

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

President confers Padma awards to Mammooty, Satish Shah, Rohit Sharma



NEW DELHI, JUN 23: Tennis legend Vijay Amritraj, actors Mammooty and Satish Shah, cricketer Rohit Sharma, and playback singer Alka Yagnik were among eminent personalities conferred with the coveted Padma awards by President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday.

In the second civil investiture ceremony at the Ganatantra Mandap of Rashtrapati Bhavan, the president presented Padma Vibhushan to former Supreme Court judge K T Thomas for public affairs and eminent Malayalam journalist P Narayanan for contribution in literature and education.

Alka Yagnik, Mammooty, American oncologist Dattatreya Nuri, tennis player Vijay Amritraj, industrialist S K M Maeilinandhan and social worker and educationist Vellappally Natesan received Padma Bhushan from the president during the ceremony.

Rupi Soren, wife of JMM founder Shibu Soren, received the Padma Bhushan on behalf of the late leader.

The president conferred the Padma Shri on cricketer

Rohit Sharma, who led India to victory in the last T20 World Cup, and hockey player Savita Punia. History

Vladimir Mestvirishvili, the Georgian coach who mentored Indian Olympic medallists like Sushil Kumar, Yogeshwar Dutt, and Ravi Dahiya, was awarded the Padma Shri posthumously. His wife received the award on his behalf.

The function was attended by Vice President C P Radhakrishnan, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Union Home Minister Amit Shah among other dignitaries.

The arrival of 83-year-old folk artist and cultural guardian from Nagaland, Guru Sangyusang Pongener, added a dash of vibrant cultural touch to the ceremony. Dressed in traditional Naga attire, his spirited entry drew a huge round of applause from the audience, including Prime Minister Modi. He received the Padma Shri.

Social worker Budhri Tati, who worked in the field of education and women's empowerment in the previously nalax-affected Bastar region of Chhattisgarh, also received the Padma Shri. She,

too, preferred her traditional dress and received warm applause as she walked up to accept the honour.

The president also conferred the Padma Shri posthumously on actor Satish Shah. The actor was known for essaying prominent roles in the country's first sitcom Ye Jo Hai Zindagi, Sarabhai Vs Sarabhai, and cult movie Jaane Bhi Do Yaaro. His brother received the award on his behalf.

Former CEO of Prasar Bharati, Shashi Shekhar Vempati, who is now the CBFC Chairman, was also awarded the Padma Shri by the President.

In the ceremony, the president conferred 65 Padma Awards, including two Padma Vibhushan, seven Padma Bhushan and 56 Padma Shri.

Actor R Madhavan, Indian aerospace scientist in Defence Research and Development Laboratory, Chandramouli Gaddamanugu, who led the Akash Missile system from development to deployment during Operation Sindoor, former MHA under secretary RVS Mani and a self-made entrepreneur

from a Dalit cobbler family, Ashok Khade, who established a cutting-edge offshore fabrication company, were awarded the Padma Shri.

Dalit author Asok Kumar Haldar, who wrote inspiring literature while being a railway guard, Ranjani and Gayatri (counted as one award) for Carnatic music, famous actor Anil Kumar Rastogi and chemistry professor Mahendra Nath Roy were also conferred the Padma Shri.

On Republic Day eve, the government had announced 131 Padma awards, including two duo cases (in a duo case, the award is counted as one). The awards included five Padma Vibhushans, 13 Padma Bhushans, and 113 Padma Shri.

The president had conferred 65 Padma Awards — two Padma Vibhushan, six Padma Bhushan and 57 Padma Shri in the first civil investiture ceremony held on May 25. The remaining 65 awards (including a duo) were presented during the ceremony on Tuesday.

The Padma Awards — one of the highest civilian awards of the country, are conferred in three categories — Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.

