities for teacher collaboration, and create a culture where experimentation and improvement are welcomed. A school that supports its teachers is better equipped to support its students. Policy decisions must reflect the realities of classrooms on the ground. Education reforms often focus on curriculum changes and new programmes, but lasting improvement requires investment in teachers, infrastructure, learning resources, and support systems. Without strengthening these foundations, even well-designed policies may fail to achieve their intended goals.

The true measure of an education system is not how efficiently it produces identical outcomes, but how effectively it helps every child discover and develop their potential. A system that respects diversity in learning creates not only better students but also a more inclusive and capable society. The classroom of the future must therefore be one where differences are not seen as challenges alone, but as opportunities to make learning richer for everyone.

FALAKNUMA NEWS
ENGLISH DAILY
HYDERABAD, TELANGANA

Metro cargo plan to boost urban mobility by 2047: Minister

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS) The Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) observed its 31st Foundation Day today at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi. The occasion was attended by Shri Manohar Lal, Hon'ble Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs & Power, as the Chief Guest. Smt. Rekha Gupta, Hon'ble Chief Minister, GNCTD, was present as the Guest of Honour. Hon'ble Minister of Housing & Urban Affairs and Power, Shri Manohar Lal ji, joins Hon'ble Chief Minister Smt Rekha Gupta ji on the occasion of the 31st Foundation Day of Delhi Metro Rail Corporation at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi

In his address, the Hon'ble Minister highlighted the significant role that Delhi Metro plays in the daily life of the common citizen in Delhi. He emphasized that easy, reliable, and safe mobility is the fundamental right of every citizen, and that urban transport systems like the Delhi Metro have become an indispensable part of urban living.

Looking ahead, the Hon'ble Minister underlined that by 2047, nearly 50% of India's population will reside in urban areas, making it imperative to plan and strengthen urban mobility infrastructure today. He shared a visionary idea of adding cargo compartments to metro trains, enabling small businessmen, vendors, and hawkers to seamlessly transport their goods across the city — a step that would save time, reduce energy consumption, and enhance business efficiency for the urban working class.

Furthermore, Shri Manohar Lal ji emphasized the need to integrate green and renewable energy solutions in metro operations, aligning with the nation's sustainable development goals. He reiterated that metro systems will be the lifeline of every city in India, and their continued expansion and modernization is key to building smart, inclusive, and future-ready urban centers. Other dignitaries in attendance included Shri Katikithala Srinivas, Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and Chairman, DMRC; Shri Dharmendra, Chief Secretary, GNCTD; and Dr. Vikas Kumar, Managing Director, DMRC.

The Hon'ble Chief Minister of Delhi Smt. Rekha Gupta also congratulated Delhi Metro on the occasion.

New Express Trains Flagged Off, Pune Rail Projects Near Completion: Vaishnaw

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS) Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw today said, that considering the historic and industrial significance of Pune city, the government has decided to completely transform Pune railway station. He added that under this major initiative world class facilities will be provided on the railway station including four new platforms.

He was speaking after inaugurating two new express trains – Hadapsar–Jodhpur Express and MGR Chennai Central–Bhagat Ki Kothi Express – by flagging them off from Hadapsar near Pune in Maharashtra. Minister of State for Cooperation and Civil Aviation Murlidhar Mohol, Minister for Higher and Technical Education and Parliamentary Affairs Chandrakant Patil, and Members of Parliament Shrirang Barne and Medha Kulkarni were present on the occasion. Union Ministers of State L. Murugan (from Chennai) and Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (from Jodhpur) joined the event virtually. Vaishnaw said that development plan for six railway stations – Pune, Hadapsar, Khadki, Shivajinagar, Uruli Kanchan, and Alandi – is in the final stage.

He also stated that discussions have been held with Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis regarding the introduction of a Pune–Nagpur Vande Bharat train. He added that trial runs are underway on new alignments for the Pune–Nashik railway corridor, which holds strategic importance due to the presence of a world-class testing laboratory at Khodad. Additionally, work on the third and fourth railway lines on the Pune–Lonavala route will be completed shortly.

