

GREAT OFFERS!



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Committed to Nari Shakti Vandan

#NariShaktiVandan

Safe motherhood is my right
 7.2+ crore women supported under PM Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan

Being a daughter is my pride
 Sex Ratio at Birth improved from 918 to 929

Our future is now secured
 4.6+ crore Sukanya Samridhi accounts opened

PIONEER IN SHORT

ISRO ADVANCES GAGANYAAN MISSION

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully carried out the second Integrated Air Drop Test (IADT-02) for the upcoming Gaganyaan mission at Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh, marking a crucial step in validating the crew module's recovery and landing system for India's first human spaceflight programme. The test simulated the final phase of spacecraft re-entry and ocean splashdown, designed to ensure astronaut safety during descent. A 5.7-tonne simulated crew module was lifted by an Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter to an altitude of around three kilometres and released over a designated sea drop zone near Sriharikota. During descent, ten parachutes of four different types deployed in a carefully timed sequence, steadily reducing the module's velocity. The system was also evaluated under critical failure scenarios, including partial parachute malfunction and stability control, before safe splashdown. The module was subsequently recovered in coordination with the Indian Navy. The test follows the first Integrated Air Drop Test conducted on August 24, 2025.

Amit Shah unveils BJP's Sonar Bangla vision for West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ Kolkata

BJP on Friday unveiled its manifesto for the West Bengal Assembly polls, which promised to plug infiltration, implement Uniform Civil Code in six months if voted to power and proposed expansive welfare packages for women, youth, farmers and State Government employees if the party wins the electoral battle.

Releasing the manifesto — *Sankalp Patra* —, Union Home Minister Amit Shah described it as a roadmap for *Sonar Bangla* and launched a blistering attack on the Mamata Banerjee Government, alleging the last 15 years of the TMC's rule had been a "nightmare" for the people of the State.

Shah announced that every woman in Bengal would receive ₹3,000 each month if the BJP came to power. He also promised 33 per cent reservation for women in all Government



Union Home Minister Amit Shah, left, addresses a press conference during the unveiling of 'BJP Sankalp Patra', the party's manifesto for the upcoming West Bengal Assembly elections, in Kolkata. PTI

jobs, including the police, as well as free travel on public transport vehicles.

Last month, the TMC announced a ₹500 increase in Lakshmir Bhandar in its own manifesto, taking the monthly payout to ₹1,500 for general category women and ₹1,700 for SC and ST beneficiaries. It promised unemployed

youth a monthly allowance of ₹3,000 and an additional ₹15,000 to prepare for competitive examinations. Those who lost jobs because of the school recruitment scam and other corruption-related cases would be given an age relaxation of up to five years, the BJP promised. The party promised to

secure the State's borders, stop cattle smuggling and clear Government land of "encroachers and infiltrators", underscoring the BJP's attempt to keep the campaign centred on the border belt stretching across North 24 Parganas, Nadia, Malda, Murshidabad and North Bengal.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Yashwant Varma quits amid probe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

Tainted Allahabad High Court judge Yashwant Varma, who is facing impeachment proceedings for his removal over allegations of corruption after wads of burnt currency notes were recovered from his residence in Delhi last year, has resigned. The judge submitted his resignation in a letter sent to President Droupadi Murmu on April 9, marking copy to Chief Justice



Ex-HC judge Yashwant Varma

of India Surya Kant. In his letter, Justice Varma, 57, said he was tendering his resignation with "deep

anguish" and that it was an honour to serve the office. "Your Excellency, While I do not propose to burden your august office with the reasons which have constrained me to submit this missive, it is with deep anguish that I hereby tender my resignation from the office of Judge of the Hon'ble High Court of Judicature at Allahabad, with immediate effect. It has been an honour to serve in this office," the letter said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Col Purohit promoted after acquittal

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
 ■ New Delhi

Justice has been restored to Colonel Prasad Shrikant Purohit, a serving Military Intelligence (MI) officer, 17 years after he was implicated in one of India's most controversial terror cases. Purohit has been promoted to Brigadier's rank. The order to promote Purohit has come following an order by the Armed Forces Tribunal that put scheduled retirement on

March 31, 2026 on hold and directed the Ministry of Defence to respond to his plea for promotions and service benefits that were allegedly stalled due to the now-acquitted 2008 Malegaon blast case.

This development has come months after a special National Investigation Agency (NIA) court acquitted Col Purohit and six others in July 2025 and the Army promoted him to the rank of Colonel in September 2025.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Col Prasad Shrikant Purohit
 FILE PHOTO

The Bystander

High polling percentage in Assam, Kerala and Puducherry.



KHARGE ATTACKS BJP'S WOMEN QUOTA PLAN

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Friday accused the Narendra Modi Government of attempting to violate the Model Code of Conduct through its proposed constitutional amendments on women's reservation and parliamentary delimitation, alleging that the move is aimed at securing political advantage ahead of State elections. Speaking at the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting in New Delhi, Kharge said the Government's plan to convene a special Parliament session from April 16-18 to push the legislation was being done in undue haste and without adequate consultation. He warned that increasing Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 816, along with expansion of assemblies and implementation of women's quota, will have "profound consequences" on India.

Police bust spy module for using CCTV feeds

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
 ■ New Delhi

In a major counter-terror and counter-espionage operation, the Special Cell of the Delhi Police has unmasked an inter-State module for installing solar-powered CCTV camera near international borders, vital Army cantonments and logistical corridors. At least 11 individuals have been arrested from different locations. The police claim they were working for Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and linked to the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI).

Additional Commissioner of Police, Special Cell Pramod Kushwah said, "Investigations have revealed that the network was primarily engaged in espionage, arms smuggling and reconnaissance of critical defence sites.

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Representative image

ISTOCK

Vance heads to Pakistan for talks as Trump signals reset

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

A cryptic yet ominous message from Donald Trump has injected fresh uncertainty into already fragile diplomacy, just as the US and Iran prepare for crucial talks in Pakistan.

Posting on social media, Trump spoke of a "world's most powerful reset," a remark that has reverberated across diplomatic circles due to its timing — just hours before delegations converge in Islamabad for negotiations that could reshape the regional order.

The statement coincided with the departure of US Vice



US VP JD Vance before boarding Air Force Two on Friday for expected departure to Pakistan, for talks with Iran. AP

President JD Vance, who is expected to lead Washington's engagement at the talks. While officials have

remained tight-lipped, Trump's message has fuelled speculation that the negotiations could mark either a

breakthrough—or a breakthrough.

The ambiguity of Trump's "reset" comment was underscored by a far more explicit warning issued shortly after. The former president declared that US military forces would remain deployed "in and around Iran" until a "real agreement" is fully enforced, cautioning that any violation would trigger overwhelming force.

He reiterated that Iran must not develop nuclear weapons and stressed the importance of keeping the strategically vital Strait of Hormuz open for global commerce — an artery for the world's energy supply.

The remarks signal a dual-track approach: diplomacy backed by the implicit threat of military escalation.

The talks follow a tenuous two-week ceasefire between Washington and Tehran, brokered by Pakistan after weeks of hostilities. While the truce has offered temporary relief — including stabilising global energy concerns — it remains under strain.

Tehran has indicated that safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz could resume, but only under coordination with its military, highlighting lingering mistrust.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Boat tragedy in Vrindavan kills 10

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
 ■ Mathura

A boat carrying tourists, primarily from Punjab, capsized in Yamuna in Vrindavan on Friday afternoon, leaving at least 10 people dead and several others missing, officials said.

The accident occurred near Kesi Ghat when the boat carrying over two dozen tourists moved into deeper waters and hit a floating pontoon, they said. Authorities noted that a pontoon bridge had recently



Rescue personnel during a search operation in the Yamuna River after a boat carrying pilgrims capsized near Kesi Ghat, in Mathura. PTI

been dismantled in the area due to rising water levels, leaving some pontoon drums in the river, one of which the boat is believed to have collided with. District Magistrate Chandra Prakash

Singh reported six fatalities earlier and later rescuers recovered four more bodies, taking the toll to 10, district administration officials confirmed.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Pakistan minister sparks Israel row ahead of talks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
 ■ New Delhi

A fresh diplomatic dispute has erupted after Khawaja Muhammad Asif, Pakistan's defence minister, posted strongly worded remarks about Israel, prompting swift condemnation from Israeli officials, US lawmakers and international commentators at a sensitive moment for regional diplomacy.

In a post on the social media platform X, Asif



Pakistan defence minister, Khawaja Muhammad Asif

described Israel as "evil" and "a curse for humanity," while accusing it of committing "genocide" in Lebanon.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

UNSEASONAL RAIN, HAIL DAMAGES RABI CROPS

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday said unseasonal rains and hailstorms have damaged rabi crops across about 2.49 lakh hectares in multiple States, with wheat emerging as the worst-hit crop. Speaking in Madhya Pradesh's Raisen district ahead of the "Unnat Krishi Mela", Chouhan said inter-departmental surveys are underway and the final assessment of losses is still in progress. The minister further noted that horticulture crops, including mango and litchi, have also suffered significant damage. According to preliminary data till April 8, widespread weather events reported by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) between April 2-8 impacted several regions across States in north, central, east and northeast India.

New highway between Delhi, Dehradun balances development with nature

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

Come April 14, you can zip past at 100 kmph on the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor without disturbing wildlife in this ecologically sensitive area, courtesy unique animal underpasses. The stretch features a 10.97 km long animal underpass designed specifically to facilitate unobstructed wildlife movement.

In fact, elephants, golden jackals, nilgais, sambhars and spotted deer are already using the underpasses, according to a study released on Friday. The study also captured images of these animals traversing the tunnels. The National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) and the Wildlife

Institute of India (WII) conducted this study titled Landscapes Reconnected.

The study highlights the underpasses as a major milestone in showcasing successful sustainable and inclusive development of highway projects in ecologically sensitive areas.

"Conducted along an 18 km stretch of Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor between Ganeshpur and Asharodi, the study was undertaken with the objective of assessing patterns of underpass use by wildlife, factors affecting usage of underpasses by different wild species and effectiveness of the underpasses," said an official.

The corridor is surrounded by a forest region inhabited by



Elephants crossing the animal underpass on the Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor. BIB

the endangered species such as tigers, elephants, greater hornbills and king cobras.

The research identified the strategic management of the soundscape as a primary

factor in facilitating natural wildlife behaviour beneath the corridor. The data indicate that while generalist species, such as golden jackals and wild boar, have habituated to

significant traffic sound, sensitive species like elephants and spotted deer selectively utilise underpass segments with lower sound levels.

Utilising camera traps and

acoustic recorders along the corridor, the study documented a total of 1,11,234 images of humans, domestic animals, and wildlife over 40 days. Among these, 40,444 were attributed to 18 unique wild species utilising the underpass, including various carnivores, herbivores, ungulates, pheasants and primates.

The golden jackal was the most frequently captured, followed closely by nilgais, sambars, and spotted deers. Smaller mammals, including the indian hare, also showed consistent movement through the structures. The report also recorded 60 instances of the elephants safely utilising the corridors.

Deployment of advanced noise reduction strategies

including targeted sound barriers in high-frequency crossing areas will further enhance passage for noise-sensitive species.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will dedicate the 210-km Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor to the nation on April 14. This major infrastructure project will reduce travel time between Delhi and Dehradun to approximately two and a half hours, down from the current five hours.

The study reaffirms that well-planned infrastructure interventions, including underpasses and elevated corridors, play a crucial role in preserving the natural habitat of the wild animals and maintaining ecological connectivity.

CM interacts with students, faculty members at DU's North Campus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday interacted with students and women faculty members at the University of Delhi's North Campus, listening to their views, experiences and suggestions. Sitting at a tea stall on campus, the chief minister recalled her connection with the university as an alumnus and said the same paths now carried new faces and even bigger dreams.

She said the conversations over tea brought back old memories while also familiarising her with the aspirations for a new India. She described DU as more than just a university, saying it

always evokes a deep sense of belonging.

This was preceded by a signature campaign at DU's Faculty of Arts in support of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act), where the chief minister highlighted the need to enhance women's participation in governance and policymaking.

Interacting with the students and women faculty, the chief minister said meaningful change can be achieved only when women occupy decision-making positions, enabling them to address issues that directly affect society, families and their own lives.

Speaking on the act, she said, "I often wonder why we

all need this reservation. Every person, every woman, every daughter may not be able to reach this far on their own through normal courses. But today, women should play a much bigger role in running this country, in administration, in policy-making."

The chief minister said meaningful change can be achieved only when women occupy decision-making positions, enabling them to address issues that directly affect society, families and their lives.

She highlighted the Delhi government initiatives such as the Lakhpati Btiya and Anmol schemes, describing them as outcomes of sensitive and inclusive policy-making aimed at women's empower-



Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, centre, interacts with faculty at the Delhi University in New Delhi. PANKAJ KUMAR

ment and strengthening social security.

The event showcased women's leadership and

equal representation, with messages like "It's time for women to lead" and "Empowered women, pro-

perous nation". "I believe that when women come forward, become MLAs, ministers, and chief ministers, only then will it be possible to bring about change in the system," she asserted.

Calling the legislation a historic step, the chief minister expressed gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for its passage, saying the law furthers the cause from "Beti Bachao" (protect women) to "Beti Badhao" (empower women).

"Through this platform, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the prime minister for the monumental effort he undertook to introduce this legislation. He strove to bring every political party onto a single platform, recog-

nising the magnitude of the revolution this would spark in our nation," she asserted.

She noted that the demand for greater political representation for women dates back decades. Tracing its roots to 1931, she said the law enacted in 2023 reflects a long and persistent struggle, adding that ensuring its effective implementation is now a collective responsibility.

She urged the youth to actively support the initiative and help turn it into a mass movement, saying true democratic strength lies in equal participation in decision-making.

Expressing confidence in the law's impact, the chief minister said it would redefine political representation in

the country and help build a stronger, more balanced and progressive democracy.

"The enthusiasm of female students and women on campus for this signature campaign and women's reservation is a message in itself... The steps moving forward in this direction in Parliament on April 16 will give new direction and new confidence to the dreams, struggles, and aspirations of crores of mothers, sisters, and daughters of the country," the chief minister wrote on X.

She asserted that this step toward one-third representation in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies will give new strength to the daughters of the country.

PMO team visits Namu Bharat corridor, reviews operations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Dr PK Mishra, on Friday visited the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namu Bharat corridor and reviewed the functioning of India's first regional rapid transit system, with a focus on technology, connectivity, and commuter experience.

Dr Mishra was accompanied by Tarun Kapoor, advisor to the Prime Minister, and other senior officials from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs Srinivas Katkithala and other senior ministry officials were also present during the visit.

The delegation was received at Sarai Kale Khan Namu Bharat station by NCRTC Managing Director Shalabh Goel, along with senior officials. The station



serves as the starting point of the corridor and is being developed as a major multimodal transport hub.

Officials briefed the delegation on the 82-kilometre corridor connecting Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Meerut.

The project has been positioned as a key initiative to improve regional mobility and reduce traffic conges-

tion and vehicular emissions. According to the presentation, the corridor is designed to support sustainable urban transport while enabling faster and more efficient travel across the region. It also aims to promote balanced urban growth by improving connectivity between cities.

Dr Mishra reviewed the integrated design of Sarai Kale Khan station, which connects with multiple transport systems, including the Delhi Metro, railway station, integrated bus terminal, and city bus services. Officials said the station will act as a central hub where different modes of transport converge to provide seamless travel.

The delegation was informed that all three priority corridors under Phase 1 of the Namu Bharat project will meet at Sarai Kale Khan and will be interoperable. This integration is expected to improve commuter convenience and reduce reliance on private vehicles.

Dr Mishra appreciated the concept of linking multiple transport networks into a unified system. He noted that such integration can improve efficiency and encourage people to shift to public transport. During the visit, the delegation undertook a round trip on the Namu Bharat train from Sarai Kale Khan to Duhai Depot station. Officials demonstrated various features of the train designed to enhance passenger comfort and accessibility. Special attention was drawn to facilities aimed at inclusivity, including arrangements for carrying stretchers for medical emergencies.

MCD to roll out microchipping, vaccination drive for stray dogs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) is set to roll out a citywide drive for microchipping and mass vaccination of stray dogs, with tenders likely to be floated within the next 15 days.

In a first, the civic body is also set to conduct a comprehensive dog census through the microchipping drive. The exercise will record key details such as age, sex, colour, location (area and ward), vaccination status, and the NGO responsible for immunisation, officials said.

An official said that the exercise will begin within two months from the completion of the tendering process. "Once the proposal receives the commissioner's approval, tenders will be



He said given the scale of the exercise, at least 35 teams, each consisting of four members, will be required to cover all 250 wards. Each team must be equipped with a vehicle fitted with essential infrastructure such as vaccine storage units and scanners.

The civic body is inclined to appoint a single agency for the project to ensure accountability.

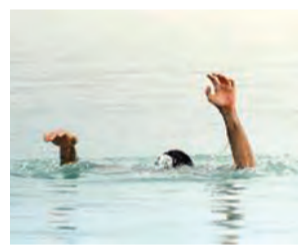
"Since stray dogs are free-ranging, fixing responsibility in dog bite cases becomes difficult. Having one agency will make monitoring and accountability more effective," the official said. The civic body aims to complete microchipping of all adult stray dogs this year, while puppies below three months will be covered in the next phase, he said.

Child drowns in farmhouse pool in Mehrauli

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A two-and-a-half-year-old boy drowned after allegedly falling into a swimming pool at a farmhouse in south Delhi's Mehrauli area on Wednesday evening, police said. A case has been registered against the farmhouse owner.

The child, son of Bengali Majhi, a mason from Bihar's Bhagalpur, had stepped out of his home around 6.15 pm after eating, telling his mother he was going to visit



his aunt who lived nearby. He never reached her. By 7 pm, his family was searching for him. His grandmother found his clothes lying near the swimming pool of the adjoining farmhouse. When the family rushed to the pool, the

boy's body was floating in the water. He was pulled out and taken to a nearby hospital, where doctors declared him dead.

The family had been living in the Mehrauli area for the past three months after relocating to Delhi in search of work. The child's maternal grandfather, Vipin, who also worked as a mason at a construction site near the farmhouse alongside the boy's father, described the sequence of events to the police.

"That evening, we were

working at the construction site near the farmhouse while he was playing nearby. Around 6.15 pm, he went back home after telling us he was hungry," Vipin said.

After being fed by his mother, the child stepped out again. He was familiar with the area and would regularly move between the houses and the work site to play, Vipin said. No one thought anything of it when he left. "When we saw the clothes near the pool, we rushed there, but it was too late," Vipin said.

Govt schools to get textbooks by April 20: Sood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Government-run schools will receive textbooks by April 20, Education Minister Ashish Sood said on Friday, amid concern over delays in distribution at the start of the academic session. Sood said that the supply of books saw a slight delay due to a tendering process adopted for printing, which helps reduce costs by 20 to 30 per cent for the Directorate of Education (DoE) and allows better utilisation of resources.

The textbooks are being printed in improved quality, and distribution has already begun for primary classes in

MCD schools, with all institutions expected to receive them by April 20, he added.

Meanwhile, the Delhi government on Wednesday directed private unaided recognised schools not to compel students or parents to purchase books, writing materials or uniforms from specific vendors, reiterating that families must have the freedom to choose where to buy these items.

The DoE said the directive follows complaints that some schools were forcing parents to buy educational materials from designated shops, in violation of provisions under the Delhi School Education Act and Rules (DSEAR), 1973, and the Right



to Education Rules, 2011. It asked schools to provide clear, class-wise lists of prescribed items and ensure multiple purchasing options in the open market.

In its order, it also said complaints had indicated that in some schools, students were compelled to allegedly purchase items such as books, notebooks, uniforms, bags and accessories like belts and ties from particular vendors,

often at higher prices.

It added that schools must ensure that prescribed books align with official curriculum and examination guidelines and follow directions issued by boards such as CBSE, ICSE and state education authorities. Schools have also been asked to upload detailed lists of books and materials on their websites in a transparent manner.

Activist and lawyer Ashok Agarwal had also flagged concerns over delays in government schools, writing to the chief minister that students are yet to receive textbooks even a week after the new academic session began.

He urged authorities to intervene, stressing the impact on students' education and future.

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is hereby notified that Mrs. Rekha Pandey is the absolute owner of Plot No. 510 (Eastern Portion), area measuring 50 Sq. Yds., out of Kharsa Mustali No. 8/13, situated at Wazirpur Marg, Gurgaon, Tehsil Badli, Distt. Faridabad, Haryana. The Sale Deed, executed by Mr. Shyam Sunder as General Attorney of Mrs. Smt. Devi in favour of Mrs. Rekha Pandey in respect of the said Plot, is being replaced by Mrs. Rekha Pandey. An FIR regarding the loss of the aforesaid document, has been lodged vide LR No. 22156/2026, dated 09.04.2026. Any individual or entity in possession of the aforementioned Original Sale Deed dated 09.04.2026, is requested to return it at the earliest. Kindly contact Adv. Sachin Bhupinder Kumar at +91-829594981 within 7 days from the date of this notice.

PUBLIC NOTICE
To be known to all that I, Lakshmi Narayan Ghosh S/o Late Sh. Arun Chandra Ghosh R/o H.No. 63, PKT B-5 Sector-4, Rohini Delhi-110085. The All Original Documents i.e. Original Allotment-cum-Demand Letter, Possession Letter, Site Possession Slip, NOC for water & Electricity Connection and C & D Form issued by DDA, vide DDA File No. F12 (1033) 1983/RNR/IN have been Lost/ Misplaced somewhere and not traceable despite of my best efforts. An NCR/FIR of this has been lodged in Police Station Vijay Vihar, Delhi vide LR No. 221466/2026 on 09/04/2026. Any person(s) claiming any right, interest having any objection or found in possession of original documents, may write/contact with above named person at above address/phone No. 9810776922 with in 15 days of this publication or Write/inform to Dy. Director (CE) or Director (CL), A-Block, 2nd Floor, Vikas Sadan, INA, New Delhi-110023

Public Notice
We, Jaspal Singh Chadha, D.S. Chadha (S/o Late Sh. Surinder Singh Chadha) and Tarun Kaur Anand (D/o Late Sh. Surinder Singh Chadha), hereby inform that our father Late Sh. Surinder Singh Chadha was expired on 02.06.2014 and we are his only legal heirs. We have no objection if Mr. Jaspal Singh Chadha applies for and obtains the Surviving Member / Legal Heir Certificate on our behalf.

D.S. Chadha
Tarun Kaur Anand

PUBLIC NOTICE
General Public is hereby informed that my client, Sh. Azad Singh S/o Lt. Sh. Nale Singh R/o D/30, Phase-1, Budh Vihar, Delhi - 110086. Do hereby affirm and declare that he has evicted his daughter "Usha Kumari" due to her misconduct, disobedience, and irresponsible behaviour from all his movable and immovable properties and disowned, disinherited, debarred and severed all relations with her and she has no right, title, interest, or claim whatsoever in his properties. Any person dealing with "Usha Kumari" in respect of his properties shall do so at their own risk and cost.

ROHIT KUMAR (ADVOCATE)
RKP LAW CHAMBERS

NORTHERN RAILWAY
Corrigendum
Tender Notice No. 93/2025-2026 dated: 11.03.2026
S.No.: 04 Tender Number 07265018 is due on 13.04.2026
In reference to the above cited tender, the due date of opening of Tender No. 07265018 has been postponed from 13.04.2026 to 21.04.2026. The all-other Terms & Conditions of the subject tender will remain unchanged. The Corrigendum has been published on Website www.ireps.gov.in

Form No. INC-19 Notice
(Pursuant to rule 22 the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014)
1. Notice is hereby given that, **Essentia Hospital (CIN: U74900DL2015NPL288750)** a company licensed under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013, having its registered office at SC, Pocket-B-6, Mayapuri Vihar, Phase-III, East Delhi, Delhi, India, 110096, an application has been made to the Registrar of State of Haryana to the National Capital Territory of Delhi in Form INC-18 for surrender of its Section 8 license, a license the company was given to be registered under sub-section(5) of section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 without the addition of the word "Limited" or the case may be, the words "Private Limited" to its name.

NORTHERN RAILWAY
TENDER NOTICE
(Through e-tendering)
Tender No. 558-Sig-16-M-TENDER-1474 Dated: 10.04.2026
Name of work with its location: Provision of RTU at Interlocked Mid-Section LC Gates over Delhi Division.
App. Cost of the work (₹) ₹ 3,75,30,685.43/-
Bid Security (₹) ₹ 7,50,600.00/-
Address of the office: Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.
Date & Time for uploading the tender / closing of the tender: Tender uploading 10/04/2026/ closing date & time - 04.05.2026 up to 15.00 hrs.
Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc. See the Northern Railway website www.ireps.gov.in & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055

NORTHERN RAILWAY
CORRIGENDUM
Ref:- i) Tender Notice No. 86/2025-2026 Dated: 12.02.2026 SN: 02
ii) T.No. 07235090A is due on 13.04.2026.
In reference to the above cited tender, the due date of opening of Tender No. 07235090A has been postponed from 13.04.2026 to 27.04.2026. The all other Terms & Conditions of the subject tender will remain unchanged. The corrigendum has been published on website www.ireps.gov.in. 11/07/2026

PUBLIC NOTICE
My clients Sh. Shish Pal Singh S/o Sh. Puran Singh and Smt. Sharda Devi W/o Sh. Shish Pal Singh, both R/o C-187, Near Hanuman Mandir, Near Ashok Nagar, Trikolpuri, Delhi-110096 has earlier disowned in 15.07.2024 their son Prem Chand from all their movable or immovable properties and assets. Now, due to reconciliation, disownment is withdrawn. He has full rights. Previous notices cancelled.

Ravi Karakam (Advocate) Ch. No. G-722, Karkardooma Court, Delhi-110032

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given to the General Public on behalf of our client, HFC Bank Ltd. in respect of said property, vide Regd. Apartment No. 102, 102/1, G. Block, on the ground floor, in the Block-I, having super area of 151.67 Sq. Mts. (1632.59 Sq. Ft.) in the project name as "MOR CORNER WALK" situated at Sector-74, Village Bagpur, Khada, Tehsil & District Gurgaon (Gurgaon), Haryana. In view of a Conveyance Deed Dated 29.10.2024 executed by M/s. Promit Engineering Pvt. Ltd. in respect of said property, only regd. 102/1, Apartment No. 102, 102/1, G. Block, on the ground floor, in the Block-I, having super area of 151.67 Sq. Mts. (1632.59 Sq. Ft.) in the project name as "MOR CORNER WALK" situated at Sector-74, Village Bagpur, Khada, Tehsil & District Gurgaon (Gurgaon), Haryana. In view of a Conveyance Deed Dated 29.10.2024 executed by M/s. Promit Engineering Pvt. Ltd. in favour of M/s. Mansu-24.09.2025 doc. no. 2025/221/12449 executed by Mr. Sanjay Kumar Grover. In favour of Mr. Mohit Anjeja in respect of said property.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the general public that Mr. Mohit Anjeja is the owner of Property bearing No. RZ-120, measuring 90 sq. yds., with all its roof terrace rights, out of Kharsa No. 13/201/2, situated in the area of Village-Kharsa, colony known as Ravi Nagar Extn., New Delhi through Sale Deed dated 24.09.2025 doc. no. 2025/221/12449 executed by Mr. Sanjay Kumar Grover. In favour of Mr. Mohit Anjeja in respect of said property.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Reg: Plot No.388, Sector-37, Pace City - II, Gurugram
Plot No. 388, Sector - 37, Pace City-II, Gurugram measuring 450 sq. meter was allotted by the Corporation to Mrs. Kamlesh Malhotra Vide Regular letter of Allotment dated 21.06.2001. The Corporation has been informed that the original allottee Mrs. Kamlesh Malhotra had expired on 24.12.2021. The legal heirs of the deceased allottee, Mr Mahesh Chander Malhotra, Mr Nitin Malhotra, Mr Saurabh Malhotra, Mrs Sonia Gadi.

Satin Housing Finance Limited
THE HOUSING IS HOME
SATIN HOUSING FINANCE LIMITED
Reg. Office: 9th Floor, Kundan Bhawan, Azadpur Corner, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110033
Corporate Office: Plot No. 492, Vijaya Vihar, Phase-3, Gurugram, Haryana-122016

PUBLIC NOTICE
Notice is hereby given that our Rewari Branch, having address at Double Storey Shop Site without Basement in the Urban Area of Sector-5, HUDA Rewari Tehsil & Distt. Rewari, Haryana-123401 will be closed with effect from 10.07.2026.
Date: 11.04.2026
Place: Rewari
Sd/-
Authorised Officer

PUBLIC NOTICE
Kind attention Mr. S. Ginni Filaments Ltd., 110 Km Stone, Delhi Mathura Road, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh (Also D-196, Sector-63, Noida Gautam Budh Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-201307)
Email: secretarial@gnimfilaments.com) supplied defective PPE Kits vide PO purchase orders PO No. -01/Proc-PPE/SL/09-21 & No. 02-A/Proc-PPE/SL/02-22 respectively, which you have been repeatedly asked to collect via notices, but you have failed to collect these and also not paid the godown charges where these kits are housed, these 1,93,000 nos. kits (approx. 193000) defective PPE Kits vide PO mentioned case within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice to present his side and file his written statement or objection, and it is hereby notified that if his written statement or objection is not filed within the said period, the court will hear the plaintiff and pass judgement in the special civil suit.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Whereas the plaintiff has filed a Spl.C.S in the court of 2nd J.C.SID Belapur, Accordingly, it is hereby declared that summons issued you could not be served in the ordinary manner and this hon'ble court has ordered substituted service under order V Rule 20 of the code of Civil Procedure, 1908. However the said Defendant or his representative may appear in the above mentioned case within 30 days from the date of publication of this notice to present his side and file his written statement or objection, and it is hereby notified that if his written statement or objection is not filed within the said period, the court will hear the plaintiff and pass judgement in the special civil suit.