The awards are given in various disciplines of activities — art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc. Padma Vibhushan is awarded for exceptional and distinguished service; Padma Bhushan for distinguished service of high order, and Padma Shri for distinguished service in any field. (Agencies)

PM Narendra Modi Calls On President Murmu Amid Cabinet Reshuffle Buzz

NEW DELHI, JUN 23: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday called on President Droupadi Murmu at the Rashtrapati Bhavan amid buzz over a reshuffle of the Union council of ministers.

The president's office shared pictures of the meeting in a post on X.

"Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi called on President Droupadi Murmu at Rashtrapati Bhavan," the post said.

The meeting, which took place soon after the civil investiture ceremony to confer Padma awards, assumes significance as political circles in the national capital are buzzing with the growing possibility of a cabinet reshuffle.

Earlier in the day, veteran BJP leader from Kerala



George Kurian resigned from the Union council of ministers following the expiry of his Rajya Sabha term. Kurian (65) was Union minister of state for minority affairs and also for fisheries, animal husbandry and dairying.

Murmu has accepted Kurian's resignation, a communication issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said.

The BJP had decided not to renominate Kurian, whose term ended on June 21, in the recent Rajya Sabha polls. Union Minister of State for Railways Ravneet Singh, whose Rajya Sabha term ended on June 21, has also not been renominated by the BJP to the Upper House.

Singh, who had been a Rajya Sabha member from Rajasthan since August 2024,

also holds the charge as the Minister of State for the Ministry of Food Processing Industries.

Of late, a few Union ministers have been given key organisational responsibilities in their home states. Their appointment has also led to speculation of an imminent cabinet reshuffle.

BJP national president Nitin Nabin had on May 28 appointed Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways Harsh Malhotra as Delhi BJP chief.

Malhotra (62) is also Union Minister of State for Corporate Affairs. He currently holds both portfolios.

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary was in December last year named the new president of the BJP's Uttar Pradesh unit. (Agencies)

SC stays Delhi HC order for premature release of 1993 Kolkata Bowbazaar blast case

NEW DELHI, JUNE 23: The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the Delhi High Court order directing premature release of a life term convict in the 1993 Kolkata Bowbazaar blast case.

A bench comprising Justices PK Mishra and Sanjeev Sachdeva gave the interim relief on a plea filed by the West Bengal government, challenging the June 5 order of the high court directing forthwith release of the 77-year-old convict Md. Rashid Khan.

The top court also issued notice to Khan, who was convicted under stringent provision of TADA, on the plea of the state government.

Appearing for the state government, additional solicitor general SV Raju said the high court erred in its finding and questioned relying on reformative theory for

granting relief to Khan in a case where more than 70 people died and hundreds got injured in the bomb blasts.

Senior advocate MR Shamshad, appearing for Khan, submitted that he had spent over 33 years in prison, and highlighted that a co-accused, Pannalal Jaiswara, was granted remission in March 2014.

The bench, however, said the roles attributed to them were completely different while pointing out that Khan was the "mastermind" of the incident. Shamshad submitted that the conduct of the prisoner which has been good in the prison should be taken into account.

The bench observed that he was sentenced for an act which was "almost a terrorist act."

Khan's counsel high-

lighted his poor health condition and told the bench, "He is not mentally incapacitated, but he is in bad condition."

The bench said if the high court's order is not stayed, the State's appeal will become infructuous.

The State government has contended that the high court granted the relief despite the recommendation made by the State's Sentence Review Board (SRB) against his release, as Khan was convicted under the Terrorist and Disruptive Acts Prevention Act (TADA).

On June 5, the high court took into account Khan's long period of incarceration, prison conduct and the reformative philosophy and ordered his premature release.

A special TADA court in 2001 had convicted Khan and four others in the 1993

Bowbazaar case, which occurred at his workshop where explosives were stored. Khan was sentenced to life imprisonment under TADA, the Arms Act and the IPC.

The top court later upheld the convictions. While allowing his release plea, the high court set aside the State SRB's decision communicated through an order dated August 8, 2018, which had rejected his request for premature release.

