

GREAT OFFERS!



Scan to Subscribe



PAGE 6
NATION

BJP used bulldozer to raze meat shops in victory rally: TMC



PAGE 10
LAW & JUSTICE

SC refuses to adjourn hearing on CEC appointments

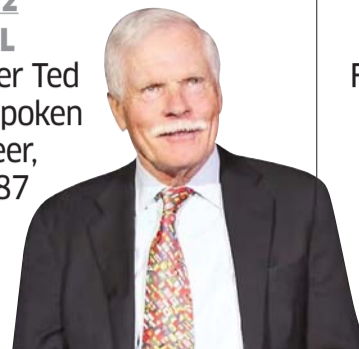
PAGE 11: BUSINESS

India, South Korea likely to hold FTA review talks on May 25



PAGE 12
GLOBAL

CNN Founder Ted Turner, outspoken TV pioneer, dies at 87



PAGE 15
SPORTS

FIFA extends ban on Argentina's Gianluca Prestianni



West Bengal: May 9 set for BJP's historic swearing-in

Party remains tight-lipped on the CM face as internal deliberations continue

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
New Delhi

The swearing-in ceremony of BJP's first-ever Government in West Bengal will be held on May 9 at the iconic Brigade Parade Ground, State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya announced on Wednesday, barely 48 hours after the party's landslide victory ended the Trinamool Congress's 15-year rule in the State.

Bhattacharya, addressing reporters, confirmed, "The new BJP Government will take oath on May 9 at 10am at Brigade Parade Ground." The move is loaded with cultural and political symbolism. For the BJP, the swearing-in on the birth anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore carries



BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari, showing a certificate of election on April 4. Adhikari defeated outgoing CM Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur PTI

more than logistical convenience. The choice is being seen in political circles as a deliberate attempt by the

BJP to embed its historic rise within Bengal's cultural imagination and to blunt the TMC's long-standing narrative that

SUVENDU AIDE SHOT DEAD

Kolkata: A close aide of Suwendu Adhikari was shot dead by unidentified assailants in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday night.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

the saffron party is a "party of outsiders" disconnected from the State's linguistic, literary and intellectual ethos.

The ceremony is expected to be a grand affair attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, national BJP president Nitin Nabin and several others.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

Twin blasts hit security agencies in Punjab

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
New Delhi/Jalandhar/Amritsar

Two incidents of explosions targeting security establishments in Punjab were reported on Tuesday night, sparking panic across the State. The first blast occurred around 8 pm outside the Brigade Headquarters of the Border Security Force's Punjab Frontier in Jalandhar. The explosion ripped apart a scooter parked near the gate, damaged a traffic signal and shattered the windowpanes of a nearby shop.

The little-known Khalistan Liberation Army (KLA) claimed responsibility for the Jalandhar blast while the threatened more attacks. Security agencies are verifying the claim. Punjab Police are also investigating a possible link to a Pakistani gangster in the Jalandhar case. The scooter, which belonged to a local parcel delivery worker, caught fire shortly after the blast. Jalandhar Police



The remains of a scooter after an explosion outside the headquarters of the BSF's Punjab Frontier in Jalandhar PTI

Commissioner Dhanpreet Kaur said the delivery worker was fully cooperating with investigators.

The second blast took place around 11 pm near the army cantonment in Khalsa, Amritsar. Senior Superintendent

of Police, Amritsar (Rural), Suhail Mir Qasim said they received reports of a loud explosion on a road adjacent to the boundary wall.

CONTINUED ON >> P4
RELATED REPORTS ON >> P5

The Bystander

Trump signals Iran deal with threats

ASHOKE RAJ
New Delhi

The US and Iran appeared to edge closer Wednesday to a preliminary agreement aimed at ending their two-month conflict, even as US President Donald Trump intensified pressure on Tehran with threats of renewed and escalated military action.

In a post on social media, Trump suggested the war could soon conclude and that disrupted oil and natural gas shipments might resume. However, he emphasised that any resolution depends on Iran accepting terms of a proposed agreement that he did not fully disclose.

"If they don't agree, the bombing starts," Trump warned, adding that any renewed strikes would be "at a much higher level and intensity than before."

The conflict has centered heavily on the Strait of Hormuz, a critical global shipping route through which a large share of the world's oil and gas supplies pass. Iran's



An Iranian demonstrator waving a flag of Hezbollah under an anti-US billboard in Tehran on Monday, May 4 AP

effective closure of the strait has driven up fuel prices, disrupted global trade, and increased economic pressure on major economies, including China.

According to reports, the White House is working toward a one-page memorandum that could outline key steps to end the war.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

NITISH'S SON LIKELY TO JOIN BIHAR CABINET

Nishant Kumar, son of Nitish Kumar, has agreed to join the Bihar cabinet led by Samrat Choudhary and is likely to be sworn in during Thursday's expansion, sources said. The 45-year-old, who joined the Janata Dal (United) less than two months ago, had earlier resisted taking office despite pressure from party leaders. He reportedly preferred to gain experience as a party worker before accepting a ministerial role. His induction follows Nitish Kumar's resignation as chief minister after entering the Rajya Sabha, paving the way for a new Government headed by the Bharatiya Janata Party. Initial speculation about Nishant's inclusion had not materialised, with senior JD(U) leaders instead appointed as deputy chief ministers. The cabinet expansion, expected to include around a dozen ministers, will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

MOHIT KANDHARI
Jammu

As India observes the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor, the landmark military response to the Pahalgam terror attack of April 2025, the Indian Army remains on high alert along its frontiers, demonstrating an unwavering commitment to safeguarding the nation's sovereignty.

96-hour-long Operation Sindoor, launched on the night of May 6-7, 2025, involved precise strikes on terror infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, marking a significant shift in India's approach to cross-border threats. One year on, the armed forces continue to

draw lessons from the operation, focusing on sustained preparedness and capability enhancement.

In the immediate aftermath of Operation Sindoor, the men in olive have shifted their goalposts. Units are now dedicating more time to sharpening technical skill sets, with intensive training on modernised equipment ranging from loitering munitions and advanced communication systems to AI-assisted battlefield management tools.

The security strategy in Jammu and Kashmir has undergone a sharp shift, with a strong emphasis on enhanced intelligence sharing. The field commanders have been empowered with greater autonomy to



A school student displays a painting depicting 'Operation Sindoor' ahead of its anniversary, in Jammu PTI

Tamil Nadu Governor seeks numbers from TVK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

Marking a departure from political conventions, Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Viswanath Arlekar on Wednesday sought numbers from TVK Chief Vijay, when he reached Lok Bhavan met him to stake claim. Kerala Governor Arlekar is charge Governor of Tamil Nadu, after RN Ravi was transferred to West Bengal. The TVK, which won 108 seats needs the support of 12 MLAs to reach the majority mark of 118 in the 234 member State Assembly.

Congress party with five MLA has assured its support to Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) abandoning its alliance with the DMK. Many DMK leaders said Congress backstabbed them.

AICC Tamil Nadu incharge Girish Chodankar said, "Our support shall be conditional upon the TVK keeping out from this alliance any communal forces that do not believe in the Constitution of India. This alliance between the TVK and the Tamil Nadu Congress will strive to bring back Perunthalaivar Kamaraj's glory days of Tamil Nadu, with a strong commitment to Thanthai Periyar's social justice ideals and Dr BR Ambedkar's constitutional ideals in the years and decades to come.

"This alliance — founded on mutual respect, appropriate share, and shared



Governor Rajendra Arlekar with TVK chief Vijay at the Lok Bhavan in Chennai on Wednesday PTI

responsibility between the two parties is not only for the formation of this Government, but also for future elections to the local body organisations, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha."

Vijay, who won from two constituencies has to surrender one seat, further Assembly Speaker expected to be from TVK can't vote in floor test. So, TVK is down to 106 MLAs and need the support of 12 MLAs.

DMK's allies IJML, CPI (M) and CPI with two seats each have ruled out supporting TVK. The AIADMK with 47 MLAs has said will not extend support to TVK. VCK, has not taken its stand on supporting TVK. PMK with four MLAs are also talking with TVK.

CBI arrests Lucknow man for human trafficking

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
New Delhi

In a significant breakthrough, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) on Wednesday raided nine locations across four states: Delhi, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, as part of its investigation into a sophisticated human trafficking network.

CBI teams are probing agents who lured unsuspecting Indian nationals with false promises of high-paying overseas jobs, only to traffic them into scam compounds in Myanmar and Cambodia, where they were forced into cyber fraud operations under brutal 'Cyber Slavery' conditions. One person was arrested in Lucknow for allegedly facilitating the racket.

According to the CBI, "Victims often educated youth desperate for employment were enticed through online advertisements offering lucrative roles in data entry, customer support or IT jobs in Thailand or other Southeast Asian destinations. Recruiters charged hefty placement fees, ranging between \$300-400 and arranged travel, initially routing them via Delhi or Bangkok.

Once across the border, their passports were confiscated, movement severely restricted, and victims coerced into running cyber scams targeting global victims, including Indians back home."

CONTINUED ON >> P4



Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma submitting his resignation to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya at Raj Bhavan in Guwahati PTI

Assam: Sarma steps down as CM before likely encore

TONY DAS
Guwahati

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday submitted his resignation as the outgoing chief minister to Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya, paving the way for formation of a new Government led by the BJP. The BJP-led NDA bagged 102 seats in the 126-member Assembly.

"Following the formal notification of the results of #AssamElections2026 and to enable the formation of the new Government, Himanta Biswa Sarma tendered his resignation as Chief Minister along with that of the council of Ministers to Hon'ble Governor Lakshman Acharya today at Lok Bhawan," the CM's Office posted on X. The Governor accepted the resignation, and request-

ed Sarma to continue as the caretaker CM till the new Government assumes office, it said.

The oath-taking ceremony is likely to take place on May 12. "As it was a historic win, we have invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to grace the occasion," he said. The PMO has intimated that PM Modi is busy till May 11 and he will be able to visit the State after that date, Sarma said.

Asked about the selection of the CM, he said: "The BJP has appointed two central observers. In their presence, the legislature party will nominate the leader to become the next CM. After that, NDA constituents will sit and finalise the name. So, we should wait for the process to complete."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

One year on, Operation Sindoor keeps Army on high alert in J&K

strengthen strike capabilities within their respective areas of operations.

At Northern Command headquarters, the Army's top brass is holding frequent high-level security reviews, taking decisive steps to reinforce the anti-infiltration grid and sharpen operational readiness along the Line of Control. Field commanders are personally visiting forward positions across the LoC, boosting the morale of troops on the ground while rigorously assessing combat readiness in these high-threat sectors.

Senior Army Commanders are pushing continuous skill upgrades and seamless integration of modern technologies into every operational plan. The focus is clearly on mod-

ernising existing weapon systems and inducting indigenous technologies, including kamikaze drones, AI-driven anti-terror frameworks, and rapid-response capabilities, alongside creating new anti-terror operational frameworks.

In a major boost to its strike power, the Army also raised lethal Bhairav Battalions, agile, technology-driven units designed for rapid response in hybrid and high-intensity conflicts. These specialised formations have been stationed to counter immediate threats emanating from across the border in real time, integrating advanced surveillance, drones, and precision weaponry.

Delhi to host Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday officially announced the 22nd Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship 2026 (CTTC 2026) to be held here and said Delhi has a long-standing legacy of successfully hosting world-class sporting events.

The prestigious international tournament will be held from July 27 to August 2 at Thyagraj Stadium. She also said the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship will further strengthen the Capital's position on the global sporting map.

The championship, being organised jointly by the Government of Delhi and the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI), is being seen as a landmark return of top-tier international sporting events to the national capital.

Players and representatives from more than 35 Commonwealth nations, including England, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Malaysia, Singapore, Scotland, Wales, Nigeria, Kenya, Jamaica, and Trinidad & Tobago, are expected to participate in the tournament. It is being regarded as one of the largest editions of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Championship ever held.

The seven-day championship will feature exciting competitions across multiple categories, culminating in the grand finals on August 2. Detailed information regarding ticketing, volunteer participation, and the complete match schedule will be released in the coming months.

On this occasion, Cabinet Minister of the Delhi Government Ashish Sood, senior officials from the Sports Department, Chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation Vivek Kohli, Advisor to the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation Brijesh Mathur,



On this occasion, Cabinet Minister of the Delhi Government Ashish Sood, senior officials from the Sports Department, Chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation Vivek Kohli, Advisor to the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation Brijesh Mathur,

On this occasion, Cabinet Minister of the Delhi Government Ashish Sood, senior officials from the Sports Department, Chairman of the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation Vivek Kohli, Advisor to the Commonwealth Table Tennis Federation Brijesh Mathur,

Vice President of the Table Tennis Federation of India (TTFI) Rajiv Duggal, Vice President of the Delhi State Table Tennis Association Deepali Gupta, Secretary General of the Delhi State Table Tennis Association Balbir Singh, Dronacharya Awardee Sandeep Gupta, along with several eminent personalities from the sporting fraternity, were present.

Rekha Gupta said the Thyagraj Stadium will serve as the primary competition and ceremonial venue for the championship. Equipped with modern facilities, the stadium will offer a world-class experience to both players and audiences.

She added that the event would also showcase Delhi's hosting capabilities, modern infrastructure, and vibrant sports culture at the international level. She further said that the Delhi Government is continuously working towards strengthening sports infrastructure and promoting international sporting events in line with the Vision 2036 Olympics mission.

CM Rekha rolls out 13 mobile heat relief units

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday launched 13 mobile heat relief units, one for each district, as the Government intensified its response to rising temperatures and worsening heatwave conditions across the Capital.

The mobile vans, flagged off from the Delhi Secretariat, will travel through crowded, heat-prone areas to provide cold drinking water, ORS packets, first aid, cotton towels, and caps to people exposed to extreme summer heat.

At the same event, the Chief Minister also released the government's Heat Action Plan 2026, a broader citywide strategy aimed at preventing heat-related illness and protecting vulnerable residents during the peak summer months.

The Chief Minister said the government's focus was on delivering relief directly on the ground rather than limiting action to policy announcements. She said each of the 13 districts has been assigned one dedicated mobile relief unit that will operate daily in labour



Chief Minister Rekha Gupta during the launch of the Mobile Heat Relief Units at the Delhi Secretariat in New Delhi

hubs, bus terminals, markets, slum pockets, and other high-footfall areas where people remain exposed to the sun for long hours.

The units will function from 11 am to 6 pm, and each vehicle has been fitted with a 400 to 500 litre chilled water tank, ORS distribution material, first aid supplies, and emergency support items. Officials said every district will also have 10 Civil Defence volunteers attached to the operation for the next three months to assist with crowd outreach and relief distribution. As per the deployment plan, each district is expected to distribute

nearly 1,000 ORS sachets, 300 cotton towels, and 200 caps every day. The Chief Minister said the campaign has been launched keeping in mind those sections that face the highest risk during heatwaves, including daily wage workers, construction labourers, street vendors, homeless residents, women, children, and senior citizens.

She said the administration has issued special advisories to both public and private institutions asking them to suspend outdoor labour-intensive work between 1 pm and 4 pm, when temperatures are usually at their highest.

Departments have also been told to ensure adequate rest breaks and hydration support for workers.

The Chief Minister said preventing heatstroke cases and dehydration is one of the government's immediate priorities as Delhi enters the harshest phase of summer. The Heat Action Plan also includes measures inside schools and hospitals.

To reduce dehydration among students, the Delhi government has introduced a water bell system in schools under which children will be reminded at regular intervals to drink water. Outdoor assemblies and outdoor student activities during peak afternoon hours have also been stopped.

On the healthcare front, officials said more than 339 health centres across Delhi have been stocked with extra ORS, ice packs, and essential medicines for treating heat exhaustion and dehydration. Special cool rooms have also been prepared in health facilities for heatstroke patients.

The Government has additionally accelerated the installation of water coolers and drinking water dispensers in public offices and government buildings.

Govt backs new school reform rules

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood on Wednesday said the newly launched School Management Committee Guidelines 2026 would bring a structural change in school governance by turning campuses into centres of community participation, student welfare, and long-term academic planning.

The guidelines come at a time when education departments across states are under pressure to improve learning outcomes while also addressing dropout risks, emotional well-being, and digital adaptation.

Delhi officials said the city will study the framework in detail and begin incorporating the new model into its school administration process.

Speaking at the national launch of the guidelines at Vigyan Bhawan, Sood said the Delhi Government would



implement every reform proposed under the National Education Policy 2020 and align its school system with the new framework. The event was organised by the School Education and Literacy Department of the Government of India and attended by Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, along with Chhattisgarh Education Minister Jagendra Yadav.

The School Management Committee Guidelines 2026 introduced several key reforms, including a single SMC for all classes from

Balvatika to Class 12, aimed at strengthening school-level governance and continuity in decision-making. The guidelines clearly define the roles and responsibilities of SMCs and Member Secretary, with a focus on improved accountability, transparency and financial oversight in school management.

A key feature of the framework is school development planning and social audit mechanisms, designed to enhance community participation and ensure better oversight of school functioning.

MCD to provide free cremation services

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will roll out free cremation services using electric and CNG-based facilities in coming weeks, in a move aimed at reducing air pollution and encouraging greener last rites.

According to civic authorities, the process of handing over the operation of 33 crematoriums to voluntary organisations is currently underway and the free service is expected to begin next month. The arrangement will initially be in place for two years, they said.

Officials said NGOs managing these facilities will receive financial assistance of around ₹500 per cremation to help cover maintenance and repair costs of electric and CNG furnaces.

The civic body has already approved a resolution to

make such cremations free of charge as part of its push towards environmentally sustainable practices.

At present, CNG-based cremation facilities are available at nine locations across the city, including Sarai Kale Khan, Rohini Sector-26 (Kavlya Dham), Dwarka Sector-24, Green Park, Karkardooma, Ghazipur, Subhash Nagar, Punjabi Bagh and Hastals.

An official said that a newly built crematorium at Sarai Kale Khan is also set to become operational soon. The facility is equipped with one CNG furnace and two electric furnaces, along with 22 traditional pyres.

According to the officials, the move is expected to ease the financial burden on families while promoting cleaner alternatives to conventional wood-based cremation, particularly when the city continues to grapple with high air pollution levels.

Delhi turns to AI to fight pollution

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE New Delhi

The Delhi Government is set to sign a memorandum of understanding with the AIRAWAT Research Foundation of IIT Kanpur to develop artificial intelligence-based systems for tracking, analysing and reducing air pollution in the national Capital.

The proposed partnership, announced by Environment Minister Manjinder Singh Sirsa on Wednesday, is aimed at building a technology-backed framework that can help the government monitor pollution at a much sharper local level and respond with data-driven interventions.

Under the agreement, the Department of Environment and the AIRAWAT Research Foundation will work together on AI-powered, sensor-based and analytics-led tools for air quality management.



These systems are expected to focus on hyperlocal pollution monitoring, predictive forecasting, identification of pollution sources, decision-support platforms, policy assistance and training of Government personnel.

Sirsa said Delhi can no longer depend only on conventional seasonal measures to tackle its long-standing pollution crisis and needs scientific tools that produce actionable information in real time. He said the Government's priority is to move towards evidence-based intervention that can deliver measurable improvements in air

quality and public health.

According to the minister, the upcoming MoU is designed as a knowledge collaboration at the initial stage and does not involve any immediate financial burden on the Delhi government. He said the first objective is to study the potential and field applicability of the AI technology stack developed by the AIRAWAT Research Foundation.

The foundation, linked to IIT Kanpur, will examine how its existing systems can be adapted for Delhi's dense urban conditions and varied pollution sources. Officials said the partnership is expected to help the government understand pollution patterns not just city-wide but neighbourhood by neighbourhood.

This is significant because air quality in Delhi often fluctuates sharply across zones depending on traffic, construction, industrial activity, road dust and local pollution.

PUBLIC NOTICE

To be known to all, SATPAL SINGH KOHLI S/O LATE TIRATH SINGH KOHLI R/o 213/A, GROUND FLOOR, RAJOURI GARDEN, TAGORE GARDEN, NEW DELHI-1100 27 owner of FLAT NO.81,6/2ND FLOOR, POKHET-2, BLOCK-D, S/O-02, NARELA DELHI, NEW DELHI-110095. ...

Public Notice

This is to inform the general public that Mr. Devendra Kumar is the Owner of the Plot of Land area measuring 450 Sq. Yds., i.e., 376.2 Sq. mtrs. Out of Kharsa No. 158, Situated in the area of Village Dabra, Pargana & Tehsil Dadri, UP through Gift Deed dated 31.03.2018 doc. no. 16553 executed by Mrs. Kanti and Mrs. Urmila in favour of Mr. Devendra Kumar in respect of plot area measuring 450 Sq. Yds., out of Kharsa No. 158. ...

PUBLIC NOTICE

Notice is hereby given to public at large that we Dinesh Kumar Bhargava and Seema Bhargava R/o 133 Charak Road, Vikaspur, New Delhi-110018 have separated, cut off all relations and disowned our younger son Ishant Bhargava. Now he has no claim or right on any of our properties, assets movable and immovable as the concerned properties and assets of all of them are self-acquired. ...

AXIS BANK

Retail Asset Centre: Axis House, Jagjeev Green Wash Town, Tower-2, 4th Floor, Sec-128, Noida Expressway, Noida-201301 Corporate Office: Axis House, Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Elloribridge, Ahmedabad-380005 Also at: Axis Bank Ltd. Himalaya House, Upper Ground Floor & First Floor, KG Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi-110001

POSSESSION NOTICE UNDER SARFAESI ACT 2002

Whereas the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under the Securitisation, Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules, 2002, issued demand notice on the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) / Mortgagee(s) mentioned below, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. ...

Name of Borrower / Co-borrower:

1. Sh. Manoj Sharma, S/o. Sh. Kaushal Sharma, R/o 9/11/1st Avenue, Situated in The Township 'gaur City' At Plot No. Gh-01, Sector-04, Greater Noida, Distt. District Gautam Budh Nagar, (up) And Bounded As Under - East : As Per Title Deed, West : As Per Title Deed, North : As Per Title Deed, South : As Per Title Deed.

