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BUS FACILITY AVAILABLE

Project delays are a drag on IAF power



Air Marshal Diptendu Choudhury Retd

As the fog of Operation Sindoor begins to lift, the actual magnitude of success is beginning to emerge after the initial days of the media blitzkrieg. The offensive air power and air defence that the Indian Air Force (IAF) demonstrated was heartening, despite decades-old inventory shortcomings. Equally encouraging was the test of combat-worthiness of indigenous weapons and systems that played a defining role in the short, swift and high-intensity operation.

Whether it is the home-made Integrated Air Command and Control System, the backbone of the Indian air defence, the Akash surface-to-air missile or the BrahMos cruise missile the star of the show credit must go to the Indian industry. But, amidst the heady feel-good factor of success, the refreshingly frank and justified concerns of Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal AP Singh on the industry's failed promises and missed deadlines are a

sobering reality check. The irony is that despite being the primary customer of the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, one of the oldest and largest aviation industries in the world, the IAF has long been struggling with the downstream effects of decades of sloth in our aircraft production capability. The Air Chief's angst reflects years of overpromise, under-delivery, slippage of timelines, less-than-acceptable product quality and inadequate product performance follow-up, which the IAF has been a victim of despite decades of hand-holding and support. There is a serious need for the industry to introspect on the slippages in every indigenous platform — the Light Combat Aircraft, Advanced Light Helicopter, Light Combat Helicopter, the Netra Airborne Early Warning & Control System etc and weapon systems. In the absence of accountability, the harsh fact is that the IAF's declining numbers of combat and support platforms have created an ever-increasing inventory gap due to the

inadequate future 'fill rate' and is already in an irrecoverable downward spiral.

Future inductions will no longer be able to close the gap unless the industry achieves a substantial production capacity. Slippages snowball further into delays in induction, operationalisation, training and development of employment tactics. The capacity shortcoming is an equally serious challenge in the industry's maintenance, repair and overhaul, as this means that a significant number of platforms are always waiting in long queues, and therefore there are lesser platforms available on the flight line.

The reduced numbers are weakening India's conventional deterrence, especially in view of the unique twin-adversary multi-front threat. Post-Op Sindoor, with the widened space for conventional employment of kinetic force, the possibility of a future conflict has gone up. The recent conflict has shown that the China-Pakistan relationship, especially between the two air

forces, is no longer a colusive affair. Instead, it is a bold display of open support between two ironclad strategic friends. Since there is no doubt about the role air power will play in any future conflict, the technology differential, the increasing disparity in numbers and the strategic synergy between the China-Pak aviation industry and the air forces are red flags for India's future security paradigm.

This is because the joint air power advantage will alter the continental security dynamics and impact India's force application options. India's already delayed Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) project, which has been recently opened to the private sector, is expected to take over a decade before the platforms can be inducted into service. By that time, China would have altered the air power balance and infrastructure in Tibet in its favour with sixth-generation platforms, and Pakistan would have operationally inducted the fifth-generation J35

as well. Of equal concern is that in this period, the IAF's mainstay fourth-generation fleet would have also become a decade older, despite their upgraded capabilities.

Like the AMCA, specialist weapons, advanced support platforms, future manned and unmanned teaming projects and space-based support for multi-domain operations are future imperatives that need accelerated research & development, supported by advance manufacturing processes and large production capacities.

The pace of technological advancements can only increase if the IAF and the industry short-circuit the synapses between the development of future operational concepts, identifying operational requirements, industrial research, development and production and finally operational testing and evaluation. These need to be addressed on the highest priority, given the long distance and lead times between the drawing board and the field.

Rachna Vinod

We build taller buildings, faster cars, smarter cities-but at what cost? As humanity races forward, nature silently bears the burden. Progress is powerful, but without balance, it becomes very risky. So, the question isn't whether we can grow-but whether we can grow responsibly. In the modern world, progress is often equated with rapid industrial growth, technological advancement, and expanding infrastructure. While these achievements are remarkable, they come with an undeniable cost to our environment. Forests shrink, air and water bodies grow polluted, and biodiversity dwindles-all in the name of development. The challenge before us is no longer about choosing between progress and preservation, but about finding a sustainable balance between the two.

