

## AGNIPATH SCHEME

# Armed Forces seek larger retention of Agniveers after end of 4-yr tenure

Navy likely to seek 75% retention, Army and IAF up to 50%; current retention for each arm is 25%

**Amrita Nayak Dutta**  
New Delhi, July 5

THE ARMED Forces are seeking an increase in the percentage of Agniveers who can be retained in the services after completing their four-year tenure, even as the overall percentage agreed upon remains 25 per cent for each of the three services at present.

Agniveers recruited under



The initial batches of Agniveers recruited under the Agnipath scheme will complete their 4-year tenure with the services later this year. PTI FILE

the Agnipath scheme began their training in early 2023. The initial batches of Agniveers will complete their four-year tenure with the services later this year.

All of them would initially

be released from the services, and the selected number of Agniveers who volunteer to serve in the defence forces would be enrolled back as regular

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

## Behind the move: More experienced manpower, training on new platforms

**Amrita Nayak Dutta**  
New Delhi, July 5

THE KEY reason why the Armed Forces are seeking an increase in the percentage of Agniveers who can be retained after completion of their four-year tenure is the need for a bigger pool of experienced troops in the services, particularly in the event of a conflict.

This, people familiar with the matter told *The Indian Express*, was among the lessons learnt from Operation Sindoor

last year.

While the Agniveers performed extremely well in operations, there were instances when experience gained across various field tenures and multiple training exercises came in handy, in terms of faster and more effective reactions in operational situations.

With a constant number of soldiers retiring every year, a lower retention of Agniveers might lead to a shortfall of manpower in the

»CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



# Agniveer retention

soldiers based on merit.

It has been learnt that the Navy will likely seek a higher retention percentage of sailors who joined under the scheme at around 75 per cent, while the Army and the IAF might seek an increase to around 50 per cent from the current 25 per cent.

The defence forces have maintained so far that the retention percentage remains at 25 per cent at present.

*The Indian Express* sent queries to the Army, Navy and IAF on July 1 on whether they are seeking to retain a greater percentage of Agniveers in the three services and the reasons for that, but is yet to receive any response.

The need for more retention has been felt keeping in view the requirement of a larger pool of trained and experienced sol-

diers, who have participated in multiple operations over the last four years and are experienced in handling new technologies and weapons.

This is likely to be discussed further between the services and the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) to explore feasible options.

According to sources, even if an increase in the retention percentages of Agniveers is not approved, certain specialised units might induct a higher percentage of soldiers from among the retained Agniveers, who are more experienced, while other units may take a larger number of soldiers from among the Agniveers who will still be serving their four-year tenure.

This may be done while keeping the overall retention

percentage at 25 per cent, which is the current approved percentage.

For instance, the newly raised Bhairav battalions of the Army may eventually have a larger percentage of retained soldiers as compared to regular infantry battalions, which might have a larger percentage of Agniveers undergoing their four-year tenure.

A proposal seeking higher retention percentages had been forwarded to DMA in the past, but was returned for re-evaluation.

People privy to the development said the training of soldiers, sailors and airmen under the Agnipath scheme has been underway in full swing in all services.

In the last training year, around 70,000 Agniveers were undergoing training in the Army alone, across all regimental centres. In the next training year, around 90,000 vacancies are

likely to be released to increase the recruitment of Agniveers in the Army.

By increasing the number of vacancies for Agniveers progressively over the next two years, the Army plans to make up for the shortfall of around 1.8 lakh troops in the force. *The Indian Express* had reported in November last year.

In the last four years, a series of MoUs with various banks have been signed towards various schemes for the Agniveers. Their allowances, such as leave, are also at par with regular soldiers.

In October last year, *The Indian Express* reported that Army Commanders would likely discuss the retention percentage of Agniveers at the Army Commanders' Conference that month. In response to the report, the Army subsequently said that such a plan did not feature in the official agenda of the conference.

KOLKATA HAS THE GREATEST NUMBER OF UNINCORPORATED ENTERPRISES AT 8.84 LAKH

# 2 cr informal workers in India's big cities; Hyd tops with 15.7 lakh

Roughly 26% — or 52 lakh — of the informal workers in the country's most populous 46 cities are women

Siddharth Upasani  
New Delhi, July 5

INFORMAL BUSINESSES are widely thought to operate largely in the rural heartland of the country. However, a new government report has shed light on the size of the informal sector in India's urban centres, estimating that the country's 46 most populous cities have 1.98 crore people working in 1 crore informal establishments.

Greater Hyderabad tops the list of cities with the highest number of informal workers at 15.7 lakh, with Kolkata home to the greatest number of informal establishments — 8.84 lakh.