Minister of State for Cooperation and Civil Aviation, Murlidhar Mohol expressed confidence that the Hadapsar–Jodhpur Express will greatly benefit the Rajasthani community residing in Pune. Railway development projects worth 1 crore are underway in the state. Under the Amrit Bharat Scheme, development works are progressing at Pune, Hadapsar, Uruli, and Shivajinagar stations. MP Medha Kulkarni demanded the launch of a new train between Pune and Nashik, especially in view of the upcoming Kumbh Mela.

Halts: Chinchwad, Lonavala, Kalyan, Vasai Road, Vapi, Surat, Vadodara Junction, Ahmedabad, Mehsana, Palanpur, Abu Road, Pindwara, Jawai Bandh, Falna, Rani, Marwar Junction, Pali Marwar, and Luni.

Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw emphasized that the redevelopment of Pune and nearby railway stations is part of the broader modernization vision under Indian Railways, aimed at enhancing passenger convenience, boosting regional connectivity, and supporting economic growth. He noted that Pune, being a major educational, IT, and industrial hub, requires infrastructure that matches global standards, and the proposed upgrades will significantly improve travel experience and operational efficiency.

India Poised to Become Global MICE Hub, Says Gajendra Singh Shekhawat

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS) India is set to emerge as the Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) capital of the world and the government and the private exhibition industry has to work together to make the country a centre of MICE tourism, Union Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat has stressed. With the construction of the state-of-the art exhibition and conference complexes in the country, India is all set to become MICE tourism capital of the world.

"The exhibition and conference infrastructure we see across the nation including Mumbai, Delhi, Hyderabad, Bangalore, Jaipur and even small cities post G20 meet indicates that India is standing at the threshold of strong possibilities for this sector," said Shekhawat, while inaugurating a seminar organised by the Indian Exhibition Industry Association (IEIA). Several events which are happening globally can be calendarised and brought here in India, the minister suggested.

"Besides being a destination India, the country is also becoming a big exhibition and conference hub with planned expansion in road, aviation and railway sectors along with expansion of the conference and exhibition sector, the country has a great future for economic growth," Shekhawat said. After 2014, India has shown a tremendous growth curve in infrastructure, be it the construction of roads over 1,50,000 kms, new railway stations, semi high-speed trains, inland waterways and more than 150 operational airports. "All of these have contributed to India's prowess with regards to the MICE events. The confidence also built following India's hosting of G20 nations, the entire world is looking at India in awe and curiosity. In times to come, India will emerge as the MICE capital of the world," the minister told the gathering.

Piyush Goyal Highlights India Growth & Partnerships

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS) Pathbreaking initiatives like Make in India, 'Digital India' and achievements in sectors like energy, IT, infrastructure, health, and tourism are also being showcased at the six-month-long Expo 2025 in Japan, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal has informed. In a post on X social media platform, the minister said that the India Pavilion- BHARAT at the expo in Osaka is "a remarkable representation of India's cultural richness and commercial successes, and welcomed its 5,000th visitor today". "This space is a stunning display of India's growing international presence and the giant strides that the country has taken in the last decade, under PM @NarendraModi ji's leadership," Goyal added.

One of the highlights of the pavilion has been the display of the Chandrayaan-3 landing on the moon's south pole and India's advances in space technology. "I am confident this expo will provide a big boost to trade and tourism in India and further cement our role as the world's trusted partner," the minister mentioned. Meanwhile, Goyal said he had met Navroz D Udwadia, Co-founder and Partner of Alpha Wave Global, during his visit to London this week."Highlighted how India's rapidly expanding middle class, manufacturing capability and rise of digital economy offer a unique opportunity for investment and growth," he posted on X. Goyal also met Francois Michel, Group CEO, John Cockerill in Brussels. "We discussed how the group's expertise in innovation in diverse technology solutions can further assist India's growth story. Explored avenues for deeper collaboration and multi-sectoral partnerships," said the minister.