Progress is no longer just about how fast we move-but how wisely we do it. In a world racing toward innovation,skyscrapers climb higher and cities sprawl wider – but beneath the hum of machines and the glare of neon lies a quieter question: what's the cost of this progress? The pursuit of progress and development has driven human civilization to remarkable heights. From deforestation to pollution, industrialization and urban expansion have strained the planet's resources. As nations chase economic growth and technological advancement, ecosystems strain, air thickens, and natural spaces shrink. While economic growth and technological

Progress and Preservation



advancements bring prosperity, they often come at a significant environmental cost. Yet a new version is emerging – one that doesn't promote development against the environment but dares to imagine a world where economic growth and sustainability go hand in hand. It envisions a future where progress is not based on the exploitation of resources, but striking a balance between development and environmental preservation, thus, facilitating both humanity and nature to thrive together.

Preserving the environment while achieving progress is not an impossible task-it requires a mindset shift and collective action. The past decade has seen unprecedented climate shifts, biodiversity loss, and environmental disasters. Scientists warn that without immediate intervention, rising temperatures, deforestation, and pollution will push our ecosystems to irreversible

tipping points. Adopting eco-friendly production methods reduce carbon footprints by making conscious choices, such as reducing plastic use, supporting sustainable brands, and advocating for green policies. To achieve a balance between development and environmental preservation, efforts are made at all levels to implement and enforce regulations on emissions, deforestation, and waste management, invest in research and development for sustainable innovations.

Environment Day was established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1972 during the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. The primary reason for launching World Environment Day was to raise awareness about environmental issues and encourage global action to protect the planet. The Stockholm Conference marked the beginning of international efforts to ad-

dress environmental challenges, leading to the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP),focusing on pressing environmental concerns like climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and sustainable living.

World Environment Day 2025, scheduled for June 5, 2025, will focus on the theme of “Ending Plastic Pollution.” This theme underscores the urgent need to address the global plastic pollution crisis, which has significant environmental and health impacts. Pollution is not limited to our planet's surface; it extends to outer space, oceans, and land. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated global efforts. Increasing amounts of space debris from defunct satellites and rocket stages pose a threat to active missions. Key Areas of Focus in 2025 are reforestation and afforestation as forests play a crucial role in carbon sequestration and maintain-

ing biodiversity; reducing plastic pollution because plastic waste, oil spills, and chemical runoff are devastating marine ecosystems and terrestrial ecosystems. Plastic emissions from industries, vehicles, and deforestation contribute to climate change and respiratory diseases. Industrial regulations are essential for mitigating air pollution. Stricter regulations for debris management are being developed. Plastic waste, oil spills, and chemical runoff are devastating marine ecosystems. Measures like improved waste treatment facilities, biodegradable materials, and global ocean cleanup projects are being prioritized. Land pollution through industrial waste, deforestation, and excessive pesticide use affects soil fertility and biodiversity. Sustainable agricultural practices, enhanced waste management, and eco-friendly industrial regulations are essential for tackling this issue. Efforts in 2025 focus on banning single-use plastics, promoting biodegradable alternatives, and encouraging circular economy models where waste is minimized.

Progress is not measured by how much we build, but by what we choose to protect while building it. When development walks hand-in-hand with nature, we don't just create a better world-we preserve it for generations yet to come. Balancing progress with environmental preservation is not just an ideal-it is a necessity. A future built on sustainable practices ensures that development does not come at the cost of ecological collapse.

India, Pakistan and global support

Post Operation Sindoor ceasefire, the Indian government decided to inform the world of the dastardly killing of innocent tourists in Pahalgam, resulting in India launching a military operation against Pakistan's terrorist camps. It also intended to convey New Delhi's new normal, policy of zero tolerance to terrorism, Pakistan's continued strategy of supporting terrorism as also defending its political decision of holding the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) in abeyance.

The government therefore nominated a total of 51 Members of Parliament (MPs), cutting across party lines, and former ambassadors, conveying national unity in purpose. These MPs were formed into seven teams, covering 33 countries, spread across all continents. The nations selected included all 15 current members of the UNSC, five countries which would become non-permanent members in the near future, five influential nations and those who have a strong voice across the world. The selection of countries was done in a manner aimed at offsetting Pakistan's advantage of being a non-permanent member of the UNSC till end December 2026. It could use this position to push its own anti-India narrative.

Islamabad had attempted to take advantage of its position by demanding a closed-door session of the UNSC, post Pahalgam, hoping to garner pressure on India, which failed, due to most permanent members backing India. Hence, by engaging those who are in the UNSC as also those entering the body shortly, this would be prevented. Inputs indicate that all delegations have been well received, their interactions held at appropriate levels and more importantly, they have interacted with their domestic media, thereby conveying India's viewpoint to the local public.