Date of Possession:

Notice: 11-Dec-2025 (Rupees Nineteen Lakhs Three Thousand Eight Hundred And Eighty Six Only)

Name of Borrower / Co-borrower:

1. Baijya Nath Thakur H. No 8 Gali No. 5, Shakti Vihar, Mithapur Ext, Jaitpur, New Delhi- 110044. 2. Mukesh Kumar Thakur H. No 8 Gali No. 5, Shakti Vihar Mithapur Ext, Jaitpur, New Delhi- 110044

Description of Property:

Residential Flat/Dwelling Unit No.-841 On 8th Floor In Tower No. -F in The 'g0-01/1st Avenue' Situated in The Township 'gaur City' At Plot No. Gh-01, Sector-04, Greater Noida, Distt. District Gautam Budh Nagar, (up) And Bounded As Under - East : As Per Title Deed, West : As Per Title Deed, North : As Per Title Deed, South : As Per Title Deed.

Date of Possession:

Notice: 03-Feb-2026 (Rupees Thirty Two Lakh Forty Six Thousand Five Hundred Nineteen Only)

Name of Borrower / Co-borrower:

Shakun Sio Bashir Near Aurangabad Chowk, Gahlab, Gahlab (233), Palwal, Faridabad Haryana- 121103 (Borrower)

Description of Property:

All Piece And Parcel Of Land Measuring About Flat No-16-Blik-e4 3rd Flr Dda Lig Flat, Pocket-2 Sec-02 Narela, Narela, New Delhi-110 076 And Bounded As Under - East : As Per Title Deed, West : As Per Title Deed, South : As Per Title Deed.

Date of Possession:

Notice: 27.08.2025 (Rupees Eleven Lakh Ninety Seven Thousand One Hundred Thirty One Only)

Name of Borrower / Co-borrower:

1. Inder Jeet Singh S/o. Karan Singh R/o. 803 B-Block Ph-1 Metro Vihar, Holambi Kalan West Delhi- 110082. 2. Shalender Kumar S/o. Mr. Inder Singh R/o. 803 B-Block Ph-1, Metro Vihar, Holambi Kalan West Delhi, Delhi-110082 Also At: Mr. Inderjeet Singh & Shalender Kumar Flat No-36 Third Floor, Pocket-2 Block-D1, Sec-02, Narela Delhi, New Delhi-110095.

Date: 07-May-2026, Place: Noida

सर्वजनिक निविदा सूचना

मोहन नगर कर्मचारी सहकारी आवास समिति लि। सेक्टर-5, वसुन्धरा, गाजियाबाद सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि ग्राम प्रहलादनगरी के खसरा नं. 251, 292, 293, 296, 297 में स्थित खसरा नं. 13620 वर्गमीटर भूमि को 30 वर्ष के पट्टे/लीज पर देने हेतु सौलंकर निविदा आमंत्रित है।

महत्वपूर्ण विवरण

1. यह भूमि विकास प्राधिकरण को महरोजना-2031 में हरिपट्टी के रूप में स्थित है तथा इस भूमि का उपयोग गाजियाबाद विकास प्राधिकरण को महरोजना-2031 के तहत सव नियमों के अनुसार ही किया जा सकेगा।

2. निविदा जमा करने से पहले निविदा दाता स्वयं राख्य रिक्तों व मास्टर प्लान को जांच कर लें। निर्यात का पालन करने को पूर्ण जिम्मेदारी निविदा दाता को होगी।

3. निविदा प्रस्तुत करने के दृष्टिकोण निविदाकार निविदा तिथि से एक दिन पहले निविदा दाता स्वयं राख्य रिक्तों व मास्टर प्लान को जांच कर लें। निर्यात का पालन करने को पूर्ण जिम्मेदारी निविदा दाता को होगी।

4. निविदा व जमा करने से पहले निविदा दाता स्वयं राख्य रिक्तों व मास्टर प्लान को जांच कर लें। निर्यात का पालन करने को पूर्ण जिम्मेदारी निविदा दाता को होगी।

5. निविदा के पास किसी भी निविदा को विना कारण बताये रद्द करने का अधिकार सुरक्षित है।

सचिव

मोहन नगर कर्मचारी सहकारी आवास समिति लि।

वसुन्धरा से. 5 गाजियाबाद

CHANGE OF NAME

I, No.1419969F Hav Kharak Singh, R/o- Vill- Purkuni, PO- Purkuni, Teh- Kapkote, Distt- Bageshwar, Uttarakhand- 263642 have changed my Daughter's name from Harshita to Harshita Wachhami vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1042)C

PD(1038)C

I, No.15429610F Hav Rachakonda Anjaneyulu, Unit- Army Hospital R&R, Delhi Cantt- 110010, have changed my daughter's name from Rachkonda Pushpa Sindhu to Rachakonda Pushpa Sindhu, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1039)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, declare that in my son's service document my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 01/07/1956 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 02/07/1950 which may be amended accordingly. PD(1045)C

PD(1040)C

I, Sangeeta, Mother of No.23001820W Sep Santosh Bhimappa Belavi, R/o- AP- Vijayanagar, TQ- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591222, have changed my name from Sangeeta to Sangita Belavi, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1041)C

PD(1043)C

I, Kalle Sarala Barku M/O No.15724771M L/Hav Kale Vikin Barku, R/o- A/P Shirsondi, Tal- Molegaon, Dist- Nashik, Maharashtra, have changed my name from Kale Sarala Barku to Sarala Barku Kale, in my son's service records my DOB is wrongly written as 01.06.1963 whereas my correct DOB is 01.01.1974 vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1043)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, declare that in my son's service document my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 01/07/1956 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 02/07/1950 which may be amended accordingly. PD(1045)C

PD(1040)C

I, Sangeeta, Mother of No.23001820W Sep Santosh Bhimappa Belavi, R/o- AP- Vijayanagar, TQ- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591222, have changed my name from Sangeeta to Sangita Belavi, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1041)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, declare that in my son's service document my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 01/07/1956 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 02/07/1950 which may be amended accordingly. PD(1045)C

PD(1040)C

I, Sangeeta, Mother of No.23001820W Sep Santosh Bhimappa Belavi, R/o- AP- Vijayanagar, TQ- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591222, have changed my name from Sangeeta to Sangita Belavi, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1041)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, declare that in my son's service document my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 01/07/1956 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 02/07/1950 which may be amended accordingly. PD(1045)C

The Pioneer Classified

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Santilata Samal, Mother of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, have changed my name from Santilata Samal to Shantilata Samal, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1042)C

PD(1043)C

I, Boomika alies Shalini, W/o No.15789730W Hav Shiva Kanth Reddy M, R/o- 1-95, Vill - Palli K, Post- Palli B, Mandal- Talamadugu, Dist- Adilabad, Telangana- 504308, have changed my name from Boomika alies Shalini to Manda Shalini, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1043)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, declare that in my son's service document my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 01/07/1956 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 02/07/1950 which may be amended accordingly. PD(1045)C

PD(1040)C

I, Sangeeta, Mother of No.23001820W Sep Santosh Bhimappa Belavi, R/o- AP- Vijayanagar, TQ- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591222, have changed my name from Sangeeta to Sangita Belavi, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1041)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.14657964F Nk Satyajit Samal, R/o- At- Digamberpur, PO- Bidyaharpur, PS- Barchana, Teh- Dhanamondal, Dist- Jajpur, Odisha- 754024, declare that in my son's service document my D.O.B. is wrongly written as 01/07/1956 whereas my correct D.O.B. is 02/07/1950 which may be amended accordingly. PD(1045)C

PD(1040)C

I, Sangeeta, Mother of No.23001820W Sep Santosh Bhimappa Belavi, R/o- AP- Vijayanagar, TQ- Chikodi, Dist- Belagavi, Karnataka- 591222, have changed my name from Sangeeta to Sangita Belavi, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1041)C

PD(1043)C

I, Puja Choudhary W/o- JC- 709082F Nb/Sub Harish Chandra Choudhary, R/o- Vill- Gadobaidpur, PO- Basadihya, Teh- Damsinghsari, Dist- Samastipur, Bihar- 848114, have changed my name from Puja Choudhary to Puja Kumari, vide affidavit dated 06/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1044)C

PD(1048)C

I, Rabintra Nath Samal Father of No.1465



CM orders preparation of citywide Fire Fighting Master Plan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Wednesday ordered the preparation of a citywide Fire Fighting Master Plan and asked all departments concerned to submit, within 10 days, a detailed blueprint on recurring fire risks, vulnerable locations, system failures, and preventive solutions.

The directive came during a high-level fire safety review meeting at the Delhi Secretariat amid growing concern over recent fire incidents in the capital.

The Chief Minister said negligence in matters involving public safety would not be tolerated and warned that accountability would be fixed if lapses by any department were found in future fire tragedies.

The proposed master plan

is intended to create a long-term prevention and response system aimed at reducing both casualties and property loss in Delhi, particularly during the summer months when fire incidents usually rise. Officials from the Delhi Fire Service, Municipal Corporation of Delhi, Delhi Disaster Management Authority, power utilities, and other agencies attended the meeting along with Home and Power Minister Ashish Sood and Chief Secretary Rajiv Verma.

The Chief Minister directed every concerned department to identify the main causes behind repeated fires, map sensitive zones, examine weaknesses in current emergency systems, and suggest concrete corrective measures. She said the government wants a result-oriented mechanism instead of fragmented

responses after each incident. According to officials present in the meeting, the fire department has been asked to assess manpower shortages, requirements for new fire stations, and the need for modern firefighting equipment.

The Chief Minister assured departments that the government would provide budgetary support to strengthen emergency preparedness if gaps are clearly identified. She also instructed officials to study previous fire cases in detail so that a standardised response model can be prepared for faster rescue and better containment.

A major part of the review focused on civic and structural conditions that often worsen fire emergencies in Delhi. The Chief Minister directed the municipal corporation to ensure strict moni-



toring of illegal constructions in residential areas and to remove encroachments from narrow roads and lanes that obstruct the movement of fire tenders.

Officials were told that access routes in congested colonies must remain clear because delayed vehicle entry often increases the scale of destruction. Power department agencies were also asked to maintain greater

caution while granting electricity connections and to conduct regular inspections of vulnerable electrical infrastructure.

The Chief Minister said while fires may begin due to multiple causes, government agencies have the responsibility to reduce preventable risks and improve the speed of intervention. The government is also planning a large-scale public awareness cam-

paign as part of the new fire safety strategy.

Officials said citizens will be educated about household fire hazards, safe wiring practices, LPG handling, emergency reporting, and evacuation behaviour. Mock drills are also proposed in residential colonies to improve public readiness during fire emergencies.

Home and Power Minister Ashish Sood said the government intends to strengthen Delhi Fire Services with a long-term vision and equip it to handle the city's needs over the next 25 years. He said modern machines and advanced firefighting technology would be added in phases, while awareness campaigns would be run with the help of resident welfare associations, market bodies, social organisations, and religious institutions.

VIVEK VIHAR FIRE: INVESTIGATORS EXAMINE ELECTRICAL OVERLOADING, BUILDING VIOLATIONS

New Delhi: Investigators probing the deadly fire at a residential building in Vivek Vihar are examining possible electrical overloading and alleged building violations to ascertain the exact cause of the blaze, police said on Wednesday.

Nine people, including a toddler, died in the fire at the four-story building on Sunday, while several others were rescued amid chaotic scenes. Sources said the electricity department, fire department, and crime investigation teams are inspecting to determine the exact reason and the amount of electricity load being used in the building at the time of the incident.

"We have not received the FSL report so far. Meanwhile,

the electricity department is comparing the sanctioned load of the electricity meter," the police said. Investigators suspect that excessive power consumption beyond the approved limit could have triggered the fire.

Police have also written to the MCD seeking a structural inspection of the building and requesting that residents not be allowed to stay there till the inquiry is completed. Police have also asked the civic body to inspect nearby buildings to identify similar safety violations.

"The exact cause of the fire will be known after the report comes. The process may take time," the officer said.

Capital tops India in crimes against children and kidnapping: NCRB data

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi may have registered a slight fall in some major categories of crime in 2024, but the numbers tell a harsher story beneath the surface. The national capital continued to top the country in several serious offences, from crimes against children and kidnapping to theft, showing that even a marginal statistical decline has done little to ease the city's deepening law-and-order strain.

The latest National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data places Delhi once again at the centre of India's urban crime map.

The city reported 7,662 cases of crimes against children in 2024. This was slightly lower than 7,769 in 2023, but still higher than the 7,468 cases recorded in 2022.

In absolute numbers, Delhi remained the highest among all Union Territories by a huge margin. But the more troubling figure is not the

raw total. It is the rate.

Delhi recorded 138.4 crimes against children for every one lakh child population in 2024, more than three times the national average of 42.3. This means children in the capital remained among the most vulnerable in the country despite repeated promises of safer neighbourhoods, stronger school vigilance, and faster police response.

The justice system's response was also weak. The charge sheet rate in these cases stood at only 31.7 per cent, far below the national average of 61.4 per cent. In simple terms, in a large number of cases, the investigation did not translate into timely prosecution.

The same pattern runs through kidnapping and abduction cases.

Delhi recorded 5,580 kidnapping and abduction cases in 2024, down slightly from 5,715 in 2023 and 5,641 in 2022. Yet the Capital posted the highest kidnapping rate

FLASHPOINT: DELHI'S 2024 CRIME PROFILE

1. THE CHILD SAFETY CRISIS	
● Total Cases: 7,662 (Highest among all Union Territories).	● National Share: Delhi alone accounts for 73.3% of all theft cases reported across major Indian cities.
● The Density Gap: Delhi recorded 138.4 crimes per lakh children, more than three times the national average (42.3).	● Dominance: Theft makes up 41.6% of all registered crimes in the capital.
● Justice Lag: Only 31.7% of cases reached the charge-sheet stage, compared to the national average of 61.4%.	
2. KIDNAPPING & ABDUCTION	
● Total Cases: 5,580.	● Police Efficiency: Unlike other categories, murder investigations saw a 90.8% charge-sheeting rate, outperforming the national average of 84.7%.
● The Rate: 25.5 cases per lakh population (4x the national average of 6.8).	
● Investigation Bottleneck: A staggering 8.5% charge-sheeting rate, significantly trailing the national average of 30.9%.	
3. THE THEFT "EPIDEMIC"	
● Daily Frequency: 497 thefts per day (1	● Silver Lining: Police achieved a 100% charge-sheeting rate in this category.
every 3 minutes).	
4. MURDER & SERIOUS VIOLENCE	
● Total Cases: 504 (A marginal dip from 506 in 2023).	
5. CRIMES AGAINST SCHEDULED TRIBES	
● Trend: A small but rising figure (4 cases in 2024, up from 0 in 2022).	

in the country at 25.5 cases per lakh population, nearly four times the national average of 6.8. That is not a small aberration. It is a sustained warning.

For a city with an estimated population of 2.18 crore, these numbers suggest that

abduction, missing persons complaints, child lifting, elopement-linked kidnappings, and coercive confinement continue to form a major policing burden.

More alarming is the pace of legal closure. Delhi's charge-sheeting rate in kid-

napping cases was just 8.5 per cent in 2024 against the national average of 30.9 per cent. That leaves a very large pool of pending investigations and families waiting in uncertainty.

The NCRB data also flagged a smaller but symbolically

significant rise in crimes against Scheduled Tribes in the Capital. Delhi registered four such cases in 2024, up from two in 2023, while no case was reported in 2022.

Though the Scheduled Tribe population in Delhi is too small for a crime rate calculation, the city still recorded the highest number of such cases among Union Territories. Police, however, filed charge sheets in all the cases, giving Delhi a 100 per cent charge sheeting rate in this category.

Murder figures, by comparison, show a more stable and somewhat stronger police response.

Delhi registered 504 murder cases in 2024, marginally lower than 506 in 2023 and 509 in 2022. The decline is negligible, but unlike kidnapping and crimes against children, police filed charge sheets in 90.8 per cent of murder cases, which is higher than the national average of 84.7 per cent.

DIAL-GMR and traffic police launch automated e-challan system



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Breaking traffic rules will no longer be easy near Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport area. To strengthen traffic discipline, improve road safety and ensure smooth traffic movement around the airport, the Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL-GMR), in collaboration with the Delhi Traffic Police, has rolled out an automated e-challan enforcement system across the airport's road network.

Under this project, 14 high-definition ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) cameras have been installed at various key points in the IGI Airport area. These cameras read and instantly record the number plates of every passing vehicle. In the future, 35 more such cameras will be installed, bringing the entire airport road network under near-total surveillance.

The cameras have been strategically installed at high-traffic zones such as Aerocity, Central Spine Road, Rangpuri, the Centaur Hotel junction, the NSG junction, the Cargo Terminal area, and the Terminal 1 exit road — areas that experience heavy vehicular movement daily.

These smart cameras can automatically detect a range of violations, including over-speeding, illegal parking, wrong-side driving, triple riding, riding without helmets, jumping red lights, and stop-line violations. Once

a violation is recorded, the data is processed through NIC systems and verified by traffic personnel before e-challans are issued.

Officials said the move aims to streamline traffic flow, especially during peak travel hours, and ensure stricter compliance with road safety rules. According to DCP Traffic Shobhit Saxena, the initiative marks a major step toward technology-driven enforcement in the capital. He emphasised that ANPR-based monitoring will enhance transparency, reduce manual intervention, and ensure uniform enforcement of traffic laws.

Authorities expect the system to significantly improve road discipline and reduce violations around one of the busiest airport zones in the country.

Through this system, e-challans will be issued directly for violations such as over-speeding, wrong or illegal parking, driving on the wrong side, triple riding, riding without a helmet, breaking stop lines, and jumping red lights. This means that traffic police will no longer need to be present at the scene; the camera will automatically catch your mistake.

The entire e-challan process is also completely technology-based. As soon as a vehicle violates the rules, the ANPR camera captures its photo and details.

This data is directly connected to the NIC and Delhi Traffic Police systems.

Forest department to plant 1.5 lakh saplings in Central Ridge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Forest Department will launch a high-density plantation project in the Central Ridge to transform around 10 acres of degraded forest land into a dense native forest ecosystem. Under the project, the department will plant nearly 1 lakh to 1.5 lakh saplings at a density of 3-5 saplings per square metre.

According to the Department of Forests and Wildlife's Request for Proposal (RFP), the Miyawaki-style plantation method will create a self-sustaining forest ecosystem with rapid canopy growth in the Sardar Patel Marg area.

The tender document said agencies participating in the bid process must show prior experience in Miyawaki



plantation and ecological restoration projects.

An official said the restoration process will begin with detailed site surveys, soil testing and preparation of a plantation micro-plan identifying native species across multiple forest layers, including shrubs, sub-trees, trees and canopy species.

The selected agency will also undertake removal of

invasive species such as Prosopis juliflora and lantana, debris clearing, soil loosening, pit marking and biomass enrichment before plantation begins, he said.

The project proposes using organic compost, mulching and microbial enrichment to improve soil fertility and moisture retention, along with developing drip irrigation, sprinklers or rain gun systems for watering the plantation.

Protection infrastructure, including chain-link fencing and measures against grazing and human disturbance, will also be developed at the site, he said.

The project includes a three-year maintenance phase involving watering, weeding, pest control, soil aeration, replacement of dead saplings and biodiversity monitoring.

Gopal Rai warns of super El Nino threat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Amid rising temperatures across India and globally, senior Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader and former Delhi Environment Minister Gopal Rai warned of a looming heatwave threat, citing the possibility of a super El Nino after 140 years. He urged the Centre to take timely and concrete measures while calling for collective action to tackle the risk of extreme heat and potential famine.

El Niño is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon that describes the periodic warming of sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean. It is part of a larger system known as the El Niño Southern Oscillation, or ENSO, which has three phases: El Niño, La Niña and neutral conditions.

The AAP leader explained



that in India's history, in 1877, crores of people suddenly lost their lives and vast stretches of land turned barren. Not only India, but countries like China, Brazil and several African nations saw millions perish.

The former Delhi environment minister continued, "What exactly happened in 1877? There was no war, no earthquake, yet why did so many people die, and why did such a massive famine occur in India? The reason was scientific, geographical and natural. A disturbance in ocean waters

thousands of kilometres away from India, known worldwide as El Nino, caused the devastation. In 1877, the entire world faced the impact of a super El Nino."

Rai said that many meteorologists believe that 2026 could see the most dangerous heat in human history, potentially breaking all records.

"In Delhi, temperatures have already crossed 40 degrees Celsius. Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Bengaluru are witnessing steadily rising heat. Across India, this heat is spreading rapidly, and its impact is now directly visible on people," he said, adding that the effects of El Niño were seen in 2024 as well, when everyone experienced severe heatwaves. But this time, the super El Niño is expected to have an even more dangerous impact on human civilisation.

Assembly hosts Ram Katha evening

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Assembly on Wednesday hosted a special cultural programme, Apne Apne Ram Katha, featuring poet and storyteller Dr Kumar Vishwas, with Speaker Vijender Gupta saying the life of Lord Ram continues to offer lessons in duty, justice, and public conduct.

Held inside the Assembly premises, the event drew a packed audience and brought together senior political leaders, government officials, and invited guests for an evening centred on literature, philosophy, and civilisational thought.

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta, several MLAs, Chief Secretary Rajeev Verma, and other senior Delhi Government officials were present at the programme, which was organised in collaboration with the Education Department.

The Assembly complex was specially illuminated for the occasion, while the main hall



Dr Kumar Vishwas during the Ram Katha at the Delhi Legislative Assembly, in New Delhi

remained full throughout the presentation, reflecting strong public and official interest in the event.

Presiding over the gathering, Speaker Vijender Gupta said Lord Ram should not be seen only as a figure of faith but also as a lasting model of discipline, responsibility, and fairness.

He said the values associated with Ram continue to remain relevant in both private life and governance,

particularly at a time when institutions need stronger ethical direction.

Gupta also said cultural programmes of this nature help reconnect public life with deeper moral ideas and provide an opportunity for institutions to engage with India's intellectual traditions. At the centre of the evening was Dr Kumar Vishwas's widely known narrative presentation Apne Apne Ram, in which he blended poetry,

commentary, and storytelling to interpret different dimensions of the Ramayana.

