

NATION CELEBRATES INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA



(Clockwise from top left) Indian Army personnel perform Yoga at the world's highest battlefield Siachen; President Droupadi Murmu in Dehradun; Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Gorakhpur; participants at Victoria Memorial in Kolkata; actor Mohan Lal in Kochi; at the Gateway of India in Mumbai. PTI, Vishal Srivastav, Partha Paul, Akash Patil

Will approach top court if Statehood restoration is delayed, says NC chief

Ruling party presses for more power to the elected government in J&K, which has completed eight months in power; it also highlights the absence of Business Rules in the Union Territory

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The elected government in Jammu and Kashmir having already completed eight months in power, the top leadership of the ruling National Conference (NC) is cranking up the volume on the absence of Business Rules in the Union Territory (UT) and doubling down on the demand of restoration of Statehood.

“We are waiting for Statehood. If there are delays, we will have no option but to go to the Supreme Court. I am hopeful that when Statehood is restored, we will get (more) powers,” NC president Farooq Abdullah said on Saturday.

The apex court in December 2023, while directing the Election Commission to hold the Assembly election, observed that in view of the Centre’s submission, Statehood to J&K “shall be restored as soon as possible”.



CM Omar Abdullah and National Conference chief Farooq Abdullah at the party’s Working Committee meeting in May. FILE PHOTO

Dr. Abdullah’s remarks came a day after Chief Minister Omar Abdullah also highlighted the demand, saying “he was still waiting for the Prime Minister to fulfil his promise”.

‘Deeply troubling’

With more than three months since the J&K Cabinet forwarded the draft Business Rules to Raj Bhawan for approval and not receiving the mandatory concurrence yet, NC provincial president Rattan Lal Gupta said on Saturday that “the continued interference by the office of L-G (Lieutenant-Governor) in

the functioning of the democratically elected government is undemocratic, unconstitutional, and deeply troubling for the people of J&K”.

The NC government took more than four months to frame these rules, necessitated under the J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019, which will demarcate the functioning, powers and responsibilities of the CM, Cabinet, Ministers, and Administrative Secretaries.

“Although the Home Department, including law and order, remains under the exclusive control of the

L-G, yet the L-G Office continues to meddle in day-to-day governance, creating a dual power structure that is causing institutional confusion and administrative chaos. The will of the people cannot be held hostage to bureaucratic overreach,” Mr. Gupta said.

The Chief Minister has also been consistently highlighting his unease with the current power arrangement in the UT. On Friday, he had publicly broached the issue, saying L-G Manoj Sinha should “sign the Business Rules approved by the Cabinet so that there is no confusion”. “As the L-G’s responsibility is security in J&K, the rest of powers are with the government,” he pointed out.

In the UT, the matters related to law and order, public order, and All India Services, remain with the L-G. The Business Rules also define procedures to be followed in case of a disagreement between the L-G and a Minister or the Council of Ministers.

India set to integrate rare-blood donor registry with e-Rakt Kosh

The integration will allow those with rare blood groups to access a centralised system; the challenge is to ensure that the country has a steady, motivated group of donors who stay connected to the blood banks, says the Director of ICMR-NIIH

Bindu Shajan Perappadan
CHANDRAPUR (MAHARASHTRA)

In what would be a life, time and cost saving move for people with rare blood groups in India, the Union Health Ministry is looking at integrating the national Rare Donor Registry with the national online platform for blood bank management and blood availability information, e-Rakt Kosh.

The integration will allow those with rare blood groups to access a centralised system developed under the National Health Mission (NHS), providing details of blood banks, blood availability, and blood donation camps across the country. Essentially, it will help people find blood and blood banks, and assist blood banks manage their stock and donors.

“The Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Immunohaematology (ICMR-NIIH), along with four partnering institutes, created a database of 4,000 carefully screened donors tested for over 300 rare blood mark-



This system is useful as the registry includes ultra-rare types such as Bombay, P-Null and Rh-null. K. BHAGYA PRAKASH

ers. It helps doctors find rare and specially matched blood quickly. Rare Donor Registry of India (RDRI) platform has been developed to help patients across India,” said Manisha R. Madkaikar, Director, ICMR-NIIH, and Centre for Research, Management and Control of Hemoglobinopathies (CRMCH).

More access

She said the integration project would be taken up

soon and offer more access and support to those with rare blood groups.

“The challenge is to ensure that we have a steady, motivated group of donors who stay connected to the blood banks,” she said.