PUBLIC NOTICE
Note: The next date for hearing in the above mentioned matter has been fixed on 18.04.2026 as per the court order dated 07.02.2026. Issued on today's date 08.04.2026 as per the court order dated 07.02.2026 under the seal of the court.
Jr. Clerk
Civil Court S.D., Belapur

PUBLIC NOTICE
To whomsoever it may Concern
This is to inform the General Public that following shares of Hindustan Unilever Limited having its Corporate office at Unilever House BD Sawant Marg, Chakia, Andheri (E) Mumbai 400099 in the name of late Sushma Goyal have been lost and I Arun Kumar Goyal have applied for transmission in my name

Sr.	Name of Shareholder	Folio No	Certificate No	Distinctive Nos	No of Shares
1	Sushma Goyal	HLL 2750216	5163276	886744971 to 886745470	500

Any person who has any claim on these shares should lodge his claim to company or its RTA KFIN TECHNOLOGIES PVT. LTD. Selenium Tower B, Plot No. 31-32, Financial District Nanakramguda, Seringampally, Hyderabad, Rangareddy, Telangana 500032 within 15 days of publication of this notice.
Date: 11.04.2026
Place: Ghaziabad
Arun Kumar Goyal

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HIMACHAL PRADESH UNIVERSITY
(NAAC ACCREDITED "A" GRADE UNIVERSITY)
GYAN PATH, SUMMER HILL, SHIMLA-171005
Construction Division No.-1
INVITATION FOR BIDS (IFB)
The Executive Engineer (Const.), Division No.-1, H.P. University, Shimla-5, on behalf of Vice-Chancellor H.P. University, invites bids online on the basis of e-Tender on item rate, in electronic tendering system, in two covers system for the work "Renovation of wash-rooms of Boys, Girls & Staff in Gandhi Bhawan Building at H.P. University, Shimla-5. (SH: Civil & Public Health Work)" from the eligible and approved Contractors/Firms registered with HPPWD Department. For more details please visit H.P. University website i.e. www.hpuni.ac.in or http://hptenders.gov.in.
Executive Engineer (Const.), Division No.-1

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Executive Engineer (Const.), Division No.-1



MCD panel clears proposal for redevelopment of Town Hall

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi's (MCD) Standing Committee has approved a proposal for the conservation and redevelopment of the 160-year-old Town Hall building in Chandni Chowk.

The Town Hall, owned by the MCD, was constructed between 1861 and 1866 as the 'Delhi Institute' and later became the municipal headquarters. It continued to function as the civic body's main office until 2012, after which it remained largely vacant

and in a dilapidated condition.

Officials said the building, classified as a Grade-I heritage structure by the Delhi government, will be redeveloped in accordance with conservation norms to preserve its architectural and historical character, and open it for public use.

Standing Committee Chairperson Satya Sharma, who signed the approval, said the project envisions converting the landmark into an "immersive museum and interpretation centre" that will showcase the history of

Shahjahanabad and the Town Hall through interactive galleries, archival material, and digital displays.

Sharma said key aspects such as project cost, revenue sharing and concession period will be finalised after detailed feasibility studies and that the Delhi Tourism and Transportation Development Corporation (DTTDC) has been tasked with preparing a detailed project report and developing a financial and operational framework.

"The plan also includes guided heritage walks, cultur-



al events, educational programmes, and spaces for food and retail," the statement read.

According to the statement, the proposal took shape after a site inspection by the MCD commissioner on February 11 this year, following which the DTTDC was asked to prepare a concept plan. The proposal was discussed on March 2, and DTTDC later sought in-principle approval through a letter dated March 17.

Officials said the project has been aligned with the Centre's National Mission for

Developing Fifty Globally Competitive Tourism Destinations.

The redevelopment will be executed under a Develop-Operate-Maintain (DOM) model, under which the MCD will not incur capital expenditure while retaining ownership of the property.

"A tripartite agreement will be signed between the MCD, DTTDC, and a private operator, who will handle operations and revenue generation," it said.

Revenue is expected to come from museum entry fees, heritage circuits, venue

rentals, and food and retail services, officials said.

The project is expected to be completed in about 36 months in four phases, starting with structural assessment and conservation planning, followed by restoration work, museum development and, finally, public opening and operations, they said.

They added that the initiative will help conserve a key heritage asset without burdening the civic body financially, while boosting tourism and economic activity in Chandni Chowk.

CM unveils new initiatives for gig workers, slum dwellers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Friday unveiled new initiatives to improve conditions for gig workers and slum dwellers, including rest centres with food facilities and permanent housing for 717 families in Savda Ghevra.

The decisions were taken at the 35th board meeting of the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board held at the Secretariat. The meeting focused on slum rehabilitation, the welfare of labourers, and the strengthening of basic infrastructure across the city.

The Chief Minister said the Government's priority is to ensure dignified housing, access to food, and better living conditions for vulnerable sections. She said the administration is working towards building an inclusive system that supports workers and those in need.

A major announcement was the plan to create dedicated resting centres for gig workers and labourers. These facilities will be integrated with Atal Canteens and will provide food, rest,



and essential services at one location. In some places, separate urinal facilities will also be developed for gig workers.

Officials will identify suitable sites for these centres. The Chief Minister conceived the idea through interactions with gig workers, and policymakers have now incorporated it into planning.

The meeting also approved changes in the Atal Canteen scheme. A total of 100 canteens and distribution centres will be reorganised to improve service delivery. Revised timings have been set, with lunch to be served from 10.30 am to

board cleared the allotment of Economically Weaker Section flats in Savda Ghevra to 717 slum dwellers. Among them, 528 beneficiaries fall in the eligible category, while 189 are classified as ineligible but are still included under the plan.

These beneficiaries belong to Bhai Ram Camp, Masjid Camp, and DID Camp in the Race Course area.

In addition, 221 beneficiaries from four previously cleared slum clusters will also be allotted flats in the same area. Officials said the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs will provide financial assistance of ₹1.12 lakh per beneficiary. Each beneficiary will have to deposit ₹30,000 towards maintenance within three months.

The board also approved several infrastructure and repair projects. These include repairing 1,060 flats in Sultanpuri and making multiple housing units in Dwarka Sector 16 B habitable. Work will also be undertaken to improve roads, parks, sewer systems, and pathways for around 7,400 flats in Bhalswa.

In an administrative deci-

sion, the financial approval limit of the DUSIB Chief Executive Officer has been increased from ₹3 crore to ₹10 crore. This step is expected to speed up project execution and reduce delays. The tenure of agencies managing shelter homes has been extended till May 31, 2026, or until new agencies are appointed.

The Chief Minister also directed officials to prepare a detailed report on DUSIB's work over the past year. The report will assess the impact of schemes, track progress, and identify gaps. She stressed that all initiatives must be implemented in a time-bound and transparent manner. The focus, she said, should be on ensuring that benefits reach the intended recipients on the ground. "The goal is not just to roll out schemes, but to make sure they translate into real change," the Chief Minister said.

The measures are part of a broader effort by the Delhi Government to address long-standing urban challenges and improve the quality of life for slum dwellers, workers, and other vulnerable groups.

HC permits several restaurants in Khan Market to operate without fire NOC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Termining Khan Market the "shaan of Delhi", the Delhi High Court on Friday permitted several restaurants in the area to operate without a fire NOC if they maintained occupancy of less than 50 people.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav observed that the outlets were situated in the city's most prestigious and historically significant commercial area, which has "structural constraints" since its inception, and the court did not want these eateries to shut down due to any "extra-neous" situation.

The court was dealing with a batch of petitions by several Khan Market outlets, including Khan Chacha, Anglow, Starbucks Coffee, and Sly Granny. The restaurants sought renewal of their health licence and other approvals for running their business without the authorities insisting on a fire NOC as a precondition.

"The shops in question are situated in Delhi's most pres-



tigious and historically significant commercial area. It is also a heritage market. This iconic and unique architecture, character and culture are well-established. Because of structural constraints, the entire market has only one feasible entry and exit point for the first and second floors, where the restaurants are located. This feature remains in existence since its inception," the court observed.

"The petitioners shall not be denied operation of a restaurant only on account of lack of fire NOC so long as the petitioners maintain an occupancy of less than 50 at a given point of time," the

court ordered.

The court clarified that if any action is contemplated against the petitioners for lack of fire safety measures, it will not be given effect to without 30 days' prior notice.

The petitioners assured that they would not house more than 50 guests at a time and would comply with all necessary compliance for "non-assembly buildings" except the fire NOC.

Noting that there seemed no reason to disbelieve the petitioners, the court said the petitioners should not be disallowed from running their outlets only on account of structural constraints.

DDA to connect citizens with city's rich heritage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has organised a week-long programme starting April 13 to connect the people of Delhi, especially the youth, with the rich heritage of the national Capital.

The Heritage Week includes promotion of art, culture and heritage awareness, and the civic authority has partnered with the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) for an exhibition/documentation of conservation efforts taken in the Mehrauli area, the DDA said on Friday.

Through the Heritage Week, DDA seeks to deepen public awareness and pride in Delhi's heritage assets, encourage community participation and youth engagement, showcase its ongoing efforts in heritage conservation and urban ecology, and foster a stronger sense of ownership.

The larger objective is to inspire the public across age groups to value, experience, and actively participate in preserving the cultural and historical identity of the city.



Vice Chairman, DDA N Saravana Kumar said, "Delhi's heritage is a living legacy that must remain central to the city's future. Through Heritage Week, DDA seeks to strengthen public connection, especially among the youth, with these invaluable historical spaces. Our continued focus is to ensure that heritage conservation, ecological restoration, and public place-making move together as integral elements of Delhi's balanced and sustainable urban development."

The week-long initiative includes student engagement activities, a photography competition, a student dialogue competition, a sketching and drawing competition, a story-writing activity, exhibitions and a cultural night programme.

Over 50% de-silting completed in 77 drains: Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Irrigation and Flood Control Minister Parvesh Sahib Singh on Friday said his department is working on a war footing to de-silt the drains as part of monsoon preparedness, and more than 50 per cent of the process in 77 identified drains was completed.

He also informed that more than 14 lakh metric tonnes of silt were removed so far. The department has set a target of 28 lakh metric tonnes, and work is being carried out continuously to meet this goal within timelines, the minister said.

Parvesh Sahib Singh made these assertions after conducting an on-ground inspection of de-silting work at two critical IFCD drains, the Delhi Gate drain and the Barapulla drain. The visit highlighted both the scale and seriousness of efforts underway to tackle waterlogging in the capital before the onset of rains.



In a major development, the Delhi Gate drain, which had remained covered with slabs for nearly 40 years, is now being opened up for thorough cleaning. For decades, the covered structure had severely restricted proper desilting, contributing to repeated waterlogging in nearby areas.

For the first time in four decades, slabs are being dismantled to allow complete access to the drain, enabling deep cleaning and restoration of its carrying capacity.

The Minister informed that de-silting at the Delhi Gate drain has already crossed 70 per cent, with over 21,000 metric tonnes of silt removed so far.

Police bust Cambodia-linked SIM box fraud ring

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Police's Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations unit has dismantled a module of an international cybercrime syndicate with links to Cambodia and other Southeast Asian countries, arresting two men from East Delhi who helped foreign fraudsters impersonate law enforcement officials and trap victims in so-called "digital arrest" scams.

The arrests were made during Operation CyHawk 4.0, conducted on April 6 and 7, after investigators tracked an illegal SIM box setup to a premises in GD Colony, Mayur Vihar Phase III. The technology at the heart of the racket was a 32-




slot active SIM box, a device that routes international VoIP calls into Indian mobile networks, allowing overseas fraudsters to reach victims on what appear to be ordinary local numbers. To a victim receiving such a call, there is nothing to suggest the voice on the other end is sitting in a call centre in Southeast Asia.

That deception was the entire point. Once contact was made, fraudsters posed as officials from the Delhi Police, the CBI, or Customs. Victims were told that a fake FIR had been registered against them for money laundering, drug trafficking, or similar serious offences. The threat of imminent arrest was used

to induce panic. Victims were then told that to "verify" their accounts and avoid arrest, they needed to transfer money into what the fraudsters described as RBI-mandated accounts. The money, once transferred, vanished into a network of mule accounts. The same network also ran fraudulent investment schemes, luring victims with promises of high returns before disappearing with the funds.

The accused, Vaibhav Raj, 29, and Anil Kumar, 28, were arrested following coordinated raids across Delhi-NCR. Their roles were distinct and complementary.

Vaibhav handled the technical infrastructure, including the SIM box setup, internet connectivity, and routing of calls.




OUR CENSUS OUR DEVELOPMENT

(First Phase of Census 2027)

Common queries on Self-Enumeration (SE) and their Answers (Part-1)


WHAT IS SELF-ENUMERATION?

Self-Enumeration is an online process in which you fill and submit your household details on the SE portal (se.census.gov.in) yourself, without waiting for an enumerator



- ❖ **Is Self-Enumeration mandatory?**
No, it is an additional facility. If you do not do it, an enumerator will collect data during field visit
- ❖ **Can I do Self-Enumeration in any language?**
This facility is available in Hindi, English and 14 Indian languages
- ❖ **Is internet required for Self-Enumeration?**
Yes, internet is required to access the portal
- ❖ **Is my information safe?**
Yes, all data is secure, encrypted and stored on government servers
- ❖ **What is SE ID and its use?**
After submission of information, you will receive a unique 11 digit SE ID (Also via SMS/email) which must be shown to the enumerator during her/his visit to your house
- ❖ **What if SE ID is forgotten?**
It can be retrieved using the registered mobile number on the portal
- ❖ **Will an enumerator visit after Self-Enumeration?**
Yes, the enumerator will visit your home and confirm your details using the SE ID
- ❖ **Do I need to upload any documents?**
No documents are required to be uploaded
- ❖ **Is help available on the portal?**
Portal has user guide, flowcharts, tutorial videos, FAQs and tooltips

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CBC 19108/13/0003/2627

India concerned over rising civilian deaths in Lebanon

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India on Friday expressed deep concern over rising civilian casualties in Lebanon, as Israeli military operations continue despite a fragile two-week ceasefire aimed at halting the month-long conflict. Speaking at an inter-ministerial briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal described the situation as "very disturbing," particularly given India's longstanding engagement in peace efforts across West Asia.



THE GOVERNMENT IS ALSO CLOSELY MONITORING THE SAFETY OF INDIAN CITIZENS IN LEBANON, WHERE AROUND 1,000 INDIANS ARE CURRENTLY RESIDING. INDIA'S EMBASSY REMAINS IN REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE COMMUNITY TO ENSURE THEIR SAFETY AMID THE ESCALATING SITUATION.

MEA SPOKESPERSON RANDHIR JAISWAL

Reiterating New Delhi's position, Jaiswal emphasised that protecting civilian lives remains a top priority. He noted that India is "deeply concerned" by reports of significant civilian casualties in Lebanon. "As a troop-contributing country to the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, which is invested in Lebanon's peace and security, the trajectory of

events is very disturbing," he said. He added that India has consistently called for adherence to international law, stressing that respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is essential in resolving conflicts.

The developments come as a ceasefire reportedly brokered between the United States and Iran faces increas-

ing strain. While Tehran has maintained that the truce includes a halt to Israeli operations in Lebanon, both Washington and Israel have rejected that interpretation.

Reports indicate that Israeli strikes targeting Hezbollah positions have continued despite the agreement. Lebanese authorities say a recent wave of attacks result-

ed in hundreds of deaths, raising fears of a broader regional escalation.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu dismissed suggestions that a ceasefire applies to Lebanon, stating that military operations against Hezbollah will continue.

"There is no ceasefire in Lebanon," Netanyahu said, adding that Israel would persist with its campaign until security concerns are addressed. He also indicated that his Government is preparing for direct negotiations with Lebanon, aimed at disarming Hezbollah and pursuing what he described as a potential "historic peace agreement."

Meanwhile, Nawaf Salam is expected to travel to Washington, DC for further discussions, as diplomatic tensions grow over differing interpretations of the ceasefire and the risk of wider conflict looms.

Dispute resolution credibility key for investors: CJJ

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said the credibility of India's dispute resolution mechanisms will increasingly influence how investors assess the country as a reliable destination for sustained investment. "Globalisation ultimately depends not only upon the movement of capital, but upon the stability of expectations. Arbitration provides that stability. It reassures investors, supports commercial partnerships, and ensures that disagreement does not become disruption," CJJ Surya Kant said while delivering the inaugural address at the 5th Edition of ICA International Conference on "Arbitration in the Era of Globalisation-Legal Technology, Economic Development & Cross-Border Disputes in New Delhi on Friday.

Institutional arbitration in India must continue to expand its reach, strengthen professional capacity, and deepen engagement with global best practices, the CJJ said. "Encouraging parties, particularly public sector bodies and large commercial entities, to adopt institutional rules more frequently, will play an important role in this transition," he added.

The CJJ further said that Institutional arbitration can contribute significantly to the development of specialised arbitration



capacity — both at the Bar and within Arbitral Panels. "Expanding such capacity and infrastructure across the country will enhance India's position as a global hub for arbitration." On the occasion, Delhi L-G Taranjit Singh Sandhu said, "As the country deepens its global partnerships and advances its development goals, strengthening arbitration aligns with the need for a predictable and rules-based environment for commerce.

BJP fields 28 minorities in Ahmedabad, Vadodara local body polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Ahmedabad

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has allotted tickets to 9 minority candidates in Ahmedabad district. Out of these, three candidates have been fielded for the Taluka Panchayat elections.

Samsuddin Pathan has been given a ticket from the Virochan Nagar seat in Sanand, while Taufiq Umdiya is contesting from Bajarda in Dhandhuka. Kayamuddin Sidani has been nominated for the Viramgam Taluka Panchayat. Additionally, 9 minority candidates have been fielded across three municipalities in the district.

Meanwhile, in Vadodara district, the BJP has fielded 19 Muslim candidates. Among them, 8 candidates are contesting from Dabhoi and 5 from Savli. Muslim candidates have also been given tickets in Karjan and Padra. However, no Muslim candidate has been fielded for the Vadodara Panchayat.

Unseasonal rain, hail damage crops across 2.49 lakh hectares

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Recent unseasonal rains and hailstorms have damaged an estimated 2.49 lakh hectares of ready-to-harvest Rabi crops and horticulture produce across States and Union territories, with wheat bearing the brunt and assessments still underway.

The final figures are expected to be higher after

the surveys by the affected States. The reported damage till April 8 covers wheat, mustard, and chickpeas, most severely followed by horticulture crops like mango and litchi.

Major damage occurred in Rajasthan, Punjab, Maharashtra, and Uttar Pradesh just before harvest, with many farmers reporting 100 per cent loss. Alongside



cereals, crops such as potato,

onion and garlic in States including Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have also suffered damage.

The Centre has recently asked states to conduct a ground survey of crop losses caused by unseasonal rain in April, officials said on Friday said Wednesday, as several parts of the country reported damage to standing crops and horticulture produce. The directive comes amid

concerns over losses to wheat, pulses, oilseeds and fruit crops in affected regions.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the "Unnat Krishi Mela" launch in Raigarh district of Madhya Pradesh, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday said Wednesday, as several parts of the country reported damage to standing crops and horticulture produce. The directive comes amid

concerns over losses to wheat, pulses, oilseeds and fruit crops in affected regions.

Speaking to reporters ahead of the "Unnat Krishi Mela" launch in Raigarh district of Madhya Pradesh, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday said Wednesday, as several parts of the country reported damage to standing crops and horticulture produce. The directive comes amid

the survey. States have been advised to complete the assessment at the earliest and submit reports so that relief measures can be considered. According to officials, a preliminary estimate is expected that over six lakh hectares of cropped area have been affected across 13 States, including Uttar Pradesh (347,366.43 ha), Maharashtra (204,704 ha) and Bihar (45,000 ha).



Amit Shah unveils BJP's Sonar Bangla vision...

The promise is expected to resonate among sections of Matua and refugee Hindu voters — a section the BJP has assiduously cultivated for years through the Citizenship Amendment Act and repeated references to "infiltration".

"The UCC has been implemented in several BJP-ruled states. We will implement it in Bengal within six months so that there is one law for every citizen. In Bengal, one law will be ensured for all citizens," Shah said.

It also pledged transparent, merit-based recruitment and said deserving candidates would be given permanent jobs.

For farmers, the BJP promised to increase assistance under the PM-Kisan scheme to Rs 9,000 annually by adding Rs 3,000 from the State Government to the Centre's existing Rs 6,000. Shah announced that AIIMS, IIT, IIM and an institute of fashion designing would be set up in different districts of North Bengal, while a new cancer hospital with modern facilities would also come up in the region.

Four new townships would be developed across the state after suitable locations are identified, while special deep-sea ports would be built at Tajpur and Kulpi, and a separate development plan drawn up for the Haldia port, the manifesto promised. The BJP also promised a 10-year action plan for Kolkata, which Shah said would be projected globally as a "living city".

Darjeeling would be developed as a heritage tourism destination, while the hill areas would be developed "keeping Bengal united", a formulation apparently aimed at balancing the BJP's support base in the hills with anxieties in the plains over any suggestion of division.

Alongside development came a heavy cultural layer. The BJP said it would develop a Chaitanya Mahaprabhu spiritual circuit, establish a cultural centre in the name of Rabindranath Tagore and set up a Vande Mataram museum.

Vance heads to Pakistan for talks as Trump...

Confusion also persists over the scope of the ceasefire, particularly whether it extends to Lebanon, where tensions involving Israel and Hezbollah continue to simmer.

On board Air Force Two, Vance struck a cautious tone, saying he was "looking forward to negotiations" and signalling willingness to engage if Iran acts in "good faith." However, he warned that any attempt to mislead Washington would be met with firm resistance.

Security has been tightened across Islamabad, with increased checkpoints and paramilitary deployments as international delegations begin arriving. The Iranian delegation is yet to reach the Pakistani capital, adding to the sense of uncertainty surrounding the talks.

Diplomats say the negotiations could be among the most consequential US-Iran engagements in decades, with implications stretching far beyond bilateral ties to the broader stability of the Middle East.

Trump's rhetoric—blending promises of a "reset" with threats of unprecedented military action—has sharpened the stakes at a critical juncture. Analysts suggest the messaging may be designed to pressure Tehran ahead of negotiations, while also projecting strength to domestic and international audiences.

As the world watches Islamabad, the question remains whether this moment will lead to de-escalation—or push an already volatile region closer to the brink.

Boat tragedy in Vrindavan kills 10

"Sixteen to 17 people have been rescued safely so far. Efforts are ongoing to locate the missing," the DM said earlier, adding that all tourists onboard were pulled out so far, according to officials.

Medical authorities at the Vrindavan Joint Hospital said the deceased include six men and four women. Rescue operations are underway with teams of State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) and National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), and around 50 local divers deployed at the site. A local diver, identified as Gulab, said about 15 people have been pulled out so far, according to officials.

The tourists were part of a larger group of around 150 pilgrims from Ludhiana and Muktsar in Punjab who had come to Vrindavan.

Eyewitnesses told the media that the boat began to sway violently due to gusty winds, its speed increased and it collided with a pontoon bridge, causing it to overturn.

Officials, however, said that the boat collided with a floating pontoon left behind after the pontoon bridge was dismantled recently.

Police and local administration are jointly conducting the rescue operation, with divers searching the deeper sections of the river for missing persons. Senior officials, including the district magistrate and superintendent of police, visited the spot to monitor the situation.

Pakistan minister sparks Israel row ahead of talks

He also referred to ongoing violence involving Gaza and Iran, and included highly inflammatory language about the origins of Israel.

The comments came less than 50 hours before high-stakes diplomatic talks in Islamabad, where Pakistan is hosting discussions involving the US and Iran, linked to broader efforts to ease tensions across West Asia.

Israel reacted sharply. In a statement, the Israeli Prime Minister's Office condemned what it described as a call for the country's destruction, calling the remarks "outrageous" and incompatible with the responsibilities of a Government seeking to play a neutral role in peace efforts. In Washington, Josh Gottheimer criticised the comments as "vile rhetoric," saying such language was "beyond unacceptable and unproductive" at a fragile moment for diplomacy. Other commentators also questioned Pakistan's role as a mediator. Emily Schrader characterised the remarks as anti-Jewish rhetoric and argued they undermined Islamabad's claim to neutrality. Ellie Cohan similarly raised concerns about Pakistan's suitability as a diplomatic intermediary, citing past controversies and accusing the Government of compromising its credibility. The timing of the post has drawn particular scrutiny. Delegations were already arriving in Islamabad and security preparations were being finalised for talks widely seen as among the most significant engagements between the United States and Iran in decades.

The controversy follows earlier confusion surrounding a ceasefire announcement attributed to Pakistani leadership, which suggested the agreement extended to Lebanon. Israeli officials later clarified that operations in Lebanon were not part of the ceasefire framework.

According to Israel, its military activities in Lebanon—primarily targeting Hezbollah—remain separate from broader de-escalation efforts. Israeli forces have continued operations, including reported large-scale strikes in early April.

Analysts say the sequence of events—first ambiguity over the ceasefire's scope, and now the defence minister's remarks—risks undermining Pakistan's position as a neutral host at

FROM PAGE - 1

a critical diplomatic juncture.

Despite the controversy, preparations for the Islamabad talks are continuing, with tight security in place and international delegations already on the ground. The outcome of the discussions could have significant implications for regional stability, as tensions across the Middle East remain high.

Police bust spy module for using CCTV feeds

"The use of low-cost, solar-powered technology marks an evolution in hybrid warfare tactics, allowing discreet, long-term monitoring without drawing immediate attention. The operation underscores the growing challenge of hybrid threats combining espionage, terror financing and arms trafficking". Kushwah added.

The accused, many of them unemployed youths, were allegedly lured with payments routed through UPI transactions funded by proceeds from illegal arms smuggling. Investigations have revealed the module operated as part of a larger nexus involving Pakistan-based handlers, gangsters and terror operatives.

Recruits were divided into teams unaware of each other's existence to maintain operational security. Their tasks extended beyond surveillance to facilitating logistics for potential terror acts, including a foiled plan for grenade attacks on security establishments.

"The module was not only gathering intelligence but also sustaining itself through a structured arms-smuggling pipeline, with foreign-made pistols distributed on instructions from across the border. Funds from these activities were routed back to support further reconnaissance and subversive operations, Kushwah told The Pioneer.

Central security agencies were alarmed to see that the camera locations were chosen with precision, focusing on areas with frequent troop movements, proximity to international borders, vital Army cantonments and logistical corridors.

They had managed to install cameras in Kapurthala, Jalandhar, Pathankot, Patiala, and Moga in Punjab; Ambala in Haryana; Kathua in Jammu and Kashmir and Bikaner and Alwar in Rajasthan. Security agencies have marked these sites as 'hyper sensitive' noting that the module posed a serious threat to national security by enabling handlers across the border to monitor military logistics in real time.

The operation was carried out in two coordinated phases. In the first phase, six accused persons, three from Punjab and three from Delhi were detained for questioning and subsequently leading to the recovery of nine solar-powered CCTV cameras. Teams of Special Cell carried out raids at several places in Punjab, which led to the arrest of five more suspects. They have been identified as Manpreet Singh, Anmol, Sahil, Atul Rathee, Rohit, Ajay, Gurjeet Singh, Rimpledeep Singh, Harpreet Singh alias Happy, Salwinder Singh alias Kalu and Boota Singh. Eight of the arrested eleven persons, hail from Punjab, reflecting the module's deep roots in the sensitive border region that shares 553 kms of India's International Boundary with Pakistan.

The arrests have triggered further probes into possible links with other operatives and funding channels. Intelligence agencies are now mapping the full extent of the network, including overseas handlers. As India grapples with persistent attempts at destabilisation from across the border, this case highlights the critical role of inter-agency coordination between state police, Military Intelligence and central agencies in safeguarding national security.

Col Purohit promoted after acquittal

Let's examine the 2008 Malegaon Blasts and Lt Col Purohit, a serving officer's Arrest. On September 29, 2008, a bomb exploded near a mosque in Malegaon, Maharashtra, killing six civilians and injuring over 100. The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) quickly pointed fingers at a purported right-wing Hindu network called 'Abhinav Bharat'.

Lt Col Purohit was arrested in November 2008. He was the first serving Indian Army officer to face terror charges. Prosecutors alleged he had supplied military-grade RDX, played a key role in the plot alongside Pragma Singh Thakur whose motorcycle was allegedly used in the blast, retired Major Ramesh Upadhyay and others.