Rather than limiting the discourse to a devotional retelling, the presentation examined Lord Ram as a symbol of restraint in power, commitment to justice, compassion in action, and duty above personal interest.

Through references to major episodes from Ram's life, the narration highlighted the dilemmas, sacrifices, and decisions that shaped him as an ethical and civilisational figure. Audience members remained engaged through the long presentation, with repeated moments of silence and applause as themes of sacrifice, integrity, courage, and social responsibility were explored.

Officials said the event was designed not merely as a religious gathering but as a broader cultural initiative to promote engagement with India's literary and philosophical heritage, especially among younger audiences.

Bhairon Marg underpass work to be completed by February 2027, says PWD Minister Verma

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Bhairon Marg underpass construction, which had been stalled for almost three years, has gathered pace in the last few months and is expected to be completed by February next year, Delhi PWD Minister Parvesh Singh Verma said on Wednesday.

The project, also known as Underpass Number 5, was halted when a precast concrete box — pushed beneath an active railway line using the 'box-pushing' method — sank in 2023 due to the flooding of the Yamuna River nearby.

"Work at the Bhairon Marg tunnel is going at a desired pace. By February next year, the construction is likely to be completed. Once rendered operational, the underpass will bring relief to commuters travelling on the



Ring Road," the Minister for the Public Works Department said.

According to officials, with the tunnel work remaining incomplete, they are currently managing the traffic with temporary diversions and barricades, leading to severe congestion near the Ring Road, Bhairon Marg and Sarai Kale Khan areas.

Half of the underpass has been opened for traffic movement between Bhairon Marg and Ring Road, they said.

set to get relief from traffic congestion.

Last year, the public works department submitted a detailed proposal with expert recommendations and revised engineering designs to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, which approved the plan.

As per the revised design, the height of one side of the underpass will be reduced from 5.5 metres to 3.9 metres. This means the underpass will now be restricted to light motor vehicles and will operate as a two-lane corridor instead of the originally planned three lanes.

Currently, the public works department is carrying out grouting work under the box structures to stabilise the soil.

PWD officials said their target is to complete the box-pushing work before the monsoon this year.



IN FOCUS



A black-rumped flameback clings to a tree trunk as it searches for food, in Nadia, West Bengal on Wednesday

₹35,000 cr investment evolving in UP defence corridors: CM Yogi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Prayagraj

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday said investment proposals worth more than ₹35,000 crore are taking shape on the ground in the state's six defence industrial corridors located in Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, Agra, Aligarh and Chitrakoot.

Addressing the closing ceremony of the three-day NorthTech Symposium held at New Cantt here, he said, "The state government has also created a large land bank. Through the defence and aerospace policy, incentives are being provided to investors willing to invest."

The chief minister said Aligarh has emerged as a hub for small arms, defence equipment and military supplies, while Kanpur – traditionally known as the Manchester of the East – is becoming a centre for ammunition, missiles, defence textiles and protective gear. "Lucknow has been focused on BrahMos missiles and heavy defence manufacturing. Chitrakoot and Agra are being developed for precision engineering in



UP CM Yogi Adityanath addresses the North Tech Symposium, on the theme Raksha Triveni Sangam, where Technology, Industry & Soldiering Converge in Prayagraj on Wednesday

aerospace and defence," he said.

Adityanath said manufacturing of artillery shells, drones, bulletproof jackets and advanced communication systems is being undertaken in the defence corridors to enhance the capabilities of armed forces.

"The required ecosystem for defence manufacturing corridors exists in Uttar Pradesh. The state has 56 per cent skilled manpower. There is also a strong base of MSMEs, with 96 lakh units already operational across sectors ranging from hardware to leather and textiles," he said.

The chief minister said the government is working with

created a robust ecosystem and that Uttar Pradesh now has one of the best infrastructures in the country in terms of expressways, highways, rail connectivity, metro networks and air connectivity. "Prioritising security has led to major investors showing interest in Uttar Pradesh. Improved law and order has helped us attract quality investments," he added.

The NorthTech Symposium was inaugurated by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on May 4. More than 250 companies from the defence sector showcased their products and technologies at the event, officials said.

Adityanath while visiting the defence exhibition appreciated the country's emerging indigenous defence capabilities. The three-day event showcases a wide range of state-of-the-art technologies and equipment developed to suit the needs of modern warfare.

During the exhibition, the chief minister closely inspected the bulletproof jackets, tactical gear, state-of-the-art helmets and military equipment developed for multi-terrain operations.

Wheat exports resume at Kandla Port after 4 years



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Bhuj

In a significant development for India's maritime trade, wheat exports have resumed from Deendayal Port after a gap of four years, following earlier restrictions imposed by the Central Government. The renewed activity has brought optimism to the port sector, with a large consignment now being prepared for shipment to Dubai.

According to official sources, loading operations of 22,000 metric tonnes of wheat have commenced aboard the cargo vessel MV Anna Theresa. The export is being handled by ITC Limited, which is acting as the primary shipper for this consignment.

This marks the first major wheat export from Kandla since 2022, when sudden

export restrictions had led to a buildup of stock at the port. With the resumption of exports, the accumulated wheat stock is now being cleared, reviving cargo movement activities.

During a visit to the port, Sushilkumar Singh, Chairman of the Deendayal Port Authority, reviewed the ongoing loading operations. He emphasised worker safety as a top priority, especially in view of the extreme heat conditions in the Kutch region. Interacting directly with labourers, he urged them to take necessary health precautions and make proper use of safety equipment while on duty.

The restart of wheat exports is expected to enhance cargo handling at the port and provide significant economic relief to stakeholders associated with the trade and logistics chain.

FIR filed after tech firm alleges SMS spoofing fraud

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Bengaluru

An FIR has been registered against unknown people for allegedly sending fraudulent messages in the name of an e-commerce platform with promises of cash rewards, further disrupting its operations, police said on Wednesday.

The offence is said to have taken place between April 23 and April 27, they said.

A representative of city-based technology company Hiveloop Technology Pvt Ltd (HTPL), part of the Udaan group (eB2B platform), has lodged a complaint alleging a large-scale SMS spoofing fraud following which a detailed investigation has been initiated into the matter, a senior police officer said. According to the FIR, HTPL is a registered entity on the TRAI-mandated DLT platform, which permits only pre-approved SMS templates and whitelisted URLs to be sent through authorised sender IDs. The issue came to light on April 23, when HTPL



received alerts from buyers about fraudulent SMS messages appearing to originate from the company's sender ID "UDAANN". The messages reportedly contained Bitly links and falsely claimed a credit of ₹10,001, urging recipients to withdraw money, it said.

On April 27, at around 12:49 pm, the DLT platform blacklisted HTPL's SMS templates, citing their alleged use in sending fraudulent messages. Within minutes, the company's sender ID was also blacklisted. Airtel's DLT system subsequently confirmed the action and shared details of the fraudulent messages that were circulated in HTPL's name without its knowledge or consent, the FIR stated.

Mann starts Shukrana Yatra after implementation of anti-sacrilege law

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Sri Anandpur Sahib

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday started a four-day 'Shukrana Yatra' after implementation of the anti-sacrilege law. He embarked on the 'Shukrana Yatra' after paying obeisance at Takht Sri Kesgarh Sahib in Sri Anandpur Sahib.

Mann said those who remained hand-in-glove with the perpetrators of beadbi (sacrilege) of Sri Guru Granth Sahib during previous regimes would soon be put behind bars, asserting that Punjab now has a strict anti-sacrilege law in place.

The CM was accompanied by minister Harjot Singh Bains in Sri Anandpur Sahib. Mann said the yatra was being undertaken "to express



gratitude to the Almighty for blessing him with the opportunity to serve humanity by enacting the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act 2026, which provides for harsher punishment in 'beadbi' (sacrilege) cases".

The Punjab government last month notified the anti-sacrilege law – the Jaagat Jot Sri Guru Granth Sahib Satkar (Amendment) Act, 2026 – which proposes stricter punishment, including life imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹25 lakh, for any act of

sacrilege against the Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy book. After Sri Anandpur Sahib, Mann also addressed gatherings at other places enroute the Yatra.

In Khatkar Kalan, legendary martyr Bhagat Singh's ancestral village,

Mann addressed a gathering during the "Shukrana Yatra".

Addressing a gathering there, Mann said that while the Punjab Government is committed to following the path shown by the great martyrs, the dream of freedom envisioned by Bhagat Singh and other legendary martyrs still remains incomplete.

"This is not the India for which our martyrs sacrificed their lives. Today, divisive politics and attempts are constantly being made to create conflicts among communities. This goes against the very spirit of democracy and nationalism," he said.

The CM said that the Punjab government is continuously working to fulfil the aspirations of the freedom fighters and will

never allow the sacrifices of the martyrs to fade away. Mann said that every incident of 'beadbi' deeply wounded the sentiments of millions of people.

He said that while people always hoped the culprits would be punished, legal loopholes repeatedly allowed the accused to walk free by claiming mental instability.

"Many times, accused escaped punishment by saying that their mind was disturbed or that they were mentally unstable. But if someone is truly mentally unstable, why does he target only Sri Guru Granth Sahib ji? Why does he not crash into a train engine or touch live electric wires? The truth is that many such acts were deliberate and orchestrated," Mann said.

FROM PAGE - 1

West Bengal: May 9 set for BJP's historic...

A meeting of the newly elected BJP MLAs has been convened for the evening of May 8, when the legislature party is expected to formally elect its leader. However, the party leadership has so far remained tight-lipped about the chief ministerial face, keeping speculation rife.

Senior leaders have refused to name a frontrunner, saying the decision will be taken collectively by the elected representatives.

Preparations have already begun at the Brigade Parade Ground, one of Kolkata's largest open venues, which has in the past hosted massive public rallies and Republic Day parades. Security agencies are working overtime to ensure fool proof arrangements for the high-profile event, which is likely to see the presence of chief ministers from BJP-ruled States as well.

Congress leaders vie for top post in Kerala

While Chennithala and Satheesan were elected from their strongholds of Haripad and Paravoor, respectively, with thumping margins, Venugopal, the AICC general secretary (organisation), did not contest the election. As speculation intensifies, the leaders have begun to display their strength and loyalty to the party high command. Their supporters have stepped up campaigns for their respective leaders through extensive social media drives and by organising large receptions, such as those held for Satheesan in Ernakulam and Venugopal in New Delhi.

Soon after the results of the Assembly elections were announced on Monday, Chennithala, a staunch loyalist of the Nehru-Gandhi family, said that Rahul Gandhi was behind the UDF's historic victory, crediting him with the five guarantees that had a major impact on the election. "The strongest leadership behind this victory came from Rahul Gandhi. He convened all our leaders in Delhi, discussed the need to win, and guided us to function as a united team – the UDF working cohesively. This leadership was provided by Rahul Gandhi along with Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge.

"Priyanka Gandhi's active presence and Sonia Gandhi's blessings were also with us. The five guarantees announced by Rahul Gandhi had a major impact on the election. We will implement all five guarantees within a fixed timeframe," Chennithala said. He was the chairman of the UDF's campaign committee for the election.

At the same time, supporters of Satheesan strongly argue that he deserves the chief minister's post, saying the Paravoor MLA led the UDF from the front as Leader of the Opposition to

victory after it failed to prevent the Pinarayi Vijayan-led LDF from retaining power in the 2021 elections. Although Satheesan is said not to have the necessary support of the elected MLAs in the race, his camp claims that their leader has strong backing from UDF partners, including the Indian Union Muslim League, the largest partner of the Congress-led alliance.

Venugopal's camp, however, claims that the popular support alone cannot be considered as a factor for electing the Chief Minister and the support of the party MLAs is crucial. They argue that the support of the elected party MLAs is crucial. The party alone has 63 MLAs in the 140-member state Assembly.

"The High Command will certainly take the views of the MLAs into consideration," said a party MLA involved in mobilising more support for Venugopal.

He claimed that a majority of the party's MLAs support Venugopal for the post, although he did not contest the polls. However, his chances of securing the post will depend on the stance of Rahul Gandhi. The AICC general secretary (organisation) is a staunch loyalist of Rahul. According to Venugopal's team, the Alappuzha MP played a central role in the UDF's victory by spearheading the "Indira Guarantee" campaign, leading extensive statewide outreach and overseeing a carefully managed candidate selection process based on surveys and feedback.

As lobbying intensifies among the camps of the three leaders in Kerala as well as in Delhi, posters have appeared in various parts of the State, put up by supporters backing their respective leaders for the Chief Minister's post.

Twin blasts hit security agencies in Punjab

Preliminary investigations revealed that an explosive device had been thrown towards the wall, causing a piece of the tin-sheet cladding to fall. No one was injured.

Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav visited the site described the Amritsar explosion as low-intensity and said no group had claimed responsibility for it. However, he pointed a finger at Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). "We assume that, as today is the Operation Sindoore anniversary, this is part of Pakistan's ISI designs to cause disruptions in Punjab," DGP Yadav said and added that "Punjab is fighting a proxy war on behalf of the nation against Pakistan." As the information about the blasts was relayed, forensic experts and the bomb disposal squad were rushed to the spot to collect samples. Amritsar (Rural) Superintendent of Police Aditya S Warrior visited the site with a team of police officials. The area was immediately cordoned off. CCTV footages were secured. Meanwhile, sources said there was a possibility of hand grenades being used for triggering blasts in both

cases. The National Investigation Agency (NIA) joined the probe within hours with teams en route to secure forensic evidence, review CCTV and assist state police.

The incidents came barely ten days after an explosion on April 27 on the freight corridor rail track at Shambhu in Patiala district. In that case, police arrested four members of a pro-Khalistan terror module allegedly backed by Pakistan's ISI.

The module was allegedly directed by handlers based in Malaysia with direct links to Pakistan's notorious spy agency Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) and aimed to carry out multiple strikes on public infrastructure across Punjab to spread panic and stall development.

All four arrested accused were described as habitual offenders with multiple criminal cases against them. Several police teams are probing the twin blasts in close coordination with the central agencies. Previous incidents are also being revisited to identify the modules and their handlers sitting across the border, sources said.

CBI arrests Lucknow man for human trafficking

CBI probe has further revealed that operations involved romance scams, crypto fraud, digital arrests and extortion rackets.

Investigation has revealed that the scam compounds, run by transnational syndicates, often with Chinese links, operate like high-security prisons in border regions such as Myanmar's Myawaddy, including notorious KK Park. Inmates faced physical and psychological torture, sleep deprivation and continuous threats. Many were forced to beg families for ransom to secure release, turning victims into both perpetrators and hostages. CBI officials described these as "hubs of cyber slavery," where refusal to comply invited severe reprisals and repercussions.

The raids targeted Mumbai, Delhi, Lucknow, and Kashipur in Uttarakhnad and districts like Gonda and Saharanpur in Uttar Pradesh. Electronic devices with incriminating evidence were seized. The agency conducted a nationwide inquiry, recording victim statements and tracking cryptocurrency transactions that flowed from scam operators to Indian recruiters. Agents reportedly received commissions for supplying fresh recruits, sustaining a self-perpetuating criminal economy.

CBI has been probing this racket for quite some time. In March 2026, the CBI arrested Mumbai-based kingpin Sunil Nellathu Ramakrishnan alias Krish and Kanpur recruiter Krishna Kumar Lakhwani for similar roles in the network. Thousands of Indians were found to be stranded, as earlier estimates showed over 29,000 on visitor visas to Cambodia, Thailand, Myanmar and Vietnam unaccounted for

between 2022 and 2024, with Punjab reporting the highest numbers, CBI sources said.

The case highlights a grim irony as job-seeking Indians are weaponised against their own countrymen through digital fraud. "It underscores vulnerabilities in overseas employment verification and the growing nexus between trafficking and cybercrime amid economic desperation. There should be stricter regulation of job portals, awareness campaigns and stronger international cooperation with Myanmar, Cambodia and Thailand to dismantle the compounds and repatriate victims", an official said.

As the CBI continues financial probes and hunts more facilitators, the raids serve as a grim warning. For thousands chasing the 'overseas dream', the line between opportunity and exploitation has never been thinner. Authorities have urged vigilance and advised people to verify recruiters through government portals and avoid upfront payments for foreign jobs. Breaking this cycle demands not just enforcement but societal alertness to prevent more lives from being enslaved in the shadows of Southeast Asia's scam empires, they added.

Trump signals Iran deal with threats

Proposed elements include a temporary halt to Iran's uranium enrichment, partial lifting of U.S. sanctions, release of frozen Iranian funds, and reopening of the Strait to commercial shipping. No agreement has been finalized.

Marco Rubio, the U.S. Secretary of State, said he hopes Chinese officials will urge Iran to ease its blockade during high-level diplomatic talks this week.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited Beijing this week, marking his first trip to China since the war began. His visit comes ahead of Trump's planned summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping on May 14-15.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for an immediate ceasefire and stressed the importance of continued dialogue. He noted that the conflict has caused significant harm not only to Iran but also to regional and global stability. China reiterated its support for diplomatic resolution, while also affirming Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy, provided it does not pursue nuclear weapons.

A fragile ceasefire has largely held since April 8, despite ongoing tensions. The U.S. had recently launched "Project Freedom" to secure a safe shipping corridor through the Strait, reportedly sinking several Iranian vessels that threatened commercial traffic. Only limited shipping movement has resumed.

Trump announced he is pausing the operation to give diplomacy a chance, signalling cau-

tious optimism about a potential agreement.

Meanwhile, global oil markets showed signs of stabilization, with Brent crude prices dropping to around \$100 per barrel after earlier spikes, though still significantly higher than pre-war levels. Shehbaz Sharif, Prime Minister of Pakistan, welcomed the U.S. decision to pause military escort operations, calling it a constructive step toward peace. He emphasized the importance of dialogue and expressed hope that current efforts would lead to a lasting resolution. As diplomatic efforts intensify, the coming days—particularly the upcoming U.S.-China summit—are expected to play a critical role in determining whether a ceasefire can evolve into a durable peace agreement.

Assam: Sarma steps down as CM before...

The BJP had on Tuesday appointed Union minister JP Nadda as its central observer for election of the legislative party leader in Assam, while Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini was made the co-observer.

"The meeting of the legislature party will take place before May 11. We will get the information from Nadda's office today or tomorrow. The date will be finalised by Nadda and Saini. Following the meeting of the party MLAs and endorsement of the leader's name by the NDA members, the BJP will stake claim to form the Government," Sarma added.

Asked if new faces will get berths in the cabinet, Sarma said: "The leader of the legislature party is yet to be selected. The new CM will decide if there will be new faces in the council of ministers."

Suvendu AIDE Shot dead

The victim, Chandranath Rath, who served as the executive assistant to the Leader of Opposition in the state Assembly, was attacked on a public road at Doharia in the Madhyamgram area, party sources said. Preliminary reports suggest that Rath was shot at close range by unidentified miscreants, who fled the spot immediately after the attack. He was rushed to a private hospital with critical injuries, where doctors later declared him dead. Following the incident, a heavy police deployment was made in the area as senior officers reached the spot and began an investigation. Efforts are underway to identify the attackers and establish the motive behind the killing. No arrests have been made so far. The incident has sent shock waves through West Bengal's political circles. Newly elected BJP MLA Tarunijyoti Tewari alleged political deterioration in the state, saying the situation reflected "a breakdown of peace", while blaming the ruling establishment.

Mamata refuses to resign after loss, TMC calls it symbolic protest

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

A day after refusing to resign as the West Bengal chief minister despite the BJP's sweeping electoral victory, TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday hardened her political stance, with party leaders describing her decision as a "symbolic protest" against alleged manipulation of the assembly poll results and signalled a prolonged political and legal battle ahead.

At a meeting of newly elected TMC MLAs and senior leaders at her Kalighat residence, Banerjee reportedly told party legislators that the BJP had "looted" the election and asserted that the party would move the Supreme Court alleging large-scale manipulation during counting.

The meeting, attended by TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee and senior party leaders, also



TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee, party General Secretary Abhishek Banerjee, and others during a party meeting at Kalighat in Kolkata

focused on the party's future strategy, organisational restructuring and allocation of responsibilities after its worst electoral setback since coming to power in 2011.

According to party leaders present at the meeting, Banerjee struck a defiant note and indicated that the TMC would politically resist what it describes as an "engineered mandate".

"Let them impose President's Rule if they want. Let them dismiss me if they want. Let it remain on record

as a black day," Banerjee was quoted as telling party legislators during the closed-door meeting.

According to constitutional experts, technically, the term of the current West Bengal Assembly ends on May 7. Until then, Banerjee will continue to hold office. However, once the assembly's term expires, she will automatically cease to be chief minister, irrespective of whether she formally resigns, effectively rendering the standoff time-bound.

The TMC chief also announced the formation of a disciplinary committee within the party amid concerns over internal discontent and possible organisational drift following the defeat.

TMC spokesperson and newly elected Beliaghata MLA Kunal Ghosh defended Banerjee's refusal to tender her resignation despite the BJP securing a landslide victory, calling it a "language of protest" in a democracy.

"Mamata did not tendering her resignation is a protest language. It is symbolic. This is a protest against the way the Election Commission allegedly manipulated the results in more than 100 constituencies during counting," Ghosh told reporters after the meeting.

He alleged that the TMC had been "forcibly defeated" and maintained that Banerjee's decision was aimed at registering political dissent against the electoral outcome.

BJP-led NDA sweeps SC-ST seats in West Bengal and Assam polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies have swept the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes seats in the just-concluded Assembly elections in Assam and West Bengal, and the NDA partners too have performed strongly in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

In Assam, the performance of the BJP and its alliance partners reflected a strong consolidation across reserved constituencies, as out of the

like the BPF, combined with the BJP's expansion in Upper Assam and hill regions, ensured near-total control over ST seats by the NDA, the sources said.

In West Bengal, the 2026 Assembly election results mark a decisive political realignment in reserved constituencies.

Out of 68 SC reserved constituencies, the BJP won 51 (75 per cent of the SC seats), leaving just 17 for the TMC, signalling a clear consolidation of the Dalit support for the BJP, the sources noted.

nine SC reserved constituencies, the BJP won five seats, and the NDA partner AGP won three. Just one seat went to the Congress.