Explaining how this registry for rare blood group helps, Dr. Madkaikar said that this system helped find rare matches as the registry included ultra-rare types such as the Bombay blood group, P-Null, and

Rh-null blood group. It also helps ensure safer transfusions where matches are available for patients missing multiple antigens (common in thalassemia and sickle cell) to prevent complications.

“The group has also developed a special blood screening kit tailored for Indian patients and it uses DNA test (multiplex PCR) to quickly identify rare blood types,” Dr. Madkaikar said.

She added that in the past, this registry has transformed nearly impossible searches into life-saving solutions, and with its integration and reach, India could work towards ensuring that no life is lost due to lack of blood.

Working the area of effectively managing hemoglobinopathies, the ICMR-NIIH has developed a point-of-care test to detect life-threatening blood related genetic disorders.

“The Health Technology Assessments (HTA) led by Department of Health Research (DHR) and ICMR-CRMCH and NIIH helped cut the cost of sickle cell diagnostic kits from ₹350

to under ₹50 per test, saving the government nearly ₹1,857 crore,” said a note issued by the ICMR-CRMCH.

“India has developed testing for Haemophilia A and Von Willebrand Disease and now World Federation for Hemophilia has shown interest in procuring these tests for deployment in countries where the disease is prevalent. For India this new rapid, visual card testing device has made testing possible even at primary health centers,” Dr. Madkaikar said.

This upgraded testing is cheaper than what is currently available.

India has about 1.4 lakh haemophilia patients which is the second highest globally after Brazil. Haemophilia is a rare genetic disorder where the blood doesn't clot properly due to a deficiency in clotting factors.

The technology for the POC test for these conditions was transferred to the Bengaluru-based biotechnology firm Bhat Biotech which commercialised it under the brand name Bio-Scan in August 2023.

DGCA orders action against 3 AI officials over 'systemic failures' in managing pilots

Jagriti Chandra

NEW DELHI

The Directorate-General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has ordered Air India to remove three officials – a top executive in the flight operations department among them – from their duties, citing “systemic failures” and “multiple violations” related to the validity of pilot licences and their rest requirements, according to multiple sources.

A directive issued on Friday, a copy of which has been reviewed by *The Hindu*, states that internal disciplinary proceedings must be initiated against the officials without delay and any future violation could result in penalties including withdrawal of the airline’s permit to fly.

There was no official confirmation on the directive from the DGCA, but



The order comes during heightened scrutiny of Air India following the crash of its flight AI-171 in Ahmedabad last week. REUTERS

the airline said in a statement that it has “implemented” such an order.

The order comes during heightened scrutiny of Air India following last week’s crash in Ahmedabad.

The specific lapses mentioned in the order pertain to the licensing requirements of flight crew, their rest hours, and recency requirements, which is the experience a pilot must have within a specific time-

frame in operating an aircraft safely and legally, including a specific number of takeoffs and landings.

“Of particular concern is the absence of strict disciplinary measures against key officials directly responsible for these lapses,” the directive states.

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No decision yet on hangar facility for British F-35 jet

Dhinesh Kallungal

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Even as the F-35 fighter jet of the United Kingdom government remained grounded at Thiruvananthapuram International Airport for over a week, there is no clarity on when the fighter jet will depart or when its “technical glitches” will be fixed.

Interestingly, details of the fifth-generation stealth fighter jet, including the circumstances that led to the emergency landing on the night of June 14, its prolonged stay in Thiruvananthapuram, and the nature of glitches it arguably developed during emergency landing, are protected and not disclosed by any of the agencies.

Again interestingly, the Indian Air Force (IAF), which facilitated the emergency landing of the air-



Standing vigil: A CISF constable guarding the British F-35 fighter jet at the Thiruvananthapuram International Airport. PTI/CISFHQRS

craft for flight safety reasons and has been providing all necessary support for the rectification and subsequent return of the aircraft, has been maintaining that the combat jet was of the Royal Navy.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), which provided the security cover for the jet soon after the emergency landing, was terming it a Royal Navy

fighter jet. However, it turns out that the fighter belongs to the Royal Air Force of the United Kingdom.

A discussion was under way to make use of the hangar facility at the airport. However, a final decision would be taken only after the arrival of an expert team from the U.K. and their subsequent inspection of the aircraft, said sources.

‘Bangladesh polls cannot be held without govt.’s support’

Press Trust of India

DHAKA

The government plays a central role in the election process, the head of Bangladesh’s Election Commission said on Saturday, asserting that holding polls is “not possible” without its support.