As per the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) report on urban unincorporated enterprises in cities whose population exceeded 1 million (10 lakh) as per Census 2011, six had more than a million informal workers: Greater Hyderabad, Delhi, Kolkata, Surat, Greater Mumbai, and Jaipur. Together, these six cities account for 40% of all informal workers in the country's 46 cities with more than a mil-

lion people each. The number of unincorporated establishments in these six cities is estimated to be nearly 39 lakh, or around 39% of the total in the 46 cities.

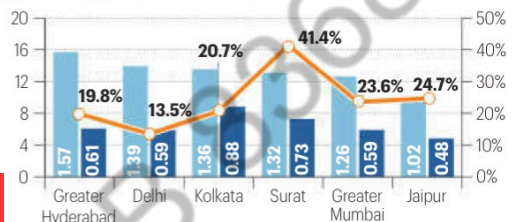
The total number of informal workers in India in 2025 was 12.81 crore.

Of the 1.98 crore informal workers in these 46 cities, roughly 26% — or 52 lakh — were women. Greater Visakhapatnam had the highest percentage of female workers at 42.5%, with Surat close behind at 41.4%. Srinagar was last at 10.5%, just below Varanasi at 12.1%. The report on the unincorporated enterprises in million-plus cities is the second such report released by MoSPI on India's biggest cities. The first was on their labour market dynamics, based on the results of the Periodic Labour Force Survey for 2025.

"This report presents, for the first time, a comprehensive statistical profile of 46 million-plus cities," Geeta Singh Rathore, Director General of MoSPI's National Sample Survey, said. She added that since the estimates are based on sample survey data, "differences observed across

## • Cities with 1 million+ informal workers

Workers Enterprises (in million) Women as % of workers



NOTE: ESTIMATES ARE FOR UNINCORPORATED ENTERPRISES. SOURCE: MoSPI

cities may arise from variations in economic structure, industrial composition, local conditions and sampling variability".

The city-level estimates are generated from MoSPI's Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE) for 2025, which covers India's unincorporated, non-agricultural enterprises, excluding construction. These enterprises make up a sizable portion of the economy and include the likes of small manufacturers, service providers, and trading units.

## Spread of cities

The 46 million-plus cities account for about 13% of establishments, 16% of workers, and 21% of Gross Value Added (GVA) of the unincorporated non-agricultural sector as per the ASUSE

2024. Informal sector pay rose by just 3.9% in 2025, less than half the 13% increase seen in 2023-24.

## Pay and productivity

In terms of total pay, emolument per worker was the highest in Jaipur, at Rs 2.33 lakh — although this only considers those unincorporated establishments with hired workers. Greater Hyderabad was second, at Rs 2.14 lakh. Emoluments refers to the total compensation a worker receives, inclusive of salary and benefits.

Meanwhile, informal enterprises in Gwalior paid hired workers the least at Rs 88,853, with Varanasi second from bottom at Rs 1 lakh. On average, emolument per worker in the 46 cities was Rs 1.5 lakh per year.

With the government releasing details for the 46 million-plus cities for the first time, comparative data on wages and the number of informal jobs is unavailable. Consequently, there is no way to calculate how much wages increased in 2025.

While informal workers in Jaipur got paid the most, they were not the most productive; that title belonged to Pimpri-Chinchwad, where the GVA per worker stood at Rs 2.9 lakh — significantly higher than Jaipur, which ranked 13th at Rs 2.23 lakh.

FULL REPORT ON

[WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM](http://WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM)

# OPEC+ okays further oil output increase

Reuters

London, July 5

OPEC+ HAS agreed a further increase in output targets from August, the group said in a statement on Sunday, adding to global supply at a time when oil prices are falling due to the gradual reopening of the Strait of Hormuz for oil exports.

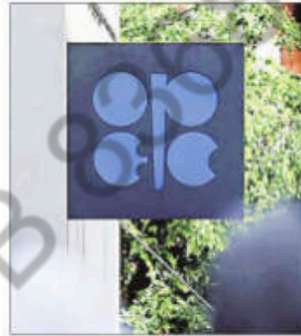
The oil-producing group agreed during an online meeting to increase quotas by 188,000 barrels per day (bpd) from August, on top of similar increases for June and July.

The seven core members of OPEC+, which groups OPEC and allied producers including Russia, have hiked their output quotas from April through July by almost 800,000 bpd. Yet the

increase has remained largely on paper because of the US-Israeli war on Iran, which closed the Strait of Hormuz to tanker traffic for some of the most important OPEC+ members, including Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iraq.