There are 18 ST reserved constituencies in Assam, and all of them were bagged by the NDA - as many as 13 by the BJP and five by the NDA partner BPF. One general seat was won by a tribal candidate of another NDA ally, AGP.

The results show a clear consolidation of the SC and ST voters towards the BJP-led NDA, turning reserved constituencies into a decisive electoral pillar, sources said.

The delimitation of constituencies played a structural role, increasing the weight of indigenous and tribal-reserved constituencies from 16 to 19 and SC reserved constituencies from eight to nine, they said. Strong tribal mobilisation through allies

in the ST reserved seats, the shift is even sharper: BJP swept all 16, reflecting a uniform mandate across tribal regions like North Bengal and Janglemahal.

Overall, the BJP secured 67 of 84 SC/ST seats, reducing the TMC to 17 and wiping out other parties, an overwhelming dominance in segments once seen as fragmented and contested.

"This outcome indicates that the BJP not only expanded its electoral base but also achieved deep penetration among historically marginalised social groups, converting reserved constituencies into a strong pillar of its overall electoral dominance in the State," a source said.

The sources said a unified shift of the Matua community significantly boosted the BJP's performance across SC-dominated seats, especially in border regions.

States Focus



INDIA AND VIETNAM VOW TO EXPAND DEFENCE TIES

India and Vietnam on Wednesday reviewed the entire gamut of their defence ties during talks between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of National Defence General Phan Van Giang.

The meeting was marked by warmth and growing strategic trust, reflecting the deep-rooted Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Vietnam. Both leaders reviewed the ongoing defence cooperation and expressed satisfaction with the steady progress in bilateral engagements, including high-level exchanges, training programmes, and capacity-building initiatives. They acknowledged the growing convergence in strategic interests, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region.



SENIOR BUREAUCRAT SAURABH VIJAY APPOINTED UIDAI CHIEF

Senior bureaucrat Saurabh Vijay was on Wednesday appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Unique Identification Authority of India.

Vijay, a 1998-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer, is currently serving in his cadre State, Maharashtra. The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved Vijay's appointment as the CEO, UIDAI, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, in the rank and pay of Additional Secretary to the Government of India, an order issued by the Personnel Ministry said.

Gujarat-cadre IAS officer Manish Bhardwaj has been appointed as Adviser, Inter-State Council Secretariat, Ministry of Home Affairs, it said. Bhardwaj is currently Secretary, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the Home Ministry.

Opposition slams Punjab Govt over twin blasts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Punjab was placed on high alert Tuesday night after two low-intensity explosions near sensitive military establishments in Jalandhar and Amritsar sparked panic and unleashed a bitter political slugfest between the ruling Aam Aadmi Party and the Opposition BJP. Opposition parties described the twin blasts as a serious lapse in intelligence and law and order.

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday described the blasts as minor incidents and directly accused the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)



Security personnel inspect the remains of a scooter after a fire incident near the BSF headquarters in Jalandhar on Tuesday

of orchestrating or exploiting them to create an atmosphere of fear and communal tension ahead of the 2027 Punjab Assembly elections.

He claimed the timing,

especially after recent West Bengal polls, showed the BJP was shifting focus to Punjab and using such incidents as part of its electoral strategy: "The BJP is a com-

munal party. These minor blasts are part of their preparation for the Punjab Assembly elections." Mann said the party relies on inciting violence and scaring voters to gain support.

Former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Wednesday launched an attack on Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the Punjab twin blasts, saying that he should be held responsible for the incidents. Yadav's remarks came hours after Punjab Chief Minister Mann and triggered a political row by blaming the BJP for the explosions.

Rajnath Singh to address Jaipur defence meet on Operation Sindoor anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan will address the second edition of the two-day Joint Commanders' Conference starting on May 7 in Jaipur, Rajasthan. The conclave assumes significance as it coincides with the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor.

It was a landmark triservice operation that stands as a testament to India's unflinching political will and military resolve, characterised by surgical precision, the defence ministry



said here on Wednesday.

The theme of the conference is 'Military Capability in New Domains.'

Modern warfare is transitioning into a more complex and tech-driven paradigm with the transformative

impact of AI, the development of unmanned systems and emerging threats that extend beyond traditional battlefields and target invisible frontiers.

The conference will provide a pivotal forum to evaluate the challenges in emerging domains of cyber, space and cognitive warfare and chart a roadmap for capability development for a resilient and future-ready force with a decisive edge.

Central to the agenda will be to accelerate indigenisation and *Aatmanirbharta* in defence production by fostering a domestic ecosystem of innovation and civil-military fusion.

BNP welcomes BJP win in West Bengal; Trump congratulates Modi

ASHOKE RAJ | New Delhi

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) has criticised West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for allegedly stalling the long-pending Teesta water-sharing agreement between India and Bangladesh, while welcoming the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) reported electoral victory in the State.

BNP Information Secretary Azizul Barea Helal said the outcome in West Bengal could help strengthen bilateral ties and revive discussions on unresolved issues, particularly the Teesta water-sharing deal.

He accused the previous



Trinamool Congress Government, led by Banerjee, of obstructing progress on the agreement, which has remained a key concern for Bangladesh.

Helal praised the BJP's per-

formance under Suwendu Adhikari and expressed optimism that a new State Government aligned with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership at the federal level could facilitate smoother cooperation.

According to him, such political alignment may create favourable conditions for advancing negotiations on the Teesta Barrage agreement.

Meanwhile, international reactions have also emerged following the BJP's reported victory. US President Donald Trump congratulated Prime Minister Modi, calling the result a "historic and decisive election victory."

ECI blocks 68 lakh cyber attacks on counting day



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Election Commission of India (ECI) on Wednesday said there were more than 68 lakh attempts from India and abroad targeting its key election platforms, including the results portal, on May 4 when votes were being counted for five assemblies.

In a statement, the poll authority said ECINET cybersecurity protocols resulted in "effectively countering" over 68 lakh malicious hits on the counting day originating from within and overseas targeting key election platforms, including the results portal.

The ECI said its IT platform ECINET played a central role in streamlining election processes, including real-time monitoring, enabling faster reporting and enhanc-

ing transparency during the elections to Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Puducherry.

Since its official launch in January, the ECINET app has witnessed a significant surge in usage and has over 10 crore downloads to date.

The beta version of ECINET was used in the Bihar elections in November 2025. On poll days - April 9, 23 and 29 - the ECINET recorded over 98.3 crore hits, and on the counting day, it recorded an average of three crore hits per minute.

In a significant step towards enhancing security at the counting centres, a new QR code-based photo identity card system was used for the first time on the counting day across all states and Union Territories (UTs) in these elections through ECINET.

Centre issues SMC guidelines 2026 for better school governance

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Centre on Wednesday launched the School Management Committee (SMC) Guidelines 2026, underscoring the need for stronger community participation, improved school infrastructure and updated pedagogy in line with the National Education Policy 2020.

Addressing the inaugural event attended by education ministers from several States

and senior officials, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan underlined that SMCs are not a new concept but have evolved over time and remain central to improving learning outcomes and governance in schools. He said that as the academic cycle progresses, "we first review what was taught in the previous year - this becomes the foundation for the next phase of learning."

Describing SMCs as a bridge between society and schools,



he said, "The School Management Committee must act as a bridge between society, education, students and teachers."

The School Management Committee Guidelines 2026 introduced several key reforms, including a single SMC for all classes from Balvatika to Class 12, aimed at strengthening school-level governance and continuity in decision-making. The guidelines clearly define the roles and responsibilities of SMCs

and Member Secretary, with a focus on improved accountability, transparency and financial oversight in school management. They also emphasise proactive monitoring of student attendance and teacher engagement to enhance learning outcomes.

A key feature of the framework is school development planning and social audit mechanisms, designed to enhance community participation and ensure better oversight of school functioning.

Kashmiri Pandits protest relief rations integration into NFSA

MOHIT KANDHARI
Jammu

Members of the Displaced Kashmiri Pandit community are up in arms against the Jammu and Kashmir administration's move to integrate their relief rations into the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

On Wednesday, a large number of aggrieved Kashmiri pandits, led by their community leaders, staged a protest outside the office of the Relief and Rehabilitation commissioner (Migrants) and demanded its immediate rollback to protect their distinct identity.

Terming the move a "conspiracy" to dilute their migrant and genocide victim



status, the protesters vowed to intensify agitation if the decision is not rolled back.

"It is a black law and a trap for the community to dilute their identity as genocide survivors. The discrepancies in this law amount to outright injustice. For 36 years, Kashmiri Pandits have suffered after their displace-

ment, and now under NFSA, our identity is being diluted," said Panun Kashmir convenor Dr Agnishaker.

"We urge the authorities to reconsider the decision pragmatically and address the community's genuine concerns. In its present form, this is anti-community," he said. He also expressed concern

over the upcoming census, demanding recognition of their distinct identity as internally displaced persons and victims of genocide.

"If our identity is not included, it will amount to erasing Kashmiri Pandits forever," Agnishaker said.

The Union Territory administration is integrating migrant ration cards, including those of Kashmiri Pandits (KPs) in Jammu, into the NFSA database. This process began in early 2026.

As of April 2026, officials said over 17,500 migrant ration cards have been integrated, with more than 50,000 families ultimately set to be included to enable access to wider social welfare schemes.

Centre to urge West Bengal, TN to sign PM SHRI MoU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

With the change of guard in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu after the recent Assembly polls verdict, the Ministry of Education will write to the Chief Secretaries of the two States, urging them to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the earliest for implementation of the Centre's PM SHRI (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India) scheme in state-run schools, sources said.

The move follows recent Assembly election results that have reshaped the political landscape in both States, with the Centre expressing renewed optimism over the rollout of key education ini-



tatives linked to the National Education Policy 2020.

According to a senior official in the Ministry of Education, letters will be sent "today or tomorrow" seeking early adoption of the PM SHRI scheme, under which selected schools are to be developed as model institutions

aligned with NEP 2020.

"We are hopeful that now the States will implement the PM SHRI scheme. We will write to the State chief secretaries for implementation of the PM SHRI scheme," a senior official said.

Earlier, the Governments in West Bengal and Tamil Nadu,

led by the Trinamool Congress (TMC) and the DMK, respectively, had not joined the centrally sponsored scheme and had not signed the required MoU with the Centre.

Officials said that implementation of the PM SHRI scheme may become smoother in West Bengal following recent electoral developments, while the situation in Tamil Nadu remains uncertain after C. Joseph Vijay-led Tamilaga Vettri Vizhagam (TVK) emerged victorious in the Assembly polls.

The PM SHRI scheme aims to develop over 14,500 schools across the country as model institutions aligned with the vision of NEP 2020.



States Focus

West Bengal post-poll violence: Two killed, mob targets TMC MLA's home

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

Tension flared in south Kolkata's Bhabanipur area past midnight on Tuesday after a mob gathered outside the residence of TMC MLA-elect and senior leader Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay, before dispersing following police intervention.

The senior minister in the outgoing Mamata Banerjee Cabinet said on Wednesday that a gang gathered before his residence at Rupnarayan Nandan Lane around midnight and created a ruckus.

"Some hooligans assembled before my house and shouted slogans for some time. However, as my security personnel called up the police station, officers came, and the troublemakers left," he said.

Chattopadhyay said the attackers were "hooligans" and he did not wish to associate them with any political party.



Neither Chattopadhyay nor the Kolkata Police specified whether any formal FIR has been lodged in connection with the incident.

Meanwhile, in stray incidents of arson reported across the State since the counting of votes on May 4, the election office of TMC candidate and former minister Aroop Biswas was vandalised by a mob in the Bijoysgarh-Netajinagar area of Tollygunge.

The office of TMC councillor Sushanta Ghosh was also ransacked at Ruby

This marks the BJP's descent into gutter politics," the party said.

A BJP and a TMC worker were killed in separate incidents of post-poll violence on Tuesday, police said.

While BJP worker Madhu Mondal died after being allegedly beaten up by TMC workers during a victory procession in the New Town area on Tuesday evening, TMC worker Abir Sheikh was hacked to death allegedly by BJP activists at Nanoor in Birbhum earlier on the same day, police said.

BJP State president Samik Bhattacharya said, "Post-poll violence would not be tolerated in any form. If anyone from our party is found involved, we will be compelled to remove them," he said.

The BJP leader also appealed to Chief Secretary Dushyant Nariala to ensure prompt administrative intervention wherever incidents of violence are reported.

Suwendu to vacate one of two constituencies within ten days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata



BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari, who defeated West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Bhabanipur and secured Nandigram for three times in a row in the recent Assembly polls, said on Wednesday that he would vacate one of the two constituencies within 10 days.

Adhikari also asserted that the party's central leadership would decide which constituency he would retain. "I will vacate one seat within 10 days. The party will decide which one I retain. I will not forget my responsibility towards the people of Bhabanipur and Nandigram," he said.

Adhikari on Monday defeated Banerjee in Bhabanipur by over 15,000 votes, puncturing what was long seen as her safest political refuge and delivering a decisive psychological blow to the TMC, amid a sweeping BJP surge across West Bengal.

Addressing party workers and supporters in Nandigram in Purba Medinipur district,

the BJP leader appealed to them not to take out victory processions immediately and instead maintain peace.

"Do not take out victory rallies now. Maintain peace and discipline. Celebrate after May 9, after taking permission," he told party workers.

State BJP president Samik Bhattacharya on Wednesday announced that the oath-taking ceremony of the new Government will be held on May 9 at Brigade Parade Ground.

Referring to alleged attacks on BJP workers during the TMC regime, Adhikari said he would not forget the "atrocities" faced by them and assured them of taking appropriate action against perpetrators through legal processes.



SUPERSTAR RAJINIKANTH MEETS DMK SUPREMO MK STALIN

Superstar Rajinikanth on Wednesday met DMK president MK Stalin at the latter's residence in Alwarpet, after the declaration of the 2026 Assembly election results. The meeting is described by sources as a "courtesy call". Rajinikanth reportedly expressed solidarity with Stalin following the DMK's electoral setback in the State polls. The 75-year-old actor had previously hailed Stalin as a top leader of Indian politics. Incidentally, in March, TVK leader Aadhav Arjuna had claimed that Rajinikanth refrained from entering politics because of a threat from the DMK. He also claimed that the DMK exerted pressure to ensure the actor stayed out of the political arena despite the star's desire to "change the system".



CM NAIDU SEEKS PLAN TO BOOST SEAWEED CULTIVATION

Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday directed officials to develop a comprehensive economic model to enhance income generation through seaweed cultivation and value addition. The initiative is aimed at benefiting women self-help groups and fishing communities in coastal regions. During a review meeting, the CM emphasised that seaweed farming has significant potential to create sustainable livelihoods along Andhra Pradesh's long coastline. "Develop a comprehensive economic model to enhance income generation through seaweed cultivation and value addition to benefit women self-help groups and fishermen in coastal regions," Naidu said.

BJP used bulldozer to raze meat shops in victory rally: TMC

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

The TMC on Wednesday alleged that BJP supporters used a bulldozer to demolish a few meat shops in the New Market area in Kolkata during a victory celebration, dubbing the incident "hooliganism".

The Mamata Banerjee-led party also accused central forces of remaining inactive when the incident occurred on Tuesday night.

"Bulldozer justice" was the phrase used by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi



Derek O'Brien

Adityanath and other BJP leaders during the recent Assembly poll campaign in West Bengal, asserting that every illegal encroachment would be razed to the ground if the BJP came to

power. The TMC, in a post on X, said, "BJP's 'Poriborton' (change) has arrived, and it has arrived with a bulldozer. In an act of brazen hooliganism, mobs of BJP supporters went on a rampage near the New Market area, destroying shops and vandalising the Trinamool Congress party office."

Attaching a video of the alleged incident, the TMC said this was the "celebration of a party that spoke of trust and delivered terror".

PTI did not independently verify the authenticity of the video. The TMC claimed that the incident reflected a "pattern of intimidation" following the declaration of election results.

"Before elections: Bhoy (fear) out, Bharosa (trust) in. After elections: Bharosa out, Bulldozer in," it said, adding that the alleged incident signalled a "dangerous precedent" for law and order in the State.

The central forces were present there but "did not intervene", the TMC claimed, alleging that they had been instructed to "stand down".

The BJP on Monday sealed a landslide victory with 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly, ending the TMC's uninterrupted 15-year rule in the State.

TMC Raja Sabha MP Derek O'Brien shared a social media post highlighting the alleged incident.

"In central Kolkata, near New Market. With police permission. As part of the victory celebrations, a bulldozer was brought in to demolish meat shops. CAPF was standing around. The BJP for you. Let the world see these pictures," he wrote. The BJP has not immediately responded to the allegations.

80 arrested; no bulldozers in victory rallies: Kolkata Police



Commissioner of Police Ajay Kumar Nand addressing a press conference in Kolkata, West Bengal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata

Amid reports of sporadic incidents of violence following the West Bengal Assembly elections, Kolkata Police commissioner Ajay Kumar Nand on Wednesday warned that strict action would be taken against anyone trying to disturb law and order.

Stating that a special drive is underway to apprehend troublemakers, he said 80 people have been arrested so far within the Kolkata Police jurisdiction.

Nand said of the 80 arrested, 65 were taken into custody in specific cases, while 15 others were apprehended as a preventive measure.

"Anyone trying to create an environment of threat or terror will be acted against strictly," the police commissioner said.

No one should indulge in any kind of violence or acts that disturb the law and order, Nand told a press conference at the police headquarters here.

"There have been a few incidents, but the situation is more or less peaceful," he said, adding that a number of arms have also been recovered in raids.

Nand warned that rallies involving bulldozers, which were a focal point during the election campaign, would not be allowed in any victory procession.

"No rallies will be allowed with [CBs (bulldozers) or similar equipment]," he said. The police chief said follow-up action will be taken against JCB owners if they rent their vehicles for such purposes.

West Bengal CEO submits elected MLA list to Governor RN Ravi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

West Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Kumar Agarwal on Wednesday met Governor RN Ravi at Lok Bhavan to complete the statutory formalities of handing over the gazette notification containing the names of elected members of the new Assembly following the recently concluded State polls.

Speaking to reporters after the meeting, Agarwal said the Election Commission of India's (ECI) role in the Assembly elections is over



West Bengal Governor RN Ravi

except for the completion of the pending poll process in the Falta constituency.

"I had come to complete the statutory work to submit the gazetted notification, which is done after any election. The list of elected MLAs has been handed over," the CEO said. "Now, constituting the

Assembly is the work of Lok Bhavan. The ECI role has ended except for completing the Falta poll," he added.

The handing over of the gazette notification is a mandatory constitutional norm after the declaration of results, paving the way for the Governor to initiate the process for the constitution of the new Assembly and Government formation.

The BJP sealed a landslide victory with 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly, ending the Trinamool Congress's uninterrupted 15-year rule. The TMC could only manage 80 seats.

2 ex-chief secretaries, Alapan Bandyopadhyay and HK Dwivedi, quit as Mamata advisors

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Kolkata

Two former chief secretaries — Alapan Bandyopadhyay and HK Dwivedi — have resigned as chief advisors to outgoing West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, following the change in guard in the State, an official said on Wednesday.

The two retired IAS officers submitted their resignations on Tuesday, he said. Eminent economist Abhirup Sarkar, too, has stepped down from the dual posts of



chairman of the West Bengal Industrial Development Corporation (WBIDC) and West Bengal Small Industries

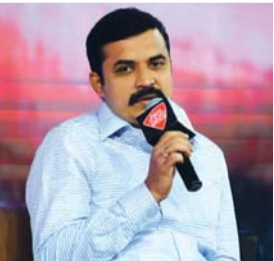
Development Corporation (WBSIDC), the State secretariat official said.

Necessary administrative steps have been initiated

following the resignations, he said.

Bandyopadhyay had been at the centre of a standoff between the State and the Centre in 2021 over a transfer order. Subsequently, he was appointed as chief advisor to the CM after his retirement. Earlier, the State's Advocate General Kishore Dutta had submitted his resignation to Governor RN Ravi. The BJP secured 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly, ending the TMC's uninterrupted 15-year rule in West Bengal.

AIADMK dismisses split; dialogue channels open with Vijay



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

Amid intensifying political activity in Tamil Nadu, AIADMK leader K. Vijay on Wednesday said the "ball is in Vijay's court" regarding potential cooperation between the AIADMK and the TVK.

Speaking to reporters, Sathyan emphasised that while there is significant "momentum" building between the camps, any formal decision regarding an alliance or support would be finalised by the AIADMK high command.

Addressing rumours of internal friction or a potential split within the party, Sathyan categorically dismissed such claims. "There is absolutely no question of the AIADMK splitting. Everyone is in common consensus, and the majority decision will be taken by the high command," he asserted.

CEC orders immediate arrests in West Bengal post-poll violence

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Kolkata

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar directed the authorities concerned to immediately arrest those involved in post-poll violence and vandalism in West Bengal, an official said on Wednesday.

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) directive came after two persons were killed in alleged incidents of post-poll violence in the State on Tuesday, besides scores of party offices being ransacked.

The CEC issued instructions to the West Bengal chief secretary, director general of police, Kolkata

police commissioner and directors general of central armed police forces, along with all district magistrates, superintendents of police and other officials, to maintain continuous patrolling in sensitive areas, he said.

"Those responsible for inciting violence and carrying out acts of vandalism must be arrested immediately," the official said, quoting the CEC's instruction.

The chief election commissioner also stressed the need for swift and firm enforcement of the law, he added.

This directive came amid concerns over law and order in parts of the State, with the ECI closely monitoring the situation, he added.

"We have been asked to remain on high alert and ensure that any attempt to disturb peace is dealt with firmly," a senior police officer said.

The State authorities have intensified vigil across districts, with coordinated efforts between the police and central forces to prevent any untoward incident, he added.

The Assembly elections were held in West Bengal in two phases — April 23 and 29. The counting of votes took place on May 4.

The BJP sealed a landslide victory with 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly, ending the TMC's uninterrupted 15-year rule in the State.



Security heightened outside Writers' Buildings amid preparations ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of the new Government of West Bengal in Kolkata

BJP slams Congress for betraying DMK to support Vijay's TVK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday took a swipe at the Congress for extending support to Vijay's TVK in forming the Government in Tamil Nadu and breaking away from its long-term ally DMK, saying the party has a history of "betraying" its allies.