Purohit, however, maintained that he was acting in his official capacity as a Military Intelligence (MI) officer and had infiltrated radical groups to gather intelligence and had duly reported his activities to superiors.

The Indian Army instituted a Court of Inquiry in April 2009 against Purohit and a few other personnel. The inquiry, conducted under military law, examined whether his actions amounted to any offence warranting court-martial. According to internal Army assessments and letters later placed on record, including communications from the Director General of Military Intelligence and the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence, Purohit's involvement was found to be consistent with his duties. Multiple official letters (dated 2018, 2019, and 2023) affirmed that he had operated a source network and acted as expected.

The Army never dismissed him or initiated disciplinary proceedings for anti-national activity. This internal clearance allowed him to remain a serving officer even as the civilian trial dragged on a rare distinction in such high-profile cases. Purohit later described himself as having been caught in a "political crossfire".

He spent nearly nine years in judicial custody before the Supreme Court granted him bail in August 2017, citing material contradictions in the charge sheet.

"The case was transferred to the NIA in 2011. After years of trial involving hundreds of witnesses and voluminous evidence, Special Judge AK Lahoti delivered a detailed verdict on July 31, 2025, acquitting all seven accused, including Purohit and former BJP MP Pragma Thakur. The court held that the prosecution had failed to prove the charges beyond reasonable doubt. The sanction under the Unlawful Activities

(Prevention) Act (UAPA) was defective. The motorcycle link to Thakur could not be established.

"Upon comprehensive evaluation, the prosecution has failed to bring any cogent evidence. The evidence is riddled with inconsistencies; the Court has to extend the benefit of doubt to all accused." The judge added a broader note: "Terrorism has no religion; the court cannot convict on mere perception; there has to be cogent evidence. Mere suspicion cannot take the place of real proof."

Addressing Career Losses Despite the acquittal and promotion, Purohit petitioned the Armed Forces Tribunal that the 17-year saga had robbed him of normal career progression. In the natural course, he would have reached Brigadier rank and become eligible for Major General. He submitted seven unblemished Annual Confidential Reports post-2018, highlighting his competence, integrity and loyalty.

The tribunal agreed prima facie that the "illegal, fabricated" implication had caused the deprivation and stayed his retirement to allow fair consideration of his statutory complaint. The

order marks another milestone in the military's consistent support for one of its own officers.

For Colonel Purohit, the journey from arrest and incarceration to being promoted as Brigadier represents the triumph of due process.

"It is God's grace and entirely his blessings that I will be serving my motherland again. It is also due to my organisation which has given me the opportunity to serve again. I want to do more than 100 percent to prove that by giving me this opportunity, I will prove them right", Purohit said when reached for his comments.

Yashwant Varma quits amid probe

Calling himself a victim of a "vilification" campaign, Justice Varma also wrote a separate letter to the Inquiry Committee appointed by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and expressed his "anguish". He also listed out reasons for withdrawing himself from the inquiry. The judge said his continued participation would legitimise an earlier inquiry where he was asked to "answer the unanswerable" question on the source of money from his residence.

In his 13-page letter, Justice Varma said that in his entire career as a judge of a High Court for over 11 years, he was not once alleged to have indulged in corruption or judicial impropriety. The judge further said he would be doing himself and the institution the greatest disservice by "continuing to participate in the present proceedings." "I therefore withdraw from these proceedings with immediate effect and have instructed my Advocates accordingly. I withdraw with the deepest sadness, conscious of the gravity of my decision and with the hope that history will one day record the unfairness with which a sitting High Court Judge was treated and that has marked this entire episode from its inception," Justice Varma wrote.

To prevent his Impeachment by Parliament, a resignation was the only option left for the judge, who withdrew from the ongoing inquiry proceedings by a Lok Sabha-appointed panel. The judge was due to superannuate on January 5, 2031. The discovery of a huge stash of cash took place after a fire broke out at the Lutyens' Delhi residence of Justice Varma, then a Delhi High Court judge, at around 11:35 pm on the night of Holi on March 14, 2025, prompting the fire department personnel to rush to the spot and douse the flames.

In an unprecedented move, the apex court on March 22 last year had uploaded on its website an in-house inquiry report, including photos and videos, into alleged discovery of a huge stash of cash at the residence of Justice Varma. On March 22, 2025 then CJJ Khanna had constituted a three-member committee to conduct an inquiry.

A three-member inquiry committee comprising Supreme Court judge Justice Arvind Kumar, Madras High Court Chief Justice Manindra Mohan Shrivastava and senior advocate B V Acharya was conducting the inquiry, a mandatory procedure before an impeachment motion. Justice Varma's case witnessed many twists and turns after he refused to heed the advice of then CJJ Sanjiv Khanna to resign following two damning reports by judges.

Supreme Court on January 16 had dismissed Varma's plea challenging the Lok Sabha Speaker's decision to admit an impeachment motion and the validity of a panel set up to inquire corruption charges against him, saying a provision in law cannot be used as a weapon to scuttle parliamentary proceedings. peaker admitted a multi-party motion for Justice Varma's removal on August 12 last.



Congress to call Opposition meet before special session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Congress on Friday said it will call a meeting of Opposition parties to devise a joint strategy ahead of the Parliament session during which the Government is set to take up amending the women's-reservation law and increase the number of seats in the Lok Sabha and State assemblies. Congress also reiterated its demand that an all-party meeting be called by the Government after April 29, when polling for the West Bengal election will be over. Addressing a Press conference along with party colleague Mukul Wasnik after a CWC meeting, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said the issue is not women's reservation but it is about delimitation and there is no information on its details.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge will call a meeting of Opposition leaders, most likely on April 15, ahead of the parliamentary sittings starting April 16, to formulate the way forward, Ramesh said. He alleged that this move of the BJP — led NDA Government is to influence the election results in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal. This is an attempt to divert attention from real issues, Ramesh claimed. The Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting, chaired by Kharge, was attended by former party chief Rahul Gandhi, party general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, K C Venugopal, Ramesh and Sachin Pilot, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy and former Punjab chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi.



Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, with party leaders Rahul Gandhi and KC Venugopal and others during the Congress Working Committee (CWC) meeting at Indira Bhawan in New Delhi on Friday

Former Lok Sabha speaker Meira Kumar, and former Union ministers Ambika Soni and Anand Sharma were also present. The meeting comes days ahead of the three-day sitting of Parliament, during which the Government will bring bills

to implement the Women's Reservation Act before the 2029 parliamentary polls and increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816, with 273 reserved for women. Congress had alleged earlier that the Government had called the "special session" of Parliament to pass bills related to amending the women's-quota law and delimitation to "grab political mileage" in the West Bengal and Tamil Nadu polls. Kharge alleged that the Narendra Modi Government's proposed delimitation exer-

cise related to the implementation of the women's reservation law would have "grave consequences" and warrants thorough deliberation. Kharge said his party would formulate a collective strategy with others in the Opposition to move forward "unitedly" on this issue. He said the Modi Government is convening the sitting of Parliament from April 16 with the sole intention of securing political advantage, which is a "violation" of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), and is keen to pass the Constitutional Amendment Bill in "utmost haste". During Parliament's sittings, the Government intends to pass a significant Constitutional Amendment Bill so that it may claim credit for, and derive political benefit from, during the upcoming State Assembly elections, he alleged.

Nation Focus



India's Dhaka envoy Pranay Verma headed to Belgium

Seasoned diplomat Pranay Verma, who is currently serving as India's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, was on Friday appointed as New Delhi's next ambassador to Belgium and the European Union (EU). His appointment to Brussels came weeks after India and the EU finalised an ambitious free trade agreement following summit talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of the influential bloc. Verma, a 1994-batch Indian Foreign Service (IFS) officer, had assumed charge as the high commissioner to Dhaka on September 21, 2022. "He is expected to take up the assignment shortly," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in a brief statement.



Inclusive education key to 100% literacy: Meghalaya CM

Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Friday underscored the need for inclusive education to achieve near-universal literacy in the northeastern State. Speaking at the 'ULLAS Fest 2026' in Shillong, Sangma said the State Government's approach to education remains rooted in inclusiveness. "We are nearing the 100 per cent literacy rate, but we have to work together as a society to bring transformation in education, while empowering all sections," he said. State Education Minister Lakhmen Rymbui said nearly two lakh people in the State remain illiterate, accounting for about eight per cent of the population.

Women's role in lawmaking must grow, says Om Birla



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Panaji

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday said women are excelling across sectors, including business, education, and science, and their participation in policymaking and lawmaking must grow accordingly. Addressing the valedictory session of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) India Region West Zone (Zone VII) conference in Panaji, Birla also said that from panchayats to State assemblies and Parliament, women's representation should be strengthened, with a greater role in shaping law. "Women are excelling across sectors, including business, education, and science, and their participation in policymaking and lawmaking must grow accordingly," he said. Birla's comments came days before a special sitting of Parliament where the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam', more commonly known as Women Reservation Act, would be amended for its

implementation of the 2029 general elections. The Act will ensure an increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816, of which 273 will be reserved for women. The provision to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution in 2023, but it was expected to come into effect only in 2034 after the completion of the delimitation exercise on the basis of the 2027 Census. To make it enforceable from the 2029 general elections, the Government has proposed the amendments to the law. The Budget session of Parliament has been extended, and a special three-day sitting has been convened on April 16 to 18. The speaker said India is entering a new era, and it is time to significantly increase women's representation in legislative bodies. "The Constitution of India has evolved through timely amendments to meet the nation's changing needs," he said.

BJP chief holds BJP meet on women's quota outreach

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

BJP national president Nitin Nabin on Friday held a meeting in New Delhi with party State unit presidents and other key office bearers to discuss the public outreach plan on the proposed amendments to the Women's Reservation Act. The meeting comes ahead of the three-day extended session of Parliament during which proposed amendments to the Act are likely to be brought for consideration and passage. The Government has extended the Budget session of Parliament, and a special three-day sitting will be held from April 16 to 18. The Union Cabinet is learnt to have cleared on



Wednesday the draft bill for amendments to the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, also known as the Women's Reservation Act. The meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The provision to provide 33 per cent reservation to women in the Lok Sabha and State assemblies was brought by amending the Constitution in 2023, but it would have

seats reserved for women. The reservation will also be done on a "vertical basis" with seats allocated for SCs and STs. The redrawing of the constituencies will be done on the basis of the 2011 census rather than the proposed 2027 Census. A similar exercise will be carried out for State assemblies, where seats will be reserved on a pro-rata basis. While a Constitution amendment bill will tweak the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, another ordinary bill will amend the Delimitation Act. Once approved by Parliament, the proposed laws will come into force on March 31, 2029 and will help reserve seats in the next Lok Sabha elections and Assembly elections.

CPI(M) demands wider talks on women's quota, delimitation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Communist Party of India (Marxist) on Friday hit out at the Modi Government for its new proposals on women's reservation, demanding that the Centre postpone the move to allow for wider consultations with political parties and State Governments. In a statement issued by its Polit Bureau, the CPI(M) alleged that the Government's latest plan — which reportedly links the implementation of the reservation to an increase in the number of seats in



Parliament and Assemblies based on the 2011 Census — is aimed at "narrow political benefit" ahead of Assembly elections. The party contended that while it remains committed to the mandatory one-third reservation for women, the current linkage to census and

delimitation exercises acts as a hurdle. "Even in 2023, we had said that the linkage will mean such a delay that women will be denied their right not only in 2024 but also in 2029," the statement noted. Criticising the lack of transparency, the Polit Bureau stated, "After two years where neither a Delimitation Commission has been set up, nor the Census started as promised, the Government has come up with new proposals without any discussions with the Opposition parties, despite repeated demands for an all-party meeting."

BJP hits out at Congress over Vande Mataram row in Indore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The BJP on Friday attacked the Congress for allegedly insulting the national song, "Vande Mataram", and claimed that the Opposition INDIA bloc prioritises vote bank politics over the nation's dignity. The BJP's attack came after two Congress councillors in Indore reportedly refused to sing "Vande Mataram" during a discussion on the city municipal corporation's Budget on April 8, saying that Islam did not permit it. Hitting out at the INDIA



bloc, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla termed the Opposition alliance "anti-India" and accused it of placing reli-

gious considerations above the Constitution. "Congress councillors Fausia Sheikh Alim and Rubina Iqbal declined to participate in Vande Mataram singing during proceedings. This is not the 'INDI' alliance, it is an anti-India alliance," the BJP spokesperson said in a social media post. "They keep Sharia above the Constitution. Congress councillors from Indore refused to sing Vande Mataram during the proceedings. But they are not alone," he added in a video message on social media.

Armed forces must be integrated, tech-driven: CDS Chauhan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Bengaluru

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan, on Friday, underscored the urgent need for India's armed forces to evolve into an integrated, agile and technologically driven warfighting instrument capable of operating seamlessly across multiple domains. He also said that modern warfare is rapidly transcending traditional boundaries and timelines. Delivering the closing address at the 'Ran Samvad' seminar, he highlighted that

Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) are no longer a conceptual buzzword but an emerging operational reality, driven by advances in data analytics, artificial intelligence and the changing character of conflict. "MDOs were chosen for this year's theme not because it's a buzzword, but I think it's a kind of new reality," the CDS said. General Chauhan noted that the seminar, conceptualised to place serving officers at the centre of strategic discourse, had enabled mid-level and junior officers to articulate perspectives on future warfare.



CDS General Anil Chauhan addressing a press conference on the sidelines of the 'Ran Samvad 2026' in Bengaluru, Karnataka

"Normally, it's veterans or think tanks who would express their views. So I reversed that particular trend," he said.

He added that those actively engaged in service are better attuned to the pace of change in warfare. The CDS said the deliberations examined critical issues, including force design, organisational structures and the adequacy of existing hierarchies in a battlespace that no longer respects domain boundaries. According to him, discussions also focused on intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), where "the bottleneck is not information, but the speed and quality of its interpretation."

President Murmu nominates Hariवंश to Rajya Sabha

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu has nominated Rajya Sabha's outgoing deputy chairman Hariवंश as a member of the Council of States. The tenure of Hariवंश as a member of the Upper Houses ended on April 9. He has been nominated as a member of the Rajya Sabha after the vacancy was created following the retirement of former Chief Justice



of India Ranjan Gogoi. "In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-clause (a) of clause (1) of article 80 of the

Constitution of India, read with clause (3) of that article, the President is pleased to nominate Hariवंश to the Council of States to fill the vacancy caused due to retirement of one of the nominated member," an official notification of the Government said. Hariवंश, 69, has completed his two terms as a member of the Rajya Sabha representing Bihar. He has also served as deputy chairman of the Upper House.

PM owes apology for U-Turn on women's quota, says Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Congress on Friday alleged that the Modi Government's "U-turn" on implementing the women's reservation law is aimed at covering up its "monumental failures" in governance and "severe setbacks" to foreign policy. The Opposition party claimed that the PM owes an "apology" to the women of India as he did not accept the Congress's demand of implementing the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023, from the 2024 polls itself. Congress general secretary in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, said the prime minister has started writing articles in the media, trying to project himself as the sole champion of women's reservation in Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha from 2029 onwards. "Actually, he owes an apology to the women of India. When the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 was passed by Parliament in 2023 unanimously, the Indian National Congress had demanded its implementation from 2024 itself," Ramesh said on social media.



74 per cent of natural lakes in J&K shrink or vanish, says CAG

MOHIT KANDHARI Jammu

Nestled in the breathtaking landscapes of Kashmir and Jammu, the world-famous Dal Lake and serene Nageen Lake in Srinagar, along with the picturesque Sanasar, Mansar, and Surinsar Lakes in Jammu, continue to draw thousands of tourists every year. During Shikara rides, many tourists capture unforgettable moments by clicking selfies and photos against the scenic backdrop, creating lifelong memories that they cherish forever. Barring these tourist hotspots, more than 500 natural lakes in Jammu and Kashmir have already faded from memory. The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its

recent report has revealed that 518 out of 697 natural lakes, over 74 per cent, have either disappeared or decreased in size since 1967, leading to significant ecological imbalance and loss of biodiversity. The CAG also observed that conservation efforts were limited to only six lakes Dal, Wular, Hokersar, Manasbal, Surinsar and Mansar while no structured programmes existed for the remaining 691 lakes. As per the CAG report on the conservation of lakes in the Union territory, out of the total 697 lakes with a total area of 28,990 hectares, as many as 315 lakes covering 1,537.07 hectares have disappeared, while the area of 203 lakes shrank by 1,314.19 hectares. "There was a total

decrease and disappearance of area of 2,851.26 hectares in 518 lakes," the report stated. The CAG strongly recommended a series of measures for effective conservation and management of lakes in Jammu and Kashmir, stressing the need for a structured and time-bound approach. It said this large-scale shrinkage has resulted in loss of flora and fauna, disruption of ecological services, and adverse impacts on water, food and biodiversity. It also said the reduction in lake area has contributed to climate insecurity and was one of the factors behind the devastating Jammu and Kashmir floods in September 2014, highlighting that lakes act as natural flood buffers. Jammu and Kashmir,



endowed with 697 natural lakes spread across 20 districts in two divisions, holds immense ecological and socio-economic significance, it said. These include 185 major lakes larger than five hectares, such as the Wular Lake, the largest freshwater lake in India, along with several other prominent water bodies.

The audit report revealed that 150 lakes recorded an increase in area by 538.22 hectares, while 29 lakes remained unchanged. However, it pointed out that the reasons behind the increase in lake areas were neither analysed nor monitored by the departments concerned. Of the disappeared lakes,

80 fell under the jurisdiction of the forest department, while 235 were under the revenue and agriculture departments. Among the 203 lakes that recorded shrinkage, 63 have lost more than 50 per cent of their area, putting them at high risk of extinction, it added. The CAG attributed the disappearance and degradation of lakes primarily to changes in land use within lake bodies and their catchment areas, along with deforestation, climate change and unregulated human activities. The audit, which covered 63 sampled lakes accounting for 87 per cent of the total lake area, used satellite imagery, remote sensing data and field verification to assess spatio-temporal

changes. It found that some lakes had nearly dried up, while others, such as Khushal Sar and Anchar, were undergoing severe degradation. "A questionnaire-based survey on 63 test-checked lakes was also undertaken by the audit. Further, the audit utilised the satellite images of the lakes provided by the ecology, environment and remote sensing department (EE&RSD) to analyse the spatio-temporal changes in lakes", it said. The report also highlighted institutional and administrative gaps, noting that despite being mandated since 1989, the forest department had not prepared comprehensive conservation and management plans for 255 lakes under its jurisdiction.



States Focus

CM Mamata accuses BJP of using outside voters in Assam

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Tentulia (WB)

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday claimed that the BJP brought people from outside for the Assam elections as it was not confident of victory with the votes of the northeastern State's residents.

Addressing an election rally at Tentulia in North 24 Parganas district, she alleged that no agency in the country was neutral under the BJP Government at the Centre as "the saffron party has bought them all". "A trainload of 50,000 people was brought to Assam from Uttar Pradesh," she claimed.

Elections to the 126-member Assam Assembly were held in a single phase on Thursday.

"Even a snake can be trusted, but not the BJP," she added, as acrimony between the TMC and the BJP gained temperature ahead of the two-phase assembly polls in



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee, addressing during a public meeting ahead of the State Assembly elections in Basirhat, West Bengal

West Bengal.

The TMC chief alleged that the BJP was trying to use the same ploy in West Bengal to bring in people from outside, which is why officers were transferred.

A large number of police and administrative officers were transferred in West Bengal by the Election Commission soon after the announcement of the polls.

"People, money and drugs are being brought in, but our

workers will fight it out and win," she said.

Banerjee said 90 lakh names have been deleted from the electoral rolls during the SIR exercise in West Bengal.

The TMC chief said that as per a newspaper report, out of 90 lakh names deleted, 60 lakh are those of Hindus and 30 lakh of Muslims.

She said that the BJP should never be trusted, claiming that in the NRC exercise in

Assam, out of 19 lakh names delisted, 13 lakh were Hindus and 6 lakh were Muslims.

Asking the electorate to consider her as the TMC's candidate in all 294 seats in the State, Banerjee said, "If you want a Trinamool Congress Government under my leadership, then I am the candidate in all seats."

The TMC chief claimed that the names of many Scheduled Caste persons have been deleted from the rolls, while maintaining that the names of electors have been deleted in her constituency as well.

"I am not worried, I have faith in people; we will get all the remaining votes on the voter list," the TMC chief said.

She alleged that a BJP Government would impose restrictions on non-vegetarian food choices of the people of West Bengal.

"People here eat according to their choice, but such is not the situation in BJP-ruled States," she said.

CPI slams mass deletion of 90 lakh voters in West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Communist Party of India (CPI) on Friday raised a red flag over the "mass deletion" of nearly 90 lakh voters from the electoral rolls in West Bengal, terming the exercise a "systematic disenfranchisement" of citizens in the middle of an election campaign.

In a strongly-worded letter addressed to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, CPI General Secretary D Raja expressed "profound unease" at the scale of removals following the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in the State.

The veteran leader alleged that the process has inverted the burden of proof, forcing ordinary citizens to prove their legitimacy rather than the State verifying their status.

"The reported removal of nearly ninety lakh names from the rolls is not merely a matter of numbers but a



CPI General Secretary D Raja

reflection of widespread anguish, uncertainty and exclusion among ordinary citizens," Raja stated in the letter released by the party's office in New Delhi.

He further contended that the process conveys an impression of a "mass-cleansing" of rolls, disproportionately affecting the poor, the marginalised and the elderly.

"Families are finding themselves partially erased, and the marginalised are pushed into processes they cannot reasonably navigate," he said, adding that such developments hollow out the substantive content of participatory democracy.



TELANGANA MAOIST-FREE AFTER 42 CADRES SURRENDER, SAYS DGP

With 42 Maoists surrendering, 11 of them from the TSC, the State is completely free of CPI (Maoist) armed formations, DGP B Shivadhar Reddy said on Friday. Sodi Malla, alias Keshal, commander of the People's Liberation Guerrilla Army (PLGA) Battalion, was among the 42 ultras who joined the mainstream and laid down their arms before the Telangana DGP.

After the surrender of all leaders of the Telangana State Committee of the CPI (Maoist), the remaining TSC cadre has been neutralised, and the TSC no longer exists, he said. The 42 Maoists surrendered along with 36 firearms, including five AK-47 rifles, four SLR rifles, two country-made grenades, 1,007 live rounds of ammunition of various calibres, and 800 grams of gold, the DGP said.



ELECTION FLYING SQUAD INSPECTS TVK CHIEF VIJAY'S VEHICLE

An election flying squad on Friday intercepted and inspected the vehicle of TVK chief Vijay near the Madurai-Sivaganga border. The check occurred while the political leader was travelling from Madurai to Sivaganga by road for his scheduled election campaign ahead of the April 23 Assembly polls. According to official sources, the flying squad personnel signalled the convoy to stop at a designated checkpoint as part of the heightened surveillance under the Model Code of Conduct. The officials conducted a thorough search of the vehicle to ensure compliance with Election Commission guidelines regarding the transport of cash or prohibited materials.

4,610 candidates in fray for Tamil Nadu's 234 seats

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chennai

As many as 4,610 candidates are in fray in the high-stakes battle for 234 Assembly constituencies in the April 23 Assembly polls in Tamil Nadu following scrutiny.

A total of 529 candidates withdrew from the race, the election commission said on Friday. A total of 7,599 candidates, including independents, filed their nomination papers, and 2,460 of them were rejected.

In the Kolathur constitu-



cy in Chennai, where Chief Minister and DMK president M K Stalin is contesting, the EC has accepted the nominations of 41 candidates, and in Chepuak-Thiruvallikeni constituency, from where Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin is contesting for the second consecutive term, 26

candidates are in the fray.

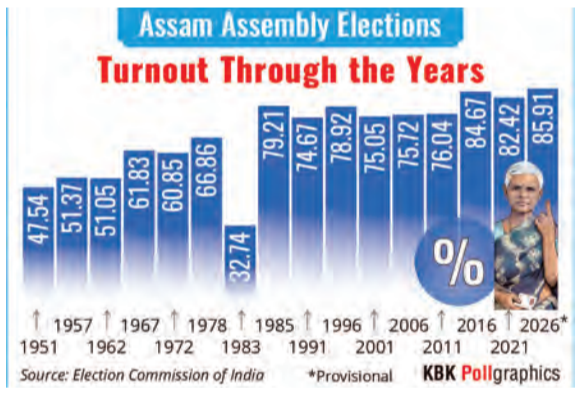
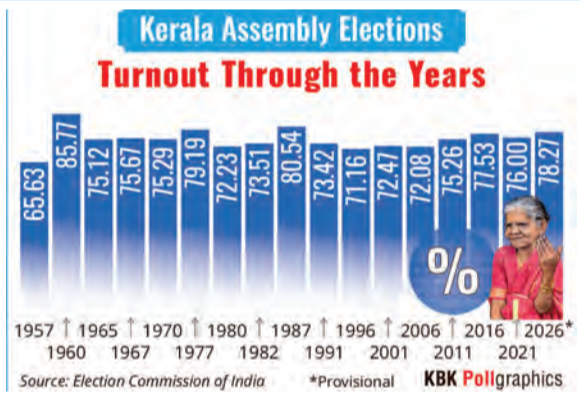
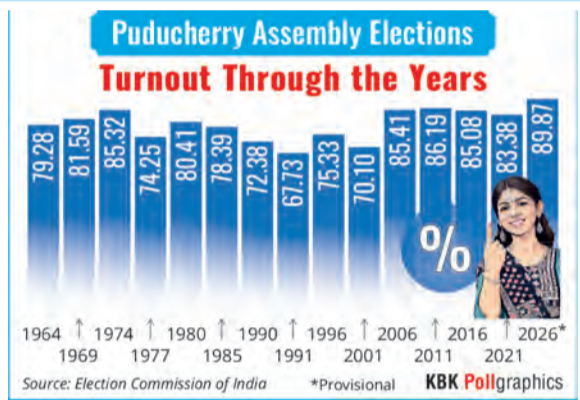
In the Edappadi constituency from where AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami is contesting, 15 persons are in the fray.

The nominations of 47 candidates have been accepted in the Perambur seat in Chennai, and 27 candidates are in the fray in Tiruchirappalli East. Actor-politician Vijay is contesting in both constituencies in his electoral debut.

Karur, where a stampede in TVK chief Vijay's rally on September 27 last year claimed the lives of 41 people,

has the highest number of contenders with 85 candidates in the poll fray. Ambasamudram has the lowest number of contestants with five in the fray, according to the EC website.

The deadline for withdrawal of nominations ended on April 9. The DMK is making hectic efforts to retain power, seeking a second term in office, while AIADMK chief Palaniswami, who is the lone star campaigner for his party, is determined to stage a comeback after being in the Opposition for five years.



AJUP-AIMIM alliance collapses after video row

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

The fledgling alliance between Humayan Kabir's Aam Janata Unnayan Party (AJUP) and Asaduddin Owaisi's AIMIM collapsed on Friday, barely a fortnight after it was stitched, after a purported video surfaced in which a person resembling Kabir was allegedly heard talking of a multi-crore deal with the BJP to dislodge TMC.

As the controversy exploded, Union Home Minister



Amit Shah rejected suggestions of any BJP link with Kabir, saying the suspended TMC leader and the BJP were "like the North Pole and the South Pole" and could never be together.

Kabir, for his part, insisted that AIMIM's decision to snap ties would have no bearing on his party's prospects and declared that AJUP would now fight the assembly polls alone.

Representatives of candidates can be deputed outside EVM strong rooms: ECI

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

The EC on Friday said that representatives of candidates who contested the Kerala Assembly polls can be deputed outside the security perimeter of strong rooms where EVMs are stored.

Kerala Chief Electoral Officer Rathan U Kelkar issued a press note stating that, after the completion of polling, the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) units used in



the election were stored in their respective strong rooms in the presence of contesting candidates or their representatives.

The polling machines were stored under the supervision of central observers appointed by the

EC. The process was video-graphed, and a two-tier armed security arrangement, along with CCTV cameras, has been set up around the strong rooms, the press note said.

"All contesting candidates have been informed in writing to depute their representatives to monitor the security arrangements of the strong rooms and to allow them to stay outside the inner security perimeter. CCTV footage of the strong rooms has been made available for them," it said.

Vijay's film Jana Nayagan leaked online before release



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chennai

Top Tamil star Vijay's highly anticipated film 'Jana Nayagan' has been leaked online in high definition (HD) ahead of its theatrical release, prompting the makers to initiate swift criminal proceedings.

The leak surfaced early Friday morning, with several clips — including the actor's five-minute introduction scene and the title card — circulating widely on social media platforms like X, WhatsApp, and Telegram.

Sources suggest the footage may have been recorded during a private test screening or a post-production session.

KVN Productions, through its legal counsel, Vijayan Subramanian, issued a public notice confirming that "certain scenes have been illegally accessed and disseminated".

Speaking to PTI, the counsel said when the notice was drafted, only a few scenes were leaked.