OPEC+ output fell to 33.13 million bpd in May, according to OPEC data, from 42.77 million bpd in February. It began to recover in June thanks to US efforts to help the UAE and other OPEC+ nations export more oil, but is still below pre-war levels.

Despite persisting supply disruptions, oil prices have returned to pre-war levels, pressured by lower Chinese imports, higher exports from non-Middle East producers, and a record global strategic stock re-



OPEC+ output fell to 33.13 million bpd in May, from 42.77 million bpd in February. REUTERS

lease coordinated by the International Energy Agency.

"The group of seven kept unwinding their production cuts as widely expected," UBS analyst

Giovanni Staunovo said. "The near-term focus will remain on how many tankers will manage to cross the Strait of Hormuz and how quickly demand and Chinese crude imports recover."

A memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran to end the war has also helped convince traders that supply will ultimately return to normal levels. Brent crude prices traded near \$72 per barrel on Friday, down from recent peaks of more than \$120 per barrel and back to levels traded just before the US and Israel attacked Iran on February 28.

Besides agreeing production targets, OPEC+ is also facing other challenges after the UAE left the group and Iraq signalled it wants higher quotas.

# Emergency gas curbs eased as LNG shipments normalise

**Press Trust of India**

NEW DELHI

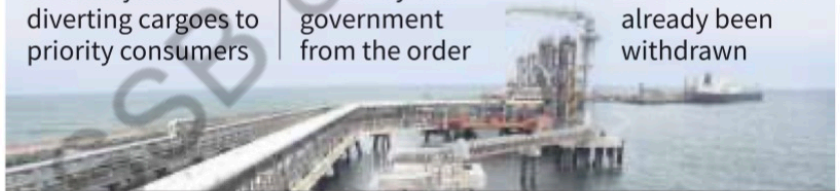
The Union government has withdrawn most provisions of an emergency natural gas supply regulation order following the resumption of liquefied natural gas (LNG) shipments through the Strait of Hormuz.

In a notification issued on Saturday, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas amended the Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026, omitting key operational provisions which led to all domestically produced natural gas and imported LNG to be sold as per a priority customer list drawn by the government. The original order, issued on March 9 under the Essential Commodities Act, was brought in after the conflict in West Asia disrupted LNG shipments, with suppliers invoking *force majeure* and diverting cargoes to priority consumers.

## Restored flow

The gas supply curbs were one of three emergency measures the govt. introduced after energy supplies from the Gulf were threatened by the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz

- Natural Gas (Supply Regulation) Order, 2026 was brought in on March 9 with suppliers invoking *force majeure* and diverting cargoes to priority consumers
- Latest amendment omits operational provisions for LNG to be sold as per a new priority customer list drawn by the government from the order
- The other two measures — diverting feedstock to maximise LPG production and restricting bulk sale of diesel — have already been withdrawn



The Ministry said the situation has since improved, with a ceasefire in place, further negotiations under way, and traffic through the Strait of Hormuz resuming.

### Emergency measures

The gas supply curbs were one of three emergency measures the government introduced after energy supplies from the Gulf were threatened by the closure of the Strait of Hor-

muz after the crisis broke out with U.S.- Israeli strike on Iran in February.

The other two measures — directing refiners to maximise LPG production by diverting feedstock from petrochemicals and restricting diesel sales to bulk consumers — have already been withdrawn as the supply situation normalised.

**CONTINUED ON**

» **PAGE 10**

# Gas curbs eased as LNG shipments normalise

India, the world's third-largest oil importer and consumer, imports about 88% of its crude oil requirements and around half of its natural gas needs. About 40-45% of its crude oil imports and nearly 65 % of its LNG supplies come from West Asia, underscoring the country's vulnerability to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz.

The threat to traffic through the waterway prompted the government to invoke emergency powers in March to safeguard domestic fuel and gas supplies. While India diversified crude oil purchases by sourcing supplies from other producers, natural gas imports remained exposed because most LNG cargoes from Qatar pass through the Strait of Hormuz.

The disruption led some suppliers to invoke force majeure, prompting the government to introduce emergency measures to prioritise gas supplies to essential sectors.

# Govt. issues notice to Meta on 'child sexual abuse' ads

Instagram, owned by Meta, ordered to disable advertisements promoting explicit child content and provide explanation within seven days; 'further action' to be decided after reviewing reply

**The Hindu Bureau**  
NEW DELHI

**T**he Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has directed Meta, the parent body of several social media platforms, to disable advertisements and content promoting and facilitating access to child sexual exploitative and abuse material (CSEAM) on Instagram, according to government sources. It has also sought an explanation on the issue.