The saffron party also attacked the Opposition INDIA bloc, claiming the alliance is "falling apart like a pack of cards" and lacks any common ideology or vision. The Tamil Nadu Congress has decided to support TVK leader Vijay in forming a



secular Government in the State, sources said.

The decision to support the TVK was taken at an urgent meeting of the Political Affairs Committee (PAC) of Tamil Nadu Congress late on Tuesday night.

Reacting to the development, BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla claimed the INDIA alliance had effectively come to an end after the declaration of Assembly elec-

tion results on May 4.

"There is nobody whom the Congress has not deceived. Imagine what they will do to the Samajwadi Party if they have done this to the DMK," he wrote in a post on social media.

Calling it the "last rites" of the INDIA bloc, Poonawalla, in a video post, said, "It has become a Bharat free of the DMK, TMC and the Left, and now Congress has dumped the DMK for the TVK."

The BJP spokesperson alleged that the Opposition bloc was formed solely out of political compulsions and personal ambitions.

"The INDI alliance never had any mission or vision. It was only about ambition for position, corruption, commission and obsession against Modi ji that they came together. But now it is all falling apart like a pack of cards," he said.

Questioning the unity of the Opposition parties, Poonawalla said the alliance was absent in several States during the election.

"Where was the INDI alliance in Bengal, in Kerala, in Gujarat, in Punjab, in Delhi, in Haryana, in Karnataka? There is no INDI alliance," he said.

The DMK on Wednesday described the Congress move to extend support to

TVK as a "backstab" by its long-time national ally.

DMK spokesperson Saravanan Anandurai said, "The Congress party has decided to ally with the TVK, pledging their support to the party. I think they have backstabbed... They have backstabbed the people of Tamil Nadu. They've backstabbed the mandate given by the people of Tamil Nadu." He said that the decision came even before the electoral process had fully concluded.

"Even before the ink on the returning officer's signature on the victory certificate dried up, they've chosen to go ahead with an alliance,"

he said. Vijay's TVK won 108 seats in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, falling short of the halfway mark. He needs the support of 10 MLAs to form a Government with a simple majority. The results were declared only on Monday.

The Congress has won five seats, while the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) has bagged four seats. The CPI and CPI(M) have two seats each. The outgoing ruling party, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), has won 59 seats while the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has won 47 seats.



TMC workers posing as cadres to incite violence in West Bengal: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The BJP on Wednesday alleged that the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in West Bengal was attempting to incite post-poll violence by disguising its workers as BJP supporters using symbols of the saffron party to malign it.

BJP national spokesperson Sambit Patra asserted that its cadres have never indulged in violence after an election victory. He claimed that reports in sections of the media and newspapers suggested that TMC workers were carrying BJP flags and wearing party scarves while attempting to disturb the atmosphere in the State.

"In all the States where our Government is in power, we have never resorted to violence against anyone. We are seeing reports that TMC workers, in several places, are wearing BJP scarves and carrying BJP flags while trying to carry out arson and disturb the atmosphere," he told reporters, responding to ques-



Sambit Patra

tions on violence in West Bengal after the Assembly election results.

Claiming that the TMC is acting out of "frustration", Patra said the ruling party "can go to any extent". The BJP MP noted that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged party workers to avoid revenge politics and work towards development.

"All of you witnessed this historic election in West Bengal. The prime minister himself, while addressing our workers the other day, made a very important point. This

Abhishek Banerjee against Union Home Minister Amit Shah during the election campaign.

Meanwhile, the West Bengal unit of the BJP on Wednesday asserted that those associated with the TMC "who have been involved in atrocities, unlawful activities, or intimidation cannot seek refuge in the BJP to escape accountability".

"The law will take its own course. The BJP stands for a clean and transparent Bengal. No criminal or anti-social element will be allowed to enter the party under any circumstances," the chief spokesperson of West Bengal BJP, Debjit Sarkar, said.

In a post on social media, he said no one can claim to be a BJP member unless the party formally accepts the individual.

Patra also attacked West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee over her remarks that she will not resign, alleging that the TMC supremo is trying to create an atmosphere of anarchy after her party suffered a crushing defeat in the Assembly polls.

Congress defends supporting Vijay's TVK in Tamil Nadu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Wednesday rejected allegations that it had "backstabbed" its long-time ally DMK for power by supporting the TVK, saying it never sought any post when their alliance was ruling Tamil Nadu and even the DMK had parted ways with it in the 2014 Lok Sabha polls.

"This cannot be called backstabbing," the Congress media and publicity chairperson, Pawan Khara, said and asked, "What is the issue," if like-minded parties were forming the Government in the State.

DMK spokesperson Saravanan Anadurai said, "The Congress party has decided to ally with the TVK, pledging their support to the party. I think they have backstabbed... They have backstabbed the people of Tamil Nadu. They've backstabbed the mandate given by the people of Tamil Nadu."

Asked about the DMK's sharp comments, Khara said, "I would like to take you back to December 2013, when DMK at a press conference announced that they will fight



Pawan Khara

the Lok Sabha polls alone."

"It was their democratic right, and they did so. Did you ask them if this was backstabbing? This cannot be called backstabbing," Khara said at a press conference in New Delhi.

"There are two parties (Congress-DMK), they fought elections together, what was the objective, it was that 'keechad' (filth and muck) should not spread," he said, referring to his earlier remarks in the presser that "lotus blooms in 'keechad'".

And to stop the muck from spreading, if like-minded parties are forming the

Government, then what is the issue, Khara asked.

To a question on criticism of the Congress that it was changing loyalties for power, Khara said, "That is an unfair remark to make because for the last five years we were partners and we were never hankering after positions, not even a board or corporations. So that is not a fair remark to make against the Congress."

The Congress, a long-time ally of the DMK, announced its support to actor-politician Vijay's TVK to form the Government in Tamil Nadu and severed ties with the Dravidian major.

The Tamil Nadu Congress Committee and the Congress Legislative Party (CLP) have decided to extend full support to the TVK to form the Government, AICC Tamil Nadu in-charge Girish Chodankar said, citing TVK chief Vijay's request seeking support.

Congress workers burst firecrackers at the party State headquarters, Satyamurthi Bhavan, in Chennai to welcome the announcement.

Chodankar, in a statement, said Vijay has formally requested the Congress party to extend its support for forming a Government in Tamil Nadu.

Vijay-led TVK secured an impressive 108 seats in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly on its maiden electoral debut and trounced the incumbent DMK led by Stalin, which finished with only 59 seats. The Congress has won five seats.

The opposition AIADMK won 47 seats while its allies, the PMK, obtained four, and the BJP and AMMK clinched one seat each in the election, according to the data available on the Election Commission of India's website.

Tamil Nadu Governor dissolves 16th Legislative Assembly

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chennai

Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Wednesday dissolved the 16th Legislative Assembly with effect from May 5, the Lok Bhavan said.

Elections to the 234 Assembly constituencies were held on April 23, and the results were announced on May 4. The incumbent DMK won 47, Congress 5, PMK 4, and VCK, IUML, CPI, and CPI (M): 2 each, respectively. The BJP, AMMK and DMKD won 1 seat each. According to a



Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar

59 seats, while the AIADMK won 47, Congress 5, PMK 4, and VCK, IUML, CPI, and CPI (M): 2 each, respectively. The BJP, AMMK and DMKD won 1 seat each. According to a

communique from the Lok Bhavan in Chennai, the Governor has dissolved the 16th Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly with effect from May 5, 2026.

2 outgoing West Bengal ministers do not turn up for ED summons

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Two outgoing West Bengal ministers under the Enforcement Directorate (ED) scanner in a recruitment scam case skipped their scheduled appearance before the central agency on Wednesday, citing separate reasons and seeking more time, officials said.

An ED official said the two Trinamool Congress leaders - Sujit Bose and Rathin Ghosh - expressed their inability to depose before sleuths at the CGO Complex in Salt Lake near the city. Ghosh, in a letter to the agency, said he had sustained a leg injury



after slipping in a washroom and had been advised around 10 days of rest by doctors, making it difficult for him to move, the official said. Bose, in his communication to the ED, said he was

busy attending to party workers affected by post-poll violence and sought more time to depose before the investigating agency. While Bose had unsuccessfully contested the

assembly polls seeking re-election, Ghosh had won.

Both had earlier sought time from the ED, citing engagement in election-related activities.

Following the conclusion of the electoral process, they were asked to appear at the agency's office two days after the declaration of results.

As per court directions, Bose appeared before the ED on May 1 and was questioned for nearly nine hours.

After the interrogation, he said he had appeared as a witness and maintained that he had conducted his business in a fair and transparent manner and had not committed any wrongdoing.

TMC meets to plan strategy after West Bengal poll loss



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Senior TMC leaders and newly-elected MLAs gathered at outgoing Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's residence on Wednesday evening for a meeting to discuss their strategy and allocation of responsibilities following the party's setback in the West Bengal Assembly elections.

TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee was also present.

TMC spokesperson and Beliaghata MLA Kunal Ghosh said all decisions regarding our future responsibilities rest with Mamata Banerjee.

"Who will get which responsibility and what assignment will be given to whom, that is entirely Didid's decision, and all of us will abide by it. Whatever decision she takes will be final," Ghosh told reporters after the meeting.

Centre clears 2 Gujarat semiconductor projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ahmedabad

In a major push to India's semiconductor ambitions, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved two new semiconductor projects in Gujarat under the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM). The projects, to be set up in Dholera and Surat, will attract a combined investment of Rs 3,936 crore and generate employment for around 2,230 skilled professionals.

According to official details, Crystal Matrix Limited will establish an integrated compound semiconductor fabrication and ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging) facility at Dholera. The unit will manufacture gallium nitride-based mini/micro-LED display modules, marking the country's first commercial

facility of its kind. It will have an annual production capacity of 72,000 square metres of display panels and 24,000 sets of RGB wafers. These products will cater to advanced applica-



tions such as smart TVs, smartphones, in-car displays, smart wearables, and extended reality (XR) devices.

Meanwhile, Suchi Semicon Private Limited will set up an Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test (OSAT) facility in Surat. This unit will have the capacity to produce over 1,033 million chips annually, catering to sectors like power electronics, analog integrated circuits, automotive, consumer electronics, and industrial automa-

With these approvals, the total number of projects sanctioned under the India Semiconductor Mission has risen to 12, with cumulative investments exceeding Rs 1.64 lakh crore.

Abhishek Banerjee's house, office security deployment removed

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Kolkata

Additional police deployment and area security arrangements outside senior TMC leader and Diamond Harbour MP Abhishek Banerjee's Harish Mukherjee Road residence and Camac Street office in Kolkata have been withdrawn following a review, though his existing security categorisation remains unchanged.

He continues to receive Z



Abhishek residence

plus-category police protection. Officials said the withdrawal of the area management deployment took

effect early Wednesday morning following fresh instructions.

Initially, in the morning, a

scissor barricade was seen covering the footpath in front of his Harish Mukherjee Road residence, with no police personnel present.

Later, police vans arrived and packed up chairs, scissor barricades and even a baggage scanner from inside the gates of his residence. The police kiosk and shed built outside the residence have not yet been dismantled, but are expected to be removed soon, an official said.

Sources said the earlier

protocol included route sanitisation and advance movement checks by police personnel before the TMC national general secretary travelled to any destination.

However, under the revised arrangement, no police vehicle will conduct advance route checks or ensure traffic clearance ahead of Banerjee's movement, officials indicated.

Local residents expressed relief, saying they had faced years of restrictions on movement.

Gujarat CM urges officials to drop ego, prioritise welfare

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Ahmedabad

Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel delivered a strong message to Government employees and revenue officials during a chintan shibir held at the Trimandir campus in Adalaj, emphasising teamwork, accountability, and citizen-centric governance.

In his address, the Chief Minister cautioned officials against adopting an attitude of self-importance, remarking that the mindset of "I

alone do everything" must be abandoned. He stressed that governance is a collective

responsibility and urged officers to work in coordination for effective public service delivery.

Highlighting the significant powers vested in district collectors, Patel said these must be exercised with transparency and sensitivity to resolve citizens' issues efficiently. He advised revenue officials to ensure that people approaching Government offices feel



Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel

comfortable and leave with a sense of satisfaction, underscoring the importance of courteous and empathetic behaviour.

In a lighter yet pointed remark, Patel questioned why officials appeared worried if the gathering was meant to be a chintan session, reinforcing the need for a positive and proactive approach.

The Chief Minister also issued a clear warning against negligence, stating that even a few corrupt or careless employees could

tarnish the reputation of the entire department. He directed officials to conduct reviews of their work every 15 days and ensure that grievances raised through platforms like Swagat Online are resolved at the local level itself.

Reiterating the Government's commitment to public welfare, Patel said that prompt and effective grievance redressal should remain a top priority, ensuring that citizens do not have to escalate their concerns beyond the district level.

BJP secures bulk of 50,000+ margin seats in West Bengal

NAMITA TEWARI
■ Kolkata

Riding on a landslide mandate of 207 seats, the BJP accounted for nearly 60 per cent of constituencies where victory margins exceeded 50,000 votes, underlining the scale of its dominance in the West Bengal Assembly polls, according to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

The BJP on Monday scripted history by winning 207 seats in the 294-member House, securing a more than two-thirds majority and ending the TMC's 15-year rule in the State.

Of the 294 constituencies, at least 39 recorded victory margins of over 50,000 votes, with the BJP winning 23 of these seats, the TMC 15 and one seat went to the Aam Janata Unnayan Party, an analysis of the data released by the ECI said.

Apart from bagging the highest number of such high-margin seats, the BJP also finished second in a majority of constituencies won by



the TMC. Several individual results reflected the scale of these mandates.

In Matigara-Naxalbari, BJP's Anandamay Barman registered the highest margin, defeating TMC's Shankar Malakar by 1,04,265 votes.

In Dabgram-Fulbari, BJP candidate Sikha Chatterjee won by nearly

98,000 votes against TMC's Ranjan Sil Sharma, while in English Bazar, Amlan Bhaduri secured a margin of over 93,000 votes.

The TMC, however, also registered commanding victories in several constituencies. In Canning Purba, TMC's Md Baharul Islam won by over 91,000 votes against his nearest

rival, AISF's Arabul Islam, while in Goalkopkar, Md Ghulam Rabbani secured over 83,000 votes against BJP's Sarajit Biswas.

In Chopra, Ballygunge, Chanchal and Kolkata Port, TMC leaders Hamidul Rahaman, Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay, Prasun Banerjee and Firhad Hakim won by margins exceeding 60,000 votes, indicating strong pockets of support.

The BJP's dominance was particularly visible in several northern constituencies, including Siliguri, Cooch Behar Uttar, Jalpaiguri and Alipurdhars, where candidates posted margins ranging between 60,000 and 70,000 votes, suggesting a strong regional consolidation of votes. On the other hand, TMC's big-margin wins are concentrated in its own strongholds.

For the BJP, Bengal is no longer a frontier; it is a governance test.

For the TMC, the battle shifts from retaining power to reclaiming relevance. (PTI)

CPI(M) reviews Kerala poll losses

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Thiruvananthapuram

After suffering a stunning defeat in the Kerala Assembly polls, the CPI(M) on Wednesday said it would make necessary corrections after listening to all party workers.

Speaking to the media after the party's State secretariat meeting, which was attended by top leaders, including Pinarayi Vijayan, CPI(M) State secretary MV Govindan said the party would take its workers into confidence for a comeback.

He said members of the State secretariat would participate in two-day district secretariat and district committee meetings to be held in May and June. Similarly, State committee members will attend all area committee meetings, dis-



Pinarayi Vijayan

tributed to the defeat. "The election review will not be conducted solely by the State committee. It has been decided that it should be carried out after listening to all party members and considering their opinions," Govindan said, indirectly admitting that the party had failed to adequately listen to grassroots workers ahead of the elections.

contributed to the defeat. "The election review will not be conducted solely by the State committee. It has been decided that it should be carried out after listening to all party members and considering their opinions," Govindan said, indirectly admitting that the party had failed to adequately listen to grassroots workers ahead of the elections.



Editor's TAKE

Capital flight tests market resilience

Driven by global uncertainties, rising oil prices, and a weakening rupee, FDI outflows are raising concerns about the resilience of India's markets

Far from the hustle and bustle of elections, Indian markets are bleeding. In January 2026, over 400 stocks with a market capitalisation of at least \$1 billion declined by more than 20 per cent from their peaks, with some falling as much as 71 per cent. As of mid-January 2026, the market experienced a sharp decline, with some reports indicating a 5 per cent loss for the month. This is not a one-time event, but a trend that is becoming increasingly pronounced. The reason, of course, is the flight of capital from the country, as foreign investors have been withdrawing heavily. Foreign Portfolio Investor (FPI) outflows from India were over ₹60,000 crore in April alone and nearly ₹2 lakh crore in the first four months of 2026. This is not routine. If this continues unabated, the Indian economy may slide back, and growth projections may have to be revised.

It is true that the Indian story is still going strong, and there is demand in the market which gives impetus to manufacturing, while many sectors are performing well. India's macroeconomic fundamentals – steady growth, improving infrastructure, and a large domestic market – remain intact. But there are factors eroding profits, and many of them are beyond control. Crude oil prices are rising amid tensions in West Asia. Rising oil prices widen the current account deficit and put pressure on the rupee. The recent slide of the rupee, breaching the ₹95 mark, has left investors anxious. Currency depreciation is an important marker for foreign investors, as it eats into their profits, and the Indian rupee is making new lows rather frequently.

Besides, changes in US banking policies are yet another reason. Interest rates in the US are going down. Large institutional investors would not like to take risks in emerging markets when safer assets back home offer competitive returns. The only saving grace for Indian markets is the Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs), who have played a stabilising role. Their buying has cushioned the impact of foreign outflows. If FPI outflows continue, they will have far-reaching implications for the Indian economy. They exert downward pressure on the rupee and raise inflation.

The big question is: what can be done to check the outflow and instil a sense of confidence among foreign investors? First, containing inflation and managing the current account deficit – especially by diversifying energy sources – can reduce vulnerability to external shocks. Overdependence on imported oil must end. Second, exchange rate management requires careful calibration. While the Reserve Bank of India interventions have helped smooth volatility, excessive defence of the currency can deplete reserves. A balanced approach that allows for gradual adjustment may be the best strategy. Third, foreign investors value predictability. Continued reforms in taxation, ease of doing business, and financial sector regulation can reinforce confidence even during periods of global uncertainty. Finally, India must continue to deepen its domestic financial markets. Indeed, the current episode of outflows is not a verdict on India's economic fundamentals. The challenge is to ensure that India remains among the most attractive destinations for capital in the long run.

Op Sindoor: No room for complacency

The success of Operation Sindoor must be backed by a strong and adaptive internal security framework. Better inter-agency coordination, real-time intelligence sharing, and the use of advanced technology are essential for early detection



ASHOK KUMAR

India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year in response to the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack, targeting terror infrastructure in Pakistan-controlled areas. The operation marked a shift in India's counter-terror approach, combining precision strikes, real-time intelligence, and advanced technology, while signalling a willingness to act proactively against cross-border threats.

Despite Operation Sindoor demonstrating India's strength, its deterrent effect on Pakistan appears limited, with Pakistan-backed networks continuing activities in more covert and sophisticated ways, reflecting a sense of confidence. Pakistan's ISI, long driven by anti-India rhetoric, continues to follow the doctrine of "bleeding India through a thousand cuts." Pakistan appears to be in an upbeat mode, and it would be unrealistic to assume passivity. Recent intelligence inputs and recoveries of explosives and weapons suggest ongoing preparations, raising concerns about coordinated rather than isolated attacks.

A key concern is the renewed focus on urban terrorism. Major cities and symbolic locations remain prime targets due to their high psychological and media impact. Investigations into the 2025 Red Fort blast have revealed a wide conspiracy involving operatives across multiple states, highlighting the growing coordination and reach of such networks.

Uncovering a hidden network

In recent months, arrests by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and state police have increased, exposing the depth of these networks. In the Red Fort blast case alone, over ten individuals were arrested, including key planners and logistical supporters linked to groups like Ansar Ghazwat-ul-Hind. They were not just foot soldiers but played crucial roles in arranging weapons, managing logistics, and executing plans.

What is particularly concerning is the changing profile of those involved. Some accused were educated professionals, including doctors and technically skilled individuals. This reflects the rise of "white-collar terrorism," where expertise in IT, engineering, and finance is used to support extremist activities. Such actors are harder to detect as they operate within legitimate systems and maintain a low profile.

At the same time, ISIS-linked modules are becoming more visible in India. Investigations in Maharashtra and Pune have uncovered sleeper cells involved in recruitment, surveillance, and explosives training. Arrests across states show these are not isolated groups but part of a broader, interconnected network. In one major case, a planned ISIS-inspired attack was foiled, preventing a potential large-scale incident.

Illegal arms trafficking is another concern. Cases like the Muzaffarpur AK-47 seizure reveal organised supply chains with cross-border links, highlighting the nexus between external support and domestic operatives. Together, these trends point to a well-integrated



system of recruitment, funding, logistics, and execution.

This growing sophistication is also visible in subtle ways. In March, a Pakistan-linked espionage plot involving covert, solar-powered CCTV cameras at Delhi Cantt railway station was uncovered. These were allegedly meant to stream real-time footage of military movements to foreign handlers, showing how surveillance is becoming more discreet and technology-driven. Such tools can map movements, identify vulnerabilities, and aid future attacks. It also demonstrates how small and unusual findings can form part of a larger plan, underlining the need for constant vigilance.

These developments do not necessarily indicate an immediate large-scale attack. Instead, they reflect ongoing efforts to gather information and prepare. In simple terms, the threat is not decreasing; rather, it is changing its methods.

Emerging trends: The new face of terrorism

Terrorism today is undergoing a major shift. It is no longer limited to conventional methods such as guns and bombs, but is becoming more decentralised, technology-driven, and harder to trace.

The rise of white-collar involvement is a key trend. Professionals with technical expertise are increasingly becoming part of these networks, making operations more efficient and less detectable. There is also growing involvement of women in support roles such as logistics, communication, and facilitation, often exploiting societal assumptions to avoid suspicion.