Post the Pahalgam attack, over 60 countries offered condolences to the Indian government, of which eight offered complete support in India's fight against terrorism. Some African and Asian nations, including Myanmar, Malaysia and Cambodia refrained from making any statement. Interestingly, Azerbaijan, a close ally of Pakistan also offered condolences. Initially there were no calls for dialogue with Pakistan. Subsequently, the US and China made this suggestion. However, none commented on India's decision to hold the IWT in abeyance. Almost no country named or blamed Pakistan directly, despite India insisting. This implied that India's ability to present Pakistan as a state sponsor of terrorism had some shortcomings over the years. It was possibly to also give this a boost that the delegation decision was undertaken and its leaders so selected.

To counter India's global outreach, Pakistan's PM, Shehbaz Sharief, accompanied by a high-powered delegation, including newly appointed Field Marshal Asim Munir embarked on a four-nation tour, as thanksgiving. The countries were Turkey, Iran, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan. Pakistan had support from Turkey, Azerbaijan and China during Operation Sindoor. Interestingly, India has an air force base at Farkhor in Tajikistan, which it operates alongside Tajikistan forces, an anathema to Pakistan.

In Ankara, Turkey, the two leaders discussed military cooperation and ‘fight against terrorism.’ This, while Turkey backs Hamas and Pakistan backs terrorist groups operating against India. Two terrorist backing nations discussing fighting terrorism is definitely a sign of terrorist unity. There is no global terrorist incident without some link to Pakistan. Shehbaz officially thanked Turkey for support in its ‘so-claimed’ victory. Was the visit also aimed at discussing failure of Turkish military products as also offering regret for loss of two Turkish UAV pilots’ lives is an added possibility.

India has already begun hitting back at Turkey for supporting Pakistan militarily. A report in The Week quotes Turkish media mentioning a day after Shehbaz visited Ankara, ‘Pakistan's resort to Turkish-made weapons and UAVs has led India to support Greece, Türkiye's geopolitical rival in the region.’ It adds that India has planned to invest in Greece's defence industries and ports. The visit of the Indian delegation to Greece reaffirmed the same. Turkish media also added, ‘The Turkish tourism sector has also been affected.’ There are mass Indian destination wedding cancellations. Turkish media has termed it as ‘India's revenge moves.’ This is in addition to India cancelling contracts with Turkish companies in airports, airlines and metro projects across the country.

Shehbaz also visited Tehran and attempted to raise India in talks. As per Iranian media, their President, Masoud Pezeshkian, only voiced Iran's support for a durable ceasefire and dialogue to end the conflict. The same happened in Tajikistan. Shehbaz had limited option but to offer talks with India, knowing it would be ignored. He mentioned, ‘We are ready to talk, for the sake of peace on water issues with our neighbour. We are ready to talk to promote trade and also, counter-terrorism. We wanted peace, we want peace and we will work for peace in the region.’ There has been no response from New Delhi. In Azerbaijan, Shehbaz Sharief conveyed his gratitude to the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, for his diplomatic support. There was no military support from Azerbaijan. Addressing the celebrations of Azerbaijan's Independence Day, Shehbaz once again claimed victory and offered talks with India.

All this while Baku has attempted to woo the Indian tourists by increasing direct flights from different parts of India. Meanwhile, Indian travel companies have reported mass cancelations of bookings for Azerbaijan. Baku also has its grudge with India. Armenia, its sworn enemy, is amongst the largest procurer of India's defence products, which will only increase with the success of Operation Sindoor.

Pakistan, copying India, has also nominated a delegation, comprising of ex-foreign ministers to cover US, UK and Brussels (where both NATO and EU have their headquarters). The delegation will attempt to defend their stance of not supporting terrorist groups while projecting Indian involvement in the rising freedom struggle in Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They will face questions on Indian accusations; proof presented by India and will have a difficult time justifying their actions. There is no way they can project victory in the recent conflict.

The approach of the two nations in projecting their viewpoints to gain global support is different. While India will insist Kashmir is non-negotiable, Pakistan will demand that it must be resolved through UNSC resolutions as it remains a flashpoint for future conflicts.Jammu and Kashmir real estate

What emerged from Shehbaz's offer for bilateral talks is that the Shimla agreement remains valid and nuclear threats have no meaning. At the end, nations will listen, while the dispute between India and Pakistan will continue to linger only to worsen when the next incident takes place.

India's diplomatic outreach following Operation Sindoor also underscored New Delhi's emphasis on shaping international opinion through sustained political engagement rather than relying solely on military success. By sending multi-party parliamentary delegations, the government sought to project national unity and reinforce its position that terrorism remains the central issue in India-Pakistan relations.