"The Ministry has ordered Instagram to disable such advertisements. The government has also demanded a detailed explanation on the action taken and other relevant information within seven days. A notice in this regard was issued on Saturday," said a



The notice comes amid allegations that Meta's algorithm had been promoting videos with child sexual abuse material on its platforms

The government has demanded a detailed explanation from the corporation on actions taken against the advertisements and other relevant information within seven days

Instagram is alleged to have shown paid advertisements with child sexual abuse material which directed users to Telegram channels where such content was reportedly on sale



Meta's advertisement policy prohibits content with sexually suggestive activities

Meta is in a 'constant battle with criminals who hide among our 3.5 billion users and try to evade detection', a spokesperson said

source. It is learnt that the notice was sent following a directive from IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to senior Ministry officials. Further course of action will be decided after reviewing the reply, said the source.

The move came a day af-

ter the BBC Eye published its investigation revealing that Instagram had allegedly been running "paid adverts promoting child sexual abuse material in India" and that such advertisements linked users to channels on Telegram, where they could buy the

material. Meta's policy on advertisements, meanwhile, stipulate that their content must comply with community standards and must not have imagery depicting nudity and activities that are sexual or sexually suggestive

In response to a query on the notice, a Meta spokesperson pointed to an earlier statement shared after the BBC report came out, where Meta said it had a "zero tolerance policy for soliciting or sharing CSEAM" and added that while Meta deployed technology to detect such advertisements, it was in a "constant battle with criminals who hide among 3.5 billion users and try to evade detection".

**CONTINUED ON**  
» PAGE 10

# Govt. issues notice to Meta over CSEAM ads

According to Meta's policy, advertisements must "comply with the community standards on adult nudity and sexual activity. Ads must not contain imagery depicting nudity, sexual activity, depictions of people in explicit or sexually suggestive positions, or activities that are sexually suggestive". The policy sets additional restrictions beyond the Community Standard on Adult Nudity and Sexual Activity, says its sub-site.

According to a written reply by Mr. Vaishnaw to the Lok Sabha last year, the IT Act, 2000 provides punishment for publishing or transmitting obscene material and material containing sexually explicit acts in electronic form. The Act also provides for stringent punishment for publishing or transmitting material depicting children in sexually explicit acts in electronic form.

Besides, the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 enforces obligations on the intermediaries, to observe due diligence. If they fail to observe it, they lose the exemption under law for third-party information or data or communication links hosted by them. The intermediaries are required to remove any such content within 24 hours. The Ministry of Home Affairs operates the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal to receive complaints against cybercrimes, with special focus on cybercrimes against children. It has also set up the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C) for such crimes.

# Govt. releases ₹25,863 cr. for VB-G RAM G scheme

U.P. receives highest allocation of ₹3,210.76 crore, followed by A.P., Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu; Kerala gets ₹925.33 crore; concerns over centralised planning and technological barriers persist

**Sobhana K. Nair**  
NEW DELHI

**U**nion Minister for Rural Development and Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday released the first instalment of ₹25,863 crore to the States for the rural employment programme under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, or VB-G RAM G, even as concerns remain over the centralised planning for the programme.

Uttar Pradesh received the highest allocation at ₹3,210.76 crore, followed by Andhra Pradesh at ₹2,545.5 crore, and Rajasthan at ₹2,274.37 crore. Tamil Nadu received ₹2,176.84 crore, placing it just below Rajasthan in the fourth position, while Kerala received a considerably smaller allocation of ₹925.33 crore.

The Minister released the funds through video-conferencing from Bhopal.

“Today, I am overjoyed and pleased to congratulate all of you, our Rural Development Ministers and officials from both the Central and State govern-



**Big change:** The VB-G RAM G Act, which came into effect on July 1, has replaced the MGNREGA. ARUN KULKARNI

ments, on the fact that there have been no complaints whatsoever so far. This signifies that this policy has smoothly transitioned from MGNREGA (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) into the Viksit Bharat G-RAM G,” he said.

## Planning process

The VB-G RAM G Act came into effect on July 1. Work under the scheme will begin with the preparation of a Viksit Gram Panchayat Plan (VGPP). According to a draft framework for the VGPP released by the Ministry, the planning process will begin with the

preparation of a comprehensive inventory of all assets and facilities in a gram panchayat, including those created under various Central and State schemes.

This inventory will be mapped using both geospatial and non-spatial data available on platforms, including Yuktdhara and PM Gati Shakti. Yuktdhara is a geographic information system (GIS)-based planning portal developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation. PM Gati Shakti is a national master plan that brings together over 16 Ministries on a single digital platform for integrated planning and the

timely execution of infrastructure projects.