Another concern is the misuse of legitimate business platforms for extremist purposes, sometimes described as "corporate jihad." A case involving a BPO in Nashik highlights how businesses can allegedly be used as fronts to channel funds, build networks, and provide operational cover, showing how such strategies are expanding beyond traditional methods.

Digital radicalisation is also playing a major role. Online propaganda, encrypted platforms, and targeted messaging are being used to recruit and influence vulnerable individuals, especially youth, making the threat more diffuse and long-term.

Pakistan's evolving strategy

External financial support, including assistance from the International Monetary Fund, has given Pakistan eco-

nomical breathing space. Its elevation to roles such as vice-chair of the United Nations Security Council counter-terrorism committee, along with its involvement in mediating tensions between the United States and Iran, has boosted its strategic confidence. Together, these factors have reduced external pressure and kept Pakistan in an upbeat mode, allowing its ISI to continue pursuing proxy activities against India. This makes it essential for Indian agencies to remain alert and prepared to respond to any emerging threats. At the same time, efforts to revive fault lines such as the Khalistani issue aim to create multiple pressure points within India. Recent incidents, including the explosion at a BJP office in Chandigarh, the blast outside the BSF headquarters in Jalandhar, and the exposure of ISI-linked modules in Punjab, reflect this trend. These activities are often supported by digital propaganda campaigns aimed at deepening divisions and shaping public perception.

Strengthening internal security

These developments point to a serious and evolving challenge. Terror networks are no longer on the margins; they are gradually embedding themselves within society. Recruitment is becoming more diverse, operations more technology-driven, and coordination more global, making the threat increasingly complex and difficult to predict.

In this context, India cannot afford complacency. The success of Operation Sindoor must be backed by a strong and adaptive internal security framework. Better inter-agency coordination, real-time intelligence sharing, and the use of advanced technology are essential for early detection. Quick-response systems, such as PRAHAAR-type frameworks, can ensure swift action when required. At the same time, addressing the root causes of radicalisation is crucial. Educating youth about extremism and misinformation can aid prevention. Basic awareness of internal security within school education can help build a more alert society. Promoting social harmony and inclusive development is equally important, as alienation is often exploited by extremist groups. The fight against terrorism is not only physical but also ideological, requiring strong counter-narratives.

Conclusion

Operation Sindoor has demonstrated that India possesses both the capability and resolve to act decisively against terror threats. However, the wave of arrests, emerging modules, and incidents like the suspicious surveillance devices near Delhi Cantt Railway Station reveal a deeper and more complex challenge. The threat is no longer distant or confined to borders; it is internal, networked, and constantly evolving. India's challenge is not merely to respond to attacks, but to anticipate and prevent them. In an era of hybrid terrorism, where external and internal threats are increasingly interconnected, constant vigilance and preparedness remain essential. Complacency is not an option.



The writer is former DGP Uttarakhand
 @dailypioneer
 @AshokKumar_IPS
 The Pioneer

PICTALK



Farmers work in a field with the Taj Mahal in the backdrop, in Agra.

PHOTO: PTI

The perils of unrestrained selfhood



RAJYOGI BRAHMA KUMAR NIKUNJ JI

2ND OPINION

A peaceful and harmonious society is a universal aspiration, yet it cannot be sustained if individuals and groups remain narrowly self-centred. A society defined by competing interests, rather than shared purpose, loses its essential cohesion. Without a unifying sense of common good, it becomes merely a loose arrangement of communities, classes, and institutions, each seeking advantage over the other. In such a setting, when faced with a choice between collective welfare and individual gain, the latter often prevails, giving rise to conflict, division, and instability.

This tendency weakens the moral and social fabric. Pressures from ego-driven cultural, religious, ethnic, caste, and political groups intensify tensions across social, economic, and political spheres. Law and order suffer, and

the collective pursuit of progress is disrupted. Though individuals may outwardly appear civilised, demonstrating manners and etiquette in daily life, their actions can be guided by narrow self-interest. In pursuit of personal or group advantage, they may adopt unfair or harmful means, often at the cost of others and, ultimately, society itself.

Everyday examples illustrate this reality. A well-connected individual may manipulate influence to secure scarce resources, bypassing those who have waited their turn. Similarly, organised groups may demand preferential treatment in exchange for political support, disregarding fairness or broader social harmony. Such actions reveal that superficial civility does not guarantee a just or stable society. True progress requires a willingness to subordinate narrow interests to the larger good.

The path forward lies in embracing values that promote collective well-being. The ancient Sanskrit ideal "Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, sarve santu niramaya" — may all be happy and free from illness — offers a guiding principle for building a just society. It calls for an inclusive vision where prosperity and well-being are shared, not monopolised. Complementing this is the philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam", which views the entire world as one family. This perspective encourages individuals to move beyond divisions and recognise the interconnectedness of all human lives.

Adopting these principles is not merely a moral exercise but a practical necessity. A society grounded in empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect is better equipped to ensure stability and sustainable progress. When individuals understand that their own well-being is tied to that of others, they are more likely to act with responsibility and fairness.

However, such transformation must begin at the individual level. Values like truth, non-violence, compassion, and cooperation cannot be imposed solely through institutions; they must be cultivated in daily life. Homes, schools, and workplaces play a crucial role in shaping this ethos. When these spaces become centres of ethical practice and mutual respect, they collectively contribute to a more value-based society. Ultimately, the future of Bharat — and indeed of humanity — depends on how sincerely these timeless principles are implemented. Peace and prosperity cannot be achieved through policy alone; they require a shift in mindset. By aligning personal conduct with the greater good,

society can move towards genuine harmony and enduring progress. The responsibility rests with each individual, and the time to act is now.



The writer is a spiritual teacher and a popular columnist

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer @TheDailyPioneer
 instagram.com/dailypioneer linkedin.com/in/ThePioneer

JUSTICE MUST BALANCE SEVERITY WITH SAFEGUARDS

The Supreme Court of India has rightly underlined the need for stricter punishment in heinous crimes and hinted at a calibrated shift in the burden of proof.

However, such changes must be grounded in thorough and credible preliminary investigations to prevent wrongful implication. Any presumption against the accused should arise only after solid evidence is established, ensuring safeguards against misuse of the law. Punishment must also be proportionate to the nature of the crime. Offences involving premeditation, sustained cruelty, or deliberate infliction of harm — such as forcibly administering harmful substances — reflect a higher degree of malice and should attract harsher penalties than impulsive acts like acid attacks carried out without prolonged planning. The justice system must

carefully distinguish between these levels of intent.

Equally important is the rehabilitation of victims. Survivors deserve comprehensive and free medical care, including reconstructive procedures, funded jointly by the offender and the State, as directed by courts. Justice, therefore, must strike a balance between deterrence, fairness, and restoration — ensuring accountability for the guilty while protecting the innocent.

A just legal framework must combine firm punishment with procedural safeguards, ensuring no innocent is wrongfully implicated. It should distinguish intent, prioritise victim rehabilitation, and uphold fairness. Only by balancing deterrence with due process can the system deliver justice that is both credible and compassionate.

RS NARULA | PATIALA

Please send your letter to the info@dailypioneer.com. In not more than 250 words. We appreciate your feedback.

Bengal verdict and the shadow of distrust

The refusal of Mamata Banerjee to accept the electoral verdict in West Bengal has deepened political tensions in the state. Alleging large-scale rigging and accusing the Election Commission of India of bias, she claimed that the mandate was "stolen" rather than lost. These serious allegations, including claims of violence at counting centres and tampering with surveillance systems, raise troubling questions that demand impartial scrutiny. The Bharatiya Janata Party's victory — securing 207 seats in the 294-member Assembly — marks a decisive political shift, ending the Trinamool Congress's 15-year rule.

However, the scale of the win contrasts sharply with the intensity of the accusations, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust. In a democracy, electoral outcomes must be respected, but credible grievances cannot be dismissed outright. Transparent investigation into the claims is essential to maintain faith in democratic institutions.

The situation carries the risk of escalating unrest if not handled with restraint and accountability. West Bengal stands at a sensitive juncture, where restoring trust in the electoral process is as crucial as ensuring political stability.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

Every vote counts, every citizen matters

The recent Tamil Nadu Assembly elections offer a compelling lesson in the value of every single vote. In Tirupattur, R Sreenivasa Sethupathy secured victory by just one vote — an extraordinary reminder of how individual choices can shape democratic outcomes. At the same time, sweeping victories like that of ECR P Saravanan in Sholinganallur demonstrate that even large mandates are built on countless individual decisions. Choosing not to vote, or missing the opportunity, weakens democracy.

Voting is not merely a right but a civic responsibility that ensures representation and accountability. When citizens abstain, they diminish the collective voice that drives governance. Encouragingly, many voters travelled long distances, even from abroad, to participate in the electoral process. Their commitment highlights the enduring faith people place in democratic institutions. Such dedication should inspire others to engage more actively. Ultimately, democracy thrives on participation. Each vote carries weight — not just in determining winners, but in shaping policies and the direction of society. Responsible and informed voting strengthens the system and ensures that governance reflects the will of the people.

AP THIRUVADI | CHENNAI

A mandate for change in Bengal

The electoral verdict in West Bengal marks a decisive rejection of the All India Trinamool Congress and its prolonged incumbency. The Bharatiya Janata Party capitalised on public discontent through strategic alliances, a focused campaign, and the appeal of leadership associated with the "Modi factor." The outcome signals that voters sought both accountability and change. Concerns over governance, allegations of corruption, and dissatisfaction with administrative functioning contributed to the erosion of support for the outgoing regime led by Mamata Banerjee. Issues such as illegal infiltration and deteriorating law and order also emerged as significant electoral themes, influencing voter sentiment, particularly among urban and middle-class communities. With a resounding mandate, the responsibility now lies with the new government to deliver on its promises. Addressing security concerns, restoring public confidence, dismantling entrenched systems of corruption, and reviving economic activity must be prioritised. The electorate has not merely voted for change, but for effective governance. This transition presents an opportunity to strengthen institutions and ensure stability. Meeting public expectations will be crucial in determining whether this political shift translates into meaningful and lasting progress.

YUGAL KISHORE SHARMA | FARIDABAD



The Lotus and India's Changing political landscape

The lotus grows in the darkest silt, drawing sustenance from decay. Yet, when it rises to the surface, it remains untouched, and its petals are not stained by the very mud that enables its existence. In politics, as in life, the question is not whether one encounters the mud, but whether one transcends it



MANOJ SINHA | **RAMANAND SHARMA**



THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT OF INDIA HAS LONG BEEN SHAPED BY OLD AND MUDDY SYSTEMS, VISIBLE ACROSS STATES SUCH AS WEST BENGAL, ASSAM, TAMIL NADU, AND KERALA. POLITICAL STAGNATION MANIFESTS IN DIFFERENT FORMS, YET SHARES A COMMON THREAD OF IDEOLOGICAL NARROW-MINDEDNESS OVER DYNAMIC GOVERNANCE

Manoj Sinha, Principal, Aryabhata College, University of Delhi and Ramanand Sharma, Assistant Professor, Aryabhata College, University of Delhi
 @daily_pioneer
 @TheDailyPioneer
 The Pioneer

Operation Sindoor: An emphatic win for India



GIRISH KUMAR GARG

During Operation Sindoor in May 2025, Pakistan conceded defeat before the Indian forces within just 88 hours. Not only did Pakistan acknowledge India's might, but the entire world was left stunned upon witnessing India's power.

India executed a deadly strike at a distance of over 100 kilometers deep inside Pakistan; through the remarkable coordination of its three-armed forces, India neutralized nine dangerous terrorist hideouts spread across Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (POJK). These hideouts were the hubs of dangerous terrorist organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Hizbul Mujahideen where terrorists were trained against India and then secretly sent to spread terrorism in India.

Through these long-range attacks, India sent a strong message to Pakistan that no terrorist hideout established there, is beyond India's military reach. In these attacks, India gave the enemy a clear example of its precision targeting, operational reach, and unwavering resolve.

More than 100 terrorists were killed in these attacks, including the dreaded terrorists Yusuf Azhar (involved in the IC-814 aircraft hijacking), Abdul Malik Rauf, and Mudassar Ahmed (involved in the Pulwama attack).

The most significant aspect of Operation Sindoor was that India remained undeterred by Pakistan's threat of a nuclear attack and exposed it as hollow. India shattered the illusion regarding the very nuclear capability that Pakistan considered to be its defensive shield.

Another remarkable aspect of this conflict was that India brought it to a conclusion — on its own terms — within just four days of achieving its objectives. We are seeing the Iran-America and Russia-Ukraine wars where the wars start but they cannot end due to lack of diplomatic and military support. The swift and successful conclusion of 'Operation Sindoor' was the direct result of India's clarity of objectives, military prowess, restraint, and astute diplomacy. This achievement is unprecedented in world history and is being praised across the globe; indeed, major global institutions are currently conducting research and analysis on this very subject.

Most wars result in extensive damage — effects that often extend beyond the borders of the nations involved and impact not only their economies but also their ordinary citizens. A distinctive feature of Operation Sindoor was that, while terrorist strongholds in Pakistan were successfully dismantled, the conflict had absolutely no adverse impact on India. The missiles fired by Pakistan were intercepted and destroyed mid-air, failing to inflict any damage within Indian territory. This conflict neither triggered instability in any third country — unlike the current Iran-US situation, where oil shortages have created an atmosphere of global instability — nor did it cast any negative shadow upon India's economy. This stands as a testament to India's robust strategic planning, modern technology, and precise execution. As a nation, this demonstrates India's maturity.



In addition to terrorist targets, 11 key Pakistani military installations were also targeted, including Nur Khan Airbase, Rafiq Airbase, Murid Airbase, and Sargodha Airbase, causing significant damage to Pakistan's military capabilities.

India is the first country in world history to target 11 military bases of a nuclear-armed nation in a single operation. In that, India destroyed 20 per cent of Pakistan's Air Force. Moreover, India accomplished all of this within a mere four days — an achievement unprecedented in history.

'Atmanirbhar Bharat' (Self-Reliant India) made a substantial contribution to this conflict. The 'BrahMos' and 'Akash' missiles, the 'Akashteer' system, the 'Tejas' aircraft, along with various other modern indigenous weapons and military equipment, delivered exceptional performance and played a decisive role in the war. The world witnessed a tangible demonstration of India's technological self-reliance and acknowledged its prowess. Today, there is an immense global demand for our indigenous military hardware. Not only does this contribute to strengthening our economy, but it also safeguards us from military dependence on other nations — a factor of paramount importance for our national security.

Operation Sindoor will be written in golden letters in the history of our nation. It presented to the world a powerful testament to India's military might, diplomatic acumen, self-reliance, and unwavering resolve against terrorism. It showed the world what a restrained attack is and how it is carried out directly.

This war has delivered such a resounding message to Pakistan — and to the terrorist organizations dancing to its tunes — that they will not be able to forget it for a long time to come.

This war established new dimensions of inter-service coordination among India's three armed forces, a factor that contributed to the spectacular success achieved in this conflict. The lessons learnt in this will be very helpful in making the framework of our country's proposed 'Joint Theatre Command' more effective.

According to the Government of India, we have not yet ended the war, but have merely called a temporary halt; should Pakistan dare to undertake any further acts of terror, this war will be resumed — with consequences far more dire than before.

This was merely a trailer; the movie is yet to come, my friend! (Yeh to sirf ek trailer tha, picture to abhi baki hai mere dost !!)

The writer is a retired Rear Admiral of the Indian Navy
 @daily_pioneer
 @TheDailyPioneer
 girishkgarg

From decriminalisation to discretion: New law to redefine India's regulatory landscape



ANISH SRIVASTAVA 'LALL'

The passage of the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2026 marks a decisive shift in India's regulatory philosophy. It seeks to replace fear-driven compliance with trust-based governance. By decriminalising hundreds of minor offences and substituting imprisonment with civil penalties and administrative action, the reform attempts to correct a long-standing imbalance where procedural lapses were often treated with disproportionate severity. The intent is clear: unclog courts, reduce harassment, and create a business environment aligned with a modern economy. Yet, as with all structural reforms, the real test lies not in legislative ambition but in institutional execution and judicial interpretation.

At its core, the reform acknowledges a basic truth: criminal law must be used sparingly. For decades, India's regulatory architecture blurred the line between mala fide intent and technical non-compliance. Entrepreneurs, especially MSMEs, operated under the constant threat of prosecution for delays or minor infractions. By removing imprisonment

for such violations and introducing graded enforcement — advisories, warnings, and monetary penalties — the new framework promises proportionality. This is a welcome correction that aligns with constitutional guarantees of fairness and reasonableness under Article 21, while also strengthening economic freedom under Article 19(1)(g).

However, the reform is not merely about ease of doing business. It also signals a broader recalibration of the State-citizen relationship. The move towards administrative penalties and compounding mechanisms reflects a governance model that prioritises compliance over coercion. In theory, this reduces friction between regulators and stakeholders. In practice, it risks shifting discretionary power from courts to administrative authorities. Without strong safeguards, transparency norms, and accountability frameworks, the danger of regulatory overreach or selective enforcement cannot be dismissed.

Complicating this evolving landscape is the judiciary's recent posture, particularly in high-value economic offences. The role of the Supreme Court of India in endorsing settlement-driven resolutions, particularly in the Sandesara-Sterling Biotech case, has introduced a parallel dimension to decriminalisation. The Court's decision to quash criminal proceedings following substantial financial recovery underpins a pragmatic approach: prioritising restitution



over prolonged litigation. While this ensures recovery of public funds and reduces judicial backlog, it also raises uncomfortable questions. Does the emerging "pay and settle" model risk creating a two-tier justice system where economic offenders can negotiate outcomes while ordinary offenders cannot?

This tension strikes at the heart of Article 14 — equality before law. If settlement mechanisms become the norm in complex economic crimes without a clear statutory framework, the line between judicial discretion and policy-making begins to blur. One can argue that such

precedents may dilute deterrence, particularly in cases involving systemic fraud or public money. Supporters counter that prolonged criminal trials often fail to deliver timely justice or recovery, making pragmatic settlements a rational alternative. Both positions carry merit, but neither can substitute the need for codified guidelines.

From an economic standpoint, the reform is undeniably positive. A less punitive regulatory environment enhances investor confidence, reduces compliance costs, and improves administrative efficiency. For citizens, it

removes the stigma and stress of criminal prosecution for minor infractions, making governance more humane. Yet, economic gains cannot come at the cost of regulatory credibility. Deterrence remains essential, particularly in sectors involving environmental protection, financial integrity, and public safety.

The way forward demands balance. Decriminalisation must not translate into deregulation. Clear statutory frameworks for economic settlements, uniform enforcement standards across ministries, and robust judicial oversight are essential to prevent arbitrariness. Serious offences involving intent, fraud, or public harm must continue to attract stringent criminal liability. Equally important is the creation of transparent mechanisms to monitor administrative discretion, ensuring that trust-based governance does not become discretion-based governance.

India stands at a critical inflection point. The shift from punishment to compliance is both necessary and overdue, but it must be anchored in institutional integrity. The success of this reform will depend not on how many provisions are decriminalised, but on how fairly, consistently, and transparently the new regime is implemented.

The writer is an Advocate, Arbitrator & Mediator at the High Court, Lucknow
 @daily_pioneer
 @TheDailyPioneer
 The Pioneer



**TRANSGLOBE
ADVISORS**

Your Trusted Management Advisory

www.transglobeadvisors.in

Order Order

UP court awards life term to man in murder over land dispute



A local court in Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh, has sentenced a man to life imprisonment in a murder case that dates back two and a half years, primarily linked to a land dispute, officials said on Wednesday.

According to prosecution sources, the incident took place on the night of October 25, 2023, in Shivpur Nai Basti Byasi village under Dubhar police station area, where a man identified as Yatharth Vikram Singh was shot dead over a dispute related to land and a brick kiln. Based on a complaint lodged by the victim's mother, Rinki Singh, a case was registered against seven accused – Baljeet Singh, Sarvjeet Singh, Amarjeet Singh, Suryabhan Pandey, Kaushal Kishore Pandey, Manoj Singh and Shera Kunwar – under relevant sections, including murder, the sources said.

Police had filed a chargesheet against all seven accused after completing the investigation. Superintendent of Police Omveer Singh said that the court of Additional District Judge Puneet Kumar, after hearing both sides, on Tuesday convicted Baljeet Singh and sentenced him to life imprisonment along with a fine of ₹1 lakh.

The court, however, acquitted the remaining six accused due to lack of evidence, he added. (PTI)

SC collegium approves names of 10 advocates as judges of Punjab, Haryana HC



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court collegium has approved a proposal for appointment of 10 advocates as judges of the Punjab and Haryana High Court.

The collegium headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, in a meeting held on May 4, approved names of advocates Monica Chhibber Sharma, Harmeet Singh Deol, Puja Chopra, Sunish Bindlish, Navdeep Singh, Divya Sharma, Ravinder Malik, Pravindra Singh Chauhan, Rajesh Gaur, and Minderjeet Yadav as judges.

Chauhan is currently the Advocate General of Haryana while Deol is Additional Advocate General of Punjab.

In another decision, the collegium also approved the proposal for appointment of three judicial officers as judges of the Andhra Pradesh High Court.

The three judicial officers are Sunitha Gandham, Alapati Giridhar, and Purushottam Kumar Chintalapudi.



SC refuses to adjourn hearing on CEC appointments

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday refused to accede to the Centre's request to adjourn the hearing on pleas challenging the constitutional validity of a 2023 law that removed the Chief Justice of India (CJI) from a committee responsible for appointing the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the deputies, saying the matter is "more important" than the Sabarimala case.

A nine-judge constitution bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant is currently hearing petitions regarding discrimination against women at religious sites, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, as well as the scope of religious freedom across various faiths.

A bench comprising justices Dipankar Datta and Satish Chandra Sharma turned down the request by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Centre, to adjourn the hearing on the ground that he was currently occupied before a nine-judge bench in the Sabarimala reference case. Referring to the



gravity of the current challenge to the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023, Justice Datta said, "This matter is more important than any other matter."