Khan has also sought remission from the Centre, stating he has been in custody since March 3, 1993 and due to advance age he suffers from multiple age-related ailments.

He further pointed out that co-convict Pannalal Jaysoora had already been released under a 2014 Government notification.

CJP announces 'diaper donation drive,' alleges police attempt to shrink protest site



NEW DELHI, JUNE 23: The Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) on Tuesday announced a "diaper donation drive" as part of its ongoing campaign seeking the resignation of the Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan over alleged NEET-UG paper leak.

The party, which has been holding a sit-in protest at Delhi's Jantar Mantar against alleged examination-related irregularities since Saturday, made this an-

nouncement through a post on X.

They appealed to their supporters to bring diapers to the protest site, write their demand for Pradhan's resignation on them and participate in the campaign, Diaper A Day Keeps Leaks Away, scheduled for Tuesday evening.

"Bring a diaper, write your demand for his resignation on it, and we'll make sure it reaches the education minister," the CJP said.

The protest on Tuesday entered its fourth day.

Meanwhile, party founder Abhijeet Dipke has alleged that police attempted to reduce the protest area.

Late on Monday night, Dipke alleged that Delhi Police attempted to move barricades and "squeeze the protest site into a smaller area". There was no immediate response from the Delhi Police on the allegations.

The CJP has been demanding accountability over

alleged paper leaks and examination irregularities, including the NEET controversy, and has maintained that the protest will continue until Pradhan resigns.

On Monday, Dipke said the protest remained crowded despite it being a working day and asserted that the agitation would continue through the night.

Candles were lit at the venue in memory of students who allegedly died by suicide following the paper-leak controversy.

Addressing protesters, Dipke questioned the response towards students affected by examination issues, saying authorities were "punishing students" while failing to act against those allegedly involved in paper leaks.

The protest has seen participation from students, aspirants and members of Left student organisations, including Students' Federation of India, All India Students' Association, All India Students' Federation (AISF).

The AISF has also set up a free library at the protest site as part of its "Fight for Education with Education" initiative. (PTI)

PM Modi Must Stop Appeasing 'Good Friend' Trump; India Must Not Sign Trade Pact As It Stands: Cong

NEW DELHI, JUN 23:

With US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer visiting India, the Congress on Tuesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi must stop appeasing his "good friend" President Donald Trump and there is absolutely no need for India to be "bambooed" into signing any trade pact which at present is heavily against its interests. Geographic Reference

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the Modi government must seek inspiration from Malaysia which has rebuffed its own trade deal with America following the US Supreme Court's verdict.

"The US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer is in New Delhi today and tomorrow. On the request of PM Modi, while he was under pressure from Rahul Gandhi's expose in Parliament of his cowardice in front of China, an India-US Joint statement on trade was issued on February 6, 2026,"

Ramesh said on X.

"The US promised to reduce tariffs on Indian exports from 25% to 18%. India promised to eliminate its tariffs or reduce them deeply on US agricultural commodities and industrial products and purchase up to USD 500 billion from the US over five years," he said.

Ramesh pointed out that on February 20, 2026, the Supreme Court of the US ruled that President Trump's reciprocal tariff strategy was illegal.

The very tariff concession that the US had offered India in the February 6, 2026, joint statement effectively disappeared overnight, he said.

"Within hours of the US Supreme Court ruling the US imposed a temporary 10% tariff on all its trading partners including India. The legal basis for this expires on July 24, 2026. There is considerable uncertainty on what will happen thereafter," Ramesh said.

However, India along with about 60 other countries is

under investigation by the US for unfair trade practices that supposedly violate US laws, he said, adding that final outcomes from this investigation are expected in the coming weeks.

The US is clearly using this investigation as a threat to get India to formally sign the agreement as announced on February 6, 2026, he said.