Based on this database, development gaps are to be identified through a GIS-enabled assessment carried out primarily on the Yuktdhara planning portal.

Taking into account “identified gaps, local priorities, demand for works and the recommendations of ward sabhas and the Gram Sabha”, the gram panchayat is to prepare a draft VGPP.

## ‘Impossible task’

Nikhil Dey of the Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan said that this was an “impossible task” and raised the technological barrier to access work.

“They have converted what was a bottom up, demand driven scheme to a top down centrally designed infrastructure programme,” he said.

He said that the States are now expected to foot 40% of the bill of centrally designed programmes which cater to Centre’s priorities and not to the States – and even the responsibility of fulfilling the so called “guarantee of employment” is on the States.

# ISRO conducts test of key component for Gaganyaan mission

The solid motor-based platform SOLVE will be used for parachute tests of the crew module; it has been derived from the PSLV strap-on motor

**The Hindu Bureau**

BENGALURU

**T**he Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully carried out the first ground test of the solid motor-based Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments (SOLVE) at its Static Test Facility at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota.

The SOLVE solid motor is a key component for conducting Gaganyaan test missions and the first ground test was carried out on July 3.

The ISRO is developing a solid motor-based SOLVE as a test platform to carry out Integrated Parachute Tests for validation of deceleration system of Gaganyaan's crew module under various test conditions.

During these test missions, the crew module will be carried to an altitude of 10 km to 17 km and separated from the vehicle.

A series of 10 parachutes will be deployed to reduce the velocity of the crew module before splashdown in the sea.



The ground test of the SOLVE solid motor being conducted at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

The solid stage of SOLVE is derived from the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) Strap-on Motor with a few modifications to meet the Gaganyaan test requirements, including development of slow burn rate propellant and straight nozzle with secondary injection thrust vector control.

The ISRO said that during the test motor performance parameters were as expected. "The development of the SOLVE vehicle provides flexibility in conducting Gaganyaan test missions simulating va-

rious conditions in the actual mission," the space agency said.

Over the past few months, the ISRO has carried out key tests related to the Gaganyaan mission, which include the second Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT-02) and a behavioural study Mission MITRA (Mapping of Interoperable Traits and Response Assessment) in Leh, during which the four Indian astronauts selected for the mission along with scientists, engineers and medical teams were subjected to a week-long study.

# Odisha draft rolls out after SIR, 20 lakh names deleted

BJD criticises EC over SIR, alleges 'inconsistency' in figures provided by the poll panel; Odisha CEO says special camps to be held to enrol young voters; over 37,000 names excluded in Sikkim

**Satyasundar Barik**  
BHUBANESWAR

**O**ver 20 lakh names were left out of the draft electoral roll published by the Election Commission in Odisha on Sunday amid the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise under way in the State.

Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) R.S. Gopalan said that before the SIR, Odisha had 3,33,99,591 electors and in the draft roll published, 3,13,87,034 names are present. Of the total electors, 1,60,19,176 are male, 1,53,65,083 are female and 2,775 belong to the third gender.

Among deletions, 8.32 lakh (2.49% of total electors) were deceased while 10.07 lakh (3.02%) were either absent or had shifted. The number of voters who enrolled in multiple places were 1.58 lakh (0.47%).

Booth-level lists of electors reported as deceased, permanently migrated, untraceable, or whose forms were not received, were shared with the Booth Level Agents (BLAs) of political parties for verification, said the CEO's office.

According to a statement issued by the CEO, as on July 5, out of 3,33,99,591 electors, 3,13,87,034 (93.97%) submitted their enumeration forms, reflecting an overwhelming participation in the first



93.97% of total voters submitted their enumeration forms, reflecting an overwhelming participation in the first phase of SIR. FILE PHOTO

phase of the SIR. "As per Para 5(b) of SIR guidelines, no name can be deleted from the draft roll published on July 5, 2026 without notice and a speaking order by the Electoral Registration Officer or Assistant Electoral Registration Officer," Mr. Gopalan said.

He said any aggrieved elector might appeal to the District Collector and thereafter to the CEO under Section 24 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. Volunteers were also being trained to assist electors in filing appeals.

In the next stage, claims and objections will be received between July 5 and August 4. The notice phase (hearing and verification) can be carried out from July 5 to September 2. The fi-

nal electoral roll will be out on September 6.

"If name is not found in the draft voter list, to include the name, Form 6 is required to be filled and submitted along with (Declaration Form) and other documents with appropriate authority," the poll body said.