Also, Goyal and European Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security, Maros Sefcovic, have reaffirmed their shared resolve to conclude the India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) by the end of 2025.

India sets up panel to develop repairability index framework

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS) The government on Saturday said that the committee constituted for the Framework on Repairability Index (RI) in mobile and electronic sector has submitted its report, to help consumers who witness issues while seeking repair for their devices. The panel has submitted its report to Nidhi Khare, Secretary, Department of Consumer Affairs. The committee's recommendations have been framed in alignment with the best global practices without causing any impediment to the industry with regard to innovation and ease of doing business.

The original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) are required to self-declare the Repairability Index based on a standards scoring criteria provided in the framework with no additional compliance burden, said Ministry of Consumer Affairs. Further, the committee recommended that the Repairability Index should be displayed at the point of sale/purchase, E-commerce platforms and in form of QR code on packaged products to enable consumer to make informed choices.

In September 2024, the Department of Consumer Affairs constituted a committee under the chairmanship of Bharat Khera, Additional Secretary for developing the framework of the Repairability Index (RI).

Repairability Index aims to create an ecosystem where consumers choose options that align with the ethos of 'mindful utilisation' of their products over 'wasteful consumption'.

By empowering consumers with ease and hassle-free repair options, the Department said it is reaffirming its commitment to a self-reliant, sustainable, and consumer-friendly economy.

CSR Conclave Focuses on Sustainable Rural Development in India

New Delhi, July 1 (GNS) The CSC CSR Conclave 2025 marked a pivotal moment in India's journey toward inclusive growth and rural empowerment, placing technology at the heart of social transformation. Inaugurated by Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), the event spotlighted the powerful role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in bridging the urban-rural divide through Common Services Centres (CSCs).

"CSC represents a radical idea bridging the urban-rural divide through technology," said Shri Atul Kumar Tiwari, Secretary of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), during the inauguration of the CSC CSR Conclave 2025. His remarks highlighted the central theme of the event leveraging Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for a sustainable tomorrow through rural empowerment and inclusive growth. Tiwari also cited the visionary role of Common Services Centres (CSCs) in strengthening India's social capital, aligning with the Hon'ble Prime Minister's vision for rural digital empowerment. He acknowledged the vital role of CSC Academy in advancing CSR initiatives, especially in vocational training and digital empowerment for rural populations, and praised CSC's alignment with national goals, particularly through programs like the PM Vishwakarma Yojana.

The Conclave, organized by CSC Academy and the Indian ESG Network, brought together leaders from government, corporate, and development sectors to discuss how CSR can drive environmental sustainability, community development, and transformative change in rural India.

In his keynote address, Shri Sanjay Kumar Rakesh, Chairman and Secretary of CSC Academy, expanded on the transformative impact of the Common Services Centres (CSCs) across the country.

He described CSCs not just as digital access points but as catalysts for change, operated by Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) who empower their communities. "CSR is not just a statutory requirement but a strategic driver for inclusive progress," said Rakesh, emphasizing the Academy's focus on scalable and measurable CSR programs aimed at reaching underserved rural populations.

Dr. Biswajit Saha, Director (Training & Skill Education) at CBSE, also highlighted the role of CSC Academy in preparing the next generation for future challenges, particularly in fields like Artificial Intelligence (AI), Cybersecurity, and Healthcare.

Nifty 50 stays range-bound amid weak momentum and sectoral mixed Trends

Mumbai, July 1 (GNS) Benchmark indices ended with marginal gains in a highly volatile session on May 2 and volatility is expected to stay elevated due to ongoing geopolitical tensions, developments related to tariffs, and the unfolding Q4 earnings season and major US economic data points, analysts said on Saturday. The Nifty on Friday opened strong and surged to an intraday high of 24,589 in the first half of the session. However, profit booking at higher levels erased those gains, leaving the index to close nearly flat.