"Such an agreement is not a deal but a steal by the US. Indian farmers in different states that include J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra will be very adversely impacted. The US makes very little firm commitments whereas India commits to at least trebling its present levels of annual imports from the US," Ramesh said.

Despite having trade agreements with Japan and the EU, the US has threatened increased tariffs on them, he said.

Even if a deal is signed, what and where is the guarantee that tariffs will not be

unilaterally imposed or threatened to be imposed thereafter, Ramesh asked. State & Local Government

"There is absolutely no need for India to be bamboozled into signing any trade agreement which as it stands now is heavily against India's interests," Ramesh said.

"PM Modi must stop appeasing his good friend President Trump, who has claimed that he halted Operation Sindoor over a 100 times and is yet to be challenged by Mr. Modi on that claim," the Congress leader said.

Greer is visiting India to take forward the discussions on the interim trade deal agreed to by Prime Minister Modi and President Trump in February.

Trump and Modi met on the sidelines of the G-7 meeting in France last week where the US president said that India and the US were very close to finalising the trade agreement. (AGENCIES)

AI companies should release environmental impact, commit to clean energy, says UN chief

NITED NATIONS, JUNE 23: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday called on artificial intelligence companies to release information about the carbon pollution they create, along with the water and land used to power their operations.

While urging action in an address at London Climate Action Week, Guterres proposed the AI Environmental Transparency Initiative, arguing AI companies should measure and disclose the impact of their increasingly in-demand technology - impact which has been cited by opponents as reasons to curb the rapid growth of data centres.

These companies have faced mounting pressure, both from governments and locally in areas with data centres that support AI, for increased transparency and more standardised reporting across the industry.

Guterres said AI companies should also commit to powering their facilities with electricity produced with renewable technologies, such as wind and solar, by 2030.

"No more hidden costs," Guterres said at Europe's largest independent climate conference. "No more shifting the burden onto those least able to bear it. It is time to come clean."

AI's needs are growing. Many major tech companies have

vowed to power their operations using cleaner sources, some by the end of the decade. Some plan to do so especially using solar and nuclear, including tech giants Amazon and Google.

But the race to deploy AI has complicated those commitments and sent soaring greenhouse gas emissions, which come from the burning of fuels like oil, coal and gas, and heat the planet. Regulatory barriers have also hindered climate-friendly projects.

Currently, coal sources about 30 per cent of the electricity consumed by data centres globally, according to the International Energy Agency. Renewable energy — primarily wind, solar and hydro powers — supplies about 27 per

cent, natural gas, 26 per cent, and nuclear, 15 per cent.

Renewables are expected to meet just half of that demand over the next five years. As AI booms, many, including Guterres, have touted its ability to accelerate climate solutions. It could improve energy efficiency, and reduce pollution and emissions.

At the same time, the environmental footprint of data centres already rivals some of the world's largest countries, according to a UN report released earlier this month.

That report also said the water, energy use and pollution associated with AI will double in just four years. Data centres needed to fuel AI accounted for

about 1.5 per cent of the world's electricity consumption in 2025, and will account for nearly 3 per cent of the world's projected electricity use by 2030.

"Despite these obvious concerns, communities are often left in the dark about the environmental impact of the infrastructure rising around them," Guterres said in his remarks. The UN continues to sound urgent alarms.

The UN chief has long urged the world to take serious climate action, and will once again convene leaders at the annual Conference of Parties, this year in Turkiye, to negotiate plans.

On Tuesday, addressing AI was just a number of steps he said needed to be

taken to keep the world below the warming limit of 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial times, a goal set during the 2015 Paris Agreement.

Last year was the first time that the three-year temperature average broke through that threshold.

"Every major emitter must accelerate action," Guterres said. "And every country must over-deliver on its commitments. He called for cutting methane, a powerful greenhouse gas responsible for around one-third of global warming and significantly more potent than carbon dioxide, though comparatively it lingers for less time in the atmosphere."