Electors who attained or would attain 18 years of age on or before July 1, 2026 were being encouraged to apply through Form-6 along with the prescribed declaration form. Special camps would be conducted across the State to enrol all eligible young voters, said the CEO.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) challenged the SIR draft report, claiming that 27 lakh names were deleted against the claimed 20

lakh. BJD vice-president Debi Prasad Mishra said that according to the final electoral roll published in 2025, the State had 3,40,72,744 registered voters as reflected on the official website.

After the EC issued the notification for the SIR in Odisha on May 14, political parties were informed in a meeting held on May 15 that the State had approximately 3.34 crore voters, said Mr. Mishra. "Subsequently, on June 12, the voter strength was shown as 3,33,99,591. However, while publishing the draft electoral roll on Sunday, the CEO stated that there are only 3,13,87,034 voters. There is, therefore, no consistency among the figures," he alleged.

## Sikkim SIR

More than 37,000 people were left out of the draft electoral rolls published in Sikkim on Sunday.

The office of the CEO said that of the 4,71,018 registered electors in the State as on May 20, as many as 4,33,294 enumeration forms were collected and digitised.

The house-to-house verification drive found that 37,724 people had either died, permanently shifted, enrolled at multiple locations, or remained untraceable, the CEO's office said.

(Inputs from PTI)

## NORTH KOREA

# Kim observes weapons tests from his new naval destroyer



The destroyer *Kang Kon* during a military drill at an undisclosed location.

NORTH KOREAN leader Kim Jong Un observed the test firing of a strategic cruise missile and evaluations of anti-ship, anti-submarine and air defence systems aboard the naval destroyer *Kang Kon*, state media *KCNA* reported on Sunday. The tests were conducted on Friday as part of an assessment of the newly built warship's combat systems. They included checks of target-detection and information-processing capabilities, *KCNA* said. **REUTERS**

## ISLAMABAD

Next round of U.S.-Iran talks likely to be held at Islamabad: report



AP

Pakistan capital Islamabad is emerging as the leading venue for the next round of technical negotiations between the U.S. and Iran, *Dawn* reported. The technical talks are expected to take place on July 11. *Dawn* further quoted diplomatic sources to say that the negotiations will focus on Iran's nuclear programme. PTI

## BEIJING

Beijing, Moscow to hold joint naval exercises off China's coast today



AP

Beijing and Moscow announced on Sunday they will hold their annual joint naval exercises off China's coast, with Russia saying the drills will begin on Monday. "Following the exercise, some forces from both sides will conduct a joint maritime patrol in relevant areas of the Pacific Ocean," a Chinese statement said. AFP

# 'Cargo ship reports being under attack off coast of Yemen'

Associated Press

CAIRO

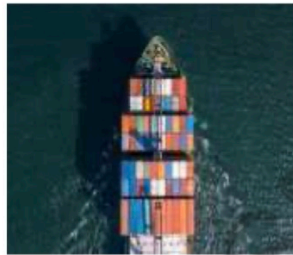
A cargo ship came under attack on Sunday off the coast of Yemen in the Red Sea, the British military said, the latest maritime attack off the conflict-torn Arab country.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre reported the attack

off the coastal city of Hodeida, which is under control of the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels.

The UKMTO said the ship reported being "under attack by unknown armed assailants".

A skiff approached the bulk carrier and opened fire, forcing the ship's se-



A skiff opened fire at the bulk carrier, forcing the ship's security guards to return fire.

curity guards to return fire, before sailing back to a larger ship about 2 nautical miles away with its automatic identification system switched off, the UKMTO said.

The cargo ship and crew were reported safe.

No group immediately claimed the attack.

# Mojtaba still absent as other sons pay respects to Khamenei

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Three of late Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei's sons made a rare public appearance at his funeral on Sunday but there was still no sign of his successor and other son, Mojtaba Khamenei.

Crowds of thousands filled the Grand Mosalla religious complex in Tehran for the second day in a row to attend the funeral ceremonies of Khamenei and four family members killed on February 28 in Israeli air strikes.

Iran's speaker of parliament and chief negotiator with the United States, Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf,

one of the most prominent faces of the post-Ali Khamenei era, hailed on X how the "proud and invincible nation of Islamic Iran unanimously" paid tribute to its "martyr".

Meanwhile, a performer at the funeral called for the death of U.S. President Donald Trump before a crowd of hundreds of thousands in Tehran. The comment represents the first, direct call for Mr. Trump's death at the funeral, which has seen posters and graffiti calling for the killing of Mr. Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu.

While speaking to the crowd, the emcee said that "the world is no longer a good place for" Mr. Trump.