"Let your (solicitor general's) associates take notes today. Let the petitioners start. All matters are important. We read in the newspapers that there is an observation that

the PIL in Sabarimala should not have been entertained by the court. So, with due respect to the judges, nine judges are occupied in a matter where there is an observation that it should not have been entertained in the first place," Justice Datta said.

The bench then directed the petitioners to conclude their arguments by Thursday, allowing the Centre to present its submissions on a subsequent date. The bench then proceed-

ed with the hearing which is underway. Earlier on March 20, CJI Surya Kant recused himself from hearing the petitions. "I will be accused of conflict of interest. There is a conflict of interest," the CJI had said. The law, enacted by Parliament in December 2023, came months after a landmark verdict by which the apex court directed that election commissioners be appointed by a committee comprising the prime minister, the leader of the Opposition, and the chief justice of India.

The bench had said that the system will remain in force till a law is enacted. Under the 2023 Act, the selection committee consists of the prime minister, a Union minister nominated by the prime minister and the leader of Opposition (or leader of the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha).

The PILs said the exclusion of the CJI from the panel undermines the independence of the appointment process. The law has been challenged by multiple petitioners, including Congress leader Jaya Thakur and the Association for Democratic Reforms. Earlier, the

Centre defended in the Supreme Court the appointment of two new election commissioners under the 2023 law that excludes the chief justice of India from the selection committee, saying the independence of the Election Commission does not arise from the presence of a judicial member on the committee.

In an affidavit filed in the apex court, the Union law ministry rejected the petitioner's claim that the two election commissioners were hastily appointed on March 14, 2024, to "pre-empt" the orders of the top court the next day, when the matters challenging the 2023 law were listed for hearing on interim relief.

The apex court also refused to stay the appointment of new election commissioners under the 2023 law.

A five-judge constitution bench had in March 2023 ruled that the chief election commissioner and election commissioners shall be appointed on the advice of a committee comprising the prime minister, the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India.

SC pays tributes to former judge Vijay Kumar Jhanji

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday held a Full Court reference to pay tribute to former acting Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh High Court Vijay Kumar Jhanji, who passed away on February 23 this year.

Speaking about Justice Jhanji, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said he always embodied the principle that institutions must stand before individuals.

The top court also paid tributes to late senior advocates ADN Rao, Mukul Gupta and S Balakrishnan. Attorney General R Venkataramani and Supreme Court Bar



Association president Vikas Singh also paid tributes to the deceased.

Jhanji authored a significant judgement which held that "daughter of a permanent resident of the State of Jammu and Kashmir will not lose status as a permanent resi-

dent of the State of Jammu and Kashmir on her marriage with a person, who is not a permanent resident of the State of Jammu and Kashmir."

Rao, who passed away on February 25, assisted the Supreme Court as an amicus curiae in dealing with several

environment-related PILs, according to the top court's bar association.

Rao, who was designated as a senior advocate by the Supreme Court in 2021, practised for over three decades at the Bar and was known for his able assistance to the top court in dealing with environment-related PILs, especially those filed by eminent environmentalist M C Mehta in the 1980s. Rao's son, Annam Venkatesh, is an advocate-on-record practising in the top court.

Senior advocate Mukul Gupta passed away on April 7.

A Full Court reference is a formal proceeding held by the court to pay tribute to deceased judges.



SC to hear pleas on legislative power to tax mineral rights on May 20

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said it would consider on May 20 the pleas related to legislative power to tax mineral rights, after the Centre said its curative petition in the matter was pending.

In September 2024, the apex court had dismissed the pleas seeking review of its July 25, 2024 nine-judge bench verdict, which ruled that the legislative power to tax mineral rights was vested in the states.

The nine-judge bench, in a majority 8:1 verdict, had said Parliament did not have the legislative competence to tax mineral rights under Entry 54 of List I of the Constitution related to the regulation of mines and mineral development by the Centre. After the review pleas were dismissed, the Centre filed a curative peti-

tion in the top court. On Wednesday, Solicitor General Tushar Mehta requested a bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and Vijay Bishnoi to adjourn the matter, saying that the curative petition filed by the Centre was pending.

Some advocates, who were appearing in the matter, supported Mehta's submission and said the pleas be heard after the curative petition was decided. They urged the bench that the pleas be listed in July.

However, lawyers representing some state authorities opposed the submissions and said the review petitions were already dismissed. One of the advocates said some of the appeals were filed in 1999 and the matter was referred to a nine-judge bench in 2011. The bench posted the matter for May 20.

2024 Haldwani riots case: SC sets aside order granting default bail to 2 accused

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court has set aside an order granting default bail to two accused in a case of arson and rioting in Haldwani in 2024 and directed them to surrender before the trial court within two weeks.

An accused is entitled to "default bail" if the investigation is not complete within 60 or 90 days "depending on the prescribed punishment for the offence

"Having gone through the record, we find that the high court has completely gone wrong in casting aspersions

on the conduct of the investigating officer in failing to complete the investigation within a period of 90 days," the court said, noting the magnitude of the crime and the challenges faced by the probe agency. A bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta allowed the appeal filed by the Uttarakhand Government, which had challenged the state high court's January 2025 order granting default bail to Javed Siddiqui and Arshad Ayub.

The top court said it was "absolutely unreasonable" of the Uttarakhand High Court to have observed that



the investigating agency had not proceeded with the probe at a reasonable pace or that it had acted with lethargy.

"Thus, without a doubt, the investigation was proceeding with utmost expediency in a case which would have presented grave chal-

lenges to the investigation agency, considering the magnitude of the crime and the large number of accused and witnesses," the bench said in its May 4 order.

Deputy Advocate General of Uttarakhand Jatinder Kumar Sethi appeared for the state in the matter.

The bench noted the FIR was filed in relation to an incident of widespread arson, rioting and damage to public property, including the building of a police station, wherein a large number of accused were arraigned with the allegation of using petrol bombs and other arsenal.

It said a few other incidents of a similar nature had taken place in the nearby areas in relation to which separate FIRs were registered.

"Having gone through the record, we find that the high court has completely gone wrong in casting aspersions on the conduct of the investigating officer in failing to complete the investigation within a period of 90 days," the bench said.

It said the observation by the high court that only eight official witnesses and four public witnesses were examined in three months was factually incorrect.

HC seeks comprehensive plan for crowd management in Mathura

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Prayagraj

Taking note of crowd-related disasters in Mathura during festivals, the Allahabad High Court has asked the district authorities as to whether a comprehensive plan for crowd and crisis management exists for the city.

Hearing a petition filed by Swami Shiv Swarupananand Ji Maharaj, Justice Vinod Diwakar has also sought details of the strategies and management principles in place for handling crowd-related disasters for sensitising stakeholders and for enhancing institutional capacity through training and awareness. In 2022, a stampede-like situation occurred at the Banke Bihari temple during Janamasthami celebrations, leaving two dead and several others injured.

Maharaj has filed this petition against the State Government as well as the Mathura Vrindavan Development Authority (MVDA)



contending that the authorities are undertaking demolition actions, which are arbitrary and discriminatory amounting to a case of "pick and choose".

He submitted that while demolition orders have been passed against 23 people for alleged unauthorised constructions, such demolition proceedings have been selectively executed only against the petitioner and certain others.

HC grants two more weeks to Centre to respond to academican Swain's plea against blacklisting order

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted the Centre two more weeks to file its reply to a plea by academican Ashok Swain challenging a purported blacklisting order, barring him from entering India.

A request for additional time was made by the central Government lawyer before Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav. "On request of respondent's counsel, two weeks further time to file reply is granted," the court said and listed the matter for next hearing on July 23.

The court had issued notice on Swain's petition in



November 2025 and asked the Union Ministries of Home Affairs and External Affairs, Embassy of India to Sweden and Latvia and Bureau of Immigration to file their replies within three weeks. The Embassy of India to Sweden and Latvia cancelled Swain's OCI Card under the Citizenship Act on February 8, 2024.

Swain, Professor and head of department at the Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University in Sweden, assert-

ed in his petition that he has been prevented from entering India based on a purported blacklisting order under the Foreigners Act, which was revealed to him in a counter affidavit filed by the Centre in his earlier petition on the issue. He submitted that his aged mother, who lives in India was unwell, but he has not been able to visit her in the past several years.

He alleged that the authorities' action was pursuant to an undisclosed blacklisting order, the content and legal basis of which have neither been communicated to him nor tested on the touchstone of procedural safeguards mandated under the Citizenship Act.

BCI urges CJI to take action against Andhra HC judge for sending young lawyer to 24-hour custody

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Bar Council of India (BCI) on Wednesday sought the urgent intervention of Chief Justice of India Surya Kant following a "deeply disturbing" incident where a judge of the Andhra Pradesh High Court reportedly sent a young advocate to 24-hour judicial custody over a procedural lapse.

The Bar Council of India (BCI) Chairperson and senior advocate Manan Kumar Mishra, in a formal representation, termed the conduct of Justice Tarlada Rajasekhar Rao "grossly inappropriate" and "damaging to the confidence of the Bar".



"I most respectfully request your Lordship to kindly take immediate institutional cognizance of the matter and call for the video

recording of the proceedings, the order passed, and the surrounding circumstances.

"I further request that appropri-

ate administrative action may kindly be considered, including withdrawal of judicial work from the learned Judge pending review, his immediate transfer to some far off High Court, and his nomination for appropriate judicial training/orientation on court management, judicial temperament, Bar-Bench relations, and proportional exercise of contempt/judicial authority," Mishra wrote.

This representation is made to preserve the "dignity, moral authority and public confidence of the judiciary", he said, adding, "Judges command the highest respect not by fear, but by fairness, patience, restraint and constitutional humility".

The communication urged the

CJI to intervene at the earliest to ensure that the faith of Bar, particularly young advocates, in the protective and corrective role of the judiciary is restored.

The controversy stems from proceedings on May 5.

According to the BCI, a video circulating online shows Justice Rao rebuking a young advocate who was unable to produce a specific order copy during a hearing.

The letter said that despite the advocate "repeatedly seeking pardon and mercy" and claiming he was in physical pain, the judge remained "unmoved".

The judge allegedly told the lawyer, "now you will learn," and mocked his experience before directing the Registrar and police

personnel to take him into custody for 24 hours.

The BCI chairperson said that the judge's actions lacked proportionality and fairness.

"The dignity of the court is not enhanced when a lawyer is made to beg for grace in open court and is still sent to custody for a procedural lapse," the letter said.

"A young lawyer... is an officer of the Court, still learning, still growing, and entitled to correction without humiliation," it added.

11 YEARS ON, THANE COURT ACQUITS 10 ACCUSED IN MURDER CASE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thane

A Thane court has acquitted all 10 accused in a 2014 murder and rioting case, noting that key witnesses failed to support the prosecution.

Additional Sessions Judge A S Bhagwat, in the order on Tuesday, said the prosecution could not prove the charges beyond a reasonable doubt.



The case stemmed from an alleged violent clash in the Kalwa area of Maharashtra's Thane city on December 16, 2014, resulting in the death of Bhaskar alias Shankar Anant Kadam and injuries to several others.

According to the prosecution, the accused, armed with knives and choppers, allegedly attacked Kadam and others.

During the trial, the prosecution examined 14 witnesses, including the deceased's wife, who is the complainant in the case.



Stock markets rally as oil prices decline amid US-Iran talks

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Mumbai

Benchmark Sensex rallied 940 points while Nifty settled above 24,300 on Wednesday following a sharp decline in crude oil prices after US President Donald Trump claimed progress in negotiations with Iran towards an agreement to end the war.

Helped by fag-end heavy buying, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 940.73 points, or 1.22 per cent, to settle at 77,958.52. During the day, it surged 1,004.99 points, or 1.30 per cent, to a day's high of 78,022.78.

The 50-share NSE Nifty rallied 298.15 points, or 1.24 per cent, to end at 24,330.95.

A positive trend in global markets aided the rally in domestic stocks. Among the 30-Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation was the biggest gainer, soaring by 6.6 per cent after a slump in crude oil prices and the announcement of a credit line for airlines hit by the West Asia crisis.

Trent rose by 3.91 per cent, Asian Paints by 3.56 per cent, State Bank of India by 3.38 per cent, HDFC Bank by 3.11 per cent, and Eternal by 2.98 per cent. Reliance Industries was the biggest loser, shedding 1.8 per cent. Larsen & Toubro, Power Grid and NTPC were also among the laggards.

Broader markets also rallied with the BSE SmallCap Select index

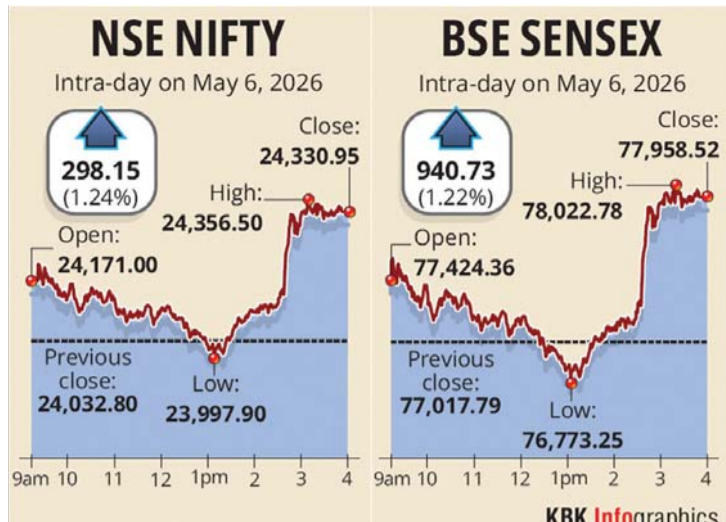
jumping 2.25 per cent and the MidCap Select index by 2.10 per cent. Among sectoral indices, banking, financials, and realty led the rally, while energy and FMCG remained relatively subdued.

"The trigger was largely global — renewed optimism around a potential US-Iran peace deal led to a sharp decline in crude oil prices, offering immediate relief to an import-heavy economy like India," Hari Prasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said. Additionally, supportive domestic developments, including the Government's credit guarantee scheme for businesses, boosted banking stocks, Ajit Mishra, SVP — Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

US President Donald Trump has suspended "Project Freedom," to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz, claiming progress in negotiations with Iran towards an agreement to end the war.

In a post on Truth Social on Tuesday, Trump said, "Great progress has been made toward a complete and final agreement with representatives of Iran."

"Based on the request of Pakistan and other Countries, the tremendous Military Success that we have had during the Campaign against the Country of Iran and, additionally, the fact that Great Progress has been made toward a Complete and Final Agreement with Representatives of Iran, we



Nifty faced selling pressure through the first half before staging a strong bullish rally in the second, reversing all losses and closing firmly in the green, as improving sentiment drew sustained buying interest through the latter half of the session," Ponmudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Sectorally, Telecommunication jumped 2.94 per cent, followed by Services (2.89 per cent), PSU Bank (2.81 per cent), Realty (2.76 per cent), Bankex (2.64 per cent), Private Banks index (2.51 per cent), Financial Services (2.47 per cent) and Healthcare (1.99 per cent). Energy, FMCG, Utilities and Power were the laggards.

A total of 2,862 stocks advanced, while 1,365 declined and 167 remained unchanged on the BSE. In Asian markets, South Korea's benchmark Kospi, Shanghai's SSE Composite index and Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended higher. Kospi surged over 6 per cent.

Markets in Europe were trading sharply higher. US markets ended in positive territory on Tuesday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth \$3,621.58 crore on Tuesday, according to exchange data.

On Tuesday, the Sensex dropped 251.61 points or 0.33 per cent to settle at 77,017.79. The Nifty edged lower by 86.50 points or 0.36 per cent to end at 24,032.80.

have mutually agreed that, while the Blockade will remain in full force and effect, Project Freedom (The Movement of Ships through the Strait of Hormuz) will be paused for a short period of time to see whether or not the Agreement can be finalised and signed," Trump said.

Project Freedom was launched on Monday to escort ships, stranded due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, to safety.

Trump's statement on Truth Social came hours after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced that Operation Epic Fury, launched on February 28, had concluded as its objectives had

been achieved. "Operation Epic Fury is concluded. We achieved the objectives of that operation. We're not cheering for an additional situation to occur. We would prefer the path of peace. What @POTUS would prefer is a deal... that is, so far, not the route that Iran has chosen," Rubio told a press conference at the White House on Tuesday.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, tumbled 8 per cent to \$101.1 per barrel.

"Indian equity markets closed on a positive note as renewed optimism around a US-Iran peace deal and easing energy prices provided the necessary catalyst. The

India's manufacturing growth sentiment positive in Q4 despite rising raw material costs: FICCI survey

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Growth sentiment in India's manufacturing sector stays positive during the fourth quarter of FY26 despite rising input costs and geopolitical uncertainties, according to a survey released on Wednesday. The only impact seen was in the capacity utilisation, which saw a little dip at nearly 72 per cent compared to the previous quarter. However, the future investment outlook is steady for the next six months, showed the latest FICCI survey for the January-March period of FY26.

The survey assessed the performance and sentiments for January-March 2025-26 of manufacturers for eight major sectors, including automobile, capital goods, chemical, fertilizer & pharmaceuticals, electronics & electricals, machine tools, metal, and textiles. Responses have been drawn from over 250 manufacturing units from both large and SME segments with a combined annual turnover of over ₹8 lakh crore.

"The survey continued to reflect sustained growth and increasing optimism for India's manufacturing sector in Q4. In comparison to Q3 FY



2025-26, when 91 per cent of respondents reported higher or same production levels, approximately 93 per cent of respondents reported either higher or same production levels in Q4 FY 2025-26. This optimism was also evident in domestic demand, as 89 per cent of respondents anticipated higher or the same orders in Q4 FY 2026 compared to the previous quarter," FICCI stated. Production costs for manufacturers in this quarter seem to remain on the higher side, the survey observed.

Nearly 70 per cent of respondents reported an increase in the cost of production as a percentage of sales, as against 57 per cent in the

previous quarter, indicating that costs pressures were higher in this quarter.

The increase in cost of production is mainly due to higher raw material costs, currency depreciation, and increased logistics, power, and utility costs. More than half of the respondents reported that they are planning to expand their capacity in the next 6 months. According to the survey, the challenges faced by the respondents in expanding capacities include the current geopolitical situation (tariffs, trade restrictions, economic uncertainty) and operational issues related to labour availability, raw material shortages

and regulatory challenges. Some major constraints restricting the manufacturing sector's growth include a lack of domestic demand, low exports, unavailability of raw materials and unavailability of skilled manpower.

The survey also found that 60 per cent of manufacturers expect high growth, and they have suggested encouraging technology partnerships and R&D grants for machinery manufacturers, support for local manufacturing clusters, and export incentives to promote new investment.

In the third quarter, 89 per cent of the respondents reported a higher or the same level of inventory, while similar expectations were shared by 86 per cent of the respondents during the fourth quarter, the survey showed.

Most of the sectors covered in the survey are not facing a shortage of labour at factories, with around 79 per cent of respondents saying that they do not have any issues with workforce availability. The remaining 21 per cent said that there is still a lack of skilled workforce in their sectors, and there is a need to step up efforts both at the Government and the industry level.

India should adopt dual-track trade strategy at WTO: Expert



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

India should adopt a dual-track approach, upholding the core principles of the multilateral system while selectively and strategically engaging in plurilateral initiatives that serve its interests, say experts.

They said the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is relevant as countries are benefiting from its rules.

These issues were deliberated during a seminar on 'WTO MC14 Outcomes: Future of Multilateralism and Implications on India's Trade Agenda' here on May 5. The seminar was organised by Chintan Research Foundation (CRF) and the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations (ICRIER).

India has not joined various plurilateral negotiations underway at the WTO because it believes that plurilateral agreements may weaken the multilateral trading system and thereby marginalise developing countries.

"However, with plurilateral discussions increasingly shaping the global trade landscape, it seems that India may have to recalibrate its approach to plurilateralism. It could consider following a two-track approach. It should continue defending the WTO's broader rules-based system that protects developing countries, while also joining

plurilateral discussions, especially in areas which support India's economic and strategic interests," CRF President Shishir Priyadarshi said. The discussions were held on the broader implications for the credibility and future direction of the rules-based trading system, particularly in the current geopolitical context.

Shekhar Aiyar, Director and Chief Executive of ICRIER, said the 14th WTO Ministerial Conference, held in Yaounde in March, had highlighted several divides, including the divide between multilateralism and plurilateralism.

At the WTO, a few key plurilateral agreements and initiatives that are currently being negotiated or discussed among a group of members include Investment Facilitation for Development and E-commerce. These are called plurilateral because not all WTO members participate.

Countries like India and South Africa have raised concerns about them bypassing consensus-based multilateralism. In a statement, the CRF said the discussions underscored the urgency of pragmatic, coalition-based approaches to revitalising multilateralism approaches that are responsive to evolving geopolitical and economic realities while safeguarding the principles of an open, rules-based, and inclusive trading system.

Silver surges ₹10,368 to ₹2.54 lakh/kg in futures trade

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Silver prices surged by ₹10,368 to ₹2.54 lakh per kilogram in futures trade on Wednesday, tracking strong global cues and easing inflation concerns after oil prices declined.

On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the white metal for July delivery soared by ₹10,368, or 4.24 per cent, to ₹2,54,684 per kilogram in a business turnover of 7,193 lots.

"Silver prices have recovered from key support levels as Middle East de-escalation signals pressured oil prices, reducing inflation concerns," Renisha Chainani, Head — Research at Augmont, said.

In the global markets, Comex silver futures for the July contract rose \$4.41,



or 6.01 per cent, to \$78 per ounce in New York. Chainani said the US dollar weakened against major currencies following indications of progress in US-Iran negotiations, while the Japanese yen strengthened to a two-month high

amid intervention expectations. Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump announced a temporary pause in "Project Freedom," the American military's escort operation for commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, to facilitate ongoing negotiations with Iran.

Trump also confirmed via Truth Social that negotiations have advanced significantly towards a comprehensive deal.

Market participants are now focusing on upcoming US non-farm payrolls data for cues on the Federal Reserve's policy stance and near-term direction for precious metals, Chainani added. On the outlook, she said silver is expected to trade in the range of ₹77-78 per ounce globally, translating to ₹2.54-2.56 lakh per kilogram level in the domestic market.