Udhayanidhi campaigns for Dravidian model 2.0 in Chennai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin on Friday held a roadshow in Chennai's Chepuak-Thiruvallikeni Assembly constituency from where he is seeking re-election for the second time.

Udhayanidhi, who has been campaigning throughout the State in support of the DMK-led Secular Progressive Alliance candidates, had been saying that despite being a candidate himself, he has been garnering votes for the alliance throughout the State, aiming to ensure the formation of a Dravidian model 2.0 regime.

"Do you know that I am also contesting this election. I have not visited my con-



TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin, with DMK MP Dayanidhi Maran, campaigns for Chepuak-Thiruvallikeni constituency ahead of the State Assembly elections in Chennai, Tamil Nadu on Friday

stituency for the poll campaign. Sending our candidates to the Assembly is like ensuring a victory for me," the Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister has been saying during his tour of the State.

On Friday, he undertook a roadshow in Chepuak-Thiruvallikeni from where his grandfather and former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi had contested and won three consecutive terms in

1996, 2001, and 2006.

Prior to Udhayanidhi's election in 2021, DMK's J Anbalagan had won from the seat in the 2016 and 2011 elections.

The DMK youth wing secretary undertook a door-to-door campaign in Chepuak and highlighted the DMK Government's welfare initiatives. The people would get more development if they gave a second consecutive term for the party to rule, he said.

Later, in a post on the social media platform, Udhayanidhi said, "We highlighted the welfare schemes implemented by our Government for minorities, including Christians, during the five-year Dravidian model rule led by Chief Minister MK Stalin."



results will uphold the dignity of the voters in Kerala, who survived both," he contended. The BJP has denied these allegations.

He also accused the CPI(M) of attempting fraudulent voting in Kannur and assaulting Congress workers in the

DMK slams Palaniswami over remarks on Kanimozhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Chennai

The DMK on Friday criticised AIADMK General Secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami for making "highly derogatory" and "third-rate" remarks against the party's Deputy General Secretary Kanimozhi Karunanidhi.

In a press conference organised here, DMK leaders and Members of Parliament, Thamizhachi Thangapandian and Kanimozhi Somu, alleged that Palaniswami's recent comments reflect a "peak of defeatist fear", as the Opposition leader anticipates a third-place finish in the upcoming elections.

During his recent election campaign, Palaniswami declared that if MP Kanimozhi "continues to believe in CM Stalin, she will end up in Tihar Jail again", in an explicit reference to her 2011 arrest and imprisonment in connection with the 2G spectrum case.

He further asserted that she lacks actual decision-making power in the party, remarking that despite

having "no responsibilities", she "continues to talk so much".

Both Somu and Thangapandian claimed that such personal attacks have become a pattern for the AIADMK, citing past instances of alleged "body shaming" and disparaging comments about women by leaders like CV Shanmugam and Dindigul Sreenivasan.

"Without considering a woman's dignity, he (Palaniswami) has degraded our leader in words that reflect his own lack of self-respect," Somu stated, demanding an unconditional apology from the former Chief Minister.

The DMK also linked the AIADMK's rhetoric to its alliance with the BJP, characterising it as a "Nonsense Development Alliance" that "routinely undermines" women's rights.

The DMK leaders further indicated that the party is exploring legal avenues, including filing a defamation suit and lodging a formal complaint with the Election Commission for violation of the model code of conduct.

Assamese daily's office attacked in North Lakhimpur



TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

Unidentified persons attacked the office of an Assamese daily in North Lakhimpur, breaking window panes with stones, police said on Friday.

He said the incident is suspected to have happened the previous night.

"We have learnt that miscreants attacked the office with stones. Window panes were broken. We have started an investigation and arrests will be made soon," a police officer said.

The attack was carried out in 'Asomiya Pratidin' newspaper's North Lakhimpur edition office, located on the first floor of a building in the heart of the town. Staff members said they came to know of the incident when the office was opened on Friday morning, with window panes shattered and stones found inside.

"We immediately informed the police. We have come to know that important evidence has been found from CCTV footage in the area," an employee said.



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Order Order

**Supreme Court rejects
plea to stop caste census**



The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed a plea seeking a direction to the Centre to stop caste Census, and slammed the petitioner for the language used in the PIL.

"Aapne apne petition me badtameezi ki bhasa likhi hai. Aapne kisse apna petition likhwaya hai?" (You have written indecent language in your petition. Who has written your petition?), a visibly angry Chief Justice Surya Kant told the petitioner, who was appearing in person.

"Aap kahan se aisi bhasa likhte ho petition me (From where you write such language in your petition)," the CJ, who was heading the bench which also comprised Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, told the petitioner. The bench dismissed the plea, which also sought a direction to the Centre to formulate policies to provide economic incentives to families with a single child. On February 2, the top court had refused to entertain a separate PIL questioning the procedure to be adopted to record, classify and verify the caste data of citizens in the 2027 general Census.

The 2027 Census, officially the 16th national census, will be the first to include comprehensive caste enumeration since 1931 and the country's first fully digital census.

SC relief to priest



The Supreme Court on Friday stayed criminal proceedings and summons against a priest, who claimed that Christianity was the only true religion.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta issued notice to the Uttar Pradesh Government on a plea of Reverend Father Vineet Vincent Pereira challenging the March 18 order of the Allahabad High Court for quashing criminal proceedings against him.

Senior advocate Siddharth Dave, appearing for the priest, said police have invoked section 295A of the IPC, which deals with deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings.

The bench said it is issuing notice on the plea seeking the Uttar Pradesh Government's response.

Dave said criminal proceedings and summons issued against him shall be stayed. The bench agreed to the request and stayed the proceedings.

On March 18, the Allahabad High Court, while dismissing the plea of Father Pereira, observed that claiming a particular religion to be the "only true religion" is wrong in a secular country like India and may amount to disparaging other faiths, thereby attracting provisions of law.

It said such statements prima facie fall within the ambit of Section 295A of the IPC, which deals with deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings.

"It is wrong for any religion to claim that it is the only true religion as it implies a disparagement of other faiths," the order said.

According to the FIR lodged by Uttar Pradesh police, the applicant allegedly held prayer meetings where he repeatedly stated that Christianity was the only true religion, which hurt the sentiments of members of another community.

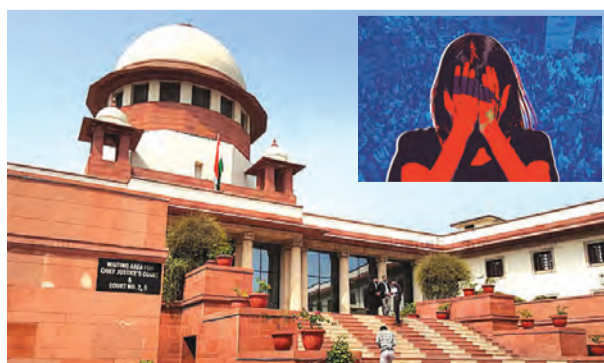
SC blasts Ghaziabad police in rape-murder case, summons commissioner

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday lambasted Ghaziabad police's "insensitive approach" in the investigation of the rape and murder case of a four-year-old girl and summoned senior officials, including the police commissioner, on April 13 with case records.

The top court observed that a court-monitored, time-bound probe either by a special investigation team (SIT) or a central agency was needed in the case.

A bench comprising Chief Justice of India (CJI) Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi took note of the submissions of senior lawyer N Hariharan, appearing for the victim's



father, a daily wage, and expressed his displeasure over the manner in which the state police had conducted the investigation so far in the case.

"My conscience was revolted the moment I saw it (the video evidence)," Hariharan told the bench and urged



Telangana HC breather to Pawan Khera

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Hyderabad

In some relief to senior Congress leader Pawan Khera, the Telangana High Court on Friday granted temporary anticipatory bail for one week to the party spokesperson in a case registered against him by the Assam police over his allegations against Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife.

During the hearing of a petition filed by Khera, Justice Sujana Kalasikam said, "The petitioner is granted time for one week to file an application before the concerned court. Granting relief to the petitioner for one week with the conditions."

The Congress leader on April 5 had alleged that the Assam CM's wife, Riniki



Bhuyan Sarma, has multiple passports and foreign property, which were not declared in the chief minister's election affidavit for the April 9 Assembly polls in that State.

The case against Khera was registered at the Guwahati Crime Branch Police Station under several sections of the BNS, including 175 (false statement in connection with an

election), 35 (Right of private defence of the body and of property) and 318 (cheating). Khera, who filed the petition in the High Court on April 7, showed his residential

address in Hyderabad. He requested the court to release him on bail in the event of his arrest.

Congress MP and senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, who argued virtually for Khera on Thursday, alleged political vendetta in the case by the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led Government.

Singhvi, describing Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma as a "Constitutional Cowboy," said Khera was in Hyderabad when the FIR was filed against him by Guwahati police and that he co-resides with his wife who is a resident of the Telangana capital. She had also contested in polls in the southern State.

Assam Advocate General Devajit Saikia, who argued against Khera's petition on Thursday, had stressed that

there was no political vendetta against the Congress leader and that the petition was not maintainable before the Telangana HC.

He further said the complainant is a lady (Sarma's wife) and not a political person. The allegations made by Khera are devoid of any truth, he said.

An Assam police team had earlier visited Khera's Delhi residence for questioning in connection with the case.

Sarma on Tuesday slammed the Congress for "not verifying" the documents based on which it brought allegations against him and his family.

The CM asserted that Khera had "run away" to Hyderabad, but the Assam police will "hunt him down even from 'pataal' (netherworld)".

SC to hear plea on 26 Indians allegedly detained in Russia

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear a plea seeking directions to the Centre to take steps to facilitate the safe repatriation of 26 Indian citizens who have allegedly been detained in Russia and forced to fight in the ongoing war with Ukraine.

Taking note of the plea, a bench of Chief Justice Surya

consular measures through the Indian embassy in Russia to ascertain the whereabouts, legal status and safety of the detained Indian citizens.

It has also sought directions to secure consular access to these individuals in accordance with the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations, 1963, and the applicable bilateral consular agreements.

The plea said the Centre



Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi asked Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who was present in the court, to take instructions on the issue.

The counsel appearing for the petitioners told the bench that these 26 individuals were Indian citizens who were stuck in Russia. He claimed that they were compelled to take part in the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine.

Mehta told the bench that he would examine the plea and take instructions (from the Centre). The bench granted time to the top law officer to take instructions in the matter and posted the plea for hearing later this month.

The plea has sought directions to the Centre to take immediate diplomatic and

should take all necessary diplomatic steps to facilitate their protection, welfare and safe repatriation to India, wherever permissible under international law.

It has sought directions to facilitate communication between the detainees and their families and also to ensure that the detainees receive appropriate medical care, humanitarian treatment and legal assistance, wherever required.

The plea sought a direction to the Centre to place on record an affidavit setting out the protocol, procedure and standard operating mechanism followed by the Government in cases where Indian citizens are reported missing, detained or stranded abroad.

Justice Varma's resignation welcome, should have done it earlier: Pande

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Lucknow/Prayagraj

President of the Allahabad High Court Bar Association Rakesh Pande on Friday welcomed Justice Yashwant Varma's resignation but said he should have taken the step earlier and put an end to needless controversy.

"If Justice Yashwant Varma wanted to resign, it would have been better for all of us had he done it much earlier. This merely created unnecessary controversy. It tarnished the image of everyone involved — the High Court, the entire judiciary, and him.

"If he was going to fight (corruption charges against him), he should have continued to fight. And if he intend-



Justice Varma (Left) and Rakesh Pande (Right)

ed to resign, he could have done it right at the beginning. Nevertheless, his resignation now is a welcome step. He has acted sensibly," Pande told PTI on Friday.

Allahabad High Court judge Varma, who was facing impeachment proceedings after wads of burnt currency notes were found at his residence in Delhi, has submitted his resigna-

tion to President Droupadi Murmu, sources said on Friday. Due to his resignation, impeachment proceedings against him have become infructuous.

Justice Varma was repatriated from the Delhi High Court to the Allahabad High Court the currency notes were purportedly found on March 14 last year.

The cash discovery happened following a fire there around 11.35 pm that day. Fire officials responded to a distress call and doused the blaze.

The apex court collegium, headed by the then CJ Sanjiv Khanna, and the Delhi High Court subsequently issued a series of directives, including the withdrawal of judicial work from Justice Varma.

Supreme Court refuses bail plea of suspended Punjab Police DIG in corruption case

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain the bail plea of suspended Punjab Police DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar, who was arrested by the CBI in October last year in connection with a corruption case.

A bench of Chief Justice Surya Kant and Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi granted liberty to Bhullar to approach the Punjab and Haryana High Court seeking bail if the trial in the case does not commence within two months.

The bench was hearing Bhullar's plea challenging a High Court order passed in February this year that denied him bail in the case.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi,



Punjab Police DIG Harcharan Singh Bhullar

appearing for Bhullar, sought bail saying the petitioner was not a flight risk and chargesheet and supplementary chargesheet in the case have already been filed.

The bench said it was not inclined to entertain the petition at this stage.

A complaint was filed in October last year alleging that Bhullar, who was posted as DIG of Ropar range had demanded illegal gratification through a private intermediary to secure favourable treatment in an FIR registered at Sirhind police station and to ensure that no coercive steps were taken against the business of the complainant.

An FIR was registered and a trap was laid on October 16 last year in Chandigarh wherein a co-accused was apprehended while allegedly accepting Rs five lakh as part of the demanded bribe. Bhullar was arrested in the case and later in January, a special CBI court in Chandigarh dismissed his plea seeking bail.

Approach authorities instead of rushing with PILs: SC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday told an advocate, who has filed 25 separate PILs on a range of issues, that he should approach the authorities instead of rushing to the court.

As soon as the matter was called up for hearing, advocate Sachin Gupta, who was appearing as petitioner-in-person, told a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant that he wanted to withdraw the PILs.



"You concentrate on the profession. You should approach the authorities,

make them wiser on certain issues instead of rushing to the court," the CJ, who was

heading the bench which also comprised Justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi, told Gupta.

The bench said at appropriate stage, the court would also entertain his petitions, if the need arise. The CJ said being a member of the bar and a person with legal knowledge, the petitioner should identify the issues with an analytical approach and try to sensitise the authorities concerned.

The bench said if nothing happens, then the petitioner may approach the court.

SC to hear plea on WB electoral rolls

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear on April 13 a fresh plea along with pending ones challenging the freezing of electoral rolls by the Election Commission ahead of the upcoming assembly polls in West Bengal.

The poll panel has frozen and finalised the electoral rolls on April 9 for the assembly seats which are going to polls in the first stage.

Assembly elections in West Bengal will be held in two phases on April 23 and 29 and votes will be counted for all polls on May 4.

The freezing of electoral rolls means that no new person, who has been deleted, can be added to the voters list for this assembly polls.

A bench comprising Chief Justice Surya Kant and justices Joymalya Bagchi and Vipul M Pancholi was urged by a lawyer to take up the plea against freezing on an urgent basis.

The lawyer said many appeals against deletions from the electoral rolls are still pending and the poll panel has frozen the rolls



on April 9. "We will consider the petition on April 13," the CJ said. Senior advocate D S Naidu, appearing for the poll panel, said the freezing date was April 9 and after that none will be considered.

"Right to vote remains, these appellants are similarly situated like others whose appeals were allowed," Naidu said.

"What was the architecture we are thinking. There is a cut-off line with respect to an election, and underlying is a constitutional right to be on the electoral roll and to vote in further elections. That is much higher and permanent," Justice Bagchi said.

The CJ said the person is not being deprived permanently.

On April 6, the bench noted that around 60 lakh claims and objections of those removed from voters' lists in the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in poll-bound West Bengal have been decided.



Editor's TAKE

Will the ceasefire hold as Israel strikes Lebanon?

As strikes resume and mistrust deepens, the central question looms large: was this ever a ceasefire meant to hold, or merely a pause before the next escalation?

The world breathed a sigh of relief when a two-week ceasefire was announced in the US-Iran-Israel conflict. The West Asia crisis has been going on for over a month now and has caused heavy casualties on both sides, killing innocents and causing enormous loss to the environment and property.

However, as it was, the ceasefire, a momentary pause, was fragile, as Israel, one of the key players, has said that it was kept in the dark by the US. As if to sabotage the ceasefire, Israel launched a massive 100-missile strike on Lebanon, killing over 250 people. Iran, on its part, closed the Strait of Hormuz. This impasse has again put a question mark on the validity of the ceasefire, as both sides exploited the structural flaws in the truce. Israel maintains that Lebanon was not part of the deal while Iran includes Lebanon as integral part of the deal framework. To show its displeasure with Lebanon strikes Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz which itself a big proof that reescalation is not ruled out in near future even before the 14-day ceasefire ends.

The biggest drawback in the ceasefire is the structural flaw in the framework. While Iran has consistently insisted that any meaningful de-escalation must include Israeli operations in Lebanon, the United States and Israel have treated it as a separate entity. Israel's strike has been interpreted in Tehran as a violation of the spirit of the ceasefire. Iran's missile response signals that it is unwilling to compartmentalise the conflict. If the ceasefire collapses it would be a big embarrassment for the US President Donald Trump personally, who positioned the ceasefire as a diplomatic victory. It would also mean that Israel its partner in the war is not in sync with its decisions. He faces three difficult choices: resume hostilities, intensify diplomatic efforts, or pressure Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to halt military operations in Lebanon. And there is little hope that any of these choices would bring lasting peace in the region. Thus, there is an imminent danger of hostilities breaking out. Resuming the war risks unleashing a wider regional conflagration. Iran has already demonstrated its willingness to escalate, and any renewed US military action could trigger coordinated responses from allied militias across the region. Then there is also the risk of China and Russia also getting involved directly or indirectly making it a world conflict. The consequences would not be confined to West Asia.

Politically, it would also undermine Trump's credibility, especially as he had touted the ceasefire as a major achievement. The diplomatic route is more appealing but fraught with challenges. Vice-President JD Vance's outreach to Iran through talks in Pakistan offers a pathway, but it depends on Israeli restraint. Without halting operations in Lebanon, Iran is unlikely to engage meaningfully. Tehran's distrust runs deep. The US-Israel relationship is deeply entrenched, and reining in Benjamin Netanyahu could have domestic and strategic costs. Yet without addressing Israeli actions, the ceasefire remains unstable. Ultimately, the issue is not just whether the ceasefire will last, but whether it was ever meant to.

Mahatma Jyotirao Phule: A light that still shows the way

Mahatma Phule was a great reformer. In addition to that, his was a life of moral courage, restless enquiry and unshakable commitment to social good. Mahatma Phule is remembered for the institutions he built and the movements he led



NARENDRA MODI

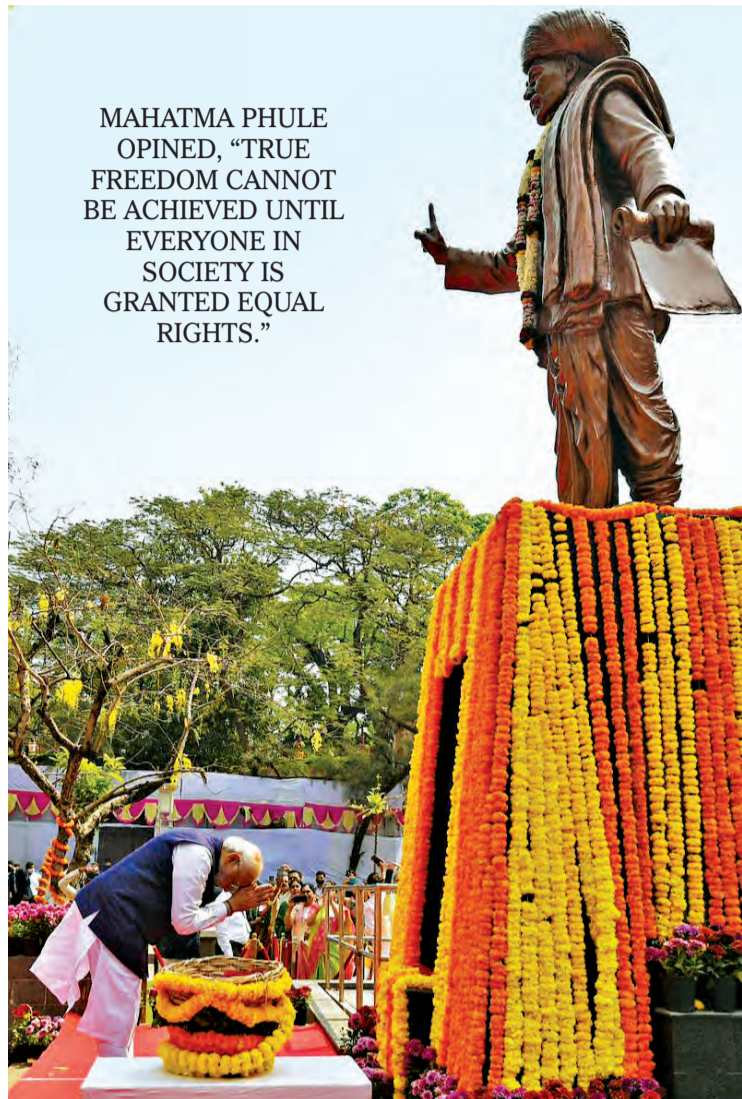
Today, 11th April, is a deeply special day for all of us. It is the birth anniversary of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, one of India's greatest social reformers and a guiding light for generations. This year, the occasion carries even greater significance, as it marks the beginning of his 200th birth anniversary celebrations.

Mahatma Phule was a great reformer. In addition to that, his was a life of moral courage, restless enquiry and unshakable commitment to social good. Mahatma Phule is remembered for the institutions he built and the movements he led. At the same time, his contribution to our civilisational journey lies in the hope he aroused, the confidence he instilled and the strength his thoughts continue to give to millions of people across the nation.

Born in the great state of Maharashtra in 1827, Mahatma Phule emerged from modest beginnings. But his initial hardships never stood in the way of his learning, his courage or his commitment to society. This is a trait that remained with him forever: whatever the challenges may be, one must work hard, acquire knowledge and mitigate those challenges instead of doing nothing about it. From his school days, young Jyotirao was deeply curious and became a voracious reader, often reading books far beyond what children his age were expected to engage with. Years later, he said, "The more questions we generate, the more knowledge emerges from them." Clearly, the spirit of enquiry he was blessed with since his childhood remained constant in his journey.

Throughout his life, learning and education became central to Mahatma Phule's mission. He recognised with rare clarity that knowledge is not a privilege to be guarded, but a force to be shared. At a time when the joys of learning were denied to many, he opened pioneering schools for girls and for those kept out of formal education. He used to say, "Any improvement that comes in children through mothers is deeply valuable. Therefore, if schools are to be opened, they should first be opened for girls." He worked to create a new social imagination in which the classroom became an instrument of justice and equality.

His vision for education inspires us greatly. Over the last decade, we have worked to make research and innovation a cornerstone for the youth of India. Efforts are being made to create an ecosystem where young minds are encouraged to question, explore and innovate. By investing in knowledge, skills and opportunity,



MAHATMA PHULE OPINED, "TRUE FREEDOM CANNOT BE ACHIEVED UNTIL EVERYONE IN SOCIETY IS GRANTED EQUAL RIGHTS."

India is empowering its youth to become problem-solvers and drivers of national progress. Due to his knowledge and wisdom, Mahatma Phule developed a strong understanding of areas such as agriculture, healthcare and rural development. He often said that injustice towards our farmers and workers weakens our society. He saw how social inequalities manifested themselves in daily life, be it in the farms or in villages. Hence, he immersed himself in ensuring dignity for the poor, the downtrodden and the marginalised. At the same time, he made every possible effort to ensure social harmony was maintained.

Mahatma Phule opined, "True freedom cannot be achieved until everyone in society is granted equal rights." And for that, he built institutions that translated this vision into

action, contributing to a just society. The Satyashodhak Samaj, founded by him, was one of the most important social reform movements in modern India. It was at the forefront of social reform, community service and furthering human dignity. It became an effective voice for women, youngsters and those living in villages. This movement reflected Mahatma Phule's intrinsic belief that society could be strengthened by placing at its core justice, respect for every person and a spirit of collective progress. His personal life, too, carried lessons in courage. Always working and being among the people took a toll on his health. But even the most serious health challenges did not dim his resolve. After suffering a debilitating stroke, he continued to work and fulfil his vision. Yes, his body had been tested, but his commitment to society had not yielded. For millions today, especially those who draw courage from struggle, this remains one of the most powerful dimensions of his life.

No remembrance of Mahatma Phule can be complete without a respectful mention of Savitribai Phule, who was herself one of the tallest reformers of our nation. As one of India's pioneering women teachers, she played a defining role in advancing education for girls, thus giving them the opportunity to pursue their dreams. After Mahatma Phule's passing, Savitribai carried forward that torch and, in 1897, during a plague outbreak, she served victims with such devotion that she herself contracted the disease and lost her own life.

Our land has been blessed, time and again, by great men and women who have strengthened society through thought, sacrifice and action. They did not wait for change to arrive from somewhere else. They became its source. For hundreds of years in our land, the clarion call for social betterment has often risen from within society itself, from those who could see suffering clearly and refused to accept it as fate. Mahatma Jyotirao Phule was one such voice.

I fondly recall my visit to Pune in 2022, when I had offered tributes to Mahatma Phule at his grand statue in the city. As we mark the beginning of his bicentenary year, the most fitting tribute to Mahatma Jyotirao Phule is about renewal. Renewal of our commitment to subjects close to his heart, such as education. Renewal of our sensitivity to injustice. Renewal of our faith that society can improve itself from within. His life tells us that the power of community can achieve miracles in India when joined with moral clarity and public purpose. That is why he still gives strength to millions. That is why his words and work still carry hope. And that is why, nearly two hundred years after his birth, Mahatma Jyotirao Phule remains not a figure of the past, but a guide for India's future.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

The writer is the Prime Minister of India

@narendramodi @narendramodi narendramodi

PIC TALK



A yellow-footed green pigeon, centre, with its chicks perches on a tree branch. PHOTO: PTI

Fee upon fee upon fee: The middle-class monsoon



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

2ND OPINION

There is a screenshot doing the rounds on social media. A food delivery order. A break-up of charges. And buried somewhere between the restaurant GST and the platform fee sits a quietly audacious little line item — Rain Fee ₹25.00. And then, because apparently the universe has a sense of humour, right below it — GST on Rain Fee: ₹4.50.

Let that sink in for a moment. We are now paying tax on weather. This is a watershed moment — not because of the ₹4.50, which is frankly the least of our worries — but because of what it represents. The complete and creative normalisation of extracting money from the paying class for absolutely everything, including the sky deciding to do what the sky has done for four billion years.



The logic, presumably, is that delivery partners need support during rains. Fair enough. Nobody is arguing against protecting workers in difficult conditions. But here is where things get philosophically uncomfortable — if a company chooses to implement a weather surcharge, who authorised the government's cut of that surcharge? Rain is not a service. It is not infrastructure. It did not file returns. Yet here we are, paying GST on the inconvenience of precipitation.

And this opens a door that, once cracked, is very hard to shut. If there is a Rain Fee today, tomorrow brings no surprises. A Summer Surge Fee for the heat. A Winter Comfort Fee for the cold. A Spring Freshness Levy, perhaps,

for the pleasant weather that clearly someone must be taxed on. Every season becomes a billing opportunity. Every act of nature becomes a line item. The Indian middle class — already a masterclass in absorbing financial shocks with a deep breath and a resigned scroll — will simply add these to the growing list of things they silently pay for.

And that silence is precisely the problem. The middle class in this country is, functionally, the most reliable ATM in the national economy. Taxes deducted before the salary even lands. GST on everything from biscuits to broadband. Fuel prices that somehow remain immune to global oil drops but sprint ahead of every global rise. And now, GST on a rain surcharge on a food delivery app.

What is striking, and worth saying plainly, is that a demographic that contributes this consistently, this obediently, and this extensively to the national exchequer receives remarkably little in return. No meaningful healthcare subsidy. No housing cushion. Education costs that climb faster than salaries. And certainly no rebate for the rain.

There is an old social contract at the heart of taxation: you pay, and the state provides. When the providing becomes invisible and the paying becomes inventive, the contract starts to feel less like governance and more like a subscription nobody agreed to. The monsoon will pass. The fees, one suspects, will not.

The writer is a freelancer and writes on development, social and gender issue

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

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AFFORDABLE ECO-FRIENDLY COOKING ALTERNATIVES FOR INDIAN HOUSEHOLDS

For decades, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) has been the backbone of cooking in Indian households. It is convenient, efficient, and relatively clean compared with traditional fuels. However, rising prices, supply concerns, and growing environmental awareness have led many Indian housewives to explore viable alternatives. Fortunately, India today offers several practical, affordable, and eco-friendly cooking options that can reduce dependence on LPG without compromising daily needs.

One of the most accessible alternatives is the electric induction cooktop. Widely available and easy to use, induction stoves heat vessels directly using electromagnetic energy, making them highly efficient and often faster than LPG. They are particularly useful in urban homes with a stable

electricity supply. Another promising option is the electric pressure cooker and rice cooker. These appliances simplify cooking while saving energy and time, handling a wide range of Indian recipes.