The Nifty finished the day up 12.50 points, or 0.05 per cent, at 24,346.70.

"For the week, the BSE Sensex gained 1.6 per cent, while the Nifty50 rose 1.2 per cent. The BSE Midcap index declined 0.4 per cent and the Smallcap index ended flat," said a note from Bajaj Broking Research.

Among sectoral performers, media, energy, IT, and oil & gas posted gains of 0.3–0.7 per cent. On the other hand, power, metal, telecom, pharma, realty, and consumer durables sectors saw losses ranging from 0.5 to 2 per cent. According to Dhupesh Dhameja, Derivatives Research Analyst, SAMCO Securities, Nifty continues to display signs of hesitation at elevated levels, repeatedly getting knocked back from crucial resistance zones and producing intraday fake-outs, indicating a period of consolidation amid fading momentum. This marks the seventh consecutive session where Nifty has been locked in a choppy range, failing to conquer overhead resistances, underscoring persistent supply pressure and an undercurrent of caution in the broader market mood.

Going ahead, Nifty is expected to extend consolidation in the range of 24,550-23,800. With 23,800 being the confluence of last week's low and recent breakout area. While 24,550 is the 61.8 per cent retracement of the entire decline (26,277-21,744)," according to Bajaj Broking Research. "We believe the current consolidation will help the index work off the overbought condition developed after the recent strong rally. Stock specific action will continue to remain in focus as we progress through the Q4 earnings season," it added.

CM Revanth Reddy calls for tech-driven revenue reforms and fiscal discipline

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Wednesday directed officials to intensify revenue mobilisation, prevent revenue leakages and adopt technology-driven measures to strengthen the state's finances while reviewing the government's revenue mobilisation strategy at the MCRHRD Institute here.

The Chief Minister instructed officials to pay serious attention to achieving revenue targets in line with the state Budget. He asked agencies such as the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA) and the Telangana Government Industrial Infrastructure Corporation (TGIIC) to focus on enhancing revenue generation.

Revanth Reddy also directed officials to prevent revenue leakages in key departments, including Commercial Taxes, Excise and Mines, and called for the establishment of a dedicated "chasing cell" to continuously monitor and follow up on revenue mobilisation efforts. He stressed the need to improve the operational efficiency of all departments and directed officials to leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) to integrate beneficiary databases with the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system for better transparency and efficiency.

The Chief Minister said future budgets should prioritise the completion of pending and ongoing projects and be prepared on realistic assessments rather than hypothetical projections. He also identified land acquisition as a top priority and assured departments of the government's full support in mobilising resources.

Emphasising fiscal discipline, Revanth Reddy told officials to eliminate negligence in revenue enhancement and fund mobilisation to ensure the effective implementation of the government's development agenda. The review meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, Ministers N. Uttam Kumar Reddy and Jupally Krishna Rao, Chief Secretary Sanjay Jaju, Advisor Ramakrishna Rao, and senior officials.

Mahesh Goud Calls BJP Leader Nitin Nabin's Telangana Visit a "Flop"

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President and MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud on Wednesday termed BJP National Leader Nitin Nabin's three-day visit to Telangana a "total flop", asserting that there was neither scope nor need for the BJP in the state. Addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan, Goud said Telangana was achieved due to the efforts of the Congress under the leadership of Sonia Gandhi and the sacrifices of thousands of people, adding that the Congress enjoys a permanent place in the hearts of the people.

He said Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had released the Rythu Bharosa funds and accused the BJP of failing to fulfil its promises, including providing two crore jobs. The TPCC chief questioned why the BJP had remained silent on the alleged irregularities in Ayodhya and the Kaleshwaram project despite the Congress seeking a CBI probe. He alleged that the BJP was using central agencies such as the CBI, ED and the Election Commission for political vendetta and claimed there was no place for communal politics in Telangana, which he described as a symbol of religious harmony.