# Trump hails U.S., blasts ‘communists’ in 250th anniversary celebration speech

**Agence France-Press**

WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump hailed America on its 250th birthday on Saturday as the “crowning achievement” of human history, even as he used the event to renew his attack on domestic opponents he branded communists.

In a speech delayed by several hours when storms forced the temporary evacuation of crowds in Washington, Mr. Trump claimed that under his presidency the United States was “prouder than ever before”.

While Mr. Trump had promised a huge political rally to stamp his brand on



A person watches a fireworks display during the Fourth of July rally on the National Mall in Washington DC on Sunday. REUTERS

the national celebrations, the 80-year-old Republican largely stuck to a more traditionally patriotic script.

“For two and a half centuries, our American republic has stood as the crowning achievement of human history,” Mr.

Trump told tens of thousands of people on the National Mall.

On stage, he hailed also veterans from the Second World War, and the Korean and Vietnam wars.

But he then hailed the latter two as examples of

the battle against “communists” – reprising his message from his speech on Friday night at the iconic Mount Rushmore monument.

“Our warriors did not fight communism on battlefields across the world, only to have that menace rear its ugly head right back here in America. We’re not going to let it happen,” he said.

Mr. Trump has repeatedly hammered home the theme recently ahead of November’s U.S. midterm elections, after the anti-establishment left of the Democratic Party won a string of U.S. primary victories. “It’s like a cancer, you’ve got to cut it out,” he added.

# Attack by Yemen's Houthis kills 16 pro-govt. troops, injures 22: medics

The fighting began late Friday in the Jabal Dubas area of Hays district, where the Houthis briefly captured govt. positions; rebels attacked with snipers, which accounted for most of the casualties, later launched drone, mortar salvos, says official

**Agence France-Presse**

ADEN

**Y**emen's Houthi rebels killed 16 troops in an attack on government-aligned forces south of the port city of Hodeidah, two medical officials said on Sunday, in some of the most violent fighting between the sides in years.

The two medical sources said hospitals in the area on the Red Sea coast received 16 dead from pro-government forces and 22 wounded.

Earlier an officer with the government-aligned forces in Jabal Dubas in the Hays district, where the

clashes took place, gave a provisional toll of 14 troops and 23 injured in "fierce fighting".

The officer said the Iran-backed Houthis briefly took control of pro-government positions in the clashes, which began late on Friday, before a counterattack to retake them concluded at dawn on Saturday.

## 'Deadliest attack'

"This was the deadliest Houthi attack in years," the officer said on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to speak to the media.

He described how the rebels had attacked with



**Fight for control:** A file photo of Houthi rebel fighters chanting slogans as they take off to a battlefield in Sanaa, Yemen. AP

snipers, which accounted for most of the casualties, before launching drone and mortar salvos.

Another military official said pro-government forc-

es had repelled the Houthi attack in Hays district in "clashes lasting for several hours".

He added "fighting resulted in dead and wound-

ed among [Houthi] ranks," without specifying the number killed in the opposing force.

The Houthis have been at war with the government since 2015 in a conflict that has killed hundreds of thousands of people and triggered a major humanitarian crisis in Yemen. The rebels control Yemen's capital Sanaa and much of the north, including Hodeidah on Yemen's western Red Sea coast, while the internationally-recognised government holds much of the south.

The fighting between the two sides has largely been frozen since a UN-negotiated truce in 2022.

# AI is reshaping warfare: How India can keep pace



## EXPERT EXPLAINS

LT GEN RAJ SHUKLA (RETD)

FORMER ARMY COMMANDER, UPSC MEMBER

THE TRINITY of artificial intelligence (AI), military autonomy and algorithmic warfare is redefining modern-day warfighting and deterrence. The workflows of combat are being infused with AI and driven by autonomy, but what is making them unfa-  
 unfailingly lethal is algorithmic precision. Indeed, these three factors are poised to exponentially increase battlefield lethality over the next few years.

The strategic-military establishment in India would do well to take note of this 'Manhattan Project' moment in combat — the deployment of software at unprecedented speed and scale.

### Tech in conflict: Ukraine, Venezuela and Iran

Drones are the greatest techno-military revolution since gunpowder and nuclear weapons. Their integration with AI and associated technologies has given birth to the art and science of drone warfare as warfare, even stackraft.

Their impact has been particularly visible in the Russia-Ukraine war. Ukraine, for instance, uses an AI-enabled data analytics platform called Delta that fuses multiple data inputs (from radar imagery to social media feeds) into one intelligent stream. Delta then plugs into a versatile inventory of drones to form a digital 'kill web' that compresses engagement times (detection to neutralisation) to a couple of minutes.