In rural and semi-urban areas, biogas plants offer a sustainable and cost-effective solution. Solar cookers also provide a useful option in sunny regions, reducing fuel costs over time. Improved biomass cookstoves further offer cleaner traditional cooking methods.

Additionally, piped natural gas (PNG) is expanding in cities, offering convenience and affordability. In conclusion, combining these alternatives can ensure flexibility, savings, and a more sustainable future.

JUBEL D'CRUZ | MUMBAI

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The Pioneer SINCE 1865

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Security first in digital payments

The RBI has proposed a one-hour delay for certain Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions above ₹10,000. While this move may initially appear inconvenient to people, it is a well-thought-out step towards enhancing user security. With daily 650 million transactions worth more than ₹91,000 crore and such rapid growth of digital payments in India, incidents of fraud, phishing, and mistaken transfers have also increased. It has opened doors for scammers, as they are employing new tricks to defraud individuals, such as fake UPI transaction images seeking refunds of money.

The proposed delay would provide users with a crucial window to verify transaction details or report unauthorised activity before the money is irreversibly transferred. This added layer of protection is especially beneficial for new users and those less familiar with digital platforms.

Moreover, such a safeguard can help reduce financial losses due to human errors, such as entering incorrect UPI IDs or transferring funds to the wrong recipient. It also acts as a deterrent against cybercriminals who rely on the immediacy of transactions to exploit victims.

BAL GOVIND | NOIDA

Resignation ends judicial controversy

Justice Yashwant Varma of the Allahabad High Court has tendered his resignation with immediate effect to President Droupadi Murmu, bringing an abrupt end to his tenure amid ongoing impeachment proceedings. Justice Varma has been at the centre of controversy since burnt cash was allegedly discovered on March 14, 2025 in an outhouse at the official residence allotted to him during his tenure as a judge of the Delhi High Court.

Notices of impeachment, backed by 145 Lok Sabha members and 63 Rajya Sabha members, were moved in both Houses of Parliament in July 2025. Subsequently, the Lok Sabha Speaker constituted a three-member enquiry committee under the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968, to examine the charges. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court rejected a plea filed by Justice Varma challenging the Speaker's decision.

The apex court held that the petitioner was not entitled to relief. The in-house enquiry was found fair and just.

This episode underscores the importance of accountability and transparency within the judiciary. Upholding public trust must remain paramount in preserving the integrity of democratic institutions.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Peace needs more than truce

Despite the ceasefire between Iran and the USA coming at the cost of heavy terms and conditions, the welcoming part is that at least the ceasefire has been inked between the conflicting parties, serving the greater global good.

However, the attitude of Donald Trump remains unpredictable. Immediately after the signing of the ceasefire, he made caveat remarks stating that the cessation of hostilities and reopening of the Strait of Hormuz does not mean everything has returned to the status quo.

Unfortunately, the USA must clarify what it actually intends to do. Are they truly interested in ending hostilities and settling the peace process with Iran or not? Even JD Vance described the ceasefire as a mere "fragile truce". If peace initiatives are merely fragile truces, then there is little sense in offering temporary relief to the world.

Iran's agenda and America's ceasefire efforts must deliver lasting peace. The world needs peaceful coexistence. Iran and the USA must initiate dialogue and negotiate a balanced, win-win outcome to ensure long-term stability and prevent further escalation in the region.

KIRTI WADHAWAN | KANPUR



14-day reprieve: Ceasefire and new global strategic challenges

This ceasefire, brokered through Pakistan, marks a turning point in 21st-century geopolitics. While the US used Pakistan as a credible “neutral” mouthpiece to deliver an ultimatum, Sharif-a favorite of Trump-and Field Marshal Asim Munir provided Iran with a dignified exit strategy, likely at Washington’s suggestion

FIRST Column



BHASKAR JYOTI MAHANTA



AFTER 14 DAYS, SOMEONE WILL HAVE TO BACK DOWN. IF NO ONE DOES, THE “CIVILISATION-DESTROYING” FORCE TRUMP THREATENED REMAINS POISED IN THE PERSIAN GULF

On the morning of April 7, 2026, the world stood at a precipice that US President Donald Trump described as “the death of a civilisation.” Twelve hours before his self-imposed 8:00 PM deadline, the shadow of full-scale war loomed over the entire Middle East. With the destruction of bridges in Kashan, Iran’s key oil export hub on Kharg Island, and the rising humanitarian toll-including the deaths of 18 civilians in Alborz province-Trump had provided a grim preview of this “civilisational destruction.” As the clock ticked toward a catastrophic conflict, an unexpected mediator and a 10-point proposal, termed a “Document of Self-Respect,” emerged to pull the world back from the brink.

This ceasefire, brokered through Pakistan, marks a turning point in 21st-century geopolitics. To understand its significance, one must observe the roles of the primary parties involved and the massive economic and structural implications of the demands currently on the table.

The path to the April 7 ceasefire was paved by the “Maximum Pressure 2.0” strategy. President Trump’s approach was uniquely aggressive, eschewing traditional diplomatic nuances in favor of a “might is right” policy. By targeting critical infrastructure like power plants, railways, and bridges, the US presented Tehran with two choices: surrender or face total annihilation. During this period, President Trump and Vice President JD Vance played a “bad cop-good cop” routine, alternating between aggressive posturing and messages of peace.

In this crisis, an unexpected “hero” emerged. Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, despite struggling with his own country’s economic fragility, filled the vacuum. According to analysts like Olivia Reed, Pakistan’s role was a well-planned US maneuver. While the US used Pakistan as a credible “neutral” mouthpiece to deliver an ultimatum, Sharif-a favorite of Trump-and Field Marshal Asim Munir provided Iran with a dignified exit strategy, likely at Washington’s suggestion. By requesting a two-week window to “give diplomacy a

A US MILITARY WITHDRAWAL (IRAN’S 4TH DEMAND) WOULD LEAVE ALLIES LIKE SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN, AND THE UAE VULNERABLE, POTENTIALLY TRIGGERING A REGIONAL NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

The author is the former Director General of Police, Assam, and the General Secretary of the think tank ‘SHARE’

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@TheDailyPioneer
bhaskar-mahanta-ips-retired-a81a27b

chance,” Pakistan allowed Trump to appear magnanimous and helped the Iranian government frame the move not as a surrender to Western powers, but as a response to a brotherly Islamic nation.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi and the High-Level National Security Council immediately pivoted, presenting the 10-point proposal as a “functional basis” for victory rather than a surrender. This narrative was crucial for domestic stability; facing pressure from ordinary citizens forming human chains around power plants and the IRGC (Islamic Revolutionary Guard. This ceasefire is not a permanent solution but a strategic pause that exposes three significant loopholes:

Trump’s announcement conditioned the ceasefire on the “complete, immediate, and secure reopening” of the Strait. Conversely, Iranian state media claims the agreement mentions “continued Iranian control” over the waterway. It is difficult to see how these contradictory positions can coexist. If Iran attempts to collect “transit fees” during these two

weeks, Trump’s promise of a “secure opening” to his supporters will be proven false. While Prime Minister Sharif announced a ceasefire “everywhere,” including Lebanon, Benjamin Netanyahu’s office promptly issued a warning stating that Lebanon is not included. This is a major strategic discrepancy. If Israel continues operations against Hezbollah, Iran may feel compelled to respond, potentially collapsing the Islamabad talks before they begin on April 10.

Iran’s call for human chains around civilian infrastructure was a calculated move to gain global sympathy. By agreeing to the ceasefire, Trump mitigated international PR damage but maintained the threat of “destructive force” if a deal isn’t signed within 14 days.

The economic reaction was instantaneous. Within 30 minutes of Trump’s Truth Social post, WTI Crude fell from \$114 to \$96 per barrel. This 9% drop provided much-needed relief after 38 days of uncertainty.

However, if Iran’s primary demands-

specifically the imposition of permanent “fees” in the Strait of Hormuz-are accepted in the final Islamabad agreement, it would signal a structural shift in the global economy. A fee of \$2 million per ship would drive global inflation. Furthermore, Iran’s

“sovereign currencies” strikes at the heart of petrodollar dominance. If the US agrees to this to ensure oil flow, it signals a multipolar financial world, benefiting the Chinese Yuan and weakening Washington’s ability to use the global financial system as a weapon.

If the demands of Iran’s 10-point plan are met, the Middle East will be transformed for the next half-century:

A US military withdrawal (Iran’s 4th demand) would leave allies like Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UAE vulnerable, potentially triggering a regional nuclear arms race.

example for other middle-tier powers. The message is clear: if you can choke the global energy supply, you can force any

“superpower” to the table. Pakistan’s Ascent: Pakistan’s transition from seeking IMF loans to hosting the decade’s most significant peace talks is nothing short of extraordinary. Chinese interests, seeking a stable and dollar-free energy route, likely lurk behind this development. For now, the bombing has stopped.

For the families in Alborz and the traders in New York, this 14-day reprieve is a blessing. But when delegates meet in Islamabad on Friday, April 10, the core disagreements will remain. The US views this as a “window for surrender” to reopen the waterways.

Iran views it as a “moment of victory” where they forced the US to acknowledge their dominance and lift sanctions. One side is bound to be proven wrong. In the words of Olivia Reed: “This is not peace; it is a time to re-arm.” After 14 days, someone will have to back down. If no one does, the “civilization-destroying” force Trump threatened remains poised in the Persian Gulf. For now, the world breathes-but with one eye fixed firmly on the clock.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

What the IPL spectacle really feeds



ACHARYA PRASHANT

There is something in the human being that cannot sit quietly with itself. Not restlessness in the ordinary sense, not boredom that a good night’s sleep would fix, but a structural dissatisfaction, a felt sense of incompleteness that persists regardless of what is acquired or achieved. The person who appears to have everything still reaches for something more. At rest, there is still a low hum of insufficiency beneath the rest, one that cannot quite be named or located.

This dissatisfaction is not a mystery. It is the ego’s own structure: a false center claiming to be the whole, unable to sit with itself because sitting with itself would expose the claim. What the ego will not face, it must run from. And running requires a destination.

To keep that condition below the threshold of conscious discomfort, one reaches for objects: achievement, approval, belief, tribe. And of all the objects available, a borrowed collective identity is among the most efficient: it delivers belonging, definition, and a ready-made opposition in a single transaction, with no inner work required. You simply absorb the group, and the group begins doing what you needed done.

This is what makes IPL cricket, now in its nineteenth season and carrying a total business value that has crossed eighteen billion dollars, something more interesting than just a cricket tournament. The economics have been analysed, the spectacle often criticised, and the cricket endlessly debated. But the real question worth asking is a different one, and it concerns the man watching rather than the men playing. Why does he need it so badly that none of the rest of it seems to matter? What is the franchise actually doing for him? What would he have to sit with if it were not there?

The franchise you never joined

Every season, millions of people across the country develop a fierce, protective attachment to a franchise they do not own, whose players they have never met, and whose victories produce in them a warmth they would struggle to explain. The first thing to notice about this attachment is that it is borrowed, and borrowed from nothing the spectator chose with any real attention. The team was absorbed, usually through geography, peer pressure, or proximity to a single player whose face appeared on enough billboards. And yet the resulting loyalty behaves in every way like something earned: fierce, tribal, capable of genuine aggression

towards those who hold the rival affiliation.

Outside a home stadium after a closely contested match, one often sees the winning side’s supporters turning on those who came for the other team. People with no personal history with each other, no competing interests, no actual grievance, treating each other as opponents because of the colours on someone else’s shirt. This is not fan enthusiasm exceeding itself but a precise illustration of what borrowed identity does to a person when it operates without examination.

The ego, by its nature, requires objects to feel real. It cannot sustain itself on nothing; it must attach, claim, identify. And the franchise is a remarkably convenient object for this purpose. It is stable, highly visible, emotionally intense, and, crucially, it requires no inner work whatsoever. You do not need to understand anything, question anything, or risk anything to absorb a franchise as your own. You simply take on the identity, and it begins immediately doing what all borrowed identities do: sorting the world into those who share it and those who threaten it.

What should disturb a thoughtful person is not that this mechanism exists, but that it is so transparent in this context and yet so invisible to those inside it. A man who would bristle at being called communally tribal will spend two months a year in an emotional state psychologically closer to tribalism than he would like to admit, organised around the batting average of a paid athlete who lives in a different country and would not even recognise him on the street.

The formula of inner poverty

There is a principle worth stating as plainly as possible, because it is the key to everything else. The poorer the inner life, the cheaper the entertainment will need to be. When the actual life fails to provide genuine engagement, genuine love, work of any real depth, the evening’s match ceases to be a pleasure and becomes an anaesthetic, something the person takes not to feel good but to feel less. The kind of entertainment one repeatedly reaches for can reveal more about inner condition than income, education, or stated aspiration ever will.

There is a quality of watching that does not leave the person where it found him. Not excitement, for excitement passes without depositing anything. Something that went deeper than excitement, an inner movement that left a residue, so that the person who attended carefully to a passage of real beauty walked out of the ground carrying something he did not have when he walked in.

What has replaced that deeper inner movement is something that asks nothing of the watcher and leaves nothing behind. One kind of engagement left the person altered; the other leaves only the demand for another unit of the same, because nothing has been satisfied, only temporarily suppressed. This is why the dose must keep rising. A six was once sufficient. Then the six needed the fireworks burst to register as real. Then

it needed the cheerleaders. Then came the fantasy sports apps that allowed the viewer to carry a financial stake in every delivery. The deeper enjoyment has left; agitation has filled its place; and these are not equivalent conditions, whatever the roar of the crowd might suggest.

The economy of distraction

That redistribution did not happen passively. The ego chose it, every evening, every weekend, over several seasons compounding into years. The franchise received that time instead. And here the irony deserves to be looked at plainly: the theft is the spectator’s own, committed against his own life, and the proceeds are collected by someone else entirely.

The player whose jersey the spectator wears does not know his name. He does not know whether his child is unwell, whether his savings are stretched, whether the month has been hard or easy. The spectator’s loyalty, his evenings, his emotional energy, his willingness to defend a stranger online against other strangers: all of this flows in one direction, and nothing of comparable weight returns. Yet when someone criticises the player, it is the spectator who reaches for his phone, as though an insult to the franchise were an insult to his own family. This is the furthest reach of borrowed identity: a person spending his real life protecting the reputation of someone who does not know he exists.

Political theatre, religious spectacle, franchise cricket: the products differ but the mechanism is identical in every case, each offering the ego a ready-made emotional world to inhabit so that it need not examine the actual world it lives in. The spectacle has not grown because the human capacity for joy has grown; it has grown because the ego’s willingness to bear reality has declined, and the ego must administer a progressively larger dose to itself to maintain the numbness.

The match ends every night. The emptiness that sent the spectator to the screen is exactly where he left it when he sat down. Sometimes the result has gone badly and there is the additional weight of frustration; sometimes it has gone well and there is a warmth that persists for an hour. But the franchise cannot replace a self, and a borrowed loyalty cannot substitute for the loyalty a person owes to his own life, his own questions, the things in himself that have been accumulating, season after season, while the matches played on. These do not disappear because the IPL is live; they compound.

What the crowd is running from was there before the first ball of this season was bowled, and it will be there after the last wicket falls. That, not the scoreboard, is the fact that has been waiting, patiently, without fanfare, for someone to sit with it.

Acharya Prashant is a teacher and author whose work centres on self-inquiry and its application to contemporary life
@acharya_prashant_paf
@Prashant_Advait
prashantadvait

China in India’s FDI policy shifts

ABHISHEK PRATAP SINGH AND PRACHI

Despite the push for Atmanirbhar Bharat, India’s 2026 decision to relax Press Note 3 specifically for investments from China has sparked debate about whether the country is rearranging its economic priorities. What appears at first glance to be a softening in policy is, in reality, a more nuanced shift. Rather than abandoning caution, India seems to be redefining how it manages economic engagement with a country that is both a key trade partner and a strategic competitor.

Unlike other foreign investors, Chinese firms have often been viewed through a dual lens: contributors to economic growth on one hand and potential strategic risks on the other. This is because Chinese investments are not limited to passive capital flows; they are frequently linked to supply chains, technology ecosystems, and, in some cases, state-backed enterprises. Sectors such as electronics, pharmaceuticals, and renewable energy in India have deep linkages with Chinese inputs and, historically, Chinese capital.

The 2026 relaxation does not dismantle this cautious approach. Instead, it introduces a calibrated opening, allowing up to a 10 per cent stake without prior approval, provided there is no transfer of control. This distinction is critical. It ensures that while capital inflows are facilitated, decision-making authority within Indian firms remains protected. In this sense, China continues to be treated as a special case within India’s FDI regime, reflecting the complexity of the relationship.

Security economics and strategic interdependence

The evolving policy highlights a broader shift towards what can be described as “security economics”. In today’s global environment, economic decisions are increasingly influenced by national security considerations. For India, this means carefully managing dependencies without completely disengaging from global networks, especially when it comes to China.

India’s manufacturing ambitions, particularly under initiatives to boost domestic production, rely heavily on imported components. Chinese firms dominate several upstream segments, from semiconductor components to solar modules. A complete exclusion of Chinese capital and inputs would not only disrupt supply chains but also increase costs for Indian industries, potentially making them less competitive globally.

At the same time, unrestricted access could create vulnerabilities. Concerns about data security, critical infrastructure, and long-term market influence have made policymakers wary. This is why the current approach seeks to strike a balance, limiting control while allowing partici-

pation. It reflects an understanding that economic decoupling is neither feasible nor desirable in the short term, but unmanaged integration carries its own risks. Global trends also influence this balancing act. Many countries are adopting similar strategies, tightening observation over foreign investments in sensitive sectors while remaining open to capital that supports growth. India’s policy shift can be seen as part of this broader realignment.

Drivers of policy shift

The decision to ease restrictions is rooted in practical economic considerations. One of the primary drivers is the need for capital. As India aims to position itself as a global manufacturing hub, it requires significant investment in infrastructure, technology, and production capacity. Domestic resources alone are insufficient to meet these demands, making foreign investment essential.

Additionally, the global “China plus one” strategy offers India an opportunity as companies diversify supply chains beyond China. To attract such investment, India must remain business-friendly, as overly restrictive policies could deter global players. The 2026 change may boost investor confidence, increase capital inflows, support industrial growth, and help firms access technology and integrate

into global value chains. However, the concerns are equally significant. Even minority stakes can translate into influence over time, especially in sectors where technology and data play a critical role. There is also the risk of gradual market penetration, where cumulative small investments lead to a larger strategic presence. These risks underline the importance of strong regulatory oversight and continuous policy evaluation.

Conclusion

Ultimately, the shift does not signal a departure from the principles of Atmanirbhar Bharat. Instead, it reflects a more mature interpretation of self-reliance, one that recognises the importance of engaging with global capital while safeguarding national interests. Self-reliance, in this context, is not about isolation but about building resilience within an interconnected world.

India’s approach to Chinese FDI in 2026 is best understood as a form of tactical balancing. This strategy suggests that India is moving beyond binary choices of openness versus protectionism. Instead, it is crafting a middle path that allows global opportunities while maintaining control over its economic trajectory. If managed carefully, this approach can help India navigate the complexities of its relationship with China and strengthen its position in an increasingly competitive global economy.

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Abhishek Pratap Singh is Assistant Professor, University of Delhi, and Prachi works with Swadeshi Shodh Sansthan, New Delhi
dailypioneer
@TheDailyPioneer
dailypioneer



In several columns on this page, we presented a warning. While the central bank's aggressive moves, even archaic in the age reforms, to staunchly and unequivocally support the rupee may work in the short term, they may result in a freer fall later. Indeed, after the weekend when the crunching limits on short positions were imposed, the rupee slumped below ₹95, and only strengthened after a series of extra and stringent moves were imposed immediately. The rupee recovered, but still behaved like an ailing patient. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) won the crucial battle but one is not sure about the state of war.

Experts cite several reasons why the rupee may be under more pressure in the future. The first is that an impression has gained ground that the RBI is possibly "stepping back" from reforms, and its intent for deeper integration with the global financial markets. Since the moves hint at what happened in 2013, more than a decade ago, these are being thought of as retrograde steps, which is pushing the central bank into a closed-door room, where currency protection is paramount. This may flush out genuine and honest traders, and leave the rupee to battle it out between the aggressive regulator, and never-giving-up speculators.

Some economists feel that the decisions, coming as they did after more than decade, may undo years of openness. One of them said that they "essentially break the link RBI had cultivated in the last decade." The fact is that no one, not even the most nationalistic traders, expected the central bank to go this far. This is how closed economies function, or how Malaysia reacted after the Asian currency crisis. This is not how a confident, growing, and prosperous emerging economy reacts. Investors' faith in reforms, market moves, and similar jargon may shake.

Another side effect, but crucial implications of the rupee becoming stronger from over-₹95 to a dollar to under-₹93, relate to the impending losses to the banks, and hedging becoming more expensive. The unwinding of short positions may cost some of the banks several millions of dollars each. Expensive hedging means higher costs, and difficulty-in-doing business, which is contrary to the aims and desires of the policy-makers. As investors protect their positions, they cut back their exposure to bonds, which creates complications. If global investors, and institutions shun the rupee, or give hints, there are more problems.

Look at the open reactions of some of the experts. One of them told a newspaper that the scale of intervention, and lack of communication raised concerns over transparency. The RBI's actions were "discretionary," which stinks of the times when policies are opaque, nationalistic, and aimed to protect the policy-makers and regulators. Some feel that the recent actions "raise the bar for rupee assets among offshore investors." Indeed, there may now be a divide between onshore and offshore trading, which may not be a good sign. Even if the moves are reversed, the taste will linger on for a long time.

Media reports indicate that nations, which have imposed such strictures in the recent past have suffered. Between 2015 and 2017, China tightened the offshore yuan liquidity, which "steadied the currency but led to funding pressure, and unsettled global investors." In 2016, Malaysia's restrictions on offshore currency trading "reduced the speculative activity but drained liquidity." Hence, there is invariably a "delicate balance" between currency protection at any cost, which is what India did, and reforms-oriented image, which India gave. Even minor discretions can break the bond, and severe links.

When he spoke for the first time after the currency moves, which is when he unveiled the monetary policy, Sanjay Malhorta, RBI governor, explained that the measures were temporary, and not permanent. The finance ministry leaked information that global experts, including foreign investors, were consulted before the measures. The first indicates signs of reconciliation, or an admission that this was knee-jerk reaction to prevent the rupee from breaching ₹100 to a dollar. The second hints that the idea was not to spook investors.

"Some analysts believe the central bank's actions may provide only limited support to an economy dealing with a current account deficit, and capital outflows. Elevated oil prices could further strain inflation, and widen the deficit, adding to pressure on the rupee. For now, restrictions... have reduced liquidity, and made hedging more challenging. The growing divergence between offshore and onshore markets is already affecting foreign appetite for Indian bonds," explains a media report. The fact remains that investors need a "reliable and predictable investment framework." They cannot be jolted with shocks.

More importantly, short-term aggression, and guerrilla attacks, like the RBI did, cannot win wars. Yes, they win battles, as the RBI did, and rupee strengthened. If the macro scenario does not change, the speculators will be back, and with a vengeance. In the end, what the RBI will achieve is a steady fall, not necessarily a plateau. Possibly, this is what the central bank wishes. It does not want a sudden and steep fall. Indeed, as the RBI has maintained, it does not have a support level for the rupee. Its aim is to stop speculation that drives the rupee lower, and faster, and more aggressively, than it is expected to do.

Debates about GDP and numbers

As economies stutter due to war, economists question growth figures

Once again, this discussion is intense. On the one side are those who wish to capture everything in terms of numbers. They are the quants who believe in quantitative analyses. On the other side are the ones who want to measure actual progress, and prosperity. They have a qualitative bent, and question the "world's accounting systems" as they exist. Indeed, while the former section prays to the God of GDP, the latter think of the figure as partly-demonic. The first thinks of GDP as a sacrosanct, sure-shot way to measure the rise of the nations. The second feels the number reflects the demise of the planet.

The present debate was kicked off by Antonio Guterres, UN secretary general, who said that we needed an "urgent overhaul" of how we measure growth via GDP. "We must... go beyond gross domestic product as a measure of human progress and wellbeing. Moving beyond... is about measuring the things that really matter to people, and their communities. GDP tells us the cost of everything, and the value of nothing. Our world is not a gigantic corporation," he added. In effect, the fascination with GDP and numbers is misplaced.

Over the years, economists have argued that the problem with GDP is its obsession with market transactions, what is sold and bought in the marketplace, rather than with the "real value of work or welfare." Thus, growth numbers provide the wrong results, or measure the irrelevant outcomes. For example, as Diane Coyle illustrated, if a widower marries a housekeeper, and stops paying, GDP falls. If someone grows veggies at home, and does not buy them, the result is the same. This is true if you cook at home, and do not order. The fact is that the effort involved in both sets may remain the same. Yet, GDP does not. Inequalities, polarisation, and inclusion are never, and cannot, be captured by GDP. "Nations are so locked into the game of

beating other nations in terms of the GDP metric, that the wellbeing of the ordinary citizens, and sustainability are ignored. If all the new income accrues to a few individuals, and the GDP grows, all citizens are expected to cheer.

This feeds hyper-nationalism, inequality, and polarisation," explains Kaushik Basu, an economist. The fact is that the GDP was never designed to measure human progress, only productivity and visible output that is paid for. Yet, it is the dominant benchmark of success.

Another aspect that is ignored by GDP, or rather turned on its head, relates to the environment and sustainability. Guterres maintained that the existing accounting tends to reward activities that degrade and devastate the planet. "When we destroy a forest, we are creating GDP. When we overfish, we are creating GDP," he explained. In essence, growth happens at the expense of natural resources. This is reflected in newspaper headlines, and policy discussions. A major criticism against activists is that they impede growth and development, or rather GDP. Only by demolishing the resources can we grow faster.

On the flip side, while GDP systems negate resource depletion, they do not account for things that they need to. In a media report, it was indicated that the "rise of artificial intelligence, automation, and digital economies may intensify the debate. Many forms of value creation, especially digital services, or unpaid activities, remain poorly captured by traditional metrics." Hence, there is a need to finesse and massage the numbers in any case. In many cases, the systems are archaic. Only recently did India shift to a new data series, with its GDP based on something that was almost 15 years old. The world changed. GDP did not until the

criticism was too harsh and loud to bear.

In fact, it is because the world has changed, especially in the past two decades, that economists want to take a relook at GDP. A report by a group set up by UN's Guterres argued that "as the world wrestled with repeated global shocks... the need for economic transformation has become increasingly urgent, from the financial crash of 2008 to the Covid-19 pandemic." It added that these events were "exacerbated by the 'triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.'" The fact is that rapid tech changes were "upending" labour markets, and increasing and aiding the growing inequality.

"Economic growth (as measured by higher GDP) can coexist with poverty, exclusion, and serious violations of human rights, outcomes that remain largely invisible in the conventional economic accounts.... The (UN) group's aim is not to replace GDP but to complement it, helping governments and the public assess whether development is truly improving human wellbeing, advancing equity, and safeguarding sustainability now, and for future generations," said Basu. The current models do not account for climate shocks, and are, therefore, fundamentally flawed. Hence, the former will be unable to detect or pinpoint the future tipping points that can crash economies.

Maybe, as some economists argue, there is a need for de-growth. Not rapid rises in GDP, which conflict with nature, but policies that ask the human race to pause, take deep breaths, and rethink the growth models. A recent survey found that nearly three-fourths of the 800 climate policy researchers surveyed supported "post-growth positions," or some form of receding the GDPs. "A deeper system change is required. Specifically, we need to democratise control over production, which can enable us to change what we produce, and for whom. The dominance of GDP is not an accident, it occurs because GDP measures what is valuable to capital," explains a political economist.

During the 1930s, when the concept of GDP gained traction, one of its prime movers wanted it to measure human welfare, and not just the volume of economic activity. Thus, he wanted activities such as military spending, excessive advertising, and inflated urban housing costs out of its ambit. However, during World War II, there was an urgent need to track and monitor output and productivity, especially military and industrial ones.

Thus, GDP became a tool to gauge production, and nothing else, or little else. Volume growth mattered, which was measured largely and wholly in terms of monetary value.

As Nithin Kamath, founder, Zerodha, wrote in a recent blog, and as Basu admitted, GDP is important, and provides "valuable information about production and employment." But one needs to remember, more than eight decades later, that the metric was built in the 1940s, during World War II, "for an industrial economy focused on measuring output."

OUR TAKE



A Contrarian Investor

Inside insider-trading White House

Bets worth hundreds of millions placed minutes before decisions



Imagine this scenario. The US President Donald Trump is a minute away from making a war-shattering announcement. He is about to disclose a five-day hiatus in the ongoing attacks on Iran. A minute before he goes public, within a minute, some traders place bets worth \$500 million on the downward price movement in global crude oil futures. Within a few hours or so, oil slumped by 15 per cent, according to a media report, and the slick traders earned "enormous profits." It was an easy killing. This happened on March 23, 2026. Clearly, confidential information was leaked from the White House.