Goud also said the Congress government had provided 70,000 jobs after assuming office and asserted that the BJP would not be able to challenge the Congress in Telangana, regardless of political alliances.

KTR challenges Revanth Reddy to governance debate

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) BRS Working President K T Rama Rao (KTR) on Wednesday challenged Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to an open public debate on the Congress government's governance, the agrarian crisis, farmers' issues and the state's financial condition.

Addressing a press conference at Telangana Bhavan, KTR strongly objected to Revanth Reddy's remarks describing Telangana as a "bankrupt state" and said no Chief Minister should tarnish the image of the state. He asserted that Telangana had emerged as one of the country's fastest-growing states during the BRS regime under K. Chandrashekar Rao. Throwing an open challenge, KTR said the Chief Minister could choose the venue, time and subject of the debate anywhere in Telangana. He declared that if he failed to substantiate his allegations against the Congress government with facts and official data, he would resign immediately and retire from politics. KTR alleged that the state's financial problems, if any, were the result of corruption and mismanagement by the present government.

He accused the Congress of failing to fulfil promises made to farmers, including farm loan waivers and financial assistance, and claimed that the farming community was facing severe distress due to fertiliser shortages, crop losses, power issues and rising farmer suicides.

He also questioned the Chief Minister's repeated visits to New Delhi and accused the government of presenting contradictory claims on Telangana's debt while projecting an unrealistic picture of governance.

Reiterating his challenge, KTR said he was prepared to debate any issue concerning farmers, employment or governance with official statistics and evidence, and urged the Chief Minister to stop making statements that, he claimed, damage Telangana's image and investor confidence.

AIG study: Endoscopic treatment outperforms tablets

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) A study by AIG Hospitals, Hyderabad, published in the international journal Endoscopy, has found that Endoscopic Sleeve Gastroplasty (ESG), a 45-minute minimally invasive procedure, delivers significantly greater short-term weight loss than oral semaglutide tablets in patients with obesity. The real-world study, titled "Endoscopic Sleeve Gastroplasty Versus Oral Semaglutide for Obesity: A Real-World Comparative Cohort Study," compared outcomes in 150 adults treated between January 2024 and April 2025. Fifty patients underwent ESG, while 100 received oral semaglutide (14 mg) along with standard lifestyle counselling.

The study found that patients who underwent ESG achieved an average 12.72 per cent total body weight loss at six months, compared with 8.67 per cent among those taking oral semaglutide. About 70 per cent of ESG patients lost at least 10 per cent of their body weight, compared with 43 per cent in the medication group.

Kavitha Slams Congress, Promises Free Education, Healthcare Under TRS

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) Telangana Rakshana Sena (TRS) President Kalvakuntla Kavitha on Wednesday accused the Revanth Reddy-led Congress government of failing to fulfil its election promises, including the implementation of the Congress party's six guarantees. She said her party would provide free education and healthcare to all if voted to power, while reiterating her criticism that the Congress government has failed to deliver on its commitments.

Addressing party workers after hoisting the TRS flag at Sitaphalmandi in Secunderabad, Kavitha said she had founded the party as a "daughter of the soil" with the objective of improving the lives of the poor and asserted that the state's agenda must now change.

She alleged that Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy had failed to implement the Congress party's six guarantees, including enhancement of pensions, provision of new pensions, housing and fee reimbursement for students. She questioned the government's priority of proposing a Rs. 1 lakh crore Musi River development project while students were facing hardship due to delays in fee reimbursement.

Kavitha claimed that even more than a decade after the formation of Telangana, the lives of the poor had not improved and that education and healthcare costs continued to burden poor and middle-class families. She said her party would ensure that the government bears the full cost of education and healthcare and would provide business loans ranging from Rs. 2 lakh to Rs. 20 crore for unemployed youth to promote self-employment. The TRS chief also accused successive governments of neglecting Telangana movement activists, alleging that the promise of providing 250 square yards of land to them had not been fulfilled. She announced that the party would organise a protest at Uppal Bhagayat on Wednesday to demand land for the activists. Appealing to party workers to focus on addressing local issues, Kavitha said the TRS would stand for justice and work for the welfare of the people if given an opportunity to govern.