Chief Election Commissioner AMM Nasir Uddin said that no matter “how independent” the top election body is said to be, “it is not possible to hold an election without the government’s support.”

He added that the commission requires assistance from law enforcement agencies, the administration, and its officials to conduct the election.

Mr. Nasir Uddin made the remarks after inaugu-



Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus had announced that the national election will be held in the first half of April next year. REUTERS

rating a training programme in the capital.

In response to a question, he said while there is no constant communication between the election commission and the government, contact is being maintained both “formally and informally”.

Talking about the timeline of the polls, he said, “We’ll announce the schedule in due time and you’ll

know the date then.”
“You’ll learn everything when the time comes... We do have an operational plan – though I would not call it a roadmap,” he said, responding to another question.

Earlier this month, Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus announced that the national election will be held in the first half of April next year.

Pakistan nominates Trump for 2026 Nobel Peace Prize

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

The Pakistan government on Saturday said it has decided to formally recommend U.S. President Donald Trump for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize for his “decisive diplomatic intervention” during the recent India-Pakistan conflict.

The announcement came three days after Mr. Trump hosted Pakistan Army chief Asim Munir at the White House.

The announcement came in a post on X. “The Government of Pakistan has decided to formally recommend President Donald J Trump for the 2026 Nobel Peace Prize, in recognition of his decisive diplomatic intervention and pivotal leadership during the recent India-Pakistan crisis,” the post said.

Tensions between India and Pakistan escalated after the April 22 Pahalgam

The announcement came three days after Trump hosted Pakistan Army chief at the White House

terror attack, with India carrying out precision strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir on May 7. The on-ground hostilities from the Indian and Pakistan sides that lasted for four days ended with an understanding of stopping the military actions following talks between the directors general of military operations of both sides on May 10.

Pak. praises Trump

Mr. Trump has been persistently claiming that he stopped a war between India and Pakistan. New Delhi has been maintaining that India’s fierce counter-attack forced Pakistan to

plead for ending the hostilities.

Pakistan’s post on X said that “at a moment of heightened regional turbulence”, President Trump “demonstrated great strategic foresight and stellar statesmanship through robust diplomatic engagement”.

It further stated that the U.S. President “de-escalated a rapidly deteriorating situation, ultimately securing a ceasefire and averting a broader conflict between the two nuclear states that would have had catastrophic consequences for millions of people in the region and beyond”. “This intervention stands as a testament to his [Trump’s] role as a genuine peacemaker and his commitment to conflict resolution through dialogue,” it read.

It also acknowledged Mr. Trump’s “sincere offers” to help resolve the issue of Jammu and Kashmir.

Killed 3 Iranian commanders in latest wave of strikes: Israel

Israel's strike in Qom, south of Tehran, targeted top Iranian official in charge of coordination with Hamas; not prepared to negotiate with U.S. as long as aggression continues, says Iranian Foreign Minister; Trump unlikely to ask Israel to halt attacks

Agence France-Presse

JERUSALEM

Israel said on Saturday it had killed three more Iranian commanders in its unprecedented bombing campaign against the Islamic Republic, which Foreign Minister Gideon Saar claimed had delayed Tehran's alleged progress towards a nuclear weapon by two years.

Israel's military said a strike in Qom south of Tehran successfully targeted top Iranian official Saeed Izadi, in charge of coordination with Palestinian militant group Hamas, adding two other commanders



Conflict's toll: Mourners carry the coffins of Iranian Revolutionary Guards killed in Israeli strikes, in Qom on Friday. REUTERS

from Iran's Revolutionary Guards were also killed overnight.

As Israel continued to strike Iran's nuclear facilities and military targets, Mr. Saar said in an inter-

view that by his country's own assessment, it had "already delayed for at least two or three years the possibility for them to have a nuclear bomb".

"We will do everything

that we can do there in order to remove this threat," Mr. Saar told German newspaper *Bild*, asserting Israel's onslaught would continue.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi arrived in Istanbul on Saturday for a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to discuss the conflict.

Call for dialogue

Top diplomats from Britain, France and Germany met Mr. Araghchi in Geneva on Friday, and urged him to resume talks with the United States.

But Mr. Araghchi told *NBC News* that "we are not

prepared to negotiate with them [the United States] anymore, as long as the aggression continues".

Mr. Trump, dismissive of European diplomatic efforts, also said he was unlikely to ask Israel to stop its attacks to get Iran back to the table. "If somebody's winning, it's a little bit harder to do," he said.