The outreach also highlighted India's growing confidence in leveraging its expanding global partnerships. Engagements with key capitals focused on counter-terrorism, regional security, and India's decision to place the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, while seeking greater understanding for its security concerns after the Pahalgam attack.

For Pakistan, the diplomatic challenge remains convincing the international community that it is committed to combating terrorism while simultaneously countering India's allegations. Islamabad's outreach has largely focused on friendly nations and traditional partners, but it continues to face scrutiny over the presence of terrorist groups operating from its territory.

The developments also reflect an evolving geopolitical contest in South Asia, where diplomacy, strategic partnerships, defence cooperation, and economic measures increasingly complement conventional military responses. Countries are weighing their responses carefully, balancing regional stability with their strategic interests in both India and Pakistan.

India's economy to grow by 6.3 pc in 2025, 6.4 pc in 2026 as global growth slows: OECD

New Delhi, July 5 (GNS): India continues to defy the global slowdown, the OECD's latest 'Economic Outlook' said on Tuesday, projecting the country's economy to grow by 6.3 per cent in 2025 and 6.4 per cent in 2026. Strong domestic demand, resilient services and manufacturing sectors, and ongoing infrastructure investments have been cited as key drivers for India's strong performance amid global uncertainties.

The report also cautioned that external risks — particularly from global trade frictions — could spill over into export-heavy segments.

China, on the other hand, is losing steam. Its growth is projected to moderate from 5.0 per cent in 2024 to 4.7 per cent in 2025 and 4.3 per cent in 2026. The Outlook projects global growth slowing from 3.3 per cent in 2024 to 2.9 per cent in both 2025 and 2026. "The slowdown is expected to be most



concentrated in the United States, Canada, Mexico and China, with smaller downward adjustments in other economies," it noted. GDP growth in the United States is projected to decline from 2.8 per cent in 2024 to 1.6 per cent in 2025 and 1.5 per cent in 2026. Inflationary pressures have resurfaced in some economies. Higher trade costs in countries raising tariffs are expected to push inflation up further,

although the impact will be partially offset by weaker commodity prices.

Annual headline inflation in the G20 economies is collectively expected to moderate from 6.2 per cent to 3.6 per cent in 2025 and 3.2 per cent in 2026. "The global economy has shifted from a period of resilient growth and declining inflation to a more uncertain path," OECD Secretary-General Mathias Cormann said in a

statement. "Governments need to engage with each other to address any issues in the global trading system positively and constructively through dialogue – keeping markets open and preserving the economic benefits of rules-based global trade for competition, innovation, productivity, efficiency and ultimately growth," Cormann emphasised.

On the upside, a reversal of new trade barriers would

boost global growth prospects and reduce inflation. A peaceful resolution to Russia's war against Ukraine and of ongoing conflicts in the Middle East could also improve confidence and incentives to invest. "Central banks should remain vigilant, given heightened uncertainty and the potential for initial increases in trade costs to push up wage and price pressures more generally," said the Outlook.

ICEA launches drive to boost tech and AI innovation

New Delhi, July 5 (GNS): The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA) on Tuesday announced a unique industry-wide initiative to collaboratively foster tech and AI innovation for the benefit of India's manufacturing sector. The programme will connect companies with transformative innovations across domains such as advanced manufacturing, AI, IoT, energy efficiency, materials science, and more. The ICEA launched Venture Access Labs -- a technology innovation access programme in collaboration with venture capital fund Caret Capital.

This initiative aims to empower India's electronics and appliances manufacturing companies by enabling them to discover, curate, and adopt cutting-edge technologies and innovations from across the world. "Through Venture Access Labs, ICEA is proud to champion and unlock global



innovation to strengthen India's position as a global hub for manufacturing and electronics with a vision to build Indian Champions," said Pankaj Mohindroo, Chairman, ICEA. "By opening the door to international technological advancements and building an innovation pipeline, we aim to accelerate India's electronics manufacturing capabilities and global competitiveness so as to capture a larger global market share," he added.

The comprehensive programme will cover several functions including procurement, planning, manufacturing, supply chain,

finance, HR, legal and ESG.

Through this programme, companies will benefit from innovation trend spotting, curated access to high-impact startups and Ips, strategic matchmaking and pilot opportunities, tailored adoption pathways for new technologies, and facilitated investments in strategically relevant, vetted high-potential startups. "It is time for the Indian electronics and appliances manufacturing to transit to tech first-led global leadership," said Salil Kapoor, Co-founder and Chief mentor of Venture Access Labs.