A 35-km corridor along the Russia-Ukraine frontier is nicknamed the 'death zone'. In this area, artillery has been pushed back and outranged, tanks don't move, and infantry soldiers are picked up by surveillance drones and neu-



Anduril's YFQ-44A began flight testing for the Collaborative Combat Aircraft Program in October 2025. ANDURIL

## • From Ukraine to US: AI on the battlefield

**UKRAINE'S DELTA** battlefield management system has given it an edge in its grinding war against Russia. The system uses artificial intelligence to help with target selection, faster multi-sensor data analysis about enemy activity, and decision-making, among others.

**THE UKRAINIAN** defence ministry

has said that Delta enables "real-time battlefield awareness, supports operational planning, and facilitates information sharing within units, brigades, formations, and, when needed, with allies".

**ANOTHER EXAMPLE** is YFQ-44A Fury, an AI-powered unmanned fighter jet developed by the American

defence tech startup Anduril.

**ANDURIL SAYS** on its website that integration of autonomy into fighter aircraft is a "step change" in aviation. "We designed YFQ-44A for a specific Air Force mission: to enhance survivability, lethality, and mission effectiveness by teaming with crewed fighter aircraft or operating independently."

tralised by FPV (first-person view) drones in a matter of minutes. Unmanned platforms are taking over functions once performed by humans. This ranges from acquiring information and fixing targets to resupplying ammunition and rations, and evacuating casualties.

This year, Ukraine is buying eight million drones, more than the artillery it fired last year. These platforms provide commanders options ranging from close air support (25 km) to strategic air power (2,500 km).

In Venezuela, the US used Anthropic's Claude in the operation to capture ousted president Nicolas Maduro. AI platforms gave the US top brass insights into Maduro's movements and helped them anticipate what he would do.

### Widening use cases

In Venezuela, the US used Anthropic's Claude in the operation to capture Maduro.

AI platforms gave the US top brass insights into Maduro's movements.

Electronic attacks and cyber exploits were then synchronised with the Delta Force's heliborne assault to telling effect.

In Iran, we saw the development of targeting packages at machine (not human) speeds, enabling precise strikes that wiped out almost the entire Iranian leadership in minutes on the morning of February 28.

### Autonomous control

Military autonomy is making giant strides. Drone warfare is moving from remote to algorithmic control. The captains of naval platforms are increasingly going to be autonomous software systems, not humans. In the aerial domain, the development of the YFQ-44A Fury, an AI-powered autonomous fighter jet, by the defence tech startup Anduril, tells us that the future of airpower will be collaborative. This also shows that the business model is moving

Examples from Iran to Venezuela show that India needs to embrace the trinity of AI, autonomy and algorithmic warfare through sovereign pathways

steadily from traditional defence primes to agile startups.

Lethal technologies are seeing an unprecedented boom. Mythos is a virtual cyber-nuke that can disable any adversary operating system. DeepSeek and Tau's Law of Scaling (Huawei professing to achieve 1.4 nanometre transistor density by 2031 to challenge the Nvidia Blackwell chips which are in the range of 4 nanometres) are symbols of how Chinese digital innovations are turbo-charging strategic-military competition.

In combat theatres, software innovations are happening every three weeks, while new hardware is being deployed every three months. The Ministry of Defence, which has hitherto been a platform and weapons factory, will have to metamorphose into a software enterprise.

### What India can do

The future of defence is also sovereignty. Beginning now, we can embrace the trinity of AI, autonomy and algorithmic warfare through these sovereign pathways:

- Urgently develop an AI-enabled data analytics platform, in the manner of Delta.
- Create software that can autonomously coordinate drones swarms; identify objects of interest; differentiate between birds, civilian aircraft and combat platforms; and direct shooters to destroy targets.

- Set up a diverse inventory of drones, with a target of five million by 2028.

- Deploy an array of counter-drone systems (such as laser and microwave weapons) with drone-hunting teams. This will help to establish drone-driven, AI-enabled "kill webs" along the LOC and LAC.

- Crowd the LEO (low-Earth orbit) space so that we transit from persistent surveillance to offensive ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance).

- The 2027 defence budget must reflect the transition. At least 40% of the Rs 2 lakh-odd crore earmarked for modernisation should be spent on technological solutions.

This is a huge challenge that will require a cultural and structural transformation. Successful adoption, however, will be game changing. It will expand options in crisis situations while enabling India to attain "combat overmatch" with Pakistan and "asymmetric deterrence" with China.



A weekly column decoding AI's new frontiers, how they shape the world and our place in it