Meanwhile, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Saturday accused Israel of leading West Asia towards "total disaster" by attacking Iran on June 13.

"There is no Palestinian, Lebanese, Syrian, Yemeni or Iranian problem, but there is clearly an Israeli problem," he said.

B-2 bombers moving to Guam amid tensions, say US officials

REUTERS

WASHINGTON, JUNE 21

THE UNITED States is moving B-2 bombers to the Pacific island of Guam, two US officials told Reuters on Saturday, as President Donald Trump weighs whether the United States should take part in Israel's strikes against Iran.

It was unclear whether the bomber deployment is tied to Middle East tensions.

The B-2 can be equipped to carry America's 30,000-pound GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator, designed to destroy targets deep underground. That is the weapon that experts say could be used to strike Iran's nuclear program, including Fordow.

The officials, speaking on the



A B-2 Spirit bomber takes off from Andersen Air Force Base. *Reuters*

condition of anonymity, declined to disclose any further details. One official said no forward orders had been given yet to move

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For deep targets

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the bombers beyond Guam.

The Pentagon did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

I am demanding: Iran must never acquire nuclear weapons, and it is up to it to provide every assurance that its intentions are peaceful. I am convinced that there is a way out of the war and to avoid greater dangers.

Emmanuel Macron,
FRENCH PRESIDENT

The Iranian Foreign Minister has expressed his willingness to continue discussions on the nuclear programme and more broadly on all issues, and we expect Iran to commit to the discussion, including with the United States, to reach a negotiated settlement.

Jean-Noel Barrot,
FRENCH FOREIGN MINISTER

SBI'S FOSSIL FUEL FINANCING EDGED UP BY \$65 MN LAST YEAR: REPORT

World's biggest banks increased fossil fuel financing by \$162 billion in 2024

SIDDHARTH UPASANI

NEW DELHI, JUNE 21

THE WORLD'S largest 65 banks committed \$869 billion in 2024 to companies in the fossil fuels sector, up from \$707 billion in 2023, with the State Bank of India (SBI) being one of nearly 50 large banks that increased their financing for the same compared to the previous year.

"This growth in fossil fuel finance is troubling because new fossil fuel infrastructure locks in more decades of fossil fuel dependence. As the IEA's (International Energy Agency) 2024 Energy Investment Outlook report states, '(a)chieving net zero emissions globally by 2050 would mean annual investment in oil, gas, and coal falls by more than half' by 2030," said the *Fossil Fuel Finance Report 2025* by a group of eight environmental organisations.

To be sure, SBI accounted for only a fraction of the total fossil fuel financing in 2024 and only saw a small increase last year compared to other lenders. As per the report, SBI was the only Indian bank in the top 65 with a \$65 million increase in fossil fuel financing in 2024 from 2023 to \$2.62 billion, putting it at the 47th spot out of the 65 banks, up from 49 in 2023.

In comparison, JPMorgan Chase retained its top spot in the

TOP 5 BANKS WITH FOSSIL FUEL FINANCING COMMITMENTS

Bank	2024 Financing	Bank	2021-24 Financing
JPMorgan Chase	\$53.5 bn	JPMorgan Chase	\$192.3 bn
Bank of America	\$46 bn	Citigroup	\$160.7 bn
Citigroup	\$44.7 bn	Bank of America	\$158.9 bn
Mizuho Financial	\$40.3 bn	Mitsubishi UFJ Fin	\$155.3 bn
Wells Fargo	\$39.3 bn	Mizuho Financial	\$150.9 bn

Source: *Fossil Fuel Finance Report 2025*

list as it gave \$53.5 billion to fossil fuel companies last year, \$15 billion more than it did in 2023. This is more than SBI's total fossil fuel financing of \$10.6 billion from 2021 to 2024.

Earlier this year in February, SBI Chairman CS Setty said the bank is targeting to be net zero in terms of emissions by 2055. Before that, the bank is aiming to have at least 75 per cent of its domestic gross advances to be green advances by 2030. As at the end of the quarter ended March, SBI's domestic advances stood at Rs 36.02 lakh crore. It had sanctioned a combined fund and non-fund-based limit of Rs 20,558 crore for sustainable finance activities.