It will be the innovation catalyst and partner, scan-

NITI Aayog organises workshop to foster structured engagement with states



New Delhi, July 5 (GNS): The NITI Aayog organised a day's regional workshop to foster structured engagement with states. The workshop held under the State Support Mission (SSM) in Dehradun was organised by NITI Aayog in collaboration with the State Institute for Empowering and Transforming Uttarakhand (SETU) Aayog, which is under the Uttarakhand government.

It "is the first in a series under the Central Sector Scheme to foster structured engagement between NITI Aayog and States/UTs through State Institutions for Transformation (SITs)," NITI Aayog said. The event aimed to bring together States and

UTs to share their experience on SSM initiatives and learn from each other.

The inaugural session was attended by Dr. V.K. Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog; Raj Shekhar Joshi, Vice Chairperson, SETU Aayog; Anand Bardhan, Chief Secretary, Uttarakhand; Shatrughna Singh, CEO, SETU Aayog and senior officers from NITI Aayog. They emphasised the crucial role of SITs in the growth of states and steering the state visions.

The sessions focussed on the role of SITs in achieving state and national goals and the experts shared key insights on the structure of SITs, guiding principles, and priority areas, highlight-

ing their role in supporting State vision and aligning with national priorities to drive socio-economic transformation. It also featured rich peer-learning with interventions and presentations from senior officers and SIT/planning representatives from Punjab, Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Chandigarh, Madhya Pradesh on the status of their SITs, structure and composition, priority areas, etc. Further, the session on data-driven governance highlighted platforms like the NITI for states portal and Viksit Bharat Strategy Room at NITI Aayog for evidence-based decision-making.

India, UK strengthen ties with landmark trade deal

New Delhi, July 5 (GNS): Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy Pralhad Joshi on Tuesday highlighted that solar+storage in India is now cheaper than industrial electricity tariffs in most states, as these prices have been fixed for decades, citing a new study.

"This breakthrough is a game-changer for India's industrial competitiveness. It also stands as a testament to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi for achieving sustainable growth," the minister said in a statement on X.

India can now deliver round-the-clock electricity at under Rs 6/kWh, cheaper than coal-fired plants and insulated from inflation for 25 years, according to a study by the India Energy and Climate Center (IECC) at the University of California, Berkeley.

The study titled 'Plummeting Solar+Storage Auction Prices in India Unlock



Affordable, Inflation-Proof 24/7 Clean Power', states that battery storage costs in India have fallen by more than 50 per cent in the last 18 months. As a result, the combined cost of solar with storage is now lower than power from new coal-fired plants. Solar+storage in India is now cheaper than industrial electricity tariffs in most states -- and these prices would be locked in for decades," said Dr Nikit Abhyankar, author of the study and faculty member at the University of California. India's competitive

edge stems from low capital costs for solar installations -- nearly one-third of those in the US -- along with declining battery prices that now match those in China. "With battery pack prices now under \$60/kWh and total system costs rivaling those in China, India is replicating its solar success in storage," said Dr Amol Phadke, co-author of the study. The report also points out that India's industrial electricity tariffs have averaged nearly Rs 8/kWh in 2025, with costs expected to rise.

Tesla India leases Rs 25 cr service centre in Mumbai

New Delhi, July 5 (GNS): Tesla India Motor and Energy Private Ltd has leased a 24,500-square-foot space in Mumbai's Kurla West to set up a service centre, located close to its upcoming showroom in the Bandra Kurla Complex (BKC). This move marks a significant step in Tesla's plans to enter the Indian electric vehicle (EV) market, although the company does not currently intend to manufacture vehicles in the country.

According to real estate documents sourced by CRE Matrix, a property data analytics firm, Tesla has signed a lease and license agreement with Bellissimo in City FC Mumbai I Private to rent the space in Lodha Logistics Park. The agreement is for a five-year period, with a starting monthly rent of Rs 37.53 lakh. Over the duration of the lease, Tesla will pay nearly Rs 25 crore in total, including a security deposit of Rs 2.25 crore, as per the documents. Tesla has made it clear that

its current interest lies only in selling its vehicles in India, not in manufacturing them at the moment. "They are not interested in manufacturing in India," Union Heavy Industries Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy said. He added that Tesla is planning to open showrooms in India purely for sales. The minister was speaking at a press conference announcing that India's flagship EV policy is now open for global carmakers who wish to manufacture and sell EVs in the country. Major players such as Germany's Mercedes-Benz and Volkswagen, along with South Korea's Hyundai Motor, have already shown interest. All three companies currently have manufacturing operations in India.

Hyundai has announced its plans to make India its global hub for EVs. Volkswagen India, meanwhile, is closely watching how the EV policy unfolds and is carefully evaluating its implications before taking further steps.