Another media report gives a more dramatic version of what happened on that day. Before Trump posted on Truth Social about a pause in the attacks on Iran's power plants, "Futures for oil and stocks worth billions of dollars changed hands just 15 minutes before Trump's post sent crude prices tumbling, and equities soaring. Contracts corresponding to at least 6 million barrels... were sold in the two minutes before 6.49 am in New York on March 23.... The average for the same time-period over the previous five trading days was about 700 lots, or 7,00,000 barrels. Trump's Truth Social post was published at around 7.05 am that day."

An angry White House reacted violently. "White House spokesperson... addressed the issue directly, stating that while Trump remains committed to fostering a strong and prosperous stock market for all Americans, government officials and members of Congress must be strictly prohibited from using non-public information for personal financial gain. The staff-wide email, reportedly distributed by the White House management office, reinforces existing legal and ethical boundaries surrounding the use of privileged information in financial markets," stated the report. This led to a bipartisan pressure to ensure accountability and transparency at the highest levels.

Ironic as it may seem, the White House and Congress insiders are possibly doing exactly what Trump, his family members, friends, and loyalists have done for over a year, and during the president's first term. They turned diplomatic discussions, and negotiations, especially in the Middle East, into personal profit fiefdoms. The president openly accepted expensive gifts, even as his family inked lucrative contracts. The penchant to make money from inside information presumably stems from the top. A call for transparency in such an environment sounds a bit shallow and hollow. If the master is grey, can the minions be expected to stay 'white' in a tainted White House?

Earlier this year, just before the US forces captured the Venezuelan president, and his wife, and shipped him to the US, profitable bets were allegedly placed. "A series of well-timed wagers placed on Polymarket by freshly created anonymous accounts have generated hundreds of thousands of dollars in profits so far, prompting analysts to scour the trade for telltale signs of insider activity. Some payouts on Middle East-related bets are now frozen in dispute, with traders unable to collect as users debate what constitutes a ceasefire," states a media report.

Not too long ago, a few months ago, India's power regulator alleged similar practices among the employees of the Indian Energy Exchange. This was after Sebi pinpointed a few wrongdoings. The market regulator ordered a few entities to surrender more than ₹170 crore, which was earned illegally. When the power regulator decided to implement a few changes that would adversely impact trading on the

energy exchange, the latter's shares plummeted by nearly 30 per cent in a single day. However, there was an unusual spike in trading volumes before the announcement, which raised suspicions of insider trading.

Evidence suggested that like in the case of the White House events, the traders received information from high-ranking officials within the energy regulator, and acted on them. Thus, the so-called profits were impounded, bank accounts related to the amounts were frozen, and several entities restrained from dealing in securities. Later, like in the case of White House, there was a debate on how to restrain officials, and educate them on what was wrong, and what was right. In fact, it was a classic case of insiders using inside information. Profits were lucrative, and not easy to be ignored, and trades simple to execute.

Last month, Sebi highlighted the energy exchange case, along with the others that involved the executives at IndusInd Bank, and

Bank of America, as also those in two leading global consulting firms. "The insiders may lie not only in companies, (but) they may also lie in the people who have gotten information in a fiduciary capacity. It may also lie with regulators because they are also doing regulation. So, we really have to see that everyone is adequately sensitised to this issue" Tuhin Kanta Pandey, Sebi chairperson, said in a media interview.

Similarly, the issue about official insiders, within the government, and within the White House has gained traction in America. Two days after the White House email on insider bets related to the Iran war, three senators introduced the 'Public Integrity in Financial Prediction Markets Act.' The aim is to ban government officials at all levels from "using non-material public information of any kind on any event contract." It is a sensible step to promote official integrity.

Another senator explained, "As financial markets evolve, so too must our ethics laws. By extending long-standing insider trading principles to prediction markets, this bill closes a dangerous loophole, and reinforces a basic expectation: Those entrusted with sensitive information cannot make a bet on the future for personal profit." The prediction market cannot be left to self-regulation, or self-policing. Laws need to be in place to stop elected officials from playing the prediction markets, or rather the futures market, as was the case with oil. The so-called bipartisan bill covers the president, vice president, members of Congress, employees of the Congress and Senate, political appointees, and employees of executive and regulatory agencies.

Other Congresspersons have chipped in. "But while insider trading is illegal for the rest of the country, there is no enforceable ban on Congress and other top officials from using their insider knowledge to cash in. So-called 'prediction markets' like Polymarket and Kalsi allow individuals to bet on timing and details of world events.... Banning members of Congress from trading stocks is an incredibly popular, bipartisan policy, with a 2025 study showing that more than 86 per cent of the voting public support such a ban," said one of them.

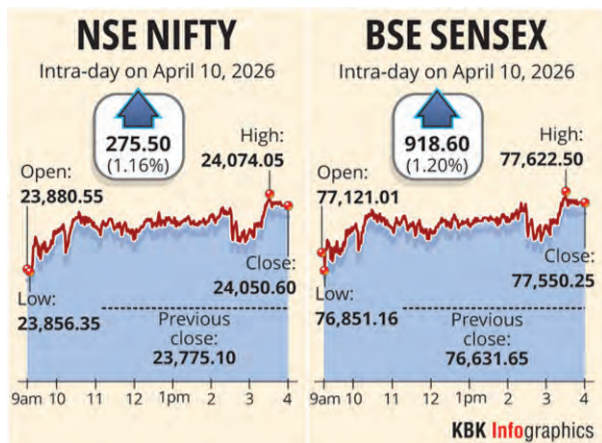


Markets rebound on positive trends

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

Stock market benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty surged over 1 per cent on Friday, propelled by buying in banking counters and a positive trend in global equities. Investor sentiment improved amid hopes of further easing in the West Asia crisis ahead of US-Iran negotiations and lower crude prices, analysts said.

After staying in the positive territory throughout the day, the 30-share BSE Sensex later jumped 918.60 points or 1.20 per cent to settle at 77,550.25. During the day, it surged 990.85 points or 1.29 per cent to 77,622.50. The 50-share NSE Nifty climbed 275.50



points or 1.16 per cent to end at 24,050.60.

The positive trend was led by buying in banking, auto and financial stocks, while IT counters saw some profit

booking after TCS' financial results.

From the 30-Sensex firms, Asian Paints, IICI Bank, Mahindra & Mahindra, InterGlobe Aviation, Axis Bank

and State Bank of India were the major gainers. On the other hand, Sun Pharma, Infosys, Tata Consultancy Services, Tech Mahindra and HCL Tech were the laggards.

In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher.

European markets were trading in positive territory. US markets ended higher on Thursday.

"Indian equity markets closed the week's final session on a positive note, with the Nifty experiencing a range-bound session with a bullish bias, gaining over 1 per cent as investors carefully priced in expectations of

progress from the upcoming US-Iran negotiations, even as the ceasefire continued to remain uncertain. "However, markets maintained a firm undertone," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Global markets shared a similarly constructive sentiment, with the US, European, and Asian indices all in the green zone, with Asian markets leading the gains, he added.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, climbed 0.57 per cent to \$96.47 per barrel.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹1,711.19 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

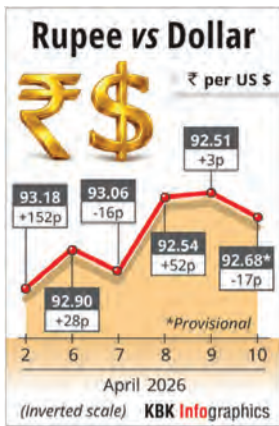
Rupee closes at 92.68 against US dollar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai

The rupee pared initial gains and settled for the day 17 paise lower at 92.68 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, weighed down by risks from rising global tensions, especially the US-Iran conflict.

Forex traders said the rupee witnessed high volatility as the deadline for the RBI's instructions to banks to curb their overnight positions to \$100 million closes on Friday amid heightened geopolitical uncertainty.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 92.58 against the US dollar, then lost ground to touch an intra-day low of 92.76 against the green-



back. It also hit the day's high of 92.41 during the session. At the end of the trading session on Friday, the rupee was quoted at 92.68 (provisional) against the American currency, reg-

istering a decline of 17 paise over its previous close. On Thursday, the rupee settled with a marginal gain of 3 paise at 92.51 against the US dollar.

"US-Iran truce is on shaky ground. There is still a lot of uncertainty around how the situation will unfold. The Strait of Hormuz remains effectively closed," IFA Global said in a research note.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was higher by 0.03 per cent at 98.84 as the safe-haven demand has come down after the ceasefire, but as the ceasefire is fragile, the US dollar is getting bids at lower levels.

100 per cent land acquisition must before approving highway projects: Nitin Gadkari

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday opined that no new national highway project should be approved without 100 per cent land acquisition, as it is a major hurdle in road construction.

Addressing the 17th CID Vishwakarma Awards & Exhibitions on Viksit Bharat 2047, Gadkari further said the Highways ministry has highway assets worth ₹15 lakh crore that can be monetised.

"Land acquisition, forest and environment clearance



are major problems in highway projects. "We had made it mandatory that without acquiring 90 per cent of the land no new national highway projects will be started. Now I think that

without acquiring 100 per cent of the land, we should not give an appointed date for the new national highway projects," he said.

Appointed date is the formal start date for highway

projects, signalling that land acquisition and clearances are sufficiently in place for construction to begin.

Further, Nitin Gadkari reiterated that consultants responsible for preparing detailed project reports (DPRs) for highway construction are the real culprits behind the poor quality of highways.

The minister suggested that retired NHAI officials should use their skills and start firms to prepare DPRs.

A DPR is a comprehensive blueprint for a road construction project, outlining all technical, financial and logistics details necessary for its execution.

Rain, hailstorm damage to rabi crops in 2.49 lakh hectares so far: Chouhan

LAXMI DEVI AERE
Bhopal

Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Friday said unseasonal rainfall and hailstorms have damaged standing rabi crops, particularly wheat, across approximately 2.49 lakh hectares so far across several States, with the full extent of losses still being assessed by multiple agencies.

"The assessment of the crop damage is still underway. The assessment is being done by three different departments," Chouhan told reporters ahead of the launch of "Unnat Krishi Mela" in Raisen district of Madhya



Pradesh. He noted that the wheat crop has suffered the maximum damage, followed by horticulture crops. The figure of 2.49 lakh hectares pertains to damage reported till April 8.

Chouhan assured farmers that the Narendra Modi Government stands with them in this hour of crisis.

On April 5, Chouhan had directed ministry officials to conduct a comprehensive

review of crop losses in the affected states and coordinate with State Governments to gather ground-level information.

The Minister also held discussions with the agriculture ministers of the affected states to assess the extent of the damage.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had earlier warned that a fresh Western Disturbance would affect northwest India from April 7, bringing widespread rainfall, thunderstorms and hailstorms over Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Uttar Pradesh till April 10. (PTI)

India must rethink West Asia energy reliance after biggest shock: ONGC chief

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

As the world scrambles to recover from the biggest energy shock in decades triggered by the West Asia conflict, India should be cautious about relying on traditional supply assumptions, particularly its proximity to the Middle East for sourcing oil and gas, ONGC Chairman and CEO Arun Kumar Singh said on Friday.

India, which relied on the Middle East to meet nearly half of its crude oil imports, 30 per cent of its gas and 85-90 per cent of LPG, must invest in building strategic storages as an insurance against price and supply

disruptions, he said. The six-week long was shut the only shipping lane that was used by the Gulf countries to export crude oil (raw material for making petrol and diesel), natural gas (used to make fertilizer, generate electricity, turn into CNG to power automobiles and piped to household kitchens for cooking) and cooking gas LPG.

This led to an energy crisis in several importing countries, including India which had to prioritise supply of gas.

"Thinking that the Middle East is nearest to us and therefore all their resources (can be accessed easily), we should take it with a pinch of



salt," Singh said at the Energy Security conclave organised by oil regulator PNGRB.

He warned that a shifting global order and rising geopolitical tensions are undermining long-held assumptions about energy

security. "A paradigm shift has happened," he said. "If the world gets more and more de-globalised, we will have more and more problems."

Singh said India's high energy import dependence

makes it especially vulnerable in an increasingly fragmented world.

"For the next 30-40 years if you have multiple (powers), then you have everyday war of supremacy," he said. He stressed that boosting domestic production is now critical.

"We have been doing it very intensely except for deep water," he said, adding that increasing output is an "existential necessity".

Calling for a strategic reset, Singh urged India to aggressively pursue domestic exploration and build resilience.

"We should chase wherever oil or gas is in our country at any cost, because in a crisis

nobody (will help)," he said. He also emphasised the need to expand storage capacity.

"We must now address this storage whatever it takes," Singh said.

Highlighting growing volatility in global markets, he said refining economics have become increasingly unpredictable.

"We should be prepared to see more and more of this," he said, citing unprecedented instances where product margins exceeded crude costs. "Nobody had ever imagined at least I, in this industry for last 40 years."

Singh also pointed to rising resource nationalism among producer nations.

Tata Sons listing in public interest: Shapoorji Pallonji Mistry



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

SP Group Chairman Shapoorji Pallonji Mistry on Friday again pressed for listing of Tata Sons, saying it is not merely a regulatory compliance but a necessary evolution in the public interest, reposing faith in the Government and RBI to "act decisively" on the matter.

In a statement, Mistry said the SP Group has "full faith in the Government of India and the Reserve Bank of India to act decisively" on the matter of listing of Tata Sons — the holding company of the coffee-to-cars-and-software conglomerate.

So far, no clear evidence-based case has been presented to explain how a public listing would materially damage the interests of the trusts or reduce their ability to serve beneficiaries."

Asserting that "the listing of Tata Sons is fundamentally in the public interest", he said, "A publicly listed holding company strengthens board accountability, broadens the investor base, and secures long-term value for all stakeholders."

have favoured public listing of Tata Sons. On the other hand, Tata Trust Chairman Noel Tata is against the move.

"As I have stated earlier, we would like to reiterate that a timely listing of Tata Sons is not merely a regulatory compliance but a necessary evolution. One that will reinforce corporate governance, deepen transparency and accountability," Mistry said.

These form the very foundation of the Tata Group, Mistry said, adding that "to date, no clear, evidence-based case has been presented to explain how a public listing would materially damage the interests of the trusts or reduce their ability to serve beneficiaries."

Asserting that "the listing of Tata Sons is fundamentally in the public interest", he said, "A publicly listed holding company strengthens board accountability, broadens the investor base, and secures long-term value for all stakeholders."

Mistry's comment comes amid reports that two of the trustees of Tata Trusts, Venu Srinivasan and Vijay Singh,

ADB ups India's FY27 GDP projections to 6.9%

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) on Friday projected India's GDP growth to remain "robust" at 6.9 per cent in the current fiscal, and rise to 7.3 per cent in next fiscal driven by strong domestic demand, and supported by easing financing conditions and lower US tariffs on Indian goods.

In its Asian Development Outlook April 2026 report, the ADB said a prolonged conflict in the Middle East could undermine India's macroeconomic performance through multiple channels, including higher energy prices, trade flow disruptions, and weaker remittance inflows.

It projected inflation to more than double from 2.1 per cent in 2025-26 to 4.5 per cent in the current fiscal due to a rebound in food prices from earlier declines, higher global oil prices, currency weakness, and rising precious metal prices. It projected inflation to ease to 4 per cent in the 2027-28 fiscal on account of lower oil prices and moderating food prices. "A prolonged conflict in the Middle East is the single biggest risk to the (developing Asia and Pacific) region's outlook, as it could lead to persistently high energy and food prices and tighter financial conditions," said ADB Chief Economist Albert Park. "With renewed trade policy uncertainty posing additional risks, it is essential that Governments

implement sound macro-economic policies to sustain growth and contain inflation, with targeted support measures to protect vulnerable households."

ADB expects economic growth in developing Asia and the Pacific to slow to 5.1 per cent in both 2026 and 2027, from 5.4 per cent last year, weighed down by the conflict in the Middle East and continuing trade uncertainty.

The recent surge in energy prices and potential disruptions to fertiliser markets linked to the conflict in the Middle East could lead to inflationary pressure on global food prices, it said.

With regard to India, ADB



said GDP growth is projected to decline to 6.9 per cent in current fiscal (April-March), from 7.6 per cent in 2025-26 primarily due to external challenges, and expand to 7.3 per cent in FY2027 as consumption and investment benefit from favourable policies and the external environment improves.

A key policy challenge of India is to rationalise subsidies and transfers to protect vulnerable groups while preserving fiscal space for growth-enhancing public investment, it said.

Qatar to remain reliable energy supplier to India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Qatar will remain a "reliable energy supplier" to India, its Energy Minister Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi said during talks with Indian Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri in Doha, as both sides called for stability in global markets amid ongoing West Asia tensions.

Puri, on a two-day visit to Qatar from April 9-10, conveyed a message of solidarity from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Qatar's leadership, following the outbreak of conflict in the region, according to an Indian Government statement on Friday.

Both sides welcomed the two-week ceasefire announced on April 8 and stressed the need for an early end to disruptions in global energy supplies.

They also emphasised the impor-



Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri, right, meets Qatar Minister, President and CEO of Qatar Petroleum Saad Sherida Al-Kaabi, during his visit in Doha, Qatar

ance of "unimpeded freedom of navigation and the global flow of commerce" to maintain supply chains, the

statement said.

The visit comes as New Delhi seeks to secure energy supplies amid heightened geopolitical tensions that have disrupted global fuel trade flows.

Qatar is India's single-largest supplier of LNG and LPG, providing 45 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively.

After the US and Israel attacks on Iran on February 28, Tehran's sweeping retaliation targeted neighbouring Gulf countries that hosted US troops. Qatar's giant LNG export facility was struck, leading to the shutdown of production and a declaration of force majeure on gas exports, including to India.

India relies on imports to meet about half of its natural gas demand and roughly two-thirds of its LPG needs, a fuel widely used for household cooking, with the bulk of supplies sourced from West Asia.

Jaiprakash Gaur backs Adani Group's acquisition of JAL assets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Jaypee Group founder Jaiprakash Gaur on Friday threw his support behind the Adani Group taking over his insolvent infrastructure firm JAL, saying he has full confidence in Gautam Adani's leadership to take the group forward.

The statement came days after rival bidder Vedanta Ltd's Anil Agarwal claimed that Gaur wanted Jaiprakash Associates Ltd (JAL) to be in the 'safe hands' of his mining conglomerate.

"I appreciate the fair and transparent process conducted by the Committee of Creditors and the Resolution Professional, and I thank both the Adani Group and the Vedanta Group for their participation and interest.

"The Committee of Creditors (CoC) has selected the Adani Group as the successful resolution applicant, and we fully respect this decision," Gaur said. In November last year, the CoC of JAL approved Adani Enterprises Ltd's ₹14,535 crore bid to acquire its assets through the insolvency process.

On March 17, the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), Allahabad bench, approved the bid. However, the same has been challenged by Vedanta, which made a bid of ₹17,926 crore, in the appellate tribunal NCLAT. The matter is currently being heard in the NCLAT, which had refused to put an interim stay on the NCLT's decision. Even the Supreme Court did not stay the NCLT order.

have every confidence that



under the leadership of Gautam Adani, the legacy of Jaiprakash Associates will be carried forward with renewed energy, responsibility, and purpose, ensuring that the aspirations of all stakeholders are fulfilled," the Jaypee Group patriarch said.

Noting that JAL has been "more than a company-it has

been a lifelong journey of conviction, perseverance, and nation-building since its founding in 1979", Gaur extended his "heartfelt wishes" to the Adani Group as they take this journey forward.

The recent financial challenges that led to the Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process have been

difficult for all stakeholders, Gaur said, adding that "throughout this period, we have worked with sincerity and commitment, alongside homebuyers, employees, lenders, and partners to enable a fair and credible resolution".

Gaur highlighted that the Jaypee Group had built an institution that delivered iconic assets, such as the Buddh International Circuit, major hydropower projects, cement capacity, and integrated developments, including Jaypee Wish Town, Jaypee Greens, and Jaypee Sports City. "This journey remains a matter of deep personal pride," he noted.

Last month, mining baron Anil Agarwal claimed that Vedanta had received written confirmation that it had won a bid for a Jaypee Group

asset, but the decision was subsequently reversed, without elaborating on the reasons.

Agarwal had said the episode brought back memories of his interactions with Jaypee group founder Jaiprakash Gaur, who had earlier expressed a desire that the group's assets be passed on to "safe hands" and carried forward with the right intent.

"We have no attachment to this asset. If it comes, it is God's grace. If it goes, that is also his wish," he said, adding that commitments made in line with "dharma" should not be taken back.

He said Vedanta would present facts through appropriate channels and follow due process, drawing on teachings from the Bhagavad Gita.

FROM THE WORLD

PAKISTAN Navy rescues 18 Ship crewmen

The Pakistan Navy on Friday rescued 18 crew members, including Chinese and Bangladeshi nationals, of a merchant vessel in the Arabian Sea in response to a distress call. The call originated from the Merchant Vessel (MV) Gold Autumn, which was operating in the North Arabian Sea at 200 nautical miles (approx 370 km) off Pakistan's coast and a ship of the Pakistan Navy responded immediately, according to a statement by the Pakistan Army. It said that PNS Hunain conducted a search and rescue operation, with the ship's crew providing medical aid, assisting in firefighting, carrying out damage assessment and successfully rescuing the crew.

SRI LANKA Provincial polls to be delayed

Council elections in Sri Lanka's nine provinces, pending since 2014, are set to be delayed further as a cross-party select committee has asked the legal position to understand the difficulties in holding polls, it was announced on Friday. A statement from the Parliament's press office said the cross-party select committee to recommend the selection of the electoral system to hold the election had met on Tuesday with the Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath in the chair.

Kuwait blames Iran for drone strikes despite ceasefire

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

US President Donald Trump appeared to cast doubt on the effectiveness of the two-week ceasefire over Iran's continued chokehold on the Strait of Hormuz, while Kuwait accused Iran and its proxies of launching drone attacks despite the ceasefire.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard denied launching attacks Thursday night on Persian Gulf states.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offered a potential boost to ceasefire efforts in the region when he said he had approved direct talks with Lebanon. The Lebanese Government has not responded as of Friday



Displaced families extend their hands for donated food beside the tents they use as shelters after fleeing Israeli bombardment in southern Lebanon in Beirut

Israel pledges not to attack two key Lebanese hospitals

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

The World Health Organisation said Israeli forces had previously issued an evacuation order for Beirut's Jnah area, which includes the Rafik Hariri — the main public hospital in the city — and Al Zahraa Hospital.

WHO's top representative in Lebanon said Friday that Israel provided "assurance" after late-night talks with UN officials that Israeli forces would not attack the hospitals as they continue military action against Hezbollah.

Dr Abdinasir Abubakar, speaking to reporters in Geneva, said UN officials "got some assurance back saying that these two hospitals will not be attacked."

Separately, Abubakar said Israeli forces warned that "ambulances will be attacked." An Israeli army



spokesman wrote on X that Hezbollah is "deliberately using ambulances for terror purposes." Abubakar said WHO was not able to independently confirm those claims. A top medical official in Iran has put the death toll in the war with Israel and the United States at over 3,000 people.

Kyiv downed Shaded in West Asia conflict: Zelenskyy

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Kyiv

Ukrainian military personnel have shot down Iranian-designed Shaded drones in multiple Middle Eastern countries during the Iran war, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said, describing the operations as part of a broader effort to help partners counter the same weapons used by Russia in Ukraine.

Zelenskyy made his first public acknowledgement of the operations on Wednesday in remarks to reporters that were embargoed until Friday. He said Ukrainian forces took part in active operations abroad using domestically produced interceptor drones proven in countering Iranian-designed Shaded drones used by Russia in Ukraine.

"This was not about a training mission or exercises, but about support in building a modern air

morning. The announcement came after Israel pounded Beirut on Wednesday, killing more than 300 people. The negotiations are expected next week in Washington, according to a person familiar with the matter.

Questions remained over what will happen to Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium at the heart of tensions, how and when normal traffic will resume through the Strait of Hormuz, and what happens to Iran's ability to launch future missile attacks and support armed proxies in the region.

Talks between the United States and Iran on a resolution to the conflict are expected to start Saturday in Islamabad, with the White House saying

Vice President JD Vance would lead the US delegation.

Beirut residents sift through the wreckage of their homes in the Ain al-Mraisheh neighbourhood along Beirut's coastal corniche, where an Israeli strike on Thursday wiped out the bottom floors of a multi-story building, causing a partial collapse, stunned residents tried to salvage whatever furniture and personal mementoes they could find in the rubble.

Although now homeless, some men at the scene expressed gratitude that they lost only their apartments, not their loved ones. The strikes killed more than 300 people and wounded over 1,800, authorities said. "There is no substitute

for family," said Wissam Tabila, 35. "Everything else can be replaced. The house and other things can be replaced, but parents, children, or a wife, this is the most important."

The NNA news agency reported that Israeli warplanes on Friday struck near a State Security agency office in the southern town of Nabatieh, causing extensive damage at the Government building. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the specific strike. Its Arabic-language spokesperson, Avichay Adrae, claimed that Israel had hit more than 120 Hezbollah militant sites in the past 24 hours.



defence system that can actually work," Zelenskyy said. Ukraine took part in the defensive operations before the tentative ceasefire in the Middle East was reached among Iran, the United States and Israel this week. Zelenskyy did not identify the countries involved but said Ukrainian personnel operated across several nations, helping strengthen their air defence systems. He

previously said that 228 Ukrainian experts were deployed in the region.

In exchange, Ukraine is receiving weapons to protect its energy infrastructure, along with oil, diesel and, in some cases, financial arrangements, he said.

The Ukrainian leader said the agreements would bolster Ukraine's energy stability and described the partnerships as something that

would "be marketed" as Kyiv seeks to formalise and expand its defence export role. "We are helping strengthen their security in exchange for contributions to our country's resilience," he said. "This is far more than simply receiving money."

The disclosure comes amid concerns that conflict in the Middle East could divert Western military support from Ukraine, particularly air defence supplies. But Zelenskyy said that partners were continuing to supply missiles for Patriot systems, adding that a new batch had arrived in recent days and that Ukraine was working with all partners to ensure its air defence remained in place.

He warned that the coming spring and summer would be difficult for Ukraine, with growing political and battlefield pressure as the United States turns to domestic politics and elections.

Jaishankar strengthens India-Mauritius ties at IOC summit

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Port Louis

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday called on Mauritius President Dharambeer Gokhool and conveyed warm greetings from President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"Our conversation reflected the warmth of our friendship and the steadfast commitment to further advancing India-Mauritius partnership," he said in a post on X after meeting President Gokhool.

Jaishankar, who is in Mauritius to attend the 9th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC), also met Pravin Kumar Jugnauth, the former prime minister and leader of the MSM Party. "Value his strong commitment to India-Mauritius partnership," he said. The minister also met his counterparts from Nepal, Bhutan and Seychelles and discussed issues of bilateral and mutual interests.

"Glad to meet FM Shishir Khanal @shisir of Nepal this afternoon. Congratulated him on his appointment. Discussed realising the full potential of the India-Nepal partnership by deeper collaboration in different sectors,"



Union External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar interacting with former Prime Minister of Mauritius and MSM Party leader Pravin Kumar Jugnauth in Mauritius

he posted on X. Jaishankar, who held a "warm conversation" with Bhutan's Foreign Minister D N Dhungyel in Port Louis, said, "Our unique and time-tested partnership continues to progress and prosper." The minister also met Seychelles Foreign Minister Barry Faure on the sidelines of the conference. "India is committed to supporting Seychelles in meeting current economic challenges. Welcomed the steps in implementing the Special Economic Package," Jaishankar said.

A day earlier, Jaishankar reaffirmed India's commitment

ment to Mauritius' development by witnessing a Special Economic Package Level of Effort (LoE), inaugurating 11 community projects, and launching the iGOT Karmayogi portal.

Key agreements also covered higher education and hydrography cooperation. Jaishankar on Thursday announced that India would soon position a Defence Attache in Mauritius. "This will surely strengthen our growing engagements," he added. From Mauritius, Jaishankar will travel to the United Arab Emirates this weekend.

Former Iranian Foreign minister Kharazi dies

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Dubai

A former Iranian foreign minister who once suggested Tehran could seek a nuclear weapon died late Thursday after being wounded in an airstrike last week, Iranian state television reported.

Kamal Kharazi had served as a foreign minister for

Nigerian general, soldiers killed in Borno base attack

DYEPKAZAH SHIBAYAN ■ Abuja

An army general and several soldiers were killed during an attempt to raid a military base in northeastern Nigeria, officials said.

The attack occurred in Benisheikh in Borno State, army spokesman Michael Onoja said in a statement, but it was repelled.

Onoja described the assailants as "terrorists", which is the term the military uses to describe members of Islamic militant groups in the northeast of the country. President Bola Tinubu confirmed that a general was killed in the attack. "The insurgents' counterattack is a sign of desperation," he said in a statement.