According to Bengaluru-based think-tank Climate Risk Horizons, coal financing is a "huge blind spot" for Indian banks. "Among the top 1000 BSE-listed banks as of March

2024, only Federal Bank and RBL Bank have adopted explicit coal exclusion or phase-out policies... The economics are clear: coal is no longer the cheap energy source it once was. Renewable energy and storage can now provide electricity at or below the cost of coal, with continued cost declines likely," the think-tank's analysts said in a post in March 2025 warning that Indian banks were falling behind in the sustainable finance race.

Hottest year

The report found that fossil fuel financing by the world's largest banks rose in 2024 after declining in 2023 came amid watering down of exclusion policies and policy rollbacks. "...what was once largely a North American trend is now going global. European banks—often seen as more progressive on climate due to the quality of their

EXPLAINED

SBI targets net zero, green advances

IN FEBRUARY this year, SBI Chairman CS Setty said the bank is targeting to be net zero in terms of emissions by 2055. Before that, SBI aims to have at least 75% of its domestic gross advances to be green advances by 2030

sector policies—also began backtracking," it said.

In March, American lender Wells Fargo scrapped plans to become net zero by 2050, weeks after US President Donald Trump signed an executive order announcing the country's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

The US' withdrawal—which will take effect in early 2026 and see the world's largest economy join Iran, Libya, and Yemen as those not party to the Paris Agreement—has been part of a series of steps taken by the Trump administration to promote fossil fuels even in the face of 2024 being the hottest year ever recorded.

In January, the US Treasury Department withdrew its membership of the Network of Central Banks and Supervisors for Greening the Financial

System—a voluntary global coalition that looks to mobilise green finance and develop recommendations for climate-risk management in the financial sector—as part of the aforementioned executive order signed by Trump. And ahead of Trump's inauguration, the US' six largest banks left the UN-sponsored Net Zero Banking Alliance.

A committee of the US Senate also approved draft legislation this week that would hit key tax incentives for clean energy.

Trend reversal

The increase in fossil fuel financing by banks in 2024 marked a reversal of decreasing lending to the segment. While nearly \$3.3 trillion has been made available to fossil fuel businesses since 2021, the 65 banks in the 2025 report have committed \$7.9 trillion in fossil fuel financing since the Paris Agreement came into force in 2016.

In 2024, financing for acquisitions increased by \$19.2 billion to \$82.9 billion. While mergers and acquisitions don't directly create new infrastructure, "this consolidation—for which bank financing is critical—is often an attempt to grow the power and competitiveness of fossil fuel companies, at a time when the world actually needs to phase out fossil fuels", the report said.

Advance tax collections rise a tepid 4% during first quarter

The lower growth of advance tax mop-up was attributed to a decline in collection from non-corporate taxpayers; net direct tax collections slide on higher refunds

Shishir Sinha
NEW DELHI

The first instalment of advance tax collection under direct taxes recorded a modest growth of 4% in FY26 compared with a robust growth of over 27% in April-June of FY25, data from the Income Tax Department showed.

With the slowdown in the advance tax, net direct tax collection dipped by over 1.3%. The Department attributed the drop to higher refunds.

“Refunds have increased by 58.04% (as on June 19) compared with the corresponding period of last year, reflecting better taxpayer services and quicker issuance of refunds,” it said.

The lower growth of advance tax mop-up was at-



Taxing times: Tax mop-up spotlights macro trends posing challenges to earnings growth of taxpayers. GETTY IMAGES/ISTOCK

tributed to a decline in collection from non-corporate taxpayers.

As of June 19, this segment contributed about ₹34,000 crore compared with ₹35,000 crore during the corresponding period of the last fiscal.

However, during the same period, collection from corporate tax increased to about ₹1.22-lakh crore from ₹1.15-lakh crore.

Samir Kanabar, tax partner, EY India, attributed the marginal dip in net tax mop-up to revised tax slabs and reduced personal tax rates that came into effect from April 1, 2025.

Rising capex

“On the corporate front, we’re seeing the impact of increased capital expenditure by businesses. As companies invest in expan-

sion and infrastructure, they benefit from higher depreciation claims, which temporarily lower taxable profits. This is a healthy sign of forward-looking investment behaviour,” he said. A higher volume of corporate tax refunds seems to have been processed in Q1, supporting liquidity across sectors.

Sumit Singhania, Partner at Deloitte India, said tax collection for the recent quarter, while subdued, spotlights emerging macro trends posing challenges to earnings growth for corporates and non-corporate taxpayers for the financial year. Also, as several geopolitical events play out over the next few months, their impact will come to bear on the forecast for the rest of the year, too.

(The writer is with The Hindu businessline)