First India-made Polar Research Vessel to be built at Kolkata, pact signed with Norway

Oslo, July 5 (GNS) Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited and Norway's Kongsberg signed an MoU here on Tuesday to pave the way for India to indigenously build its first-ever Polar Research Vessel (PRV).

The MoU marks an important milestone for India's shipbuilding sector as it will receive design expertise for developing the PRV, while taking into account the requirement of National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research (NCOPR), which will use it for research activities in the polar and southern ocean realms. Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE), with its experience in constructing complex maritime platforms like warships, survey & research vessels, will build this PRV in its yard in Kolkata, ensuring a boost the 'Make In India' initiative. India's Minister of Ports & Shipping, Sarbananda Sonowal, the leadership of



Kongsberg, as well as GRSE and senior government officials from Norway and India, were present at the event.

In his remarks on the occasion, Sonowal said: "Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this MoU is a commitment to fostering scientific discovery, advancing India's capabilities in polar and ocean research, and contributing to global efforts to address pressing challenges like climate change. The vessel will be equipped with the latest scientific equipment,

enabling our researchers to explore the oceans' depths, study marine ecosystems, and unlock new insights into our planet's past, present, and future." Sonowal also represented India at a high-level ministerial meeting on the 'Role of Shipping in Shaping the Future'. The meet emphasised the need of the industry to align towards a stable, long-term regulatory environment supporting an inclusive and decarbonised ocean-based trade. Ministers from Brazil, Japan, the US, China, and Norway

and UN officials were present at the meeting.

Addressing the meet, Sonowal said: "Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced India's vision of 'Growth for All', articulated as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region). The overarching aim of this vision leverages India's vast coastline, strategic location, and maritime heritage to drive economic prosperity, enhance regional security, and ensure sustainable development for all stakeholders. Upgrading from the SAGAR initiative, PM Modi has also announced MAHASAGAR — which is Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions, signalling further consolidation and an expanded approach to holistic maritime engagement & growth." Sonowal also invited Norwegian shipowners to invest in India's growing maritime sector during a roundtable with the Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA).

IMEC will transform global landscape, is pivotal to 'Viksit Bharat 2047' vision: Experts

New Delhi, July 5 (GNS): The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) could be a "game-changer" in India's push towards strong and rapid economic growth, top economic and geopolitical experts reckoned on Wednesday during a day-long conference organised by Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) on the project which has huge implications to the country's growth and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of 'Viksit Bharat @2047' to transform the nation into a developed entity by the centenary of its independence in 2047.

The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), a trans-continental connectivity project which promises to transform the lives of people across continents, was announced at the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Delhi in September 2023. It is a bold vision to connect India with Europe across the Arabian Peninsula and envisions a multi-modal



economic corridor involving multiple businesses, integrating railways, ports, highways, energy networks, and digital infrastructure to enhance trade, investment, and connectivity across the continents. "From a strategic point of view, IMEC is critical to India. With its friendly relations and fast economic growth, India can be the glue and anchor for this key project," said Dam-

mu Ravi, Economic Relations Secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), while delivering the keynote address at the CRF conference titled 'IMEC: Connecting Continents, Unlocking Opportunities'.

The event brought together experts from the governments, academia, industry and private businesses across the globe to discuss various aspects of IMEC - in-

cluding its potential, promises, weaknesses, threats and ways and means to get the ambitious project off the ground. While acknowledging challenges in implementing a project of this scale which has an estimated cost outlay of over US\$ 600 Billion over a 10-year period, most analysts opined that the potential benefits of this project outweighs the costs and obstacles.

Hyderabad to Get 1 Lakh Indiramma Houses: Ponnam Prabhakar



Hyderabad, July 5 (GNS) State Minister for Transport and BC Welfare, Ponnam Prabhakar, stated that the state government's objective is to provide dignified, permanent housing to eligible, impoverished families. He clarified that the government is proceeding systematically to construct and provide houses within the same localities for the poor who are engaged in various professions across Hyderabad city.

On Sunday, at the Hyderabad District Collectorate conference hall, he distributed 2BHK housing allotment letters alongside the Minister for Minorities Welfare and Public Sector Undertakings, Mohammed Azharuddin; Government Whip Addanki Dayakar; MLAs Akbaruddin Owaisi and Majid Hussain; and District Collector Dr. Priyanka Ala. Speaking on the occasion, Minister Ponnam Prabhakar

acknowledged the hardships faced by beneficiaries who had been waiting for housing over the past decade and expressed regret for the delay on behalf of the government. He affirmed that the government is committed to ensuring that no such delays occur in the future regarding the implementation of welfare schemes for the eligible poor. Extending congratulations to every family receiving a home, the occasion was described as a historic moment where the long-cherished dream of poor families has finally come true.