Table with columns: Customer Name, Loan A/C No., Amount Outstanding (₹), Date of Recall Notice, Gross Weight, Net Weight. Includes sub-sections for various sectors like Sector 10A, Sector 12, Sector 14, Sector 16, Sector 31-32A, Sector 17, Sector 24, Sector 16, Sector 17, Sector 18, Sector 19, Sector 20, Sector 21, Sector 22, Sector 23, Sector 24, Sector 25, Sector 26, Sector 27, Sector 28, Sector 29, Sector 30, Sector 31, Sector 32, Sector 33, Sector 34, Sector 35, Sector 36, Sector 37, Sector 38, Sector 39, Sector 40, Sector 41, Sector 42, Sector 43, Sector 44, Sector 45, Sector 46, Sector 47, Sector 48, Sector 49, Sector 50.

Table with columns: Name, ID, Amount, Date, Weight. Includes sub-sections for various sectors like Sector 10A, Sector 12, Sector 14, Sector 16, Sector 31-32A, Sector 17, Sector 24, Sector 16, Sector 17, Sector 18, Sector 19, Sector 20, Sector 21, Sector 22, Sector 23, Sector 24, Sector 25, Sector 26, Sector 27, Sector 28, Sector 29, Sector 30, Sector 31, Sector 32, Sector 33, Sector 34, Sector 35, Sector 36, Sector 37, Sector 38, Sector 39, Sector 40, Sector 41, Sector 42, Sector 43, Sector 44, Sector 45, Sector 46, Sector 47, Sector 48, Sector 49, Sector 50.



Former Iranian Foreign Minister Kamal Kharazi



Rubio to visit India in May for talks

SAGAR KULKARNI
Washington

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is set to visit New Delhi next month, it was announced after his "productive meeting" with India's Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri on a range of issues, including trade and the Quad.

Misri, who is on a three-day visit, met Rubio at the White House on Thursday. The two leaders reviewed bilateral relationships, especially trade, critical minerals, defence and the Quad.

"Welcome to the White House @VikramMisri! Productive meeting with @SecRubio that focused on our bilateral relationship, especially trade, critical minerals, defence and the Quad," US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor, who was also present at the meeting, posted on X.

Secretary Rubio looks forward to visiting India next month, Gor said.

"We look forward to deepening our engagement in these important sectors and much more to strengthen the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership," the Indian embassy in the US said in a post on X.

Earlier, Misri held separate meetings with US Deputy Secretary Christopher Landau and US Under Secretary of State for



Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri during a meeting with the US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor, in Washington, DC

Political Affairs, Allison Hooker. "Deputy Secretary of State Christopher Landau met with Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri today in Washington.

The leaders reaffirmed the close partnership between the two countries and shared news about the situation in the Persian Gulf and other global and regional priorities," Tommy Pigott, Principal Deputy Spokesman for the Department of State, said in a statement.

According to the Indian embassy, Misri and Landau discussed bilateral priorities and also exchanged assessments on regional and global developments of mutual concern. Hooker said she and Misri discussed how India and the US can work closer together on security, defence, and the economy. "We are finding practical ways to make both Americans and Indians safer and more prosperous, including through the Quad," she

said. The Indian embassy in the US said Hooker and Misri took stock of the India-US bilateral agenda since the Foreign Office Consultations held last December.

The two diplomats also shared assessments on recent developments in West Asia, as well as regional issues of mutual interest.

US Vice President's leading a delegation to Islamabad for talks with Iranian leaders after the warring sides agreed to a ceasefire. (PTI)

MISRI MEETS FBI DIRECTOR KASH PATEL

Washington: Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri discussed cooperation in countering terrorism, organised crime and narcotics in a meeting with Director of US security agency FBI, Kash Patel, in Washington.

"Foreign Secretary Shri Vikram Misri met Director FBI Mr. Kash Patel today. Both had a useful exchange of views on the robust India-U.S. cooperation in countering terrorism, organised crime, and narcotics," the Indian Embassy in the US said in a social media post on Thursday night.

Misri is on a three-day visit to the US and has met several top US officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio. The visit comes after the US agreed to a ceasefire with Iran, bringing a tenuous truce to the war that began on February 28 over Tehran's refusal to give up its nuclear stockpile.



Chinese President Xi Jinping shaking hands with Kuomintang party leader Cheng Li-wun in Beijing

Xi meets Taiwan's Opposition leader

KJM VARMA ■ Beijing

President Xi Jinping on Friday said peace is the common wish of the people on both sides of the strait, but Taiwan's independence is the chief culprit that is stalling unity, as he met Taiwan's opposition leader Cheng Li-wun.

Cheng is the first Kuomintang (KMT) chairperson to visit China in a decade amid Beijing's efforts to ramp up military and diplomatic pressure on Taiwan to reintegrate with the mainland.

China claims Taiwan as part of it and pledges to reunite it with the mainland.

"Compatriots on both sides (of the strait) are both Chinese, and we need peace, we need development, we need communication, and we need cooperation. This is a common wish," Xi said.

Xi said that "Taiwan independence" is the chief culprit undermining peace across the Taiwan Strait.

"We should neither condone nor tolerate it," he was quoted by the State-run Xinhua news agency as telling Cheng.

No matter how the international landscape and the situation across the Taiwan Strait may evolve, the over-

arching trend toward the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation will not change, and the prevailing momentum for the Chinese on both sides of the Strait to come together will not change, he said.

He expressed full confidence that people across the Taiwan Strait would ultimately get closer and get together. "Differences in social systems should not be an excuse for secession," Xi said, referring to China under the socialist system headed by the ruling Communist Party and Taiwan, a democratic system with a free economy. (PTI)

Irish fuel protests enter fourth day



ASSOCIATED PRESS
London

Protests over high fuel prices in Ireland entered a fourth day on Friday, sparking concerns about fuel shortages and emergency services as demonstrators clogged roads and blocked access to refining and distribution sites around the country.

The Irish Government is set to meet with farmers, truckers and agricultural contractors on Friday to discuss the crisis, triggered by rising gasoline and diesel costs as the conflict in the West Asia restricts oil exports from the region. While organisers have said they will call off the coordinated protests if the Government agrees to talk with them, it is unclear whether they will be included in the talks.

Protests began on Tuesday as slow-moving convoys restricted access to some of the busiest streets in Dublin, the capital, and blocked fuel depots that supply half the country. Some protesters slept in their vehicles overnight, demanding that the Government speak with them.

Over 100 service stations have now run out of fuel and the number could be five times as many by Friday evening if fuel supplies remain disrupted, national broadcaster RTE reported, citing the industry organisation Fuels for Ireland.

Myanmar's president sworn in amid global criticism

RANT PECK ■ Bangkok

Min Aung Hlaing, who as Myanmar's military commander had led the Southeast Asian nation with an iron fist since seizing power from Aung San Suu Kyi's civilian Government in 2021, was sworn in as an elected president on Friday.

His inauguration came after a general election judged by UN experts and rights groups to be neither free nor fair, with Suu Kyi's popular National League for Democracy party among many not taking part. He faces the major challenge of ending the civil war that began when Suu Kyi's ouster from power met with armed resistance.

The transition back to a nominally democratic Government is widely seen as an effort to keep the army in power behind a facade of civilian rule. Min Aung Hlaing's ascent to the presidency follows a tradition of military strongmen installing themselves as the nation's top leader and seeking to legitimise their rule through unfair elections.

He will be serving a five-year term after his April 3 election by parlia-



Myanmar's newly elected President Min Aung Hlaing talking to journalists as he leaves after a sworn-in ceremony at Union parliament in Naypyitaw, Myanmar

ment. Twenty-eight of the 30 new cabinet members, also sworn in on Friday, are current or former generals, lawmakers from the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, or members of the previous military Government.

The pro-military bloc holds nearly 90 per cent of the seats in the two-chamber legislature.

"Myanmar is back on the path to

democracy and moving toward a better future," Min Aung Hlaing, 69, said in a speech after being sworn in. He also pledged to strive for peace with warring ethnic rebels and restore normal relations with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which has pressured Myanmar because of concern over its political instability.

Min Aung Hlaing took the oath of

office alongside First Vice President Nyo Saw, a former general and close adviser to him, and Second Vice President Nan Ni Ni Aye, an ethnic Karen politician from the USDP, in the newly renovated parliament building in the capital Naypyitaw. It was damaged in last year's earthquake. The general election in December and January was widely criticised, in part because the polls were not held in large parts of the country due to the ongoing civil war. "The junta's elections were held in only 42 per cent of Myanmar's territory, under a restrictive legal framework that barred legitimate political competition to the advantage and benefit of the military-aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party," the Bangkok-based, non-partisan Asian Network for Free Elections said in a report issued Friday.

"Every aspect of the staged elections, from its election management body to the design of the electoral system and the selection of political parties, was carefully engineered to ensure a predetermined outcome," it said. (AP)

Pallavi Aiyar launches her new book in Beijing

KJM VARMA ■ Beijing

Indian author and journalist Pallavi Aiyar has launched her latest book, *Travels in the Other Place: Pursuing the Self in Eight Acts*, at a get-together.

Travels in the Other Place is a blend of her memoirs, philosophy, and travel writing. The book, in her words, is an original and introspective collection of eight essays that explore identity and belonging across shifting geographies—both physical and emotional.

Spanning a life that stretches from a bookish childhood in 1980s India to a shock cancer diagnosis in Spain in 2022, the book offers readers



a kaleidoscopic view of the self in motion, she said.

It turns the lens of a foreign correspondent inward with insights that are both personal and universal, she said while interacting with Beijing-based journalists and literary personalities on Thursday.

Over a career spanning more than two decades, Aiyar has reported from China, Belgium, Japan, Indonesia, and Spain, besides India.

Guelleh seeks sixth term as Djibouti heads to polls

OMAR FARUK
Mogadishu

Voters in the small Horn of Africa nation of Djibouti cast ballots for president on Friday, with longtime leader Ismail Omar Guelleh expected to secure a sixth term in office after lawmakers scrapped presidential age limits last year.

Guelleh, 78, has ruled the country of about 1 million for more than two decades. The results of the 2021 election showed him winning nearly 99 per cent of the vote.

He faces a single challenger, Mohamed Farah Samatar, a former ruling party member, in a race analysts say offers little genuine competition. Opposition groups frequently boycott elections, citing restrictions on political freedoms. Critics describe the system as tightly controlled, while authorities point to stability in a volatile region. Guelleh succeeded his



uncle, former President Hassan Gouled Aptidon, in 1999, extending a family-led system that has shaped the country's politics for decades. Djibouti hosts multiple foreign military bases,

including those of the US, China, France and Japan, underscoring its strategic importance along a key global shipping route linking the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

Revenues from these

arrangements, along with port services for neighbouring Ethiopia, underpin the economy.

But that model leaves Djibouti exposed to external shocks. It depends heavily on Ethiopia's use of

NORTHERN RAILWAY
E - TENDER NOTICE (FOR PUBLICATION)
AMM/EMU/GZB acting for and on behalf of President of India Invites E-Tender against Tender No. 46265134 The details are as under:

Name of Work	Inter-Vehicle Couplers for 3 Phase MEMU (Medha) for Augmentation of Rakes as per Annexure Attached		
Approx. cost of work	Rs. 7915440/-	Quantity	12 Set
Last Date & Time of Submission of tender bid of tender	15.05.2026 (11:00 Hrs.)		
Date of Time of Opening of tender document	15.05.2026 (11:00 Hrs.)		
Website particulars where complete details of tender documents can be seen	www.irops.gov.in		

Note: (i) The tenderers must be registered on the Indian Railways E-Procurement System (IREPS) site i.e. www.irops.gov.in. (ii) Please refer to the tender document for all terms and conditions. (iii) No manual offers are acceptable.

NIT No. - 46265134 Date: 10.04.2026 1220/2026
SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Mohammed Kamalun Nabi**, S/o. Late MD Abdun Nabi, R/o. House No.84, 3rd Floor, Gali No.18, Zakir Nagar, Okhla, New Delhi-110025, have changed my 11-year-old minor son's name from MD Sanaf Kamal to Mohammed Shanaf Kamal for all future purposes. PD(835)C

I, **Nissamudeen**, Father of No.15198580P L/Nk Ajmal N, R/o- Ansal Nivas, Edakkulangara PO Karunagappally, Dist Kollam, Kerala- 690523, have changed my name from Nissamudeen to Nizamudeen M, vide dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(830)C

I, **Pushpa Bisht**, Mother of JC-590403F Sub/Maj Dinesh Singh Bisht, R/o- Vill- Dotiyal Gaon (Patury), Po- Takula, Dist- Almora, Uttarakhand- 263628, in my son's service record my name is wrongly written as Pushpa Devi, my Correct name is Pushpa Bisht. PD(832)C

I, **No.15446906K Nk Sanam Dorje**, R/o- VPO- Bari Tech Nichar Dist- Kinnaur, Himachal Pradesh- 172115, have changed my daughter's name from Tekshika Negi to Takshika Negi, vide affidavit dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(833)C

I, **No.15448305X Nk Vijendra Kumar**, R/o- Vill & PO- Nonaura, PS- Ghorashan, Teh- Sikaraha, Dist- East Champaran, Bihar- 845315, have changed my Son's name from Riyonsh Yadav to Riyansh Kumar, vide affidavit dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(834)C

I, **Balabai**, Mother of- No.15804996H Nk Kolekar Bholenath Mohan, R/o- At/PO- Banpuri, TK- Atpadi, Dist- Sangli, Maharashtra- 415306, have changed my name from Balabai to Balabai Mohan Kolekar, vide affidavit dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(835)C

I, **Manju Devi**, W/o- No.15573629H Hav Rajender Kumar Verma, R/o- Vill & PO- Tasing, Teh- Behror, Dist- Alwar, Rajasthan- 301701, have changed my name from Manju Bai to Manju Devi, vide affidavit dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(836)C

I, **JC-332625F SubMaj Kuldeep**, R/o- H.No.366, AK Gopalan Nagar, Khatipura, Jhotwara, Jaipur, Rajasthan-302012, declare that in my service record my daughter's name is wrongly recorded as Mushkan Yadav whereas her correct name is Muskan Yadav which may be amended accordingly. PD(837)C

I, **L. Rukmini Amma**, Mother of No.2614355A Hav I. Naresb Babu, R/o- C.S. Agharam Ville, Penumur- PO & MD, Chittoor- Dist, Andhra Pradesh- 517126, have changed my name from L. Rukmini Amma to L. Rukmini, vide affidavit dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(838)C

I, **Sarojiniamma**, Mother of JC-778419K Sub Bineesh Kumar B, R/o- Kuzhiyathu Vadakkathil, Komalloor PO, Chunnakkara Mavelikkara, Alappuzha, Kerala- 690505, have changed my name from Sarojiniamma to Sarojiniyamma, vide affidavit dated 10/04/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(839)C

Melania Trump denies links with Jeffrey Epstein

COLLIN BINKLEY/
WILL WEISSERT
Washington

First lady Melania Trump is denying ties to Jeffrey Epstein and knowledge of his sex crimes, saying that the "stories are completely false" and calling accusations that she was somehow involved "smears about me."

Reading an extraordinary statement at the White



First lady Melania Trump arrives to speaking with reporters in the Grand Foyer of the White House in Washington

House, Melania Trump said she and her attorneys were fighting back against "unfounded and baseless lies" in regards to her connections to the late financier, a convicted sex offender who leveraged connections to the rich, powerful and famous to recruit his victims and cover up his crimes.

"The lies linking me with the disgraceful Jeffrey Epstein need to end today," she said.



VIT Chennai celebrates University Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chennai

The Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT), Chennai celebrated its University Day on Tuesday, (April 7, 2026). Binod Kumar, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer of Indian Bank, graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. Major Vaibhav Chaurasia, alumnus of VIT Chennai, attended as the Guest of Honour. The event was presided over by Dr G Viswanathan, Founder and Chancellor of VIT, in the presence of Dr GV Selvam, Vice-President of VIT.

In his address, Binod Kumar encouraged students to prepare themselves for a rapidly changing world. He stressed the importance of continuous effort and adaptability to overcome challenges and seize opportunities. He also highlighted the need for innovation with a focus on improving the end-user experience.

"Always keep this mind, in banking we think how we can make life of customer easy. I am emphasising this point because this will help you in striving perfection within yourself," he said.

Emphasising the role of knowledge and character, Mr. Binod Kumar said that knowledge is one thing which will help you in shaping yourself. Knowledge can take you up to a stage, beyond that, it is your characteristics



which will shape you," he noted. Major Vaibhav Chaurasia urged students to draw inspiration from their surroundings and focus on positive influences. He urged them to remain resilient, maintain self-belief.

"Never give up, never have a doubt in yourself. Things will not work out and things will go wrong, but you have to keep working hard and always do things right," he added.

In his presidential address, Dr G Viswanathan underscored the transformative power of education. He stated that education uplifts not only individuals and families but also society, the

state, and the nation as a whole. He emphasised that achieving the vision of a developed nation depends on universal access to quality education and economic growth driven by knowledge.

The function concluded with the distribution of medals and certificates to meritorious and outstanding students in recognition of their academic and overall excellence.

Pro-Vice Chancellor of VIT Chennai Professor T Thyagarajan, Director of VIT Chennai Professor K Sathiyarayanan and Additional Registrar of VIT Chennai Professor PKManoharan were also present in the function.

India's seed sector adapts to global pressures and policy gaps

GYANVI SHARMA ■ New Delhi

India's seed supply chain is entering a vulnerable phase, as global geopolitical tensions begin to expose critical gaps in its functioning. What appears to be a brief disruption in fuel or logistics can, in reality, lead to severe and disproportionate losses in a sector that operates within narrow, time-sensitive windows.

In an exclusive conversation with *The Pioneer*, Dr Paresh Verma, Director General of the Federation of Seed Industry of India (FSII), described how deeply the country's seed supply chain is tied to external factors such as fuel availability and geopolitical tensions. Seed processing, particularly for crops like maize is highly time-sensitive and dependent on consistent energy supply.

"Seeds are harvested at high moisture levels and must be dried within a very short window. Any delay in this process can damage the entire stock," said Dr Verma and this drying process relies heavily on fuels like LPG and PNG, making the sector vulnerable to supply disruptions.

Recent global fuel spikes highlighted this problem as at first, Government fuel quotas were based on 'average' monthly use but that didn't work for the



Dr Paresh Verma

seed industry as it works on a seasonal basis sometimes. "Our fuel use is almost zero in some months but huge during harvest. Average-based allocations don't cover our peak needs," he explained.

After the industry raised these concerns, the Government intervened to fix the supply. While this saved the current stock, Dr Verma said it shows why better coordination is needed.

Beyond supply disruptions, rising costs are adding pressures as well, packaging materials, derived from petroleum products, have seen price increases of 10 to 15 per cent, while

freight costs are expected to rise alongside fuel prices. These factors, Dr Verma said, will inevitably affect the overall cost structure of the industry.

On asking him about the challenges that are further compounded by policy and regulatory gaps, he said "India's existing seed law, enacted in 1966 does not reflect the realities of a sector now dominated by private companies, who supply nearly 75 per cent of the market". Despite this, private companies continue to face a fragmented regulatory landscape, with different states imposing varying rules on licensing, testing and distribution. "The same product may be subject to different requirements across states, which affects efficiency and ease of doing business," Dr Verma said, reiterating the need for a uniform regulatory framework.

He also mentioned "Clarity on approval timelines would strengthen confidence for advanced research," adding that public perception continues to play a major role in the pace of policy evolution.

Dr Verma concluded that "Ensuring the stability of the seed industry requires a policy environment that evolves as fast as the sector itself. It is the only way to safeguard India's food security."

WORLD HEALTH DAY FOCUSES ON PREVENTIVE HEALTHCARE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

World Health Day was commemorated in Gurugram with a comprehensive panel discussion focused on preventive and integrated healthcare in urban India.

The event brought together more than 70 residents from nearby Resident Welfare Associations for an insightful session aimed at promoting disease prevention through early detection. The discussion was led by a distinguished panel of including Dr Hemant Sharma, Dr Praveen Gupta, Dr Sanjeev Chaudhary, Dr Meet Kumar, Dr Rajeev Sood (Urology & Renal Transplant), Dr Pallavi Vasal, and Dr Paras Agarwal (Diabetes, Obesity & Metabolic Disorders).

Harpreet Singh, Facility Director, addressed the gathering and highlighted various patient-friendly initiatives, particularly for streamlined emergency care management.

Galgotias University placement report: Over 4,700 offers across top recruiters in 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Greater Noida

Galgotias University has achieved a significant milestone with 4700+ placement offers for the Batch of 2026, reinforcing its position as a leading institution for career-driven education and industry readiness. The university continues to witness strong participation from top recruiters, reflecting its robust academic ecosystem and focus on employability.

Leading organisations such as Infosys, Capgemini, Cognizant, City Union Bank, LTM, Accenture, and EY have recruited students in large numbers, showcasing the scale and consistency of placements at the university. The placement drive highlights the institution's ability to bridge the gap between academia and industry through skill-based learning and real-world exposure.

Placement records from the university indicate that the highest package for the current year is recorded as 60 Lakh per annum. In addition, several other students received niche job offers ranging between ₹15 lakh and



₹26.6 lakh per annum from companies of high repute.

Further strengthening its industry-driven learning ecosystem, Galgotias University has established multiple Industry Integrated Academic Centres in collaboration with leading organisations such as Cisco, Tata Technologies, Vivo, Salesforce, L&T, and HP-Intel. These centres provide students with hands-on exposure, industry-aligned training, advanced technologies, and practical learning opportunities that effectively bridge academic knowledge with real-world applications, significantly enhancing employability and preparing future-ready professionals.

The university has also

recorded 80+ dream offers in the Big 4, with students securing opportunities in leading global firms such as Deloitte, EY, KPMG, and PwC. This achievement further reflects the strong industry readiness, academic quality, and professional excellence of Galgotias students.

Adding to the list of accomplishments, Nikita and Yashika Jain from B.Tech (AI and ML), Batch 2028, have been selected for the LinkedIn CoachIn Program 2026. Their selection reflects the growing global recognition of Galgotias students and the university's commitment to empowering future technology leaders, especially women in tech.

Speaking on the achievement, Dr Dhruv Galgotia, CEO said, "At Galgotias University, our focus has always been on creating future-ready professionals equipped with the right skills, mindset, and global exposure. The remarkable placement outcomes and international opportunities secured by our students are a testament to our commitment to academic excellence and industry integration."

Lt Gen Shukla discusses border development with Arunachal CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Tawang

Gajraj Corps General Officer Commanding (GOC), Lt Gen Neeraj Shukla, called on Arunachal Pradesh Governor Lt Gen KT Parnaik (Retd) and Chief Minister Pema Khandu in Tawang on Thursday to discuss civil-military coordination.

The high-level interaction focused on strengthening synergy between the Armed Forces and the civil administration to bolster infrastructure and connectivity in the State's strategically important border regions. Officials said the discussions highlighted ongoing and future developmental initiatives aimed at fostering socio-economic growth in remote areas.

The Governor and Chief Minister expressed their appreciation for the Indian



Army's unwavering commitment to improving the quality of life for local communities in far-flung sectors. They specifically acknowledged the Army's significant role in catalysing the 'Vibrant Village Programme', which seeks to integrate border villages into the broader framework of national development. Reaffirming their shared

commitment to security and inclusive growth, the leaders emphasised that coordinated efforts are essential for the stability of the border regions. The meeting underscored the importance of the Army's continued support in maintaining both the security and the well-being of the native population along the frontier.

DAILY SUDOKU

		3						4	6
				3	1	2			
1			7						
				8				3	2
	3		1		4				9
5	7			9					
					6				9
		8	2	5					
2	1							3	

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.



SOLUTION (10.04.26)

1	6	5	8	7	2	4	9	3
9	3	2	5	4	6	7	8	1
4	7	8	3	9	1	6	2	5
7	9	1	4	2	5	8	3	6
2	4	3	6	1	8	5	7	9
5	8	6	9	3	7	1	4	2
3	1	7	2	5	4	9	6	8
6	2	4	1	8	9	3	5	7
8	5	9	7	6	3	2	1	4

DOUBLE CROSSWORD SATURDAY | APRIL 11, 2026

1	2	3	4	5	6
7			8	9	
10	11	12	13		
14		15		16	
	17	18		19	20
	21		22		
	23		24		25
26		27	28	29	30
	32			33	
34					
			35		
36					

- ACROSS**
- 4 He went inventively ahead as a physicist (6)
 - 7 Rare show animal? (8)
 - 8 The businesslike plan of a woman embracing a general (6)
 - 10 School of love in the wild west (5)
 - 13 Discontinue giving a doctor work (4)
 - 14 It's a good sign when Henry gets a duck! (4)
 - 15 Home is where the eggs are (4)
 - 16 Being a loud means nothing to a fathead (3)
 - 17 An end-of-term mark to handicap one seriously (4)
 - 19 Old Bob had to sing about this countryside feature (4)

- DOWN**
- 1 Half of us want to be smart (5)
 - 2 How Dolores starts to show excessive enthusiasm (5)
 - 3 Move quickly to central Harlesden with a girl (4)
 - 4 Earns the opportunity to make approaches (5)
 - 5 Cry a little, softly (4)
 - 6 A tough time struggling to reload? (6)
 - 9 Try and maybe hit a century in old-fashioned style (6)
 - 11 It's a bit matey to raise one's hat (3)
 - 12 Lady from a western state (5)
 - 13 Tim Reed's foolish fault (7)
 - 15 Zero raised in cash (3)

- 21 Arrived during the tea break for a drink (5,4)
- 23 Containers used at two points? (4)
- 24 Food hashed up at the American centre (4)
- 26 Rest of the game (3)
- 27 Just one soldier's outfit? (4)
- 29 The sound of favourite music round the corner (4)
- 32 Revolutionary, but without much dash? (4)
- 33 Keep the Italian away from Estoril somehow! (5)
- 34 Thora Hird's parts? (6)
- 35 Dynamic, exciting, possibly shocking? (8)
- 36 Best suit (6)

- 16 A Tyrolean name? (3)
- 18 It's so ridiculous there's a theatre of it! (6)
- 20 Clumsy in disturbing a pet (5)
- 21 It's helpful (especially in cash)? (3)
- 22 With breathless humour! (3)
- 23 Swimmer out of breath? (6)
- 25 High point that turns up in rotation (3)
- 28 Snoops, possibly during lessons (5)
- 30 Where, in France, one appears in a dramatic part (5)
- 31 Write at half pace for low pay! (5)
- 32 A haircut to excite endless mirth? (4)
- 33 A right or left one? (4)

SOLUTION (10.04.26)

ACROSS	22. Funny	DOWN	18. U-riah
1. Shovel	23. Land	1. Surfer	19. M-an
7. Edu-cator	26. Sat up	2. Violent	20. Ney
8. Rosa	28. Bob	3. Lead	21. Sup-port
10. Filled	29. Thorpe	4. Scanner	22. Fur
11. Un-just	30. C-over-t	5. St-out	23. Lovers
14. Bet	31. Axed	6. Brats	24. A-bed
16. Notes	32. Internal	8. Ribs	25. Detain
17. Rust	33. Less-EN	9. Set (rev)	26. Strip
19. Manet		12. Jot	27. Toots
21. Saner		13. S-even	28. Box
		15. Manna	30. Call

Army launches Op Him Setu to rescue tourists in Sikkim



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gangtok

The Indian Army's Trishakti Corps has launched 'Operation Him Setu' to rescue approximately 1,000 tourists stranded in Lachen, North Sikkim, after massive landslides snapped road connectivity with Chungthang.

Braving severe weather and heavy snowfall, troops have activated alternate routes and cleared critical passes to facilitate evacuation. Working in close coordination with the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), the Army is undertaking continuous snow removal and road restoration under hazardous terrain conditions.

So far, 135 tourists have been safely moved to secure locations, along with 32 light vehicles and 10 motorcycles. Army trucks were utilised to tow civilian vehicles across steep, snowbound stretches. Medical teams have been deployed to provide immediate aid to those in distress.

"Our foremost priority is the safety and well-being of every citizen. Our teams remain committed to providing all necessary assistance," a senior Army official stated. While 1,000 tourists remain in Lachen, officials confirmed that evacuation is being conducted in phases as conditions permit. The situation is being monitored closely alongside the civil administration.

GOC Red Shield Division visits remote villages



TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

The General Officer Commanding (GOC) of Red Shield Division visited remote and isolated villages sinaikeithi and tingpibub, inhabited by Tangkhul and Kuki communities to assess the prevailing situation and engage directly with the local populace.

During the visit, the GOC interacted with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and village headmen, holding constructive discussions focused on fostering mutual understanding and exploring peaceful resolutions to the ongoing tensions.

Emphasising dialogue and cooperation, he urged all stakeholders to work collectively towards restoring harmony and stability in the region. Reassuring the villagers, the GOC conveyed that the Indian Army remains steadfast in its commitment to ensuring the safety and security of all communities. He highlighted that the Army will continue to act as a neutral and reliable force, dedicated to protecting lives and maintaining peace.

The visit reflects the Indian Army's continued efforts to build trust, strengthen community relations, and support long-term peace in the region.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम देवास (म.प्र.)