Kavitha further said the Congress government had failed to address key public issues and accused it of ignoring the concerns of farmers, students and unemployed youth. She urged party workers to strengthen the TRS at the grassroots level and raise people's issues across Telangana.

She also stated that the TRS would continue its fight for the rights and welfare of citizens, promising people-centric governance and stronger welfare measures if the party returns to power. Kavitha further appealed to people to support the TRS, stating that the party would prioritise welfare, employment opportunities, and better public services. She said the TRS would continue to raise public concerns and work towards building a stronger and inclusive Telangana.

Ramchander Rao Hits Back at Revanth Reddy, Says BJP Will Rise in Telangana

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) Telangana BJP president N Ramchander Rao on Wednesday strongly criticised Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy for his remarks on the recent visit of BJP national president Nitin Nabin to the state, alleging that the Chief Minister was acting out of "fear and frustration" over losing power in the next Assembly elections.

Speaking to reporters on the completion of his first year as the Telangana BJP president, Rao described Revanth Reddy's comments as an act of "political arrogance." He alleged that the Chief Minister was rattled by Nitin Nabin's criticism of the state government over the alleged collection of "RR Tax", diversion of public money to the "Delhi Darbar", and the alleged misuse of funds under the Musi Riverfront development project.

Rao claimed that Nitin Nabin's call for a "Congress-mukt Telangana" had unsettled the ruling party and accused the Congress of continuing to display arrogance despite repeated electoral setbacks at the national level. The BJP leader said the people of Telangana would not accept the language used by the Chief Minister and asserted that, just as the electorate had voted out the previous BRS government led by K Chandrasekhar Rao, the Congress government too would face a similar fate in the next Assembly elections.

Quoting the Hindi phrase, "Jitna Keechad Uchaaloge, Utna Kamal Khilega" (the more mud you sling, the more the lotus will bloom), Rao said criticism would only strengthen the BJP.

Railway Minister Reviews Comprehensive Measures to Empower Station Masters for More Efficient Station Management

Hyderabad, July 1 (GNS) Union Minister for Railways Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw yesterday held a review meeting with senior railway officials to discuss issues and challenges faced by Station Masters and to deliberate on a comprehensive framework aimed at empowering them to ensure safer, more efficient, and passenger-centric railway operations across the Indian Railways network.

Station Masters play a critical role in ensuring safe train operations, coordinating with multiple departments, managing passenger facilities and maintaining smooth functioning of railway stations. During the review, detailed discussions were held on identifying operational and administrative challenges faced by Station Masters in their day-to-day working and developing solutions to strengthen their effectiveness.

The meeting also discussed strengthening the role of Station Masters. In addition, proposals relating to enhanced administrative and operational powers, improved career progression avenues and greater opportunities to higher levels of management were reviewed. These measures aim to empower Station Masters to take quicker decisions, improve passenger service delivery and effectively oversee station infrastructure, staff offices, colonies and other associated facilities.

To address growing operational requirements, discussions focused on the provision of additional Station Masters in multi-track and high-density sections where traffic levels and operational complexity have increased significantly. The need for expeditious filling of vacancies in the Station Master cadre was also reviewed, with emphasis on treating these vacancies on priority..

Recognising the importance of technology in improving efficiency, discussions were held on introducing mobile app-based paperless working systems for Station Masters. The meeting also reviewed the development of an integrated Station Management System that would enable better coordination among various railway departments and facilitate faster resolution of passenger-related issues at stations.

The Railway Minister emphasized the importance of modern skill development and capacity building. Officials discussed upgrading training methodologies through the use of Virtual Reality, simulators and other modern training technologies to better prepare Station Masters for handling increasingly complex railway operations and emergency situations.

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