It was stated that under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, the government formulated its housing policy with the livelihoods of the poor in mind. A decision was revealed to utilize valuable government land to construct and provide homes for the poor in the very areas where they

work and earn their living, rather than in locations far removed from their workplaces. The government has initiated an action plan with the target of constructing one lakh 'Indiramma' houses in the Hyderabad metropolitan area. Furthermore, it was noted that ration cards have been issued to every eligible family, and the government is implementing a system to issue ration cards within 48 hours of an eligible person applying. The government is effectively implementing welfare programs such as the distribution of high-quality fine rice alongside ration cards and the provision of 200 units of free electricity to eligible families.

Highlighting the govt's high priority on women's economic empowerment, a call was made to significantly expand the membership of women's self-help groups in Hyderabad.

Kishan Reddy accuses TG Govt of shielding MIM, demands uniform enforcement of law

Hyderabad, Jul 5 (GNS) union Coal and Mines Minister G Kishan Reddy on Sunday accused the Congress government in Telangana of practising "selective governance" to protect the AIMIM, alleging that it was sacrificing the interests of ordinary citizens for political reasons.

In a post on social media platform X, Kishan Reddy questioned whether the state government was acting out of "fear of the MIM, love for the MIM, or both."

He alleged that the Revanth Reddy government, driven by land and real estate interests, had turned HYDRAA into a symbol of



selective enforcement by acting swiftly against common people while remaining silent over allegations concerning the Barrister Fatima Owaisi Educational Campus, which, he claimed, was located in the Full Tank Level (FTL) and buffer zone of Salkam Cheruvu.

The union Minister further alleged that despite repeated observations by the Telangana High Court and requests for records from HYDRAA and other departments, the state government had failed to take action in the matter. Kishan Reddy claimed that the Congress government was treating the AIMIM as the representative of all Muslims, while poor Muslims had also been affected by HYDRAA's demolition drives without receiving support from either the Congress or the AIMIM. He alleged that both parties were protecting political interests rather than the community.

CM Revanth Reddy urges centre to fast-track Hyderabad metro takeover process

Hyderabad, July 5 (GNS) Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Sunday urged Union Housing and Urban Affairs Minister Manohar Lal to entrust SBI CAPS at the earliest with the assignment of valuing and financially examining Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase I for facilitating its takeover by the state government and examining the financial structure for Phase II. In a letter to the Union Minister, the Chief Minister stated that the prolonged process for takeover of Phase I is creating operational uncertainty and day-to-day challenges for the project.

"At the same time, the delay is also affecting the sanc-



tion of the Phase II DPRs and the tying up of suitable funding arrangements. This is postponing project implementation and is likely to increase the cost of Phase-II due to avoidable time overrun and escalation," he said in the letter.

The Chief Minister drew Manohar Lal's attention to discussions held with him in the presence of Railways

Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and Minister for Coal and Mines G. Kishan Reddy in Delhi on June 24 regarding approval of Hyderabad Metro Rail Phase II and the takeover of Phase I by the state government.

The Chief Minister mentioned that during the meeting, it was agreed that SBI Capital Markets Limited (SBI CAPS) would be en-

Bhatti asks Congress cadre to ensure no eligible voter is left out during SIR

Hyderabad, July 5 (GNS) Telangana Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka on Sunday directed Congress leaders of the Secunderabad Parliamentary constituency to conduct the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls meticulously and ensure that no eligible voter is left out. Addressing a meeting of party leaders at Praja Bhavan, Bhatti asked booth-level leaders and BLAs to closely monitor voter lists and rectify errors such as unmappped names, spelling mistakes and surname changes.

He also urged party workers to take the Congress



government's six guarantees and welfare initiatives to every household and convert public goodwill into electoral support.

Highlighting key schemes, he referred to free bus travel for women, 200 units of free electricity, 6

kg of fine rice per person, Aarogyasri health cover up to Rs 10 lakh, fee reimbursement, the proposed Indiramma Life Insurance Scheme for 1.15 crore families and Hyderabad's Rs 40,000-crore infrastructure projects. Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar and Azharuddin expressed concern over the large number of "unmapped" voters and urged party workers to coordinate with BLAs and BLOs to rectify discrepancies and prevent deletion of eligible voters' names. The meeting was attended by MPs, MLAs and other Congress leaders from the Secunderabad Parliamentary constituency.