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना

निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना क्र. 05 / लो.नि.वि. / 26 देवास दिनांक : 08.04.2026

उपरोक्त निविदा सूचना द्वारा अनिलखन टेम्पर्स ई-टेण्डरिंग प्रक्रिया के द्वारा <http://www.mpeters.gov.in> पर आमंत्रित की गई है, विवरणानुसार है:-

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निविदा क्रय करने की अंतिम तिथि 07.05.2026 6:30 P.M. है. /- कार्यालय यंत्री नगर पालिक निगम देवास



BRIEFLY

Andy Robertson to leave Liverpool at end of season



Liverpool left back Andy Robertson will leave the club at the end of the season – his ninth at Anfield – when his contract expires. The Scotland captain helped Liverpool win two Premier League titles, a Champions League title, the FA Cup and other honors since arriving in 2017. The club's announcement Thursday called Robertson "a genuine Liverpool legend" who has made 373 appearances. "It's never easy leaving a club like Liverpool, it has been a huge part of mine and my family's life for the last nine years," the 32-year-old Robertson said. He said he had opportunities to leave in the past year "and I've not taken them because of how difficult it is to leave this club." "But I know football moves on, I know teams move on and I think now is the time for me to move on and go wherever my next move is and wherever my career takes me," Robertson said. The news comes two weeks after Mohamed Salah's departure – also at season's end – was announced.

Schauffele's shot lands in a viewer's merchandise bag



Maybe gift shopping really is out of control at the Masters. Xander Schauffele's tee shot on the par-5 eighth hole Thursday at Augusta National ended up in somebody's merchandise bag, just a few feet to the left of the fairway. Schauffele used a tee to mark the spot, removed the ball and then handed off the bag to a woman in a pink and white outfit. He was able to play on without penalty and made par. "It just flew straight into the bag. It was a great break. That bounce would've put me in the pine straw and who knows if I would've had a shot to hit up the hill," Schauffele said after shooting a 2-under 70 in the first round. "So thanks to the lady on 8," he said. Schauffele shouldn't sell himself short for his own role in a solid first day. After his tee shot on the par-4 ninth ended up in some pine straw and his second shot found a bunker, he splashed out to within inches of the hole for a par. He made three birdies and two bogeys on the back nine. "A little bit of a mixed bag," he said. No pun intended, presumably.

FIFA tickets get more expensive

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Lausanne



FIFA added new, even more expensive tiers of tickets for this year's World Cup, asking up to \$4,105 for a front category 1 seat at the US opener against Paraguay in Inglewood, California, on June 12.

Last week, FIFA had asked for a top price of \$2,735 for category 1 tickets for the match but added new "front category" pricing.

FIFA also added a front category 2 tier to its ticket sales website without public announcement, asking \$1,940 to \$2,330 for those tickets for the U.S. opener. The new categories were first reported

Thursday by The Athletic. The World Cup will be held from June 11 to July 19 in 16 cities in the US, Mexico and Canada. Soccer's governing body had in its Sept. 9 "ticket products and categories" information called category 1 "the highest-priced seats, located primarily in the lower tier" but appears to have withheld some seats from that category. It had labeled category 2 as "positioned outside of category 1 areas, available in both lower and upper tiers." FIFA did not respond to an email sent to its media office seeking comment. FIFA added seats at

up to \$3,360 in front category 1 for Canada's opener against Bosnia and Herzegovina on June 12 in Toronto. For round of 16 games, it added \$905 seats in Philadelphia. FIFA last week raised its top ticket price for the World Cup final to \$10,990 during the glitch-hampered reopening of sales. The price had been \$8,680 when FIFA sold tickets after the tournament draw in December. FIFA's category 2 tickets for the July 19 game at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, were \$7,380, up from \$5,575, and category 3 cost \$5,785, an increase from \$4,185. No tickets appeared to be available for the final on Thursday on FIFA's ticket site.

Watkins strikes twice for Aston Villa win



KAREL JANICEK
■ London

Ollie Watkins scored twice and Aston Villa beat Bologna 3-1 to move a step closer to the Europa League semifinals with its eighth straight victory in the competition on Thursday.

Ezri Konsa scored the opening goal of the quarter-final first leg just before interval, heading home Youri Tielemans' curling corner kick. Watkins doubled the lead early in the second half with a shot between the legs of goalkeeper Federico Ravaglia. Jonathan Rowe reduced the deficit to one for host Bologna in the final minute before Watkins added his second in stoppage time. Villa has reached the last eight in Europe for the third straight year and is fourth in the Premier League, on course to qualify for the Champions League next season.

The return legs take place next Thursday. **Porto held by Forest:** In a matchup of former European champions, Nottingham Forest took home a promising 1-1 draw from Porto. Porto transformed early

pressure into a goal after William Gomes tapped in a low cross from Gabriel Veiga.

It was all square just two minutes later when Porto's Martim Fernandes equalized with an own goal. The right back was almost at the center line when he sent a pass back to Diogo Costa but the goalkeeper was out of position and the ball ended up in the net. Forest failed to score despite a return of striker Chris Wood from injury to the starting lineup for the first time since October.

Before the two meet at the City Ground in the second leg next week, relegation-threatened Forest hosts Villa in another crucial Premier League game on Sunday. In the league phase, Forest beat Porto 2-0 at home.

Freiburg flying: Freiburg made the most of its first quarter-final game in European competitions by beating Celta Vigo 3-0. In a dream start, captain Vincenzo Grifo fired Freiburg ahead in the 10th minute, and Jan-Niklas Beste doubled the advantage in the first half. Matthias Ginter finished the scoring in the second half. (AP)

FIFA picks 52 referees for World Cup; 2 women

JAMES ROBSON
■ Manchester



Two women will be among the record 52 referees officiating matches at the World Cup starting in two months. American Tori Penso and Mexican Katia Garcia were on the list of referees announced by global soccer body FIFA on Thursday for the tournament in the United States, Mexico and Canada. Three women were selected as assistant referees and one as a video match official.

It's the second time that female referees take part in a men's World Cup – in Qatar four years ago there were three female referees and three female assistant referees. Penso was the referee in the Women's

World Cup final in 2023.

FIFA said appointments were made on its "long-standing quality first" principle. "The fact that six women match officials have been selected continues a trend that was started four years ago in Qatar as we aim to further develop women's refereeing," referees chief

Pierluigi Collina said.

FIFA said 170 match officials – 52 referees, 88 assistant referees and 30 video match officials – will take part in the tournament. That's up from 139 match officials in 2022.

The 2026 World Cup is the biggest ever, with 48 teams and 104 matches, and

the first to be co-hosted by three countries. Several referees who took part in the 2022 tournament will be back at this World Cup, including Poland's Szymon Marciniak, who refereed the final four years ago.

Missing from the list was Congolese referee Jean-Jacques Ndala, who was in charge of the chaotic Africa Cup of Nations final in January when Senegal beat Morocco in extra time. Last month, the result was stunningly overturned by African soccer's governing body and Morocco was awarded title. Senegal has appealed to the Swiss-based Court of Arbitration for Sport and both countries claim to be African champion pending the outcome. (AP)

McIlroy has another reason to celebrate with his best Masters start

DOUG FERGUSON
■ Augusta (USA)



Rory McIlroy began his title defense in the Masters with a tee shot that rolled next to a spectator's seat. Another one was in the trees. His tee shot on the seventh hole went into the 17th fairway. The prevailing thought was not concern, not the slightest bit of panic.

He's the Masters champion. That brought a measure of patience and a load of freedom. "I just trusted that eventually I'll start to make some good swings. So that was a little different," McIlroy said after opening with a 5-under 67, his best start at Augusta National in 15 years, to share the lead with Sam Burns. It seems as though McIlroy has been wearing

his Masters green jacket all week – to the weekend activities, to his news conference on Tuesday (Tiger Woods never did that), to the Masters Club dinner that night. And after his opening round?

"It's easier for me to make those swings and not worry about where it goes when I know that I can go to the Champions Locker Room and put my green jacket on at the end of the day," he said.

It wasn't his best golf, but he got everything out of his round in his bid to become only the fourth player to win back-to-back at Augusta National. "By the way, Rory may never lose this thing again after last year," Fred Couples said he told his caddie when he heard another cheer, presumably

for McIlroy. Only one other player in the last 10 years – Hideki Matsuyama when he won in 2021 – shot 67 while hitting only five fairways. McIlroy was the sixth defending champion to have at least a share of the 18-hole lead, though only Jack Nicklaus

(1966) went on to win. There's a long way to go, and a course that already has everyone's attention because of how fast and firm it already was on Thursday.

Burns was among the early starters. He played the par 5 with three birdies and an

eagle and wound up with his lowest score in his fifth Masters appearance. "Historically, people who have success here play the par 5s really well, and we were able to do that today. So it's a good recipe around this golf course," Burns said.

Scottie Scheffler, the No. 1 player in the world going for a third green jacket in the last five years, was 3 under through three holes in the tougher afternoon, when the light gusts began playing tricks and the greens got crispy. He had one bogey and 14 pars the rest of the way for a 70. The whole day was tough, and the forecast – this could be the first Masters in 25 years without any rain – has everyone on edge thinking what the next three days

could hold. Yes, the weather was gorgeous. But dry and firm conditions are scary, even in this marvelous garden. "It's not right on the edge, but it's playing nice and firm where you can get yourself in a lot of trouble if you lose control somewhere," Adam Scott said after a 72.

Patrick Reed, the 2018 Masters champion and a two-time winner on the European tour this year, was at 69 along with Jason Day and Kurt Kitayama. Reed was atop the leaderboard for so much of the day due to two eagles on the front nine that sent him out in 31. But he dropped a shot on the 10th, and then was flummoxed by what he thought was an ideal shot for his second into the par-5 15th. (AP)

Hockey India replaces junior women's coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi



Experienced Australian Tim White was on Friday named the head coach of India's junior women's hockey team by the national federation, replacing Tushar Khandekar who was with the team since 2023. Hockey India did not specify the reasons for the change and also did not divulge the duration of White's contract.

White recently served as the head coach of the Accord Tamil Nadu Dragons in the Hockey India League (HIL) in January this year. His coaching career includes stints in Belgium and Australia.

Prior to his arrival in India, White served as the coach of Belgium's Under-21 women's

team, guiding it to a bronze medal at last year's Junior World Cup.

Between 2021 and 2024, he was also an integral part of

Belgium senior national team coaching staff, during which time the team improved its world ranking from number 12 to number 3. It also

achieved a semi-final finish at the 2024 Paris Olympics.

Earlier in his career, he held the position of Australia's national junior coach and guided the side to a bronze medal at the Junior World Cup.

"Having recently spent time in India as the coach of the Tamil Nadu Dragons, I was drawn back by the country's incredible passion and rich hockey culture," White said in a press release issued by Hockey India. "I have seen the immense young talent here while coaching against India at Junior World Cups, and the chance to work in a full-time program with such motivated athletes is a privilege.

"My goal is to produce technically sound players

who are ready to bridge the gap and push for spots in the senior team," he added.

White also said that he wants to keep the game simple and focus on collective and individual strengths.

"We will aim to be a team that values attacking hockey but remains exceptionally disciplined in our defensive structures. It is vital that we work hard physically to ensure we perform at a high level for the full 60 minutes. "By mastering core skills under pressure and playing 'team-first' hockey, we will be well-prepared for any international challenge."

Hockey India President Dilip Tirkey welcomed White and hoped that he would play a crucial role in athlete development.

Italian soccer crisis worsens

ANDREW DAMPF
■ Rome



First it was the Champions League. Then came the national team. Now it's the Europa League and Conference League.

Italy's soccer crisis is worsening with Bologna and Fiorentina risking European exits. Bologna's 3-1 loss to Aston Villa in the first leg of the Europa League quarter-finals and Fiorentina's 3-0 defeat at Crystal Palace in the same stage of the Conference League make it likely that Italy won't have any clubs in a European semifinal for the first time in seven years.

The latest losses came after Atalanta – the only Italian club to reach the

Champions League round of 16 – was eliminated by a whopping 10-2 on aggregate by Bayern Munich last month. Inter Milan – which was humiliated in a 5-0 rout by Paris Saint-Germain in last season's final – and Juventus were eliminated by Bodø/Glimt and Galatasaray, respectively, in the Champions League playoffs. Defending Serie A champion Napoli finished 30th in

the 36-team league phase and didn't even make the playoffs. The only goal scored by an Italian club on Thursday came from Bologna's English winger Jonathan Rowe.

"At this level experience counts and Aston Villa probably had more, as they made fewer mistakes and made the most of ours," said Bologna winger Federico Bernardeschi. (AP)

Vaishali takes on Goryachkina in hope of sealing her title

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Paphos (Cyprus)



With R Praggnanandhaa out of contention, focus has shifted to his sister R Vaishali, who enters Round 11 of the Women's Candidates tournament as the sole leader, boosting her chances of sealing the title when play resumes on Saturday after the rest day.

Vaishali, on six points, faces Russia's Aleksandra Goryachkina in the next round, aiming to extend her lead and strengthen her bid for the title, which would earn her a shot at reigning

world champion Ju Wenjun later this year.

With four rounds remaining, Vaishali has been the standout among the three

Indian players, ahead of her younger brother R Praggnanandhaa, who is competing in the Open section, and Divya Deshmukh.

She holds a half-point lead over Ukraine's Anna Muzychuk and China's Zhu Jiner. The trio of Kateryna Lagno, Aleksandra Goryachkina, and Kazakhstan's Bibisara Assaubayeva are tied for fourth on five points, while Divya Deshmukh is another half-point behind.

Former women's world champion Tan Zhongyi sits in last place with 3.5 points.

Player says Woods' pain medication understandable but shouldn't be driving

DAVE SKRETTA
■ Augusta (USA)



Gary Player does not begrudge Tiger Woods for using medications to manage the pain from numerous surgeries over the years, but his fellow Masters champion does believe that the 15-time major winner should not be behind the wheel of a car.

Woods was arrested March 27 on suspicion of driving under the influence after his Land Rover struck a trailer and flipped onto its side along a residential street. Florida authorities determined him to be impaired when they found two painkiller pills in his pocket. Woods also refused to submit

to a urine test and was briefly jailed. "You know," Player said Thursday, "it's very easy – the human being is so critical of everything. If I or any of you in this room had the pain that Tiger Woods had – think of the excruciating pain that this man has

been going through for a long time. "Do I blame him for taking medicine? Hell, no. He has sleep deprivation," Player continued. "Do I blame him for taking something to help him sleep? No. But I don't think he should drive a car. When you're

taking that medicine, it's dangerous when you're driving a car, same as it's dangerous when you look at your cellphone in a car." The 90-year-old Player spoke about Woods after helping to hit the honorary tee shots to start the first round of the Masters.

Known for his fastidious diet and fitness regimen, Player went so far as to admit he no longer drives himself these days. "So I think all he's got to do is just not drive a car, and get a chauffeur," Player said. "My reflexes, I think, are as good as when I was 20, but I don't drive anymore. I get a chauffeur. I think that's the answer to it." Woods, a five-time Masters champion, said last week he

would be missing the tournament at Augusta National for the second straight year so that he could seek treatment at an undisclosed facility outside of the US, and "prioritize my well-being and work toward lasting recovery."

The announcement came hours after he pleaded not guilty to a DUI charge in connection with the crash.

Woods' injury list over the last 14 years is a long one.

He had reconstructive knee surgery in 2008, four back surgeries from 2014-17, and he was previously arrested in 2017 for taking what he called a bad mix of painkillers that resulted in him falling asleep behind the wheel of a running car. (AP)



Rajasthan Royals beat Royal Challengers Bengaluru by six wickets

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Guwahati

Blistering fifties by Vaibhav Sooryavanshi and Dhruv Jurel powered Rajasthan Royals to a six-wicket win over Royal Challengers Bengaluru in their IPL match here on Friday.

Sent in to bat, RCB rode on a fighting half-century by skipper Rajat Patidar (63) to post 201 for 8.

Virat Kohli (32), Romario Shepherd (22) and Venkatesh Iyer (29) also chipped in with useful contributions.

In reply, Sooryavanshi (78 off 26 balls) and Dhruv Jurel (81 not out off 43 balls) shared a 37-ball 108-run partnership for the second wicket to set

the platform. Krunal Pandya (2/30) tried to bring them back with back-to-back wickets.

But Jurel, in the company of Ravindra Jadeja (24), completed the task with another 68-run stand, with two overs to spare.

For RR, Jofra Archer (2/33), Ravi Bishnoi (2/32) and Brijesh Sharma (2/37) took two wickets.

Earlier in the innings Rajat Patidar delivered a masterclass in calculated counter-offensive even as wickets fell regularly at the other end, guiding Royal Challengers Bengaluru to 201 for 8 against Rajasthan Royals in an IPL match here on Friday.



Patidar hit four sixes and as many boundaries in his 40-ball-63 which was largely responsible for RCB reaching a challenging score after being down and out at 94 for 6 at one stage.

Patidar nudged and pushed while keeping the scoreboard moving even as a lot of RCB batters, including the great Virat Kohli (32 off 16 balls), got out while trying to force the pace. Towards the end, it was Impact Sub Venkatesh Iyer, who scored 29 off 15 balls, including 21 off the final over from Sandeep Sharma, which took the score past 200-run mark.

Following a steady drizzle ahead of the start of the match, the Barsapara 22-yard

strip had enough underlying moisture that led to extra bounce, which accounted for both Phil Salt and Devdutt Padikkal, with Jofra Archer being the initial wrecker-in-chief.

Kohli played and missed a few with both bounce and seam movement causing some trouble but in between hit seven boundaries. But once Ravi Bishnoi, who has tweaked his run-up to a circular bowled google to outfox Kohli, who went for an inside out lofted shot over covers, RCB's troubles started.

Bishnoi got Krunal Pandya and then the unheralded Brijesh Sharma, a pick from Bengal Premier League T20, got one to skid into Jitesh

Sharma's pads to make it 76 for 5. He also accounted for Tim David before Romario Shepherd hit the first six off the innings in the 12th over.

Towards the back end, Patidar showed his range, but none of it was better than putting his dancing shoes on and lofting Bishnoi into the stands.

Venkatesh, who was under immense pressure due to his price tag at KKR last year, had to be introduced as Impact Player in pursuit of extra runs, and he did his bit to prop up the score. But, in the process, RCB had to sacrifice Suyash Sharma, a leg-break bowler, who could have been as effective as Bishnoi.

LSG skipper Pant credits Mukul's heroics for win over KKR

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Lucknow Super Giants skipper Rishabh Pant on Thursday heaped praise on Mukul Choudhary for taking the side over the line with his breath-taking unbeaten knock in the IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders, describing it as a fantastic effort.

Chasing 182, LSG were in big trouble at 104 for 5 in 12.5 overs when Mukul came on to the crease. He showed his batting prowess, remaining unbeaten on 54 off 27 balls with the help of two fours and seven sixes to help his side register a three-wicket



win in a last ball thriller.

"I do not have words to describe but what a fantastic effort (from Mukul). One thing I made sure is that personally, that trust and when you believe in someone, a player can do wonders. The character, with each and every match like this, it

shows something is building. We don't want to talk much about it but something is cooking inside," Pant said at the post match presentation.

Pant also lauded Ayush Badoni for his crucial 34-ball 54-run knock in the middle.

"He (Badoni) is now a senior pro in our team. That is the role we have given him. In a situation like him, when we talk about Badoni, these are the kind (of contributions) you want to see from Badoni." KKR skipper Ajinkya Rahane said the defeat against LSG was a tough one to swallow, but credited Mukul Choudhary's defining unbeaten knock.

Powell rues umpiring 'blunder' in KKR's narrow loss to LSG

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Kolkata

Kolkata Knight Riders' overseas recruit Rovman Powell criticised an umpiring "blunder" and blamed the sluggish Eden Gardens pitch behind their narrow loss to Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL.

From 128/7 after 16 overs, LSG pulled off a three-wicket win in a last-ball thriller here on Thursday, powered by a stunning late assault from rookie Mukul Choudhary, who smashed an unbeaten 54 off 27 balls (7x6, 2x4).

"You want to make Eden Gardens your fortress, it's your home with your fans behind you. It always feels good at home, but credit to the youngster (Mukul), he batted really well," Powell



said at the post-match media interaction, referring to KKR's four-match winless run, despite playing three at home. Put in, KKR posted 181/4 but it felt they fell short of a 200-plus total after Finn

Allen (9) was dismissed in controversial fashion.

His top-edge was caught by Digvesh Rathi at deep third man, with replays suggesting his toes may have touched the boundary rope.

In a baffling call, the on-field umpires Adrian Holdstock (South Africa) and Akshay Totre (India) however did not refer the catch upstairs, ruling it clean.

"Definitely (more angles

should have been looked at). We talked about that when he came off. We thought we had seen in the IPL that the umpires have gone upstairs for lesser things, and that are not as close as that," Powell said. "Maybe it was a blunder on their part, but we're not going to look into that and say that is what cost us two points tonight," he added, stopping short of blaming the officials entirely.

Powell said stroke-making was not straightforward on the surface.

"It's not that classic Eden Gardens wicket where you just go and turn around the strike and blast. It was not a 220-wicket; there was a little bit in it for the bowlers, especially when they used the slower balls."

Consistent PBKS face faltering SRH



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mullanpur

A plucky Punjab Kings will back themselves against a star studded yet inconsistent Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League here on Saturday.

Considering how they have started the season, PBKS must be disappointed about sharing a point with KKR in their last game due to rain.

Led by Shreyas Iyer, PBKS have come to symbolise what a winning unit should look like, whether it is chasing down a 200-plus total with ease against Chennai Super Kings in a sea of yellow or overcoming former champions Gujarat Titans on a tricky Mullanpur surface.

They could have been on course for a third successive win against Kolkata Knight Riders at the Eden Gardens with Australian quick Xavier Bartlett wreaking havoc before heavy rain and a thunderstorm forced them to share a point with the hosts.

As opener-keeper

Prabhsimran Singh, fresh off a 500-plus run breakout season, put it, PBKS are focused on collective success over Orange or Purple Cap pursuits, a mindset reflected in Cooper Connolly's unbeaten 72 against Gujarat Titans and Vijaykumar Vyshak's growing impact with the ball.

However the same cannot be said about Sunrisers Hyderabad who despite their reputation for explosive batting and big totals have faltered this season largely due to top-order collapses as seen against RCB and LSG when the dangerous opening pair of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma fell cheaply.

Adding to their woes SRH have seen little impact from the likes of Harshal Patel and Jaydev Unadkat. The batting efforts of Nitish Kumar Reddy and Heinrich Klaasen were among the few positives for SRH against LSG.

Spinner Harsh Dubey has shown glimpses of brilliance in the powerplay and he would be expected to carry on with his form.

Injuries will happen when you bowl fast: Ashok Sharma

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Bowling in the 150kmph bracket has its inherent risks but latest IPL pace sensation Ashok Sharma firmly believes that a regimented lifestyle, which includes sleeping on time, can significantly help in avoiding breakdowns.

The Gujarat Giants bowler had sent down a thunderous 154.2 kmph delivery against Rajasthan Royals in his second IPL game to attract the attention of the cricketing fraternity. The 23-year-old was bought by GT for '90 lakh following a successful season for Rajasthan in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy. He also ended up making his



List A and first-class debut last season.

Before him, the likes of Mayank Yadav and Umran Malik have made similar waves only to be sidelined by recurring injuries.

The extra pace is his biggest strength and the speedster from Rajasthan is fully mindful of injury risks

and his own ways to manage them.

"If you are a fast bowler, injury will happen. You can only avoid that by sleeping on time, focusing on your recovery and diet. What I follow is doing things on time, I don't skip it. The daily routine that I have I follow strictly. "There is no com-

promise on a gym or pool session," said Ashok, who is not obsessed with breaking the 157 kmph record in the IPL. Ashok belongs to a farming family and trains at the Aravalli Cricket Academy in Jaipur, where overnight Lucknow Super Giants batting star Mukul Choudhary also practices.

Ashok's brother had to give up his cricketing dream as the family could only support either of the two at that time.

Like any budding cricketer, Ashok aspires to play for India. He gives equal importance to all formats and in the GT camp, he talks to head coach Ashish Nehra, Ishant Sharma and Mohammed Siraj about fast bowling. So what are his go

to balls? "I like back of the hand slower one and yorker the most," he said.

"I love all formats. Four-day game is very important. Played nine games last year (age group). This year I played four Ranji games. I want to play across formats," said the soft spoken Ashok.

When asked about the biggest difference between IPL and domestic cricket, Ashok said, "...margin for error is much lesser in the IPL. You can't make mistakes in IPL while in domestic cricket there are times you would go unpunished for bowling a bad ball." Ashok is grateful that cricket has allowed him to provide a decent life to his family.

SHETTY SLAYS WORLD NO.4 CHRISTIE TO ENTER LAST FOUR STAGE



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ningbo (China)

India's Ayush Shetty stunned world number four Jonathan Christie of Indonesia to enter the men's singles semifinals of the Badminton Asia Championships here on Friday.

Shetty, ranked 25th, slayed Christie 23-21, 21-17 in a fiercely contested quarterfinal. It was the first meeting between Christie and Shetty on the tour. Christie is a gold-medallist at the Asian Games as well as the Asian Championships.

He was also a part of the Indonesian team that won the Thomas Cup back in 2020. Shetty, the reigning US Open Super 300 champion, had beaten 20th ranked Chi Yu Jen of Chinese Taipei in the round of 16 on Thursday.

Pressure piling on Samson, Gaikwad to perform

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chennai

The seasoned opening duo of Sanju Samson and Ruturaj Gaikwad will be under immense pressure to perform as Chennai Super Kings extend search for their first win of the season against Delhi Capitals in the IPL here on Saturday.

With three losses at three different venues, CSK have begun the season on an uninspiring note. Whether in batting or bowling, significant improvement is needed if they are to compete with rival teams.

The absence of Dewald

Brevis has also impacted the balance of the side. The explosive South African batter is expected to make a comeback from injury against Delhi Capitals. However, there is no clarity over the return of M S Dhoni, who is yet to play this season due to a calf strain.

The opening combination of Samson and Gaikwad needs to come good before things go out of reach for CSK. Kartik Sharma too needs to step up in the middle while Prashant Veer has done well in the lower order.

The only batter who has shown consistency is



Sarfraz Khan who has a point to prove this season. The CSK bowlers leaked 250 runs against RCB, a total that proved too steep for the batters. Barring Khaleel Ahmed, all the bowlers leaked 12 runs or more per

over. It will be the second game of the season at Chepauk. PBKS had chased 210 comfortably against the hosts on April 3.

CSK take on Delhi Capitals who would be hurting from their one-run

loss against Gujarat Titans in Delhi. The Axar Patel-led side knows the importance of momentum in a highly-competitive tournament like the IPL and would be determined to compound CSK's woes with an all-round performance.

David Miller refusing the single on the penultimate ball to tie the game against Titans would remain a talking point for the rest of the season but that surely won't be discussed in the dressing room. It could, however, play on the mind of the South African who backed himself to finish the game for his team but fell agonisingly short.

Dhoni-inspired Mukul rises to be a match-winner

TAPAN MOHANTA
■ Kolkata

Mukul Choudhary grew up watching MS Dhoni finish games, dreaming of doing the same one day.

At Eden Gardens on Thursday night, the 21-year-old rookie batter from Rajasthan turned that dream into reality with a stunning six-hitting display, helping Lucknow Super Giants secure a three-wicket win over Kolkata Knight Riders in a last-ball thriller.

"I dedicate this to my father. Even before he got



married, he always dreamt of making his son a cricketer. I also always watch MS (Dhoni) sir, the way he finishes. I also play at the same number, so I dedicate this to

him," Mukul said after his heroics (54 not out from 27 balls; 2x4, 7x6). Behind that composure lies relentless preparation of hitting close to 150 sixes everyday.

"My genes are such and I am naturally built in a way that there is power in my shots, and also I do practice a lot. Everyday I hit around 100-150 sixes. For the last five-six months, I've been practising a lot and that has come into me," he revealed.

He also spoke about his Dhoni-like "helicopter shot", which he used to hit Vaibhav Arora for a six in the 17th over.

"I have practised that shot since childhood... I always liked that, and the way Dhoni finished (an inning). He used to hit a six even off a yorker. If you even hit that kind of a

delivery for six, the bowler thinks about doing something different."

"Scariest finisher" tag: That six-hitting ability, combined with belief, has already caught the eye of LSG coach Justin Langer who had famously earlier said he could turn Mukul into one of India's "scariest" middle-order batters. It was on display against a depleted KKR bowling attack on Thursday, when he turned the match around, taking the score from 128/7 in 16 overs to 54 runs off the last four overs.

If you don't take responsibility, you cannot help your team win games: Kaif on Pant

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Former India cricketer Mohammed Kaif has criticised Lucknow Super Giants captain Rishabh Pant despite the team's win over Kolkata Knight Riders, saying the keeper-batter must improve his game awareness and take more responsibility for consistent results.

Despite Pant's underwhelming knock of 10 runs and a poor top-order performance, LSG managed to win



a last-ball thriller by three wickets in Kolkata on Thursday, thanks to Mukul Choudhary's six-filled half-century from a difficult situation. Pant has been patchy, scoring two below-par scores on either side of a half-century in his three games so far.

Kaif pointed out the inconsistency, saying that an experienced player like him should strive to bat through the chase and not throw away his wicket. "...the team needed him to stay till the end," Kaif said on Star Sports.