Mallu Ravi to felicitate Jnana Chaitanya Yatra volunteers

Hyderabad, July 5 (GNS) Nagarkurnool Member of Parliament Mallu Ravi on Sunday announced that volunteers who successfully conducted the month-long Jnana Chaitanya Yatra across the Nagarkurnool Parliamentary constituency would be honoured for their dedicated service.

In a statement, the MP said the yatra began on June 2 at Mysigandi in Kadthal mandal and concluded on July 2 at Jogulamba in Alampur mandal, covering all seven Assembly constituencies, 46 mandals, and nearly 1,000 villages in the con-

stituency. He said the campaign was organised to create awareness about the lives, ideals, and contributions of social reformers and national leaders, including B R Ambedkar, Babu Jagjivan Ram, Jyotirao Phule, Savitribai Phule, Suravaram Pratap Reddy, A P J Abdul Kalam, Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, and Rajiv Gandhi.

Mallu Ravi said the volunteers also spread awareness among Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, minorities, and Economically Weaker Sections about the contributions of these leaders.

CPI(M) Seeks Voter Survey Deadline Extension

Hyderabad, Jul 5 (GNS) The CPI(M) Telangana State Committee on Sunday urged the Election Commission to extend the ongoing voter enumeration process in the state until August 30, citing delays, confusion, and inadequate public awareness.

In a statement, CPI(M) State Secretary John Wesley said enumeration forms had reached less than 30 per cent of voters, leaving a majority of eligible voters yet to receive them. He said agricultural activities in rural areas had also made it difficult for people to complete the pro-

cess within the stipulated time. Alleging that there was a lack of clarity among voters regarding the enumeration process and complaints that some Booth Level Officers (BLOs) had not fully commenced their duties, Wesley said people needed more time to submit their details. The CPI(M) leader urged the Election Commission to launch extensive awareness campaigns at the village level to clear misconceptions, simplify the process, and ensure that all eligible voters are able to register their details.

Hyderabad, Cyberabad police book 502 drunk drivers in special enforcement drive

Hyderabad, Jul 5 (GNS) Hyderabad and Cyberabad Traffic Police booked a total of 502 motorists for drunken driving during special enforcement drives conducted over the weekend as part of intensified efforts to improve road safety.

Hyderabad Traffic Police, during a two-day drive on July 3 and 4, caught 312 motorists driving under the influence of alcohol. The offenders included 245 two-wheeler riders, 35 three-wheeler drivers, and 32 four-wheeler drivers. Eleven motorists recorded



blood alcohol concentration (BAC) levels above 300 mg/100 ml. In a separate weekend drive, Cyberabad Traffic Police apprehended 190 drunk drivers, comprising 154 two-wheeler riders, two three-wheeler drivers and 34 four-wheeler drivers. Of them, 32 recorded BAC levels above 200 mg/100

ml. All the offenders will be produced before the court.

Cyberabad Police warned that motorists causing fatal accidents while driving under the influence of alcohol would be booked under Section 105 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, which carries a maximum punishment of 10 years' imprisonment along with a fine.

Meanwhile, Cyberabad Traffic Police said that during the week from June 29 to July 4, courts disposed of 376 drunken driving cases, awarding jail and fine to 10 offenders.

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Mahila Congress to launch nationwide agitation against Centre from July 20: Alka Lamba

Hyderabad, July 5 (GNS) All India Mahila Congress President Alka Lamba on Sunday announced that the Mahila Congress would launch a nationwide agitation against the BJP-led Central government from July 20 to August, accusing it of being "anti-women" and demanding the immediate implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill with provisions for OBCs.

Addressing a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan here, Lamba said the Mahila Congress had conducted meetings across 19 districts of Telangana over the past three months and claimed that women were satisfied with the Congress government's performance in the



state. She thanked the Telangana government for its initiatives aimed at women's empowerment.

She said more than 1.16 lakh women leaders had enrolled as Mahila Congress members and announced that two-day training programmes for women leaders would be organised in September.

Lamba said a massive pro-

test would be held in New Delhi on July 25 against the Central government. She demanded the immediate implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan (33 per cent Women's Reservation) Bill and insisted that the legislation should include reservation for OBC women.

Launching a broadside against the BJP, she alleged that the Centre had failed to

ensure women's safety and accused BJP leaders of being involved in crimes against women and children. She also alleged that repeated examination paper leaks had jeopardised the future of students and held union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan responsible.

The Mahila Congress leader further accused Defence Minister Rajnath Singh of misleading Parliament on "Operation Sindhur" and questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's silence over the alleged theft at the Ayodhya Ram Mandir. She also alleged that the BJP government was indulging in "donation theft" and "vote theft."

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