Gold futures rise 2% to ₹1.52 lakh/10g amid US-Iran deal hopes

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Gold prices jumped ₹2,947 to ₹1.52 lakh per 10 grams in futures trade on Wednesday amid cooling oil rates and a weak US dollar, with traders reacting to signs that the US and Iran may be moving closer to a deal. On the Multi Commodity Exchange, the yellow metal appreciated by ₹2,947, or 1.97 per cent, to ₹1,52,700 per 10 grams in a business turnover of 9,273 lots.

Analysts said the price of the yellow metal rose as crude oil prices dropped after reports that Washington and Tehran were closing in on an agreement to bring an end to the war. Iran has also announced that the Strait of



Hormuz could reopen after US President Donald Trump paused his "Project Freedom" to guide commercial ships out of the economically vital waterway, according to reports. "Gold prices surged on Wednesday, driven by a weaker dollar and easing crude oil prices amid speculation around potential US-Iran peace talks," Gaurav Garg, Research Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The decline in crude prices, with Brent oil trading below the \$100 per barrel level in the overseas trade, has alleviated some inflationary pressures, prompting investors to flock to safe-haven assets such as gold, he added.

In the international markets, Comex gold futures for the June

contract rose by \$146.05, or 3.2 per cent, to \$4,714.55 per ounce in New York.

"Gold prices edged higher, recovering from a one-month low as the US reassured that its ceasefire with Iran remained intact despite elevated tensions around the Strait of Hormuz," Manav Modi, Commodities Analyst, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

Sentiment saw further support from China's move to ease gold import rules, which could boost physical demand. Market participants will focus on the PMI data from major economies later in the day, which will provide fresh cues on the interest rate cycle and near-term direction for precious metal prices, he added.

India, South Korea likely to hold FTA review talks on May 25

India and South Korea are expected to hold negotiations on May 25 regarding the review of the comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA), which was implemented in January 2010, an official said.

The deliberations are important as India has suggested Korea to consider negotiating a fresh bilateral trade agreement to make it more contemporary and address concerns of the trade deficit.

"The officials of the two countries are meeting on May 25 for the FTA review," the official said.

Last month, in a bilateral meeting here, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal made the suggestion to negotiate a fresh FTA to his Korean counterpart Yeo Han-woo. The minister, on multiple occasions, flagged India's concerns over the widening trade deficit between the two countries.

India's exports to Korea declined 9.3 per cent to \$5.81 billion in 2024-25 from \$6.41 billion in 2023-24. Imports fell marginally by 0.34 per cent to \$21 billion in 2024-25, leaving a trade deficit of \$15.19 billion. It was \$8 billion in 2020-21.

The two countries aim to double their two-way commerce to \$54 billion by 2030 from the current \$27 billion while ensuring a more balanced trade relationship. (PTI)



Government foodgrain nearly three times of buffer requirement

The Government's wheat and rice reserves held in Food Corporation of India (FCI) godowns rose to 604.02 lakh tonnes as of April 1, nearly three times the mandatory buffer requirement of 210.40 lakh tonnes, official data showed.

Rice stocks stood at 386.10 lakh tonnes, well above the buffer norm of 135.80 lakh tonnes, while wheat reserves were at 217.92 lakh tonnes against the required 74.60 lakh tonnes.

Buffer norms are revised quarterly — the current figures apply from April 1, with the next revision due on July 1.

The Government maintains buffer stocks of wheat and rice to ensure adequate supply for beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System (PDS) and other food welfare schemes.

Procurement of wheat and rice from the 2026 rabi season is currently underway. About 97 per cent of the wheat sown area of 334.17 lakh hectare has been harvested, along with the completion of pulse harvesting. Paddy harvesting stands at 59.32 per cent, concentrated in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

Mandaviya to launch nationwide free Annual Health Check-Up Initiative

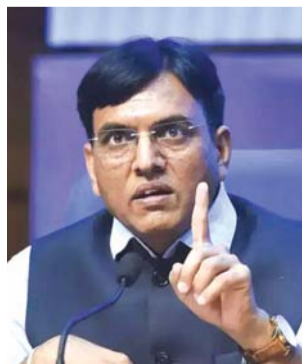
Union Minister of Labour & Employment Mansukh Mandaviya will launch a nationwide free 'Annual Health Check-Up Initiative' for Workers aged 40 years and above, as proposed under the new Labour Codes, on May 7, 2026.

The initiative will be formally inaugurated from the Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) Medical College & Hospital, Basaidarapur, New Delhi, a labour ministry statement said.

Simultaneous launch events will also be observed across 11 other ESIC hospitals across the country, which will be attended by labour ministers, MPs, MLAs, and other dignitaries from respective states.

This initiative is aligned with the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi under the overarching 'Shramev Jayate' framework, which emphasises dignity of labour and strengthened social security for workers.

The rollout is anchored in the transformative reforms introduced through the four New Labour Codes, which consolidate 29 central labour laws under four comprehensive pillars. (PTI)



Hantavirus: Patients evacuated from cruise ship

ANNIE RISEMBERG/ MISPER APAWU/
JAMEY KEATEN/ ISABEL DEBRE
Praia

Two patients with hantavirus and one suspected of being infected were being evacuated from a cruise ship to the Netherlands on Wednesday, the UN health agency said.

The vessel at the centre of a deadly outbreak remained off Cape Verde with nearly 150 people on board waiting to head to Spain's Canary Islands.

Associated Press footage showed health workers in protective gear heading to the ship for the evacuation that included the ship's British doctor, who Spain's health ministry said had been in "serious condition" but has improved. An air ambulance later departed.

Three people have died, and one body remained on the ship, the World Health Organisation said. Of the eight cases recorded, five were confirmed by laboratory testing.

Hantavirus usually spreads by inhaling contaminated rodent droppings and can spread person-to-person, though that is rare, according to the WHO, whose top



Health workers in protective gear arriving to evacuate patients from the MV Hondius cruise ship at a port in Praia, Cape Verde

epidemic expert said the risk to the public is low.

Health officials in Europe and Africa are trying to identify people who may have had contact with people who earlier left the ship, which departed April 1 from South America for stops in Antarctica and several remote Atlantic islands.

Two Argentine officials investigating the origins of the outbreak said the government's leading hypothesis is that a Dutch couple contracted the virus while bird-watching in the city of Ushuaia before boarding.

They said the couple visited a landfill during the tour and may

have been exposed to rodents. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief the media, with the investigation ongoing. Authorities previously said Ushuaia and surrounding Tierra del Fuego province had never recorded a hantavirus case.

The Dutch foreign ministry said the three people evacuated were a 41-year-old Dutch national, a 56-year-old British national and a 65-year-old German national who would be transferred to specialised hospitals in Europe.

Two remain in "serious condition," Dutch ship operator Oceanwind Expeditions said, and the third had no symptoms but was "closely associated" with a German passenger who died on the MV Hondius ship on May 2.

Health officials said passengers and crew members still on the ship are without symptoms and isolating in their cabins. Their journey to the Canary Islands will take three or four days, Spain's health ministry said, adding that the arrival "won't represent any risk for the public."

Still, the Canary Islands regional president, Fernando Clavijo, said he worried about the risk to the population and demanded a meeting with Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. Authorities said passengers tested positive for the Andes virus, a species of hantavirus found in South America, primarily in Argentina and Chile. (AP)

Bangladesh hopes no pushback after BJP's win in elections

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

Bangladesh Salahuddin Ahmed on Wednesday expressed hope that recent political developments in India's bordering states would not lead to an increase in alleged "pushback" incidents involving suspected migrants.

"I hope no such incident will happen," Ahmed told reporters when asked whether he feared a rise in cases of individuals being forcibly sent across the border into Bangladesh following the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) electoral victories.

At the same time, Ahmed confirmed that the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has been instructed to remain vigilant along the frontier areas.

His remarks come amid heightened political rhetoric after assembly election



Home Minister Salahuddin Ahmed

results were announced on Monday in West Bengal, where the Bharatiya Janata Party secured a sweeping majority.

The party also retained power for a third consecutive term in Assam, another state bordering Bangladesh. A day earlier, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Khairul Rahman warned that Dhaka would take action if "push-in" incidents occur.

AXIS BANK Retail Assets Centre, Axis Bank Ltd. Axis House, Tower T-2, 2nd Floor, I-14, Sector-128, Noida Expressway, Jaypee Greens Wishtown, Noida (U.P.)-201301, Axis Bank Ltd. Retail Assets Centre at 1st Floor, 180 Square Feet, Shubhash Ch-11, Gurgaon-122009, Axis Bank Limited, Himalaya House, Upper Ground Floor and first floor, Kasturba Gandhi Marg, Connaught Place, New Delhi - 110001 Corporate Office: Block-B, Bombay Dyeing Mills Compound, Pandurang Budhkar Marg, Worli, Mumbai-400 025 Registered Office: Trishul, 3rd floor, opposite Samarshwar Temple, Law Garden, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-380006

Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from Axis Bank Ltd. We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non Performing Asset on the respective dates mentioned hereunder in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of Axis Bank Ltd. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on the respective borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same.

Name of the Borrower /Address/ Co-borrower and Guarantor Name: 1. Mr. Dinesh Paswan Borrower R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 2. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 3. Mrs. Parvati Devi R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 4. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 5. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 6. Mrs. Parvati Devi R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 7. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 8. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 9. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 10. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 11. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 12. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 13. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 14. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 15. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 16. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 17. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 18. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 19. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 20. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 21. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 22. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 23. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 24. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 25. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 26. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 27. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 28. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 29. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 30. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 31. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 32. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 33. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 34. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 35. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 36. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 37. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 38. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 39. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 40. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 41. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 42. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 43. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 44. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 45. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 46. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 47. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 48. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 49. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 50. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 51. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 52. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 53. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 54. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 55. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 56. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 57. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 58. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 59. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 60. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 61. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 62. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 63. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 64. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 65. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 66. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 67. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 68. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 69. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 70. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 71. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 72. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 73. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 74. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 75. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 76. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 77. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 78. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 79. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 80. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 81. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 82. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 83. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 84. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 85. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 86. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 87. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 88. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 89. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 90. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 91. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 92. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 93. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 94. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 95. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 96. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 97. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 98. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 99. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 100. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 101. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 102. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 103. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 104. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 105. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 106. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 107. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 108. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 109. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 110. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 111. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 112. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 113. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 114. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 115. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 116. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 117. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 118. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 119. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 120. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 121. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 122. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 123. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 124. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 125. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 126. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 127. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 128. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 129. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 130. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 131. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 132. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 133. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 134. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 135. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 136. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 137. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 138. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 139. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 140. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 141. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 142. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 143. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 144. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 145. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 146. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 147. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 148. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 149. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 150. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 151. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 152. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 153. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 154. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 155. Mr. Dinesh Paswan R/o House No. 400, Street No. 15, Block-B, Shiv Kuni, Near Khan Vatika Barai New Delhi 110084 156. Mrs. Parvati Devi (Co-borrower) R/o Plot No. 103-B, Kh No. 7/25, Upper Ground Floor, Ultranchal Enclave, Street No. 1, Kamal Vihar, Barai, Near Khan Vatika Barai



Why Canada's intelligence reports matter for India-Canada relations?



SURJIT SINGH FLORA

Canada's latest public intelligence assessment does something the country often avoids in plain language. It says a small set of Canada-based Khalistani extremists is a national security threat, and it ties that threat to violence, fundraising, and organised support networks.

Indeed! the Khalistan movement has long been driven by a small but vocal set of activists, while most Sikhs, including many in Canada, focus on religion, work, and civic life rather than separatist politics. That distinction matters, because broad claims about an entire community blur the line between fringe advocacy and mainstream belief.

Even on the weekend Diljit Dosanjh was performing in Calgary, Canada, before a large crowd that cheered as he sang and moved around the raised stage in traditional attire under bright, colorful lights. During the concert, videos showed some pro-Khalistani attendees waving a flag linked to terror groups banned in India under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, or UAPA. Dosanjh noticed them, paused, and pointed toward the crowd. With the microphone in hand, he told them to stop the nuisance and take it somewhere else. His concerts have faced similar disruption attempts before, as pro-Khalistani flag-waving fans have tried to interrupt the show.

Canada's challenge is also more practical than rhetorical, since its laws protect free speech and worship, but they also require firm action when fundraising, intimidation, or violent extremism cross the line.

The political fallout has been real, especially after the 2023 G20 summit, when Ottawa's handling of India-related security and diplomacy drew sharp criticism and embarrassment. In that setting, the issue is less about a popular Sikh demand than about how Canada polices its own space, and whether it can separate lawful dissent from actors who push a separatist agenda.

That shift matters because the debate



has long been blurred by politics, diaspora tensions, and the wreckage of Canada-India mistrust. CSIS is now drawing a harder line. Its focus is on violent extremist networks, not on Sikh identity and not on peaceful support for Khalistan.

The report's central point is narrow but important: violent extremism is the target, not lawful political belief.

In its Public Report 2025, highlighted again in May 2026, CSIS says Canada-based Khalistani extremists, often shortened to "CBKEs," remain an active national security concern.

The agency says this small subset promotes a violent extremist agenda, plans or supports violence, and uses Canadian connections to back its cause. Most of that activity is described as directed at India, but CSIS also says it threatens Canada and Canadian interests abroad.

The wording matters. CSIS says no CBKE attack took place in Canada in 2025. Still, the agency does not treat the absence of a recent attack as proof of safety. It points to ongoing violent activity, extremist fundraising, and organised support efforts as enough to keep the threat in view.

That public clarity was overdue. For years, the issue sat in a political fog, where legitimate speech and violent militancy were often folded into the same argument. The report separates them.

Why the report places them under politically motivated violent extremism
CSIS puts these networks under "polit-

ically motivated violent extremism," or PMVE. In simple terms, that category covers people who try to force political change through violence or the threat of violence.

That classification is important because it keeps the focus on conduct. A person can hold separatist views without crossing a legal or security line. The concern begins when advocacy turns into threats, plots, intimidation, or organized material support for attacks.

In that sense, the report is less about ideology than method. Canada is saying the problem is violent action in pursuit of political goals.

How fundraising and community networks fit into the threat picture

The report says some extremists use Canadian groups and contacts to spread their message and raise money. It also says funds can come from community members who do not know where the money is going. That allegation is serious because it points to deception, not just open activism.

Public discussion around this issue often centers on trusted spaces, including temples, schools, and community groups. CSIS is more careful in its wording. It says some extremists use Canadian networks and unsuspecting people, which suggests that influence can travel through ordinary social ties rather than secret cells alone.

That is one reason the threat is hard to police. A violent network does not need a large public footprint if it can

borrow the credibility of a respected community setting.

Why this assessment matters beyond Canada's borders

This is not a narrow public order issue. CSIS links the threat to possible harm in Canada and abroad, especially in India. Once planning, money, messaging, and intimidation move across borders, the case shifts from local policing to national security.

The report also lands in a tense diplomatic setting. Canada and India have spent the past few years trading grave accusations, especially after Ottawa said Indian agents were linked to the 2023 killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia. India denies that charge. At the same time, India's long-standing complaint has been that Canada did not take Khalistani extremism seriously enough. This report partly answers that complaint, even as broader disputes remain unresolved.

The Air India Flight 182 anniversary gives the warning extra weight

The 40th anniversary of the Air India Flight 182 bombing hangs over this report. In 1985, the bomb killed 329 people, most of them Canadians. It remains the deadliest terrorist attack in Canadian history.

That memory strips away any temptation to treat Khalistani violence as distant or abstract. Canada has seen the cost before, and the victims were not someone else's problem. They were families in this country.

Historical memory does not prove every present claim. Yet it does explain why security agencies no longer speak about this issue as if it belongs only to foreign policy.

How the report could affect Canada-India relations and future enforcement

A public threat designation has practical effects. It can support tighter intelligence work, closer financial scrutiny, and more aggressive tracking of extremist fundraising or organized support activity. It may also shape how police and federal agencies prioritize investigations.

Diplomatically, the effect could cut in two directions. On one hand, it gives India public confirmation that Canada recognizes a violent extremist problem on its soil. On the other hand, the same report raises concerns about Indian foreign interference and transnational repression in Canada. So the path to better ties is not simple.

What matters now is follow-through. A threat named in a report matters less than a threat monitored, disrupted, and prosecuted.

The line between peaceful Khalistan advocacy and extremist activity

Canada's position is clear on paper. Peaceful support for Khalistan, however controversial, is protected political expression. That protection does not disappear because another government objects to the cause.

The line is crossed when activism turns into violence, fundraising for violent acts, threats, coercion, or organized support for attacks. That distinction is not legal fine print. It is the core test for a democracy that must protect speech while stopping political violence.

Too much of the public debate has treated this line as blurry. It is not. A rally, slogan, or referendum campaign is one thing. A network that channels money or support toward violence is another.

Why that distinction matters for civil rights and public trust

Precision matters because broad suspicion can poison public trust. If enforcement paints an entire Sikh diaspora with one brush, the state damages its own case and pushes communities away from cooperation.

A narrow, evidence-based approach does the opposite. It protects civil liberties, avoids guilt by association, and keeps pressure on the people who cross into criminal or terrorist conduct. That is also the only durable way to sep-

arate real security work from political theater.

Canada's report gets that point right. The harder task is keeping that discipline when rhetoric heats up.

In the end, Canada has now said plainly that violent Khalistani extremist networks are a security threat, even without a recent domestic attack. That matters because intelligence language shapes priorities, budgets, and enforcement.

The real test is not the wording in a public report. The test is whether Canada turns that assessment into sustained monitoring, stronger coordination, and credible action against violent networks, while protecting lawful speech and the broader Sikh community from lazy suspicion.

If that balance holds, the country will finally be treating national security as a matter of precision rather than posture.

Why Canada's Intelligence Reports Matter for India Relations

Canada's intelligence reports matter in India relations because they put alleged interference and repression into the language of state judgment, not just diplomatic dispute.

In the 2024 CSIS report, India appeared in a separate section and the language was direct, present-tense, and blunt about active concerns. The 2025 report used less space and shifted to "historically" when describing interference activity, yet it kept the core allegations alive through references to transnational repression, pressure on critics, and proxy relationships inside Canadian public life.

That change in tense matters because intelligence wording is never casual, and a softer phrase can suggest a narrower judgment without clearing the underlying suspicion. Dan Rogers, CSIS's director, said in February 2026 that the agency's threat assessment of India had not changed, so the report's tone softened while the concern stayed on the record.

That keeps the issue tied to domestic politics in Canada, where accusations about influence, community pressure, and state conduct make a clean reset harder, and they leave both governments with less room for trust, even as official contacts recover.

The author is a veteran journalist and freelance writer based in Brampton Canada

Pak PM thanks Trump for announcing pause on Hormuz operation



SAJJAD HUSSAIN
Islamabad

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday thanked US President Donald Trump for announcing a pause in the operation in the Strait of Hormuz.

His statement came hours after President Trump suspended "Project Freedom" to escort ships through the Strait of Hormuz, claiming progress in negotiations with Iran toward an agreement to end the war.

"I am grateful to President Donald Trump for his courageous leadership and timely announcement regarding the pause in Project Freedom in the Strait of Hormuz," PM Shehbaz, who is making efforts for permanent peace between the countries, said in a social media post on X. (PTI)

Bus, oil tanker crash in Indonesia kills at least 16

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Jakarta

A passenger bus collided head-on with a fuel tanker truck on a highway on Indonesia's Sumatra island on Wednesday, killing at least 16 people and injuring four others, officials said.

The crash occurred around midday on the Trans-Sumatra Highway in North Musi Rawas regency of South Sumatra province, when an intercity bus carrying at least 20 people struck a tanker truck travelling in the opposite direction, said Mugono, a local disaster management agency official. Mugono, who uses a



single name like many Indonesians, said preliminary findings indicate the bus - which was travelling from South Sumatra's Lubuklinggau city to Jambi, another city - may have emitted sparks shortly before the collision. This

may have prompted the driver to steer the vehicle toward the right side of the road in an attempt to avoid a more serious incident. However, an oil tanker truck was approaching at high speed, leaving little time to avoid a direct impact.

"The forceful impact triggered a fire that engulfed both vehicles, leaving many victims trapped inside," Mugono said. The dead include the bus driver and 13 passengers as well as the tanker's driver and assistant, all of whom burned to death inside the vehicles, Mugono said.

Four bus passengers survived the crash and were taken to a nearby health clinic, including three who suffered severe burn injuries and one who sustained minor injuries, Mugono said.

As the passenger manifest is still being traced, Mugono said authorities are still collecting data on the total

number of fatalities.

Photos and videos released by the National Search and Rescue Agency showed firefighters battling the blaze while thick plumes of black smoke and orange flames rose into the air. On the ground were the charred remains of the bus and tanker truck, with twisted metal scattered across the highway.

Rescuers, including disaster officers and traffic police, evacuated victims and cleared the wreckage, though several were pinned inside the vehicles, complicating rescue efforts and disrupting traffic along the highway, Margono said.

US military strike on alleged drug boat kills three in eastern Pacific

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Washington

The US military launched another strike Tuesday on a vessel suspected of transporting drugs in the eastern Pacific Ocean, killing 3 men.

The attack came a day after US forces struck an alleged drug boat in the Caribbean Sea, killing two people. The Trump administration's campaign of blowing up alleged drug-trafficking vessels in Latin American waters has persisted since early



September and killed at least 191 people in total.

Despite the Iran war, the strikes have ramped up again in recent weeks, showing that the administration's aggressive measures to stop what it calls

"narcoterrorism" in the Western Hemisphere are not letting up. The military has not provided evidence that any of the vessels were carrying drugs.

The attacks began as the US built up its largest military presence in the region in generations and came months ahead of the raid in January that captured then-Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro. He was brought to New York to face drug trafficking charges and has pleaded not guilty.

Bangladesh FM meets China's top advisor

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Beijing

Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman, who is here on his maiden visit to China, on Wednesday met China's top political advisor Wang Huning and discussed bilateral relations between the two countries.

Wang is a member of the high-level Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the ruling Communist Party of China



and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Wang said China will continue to develop friendly relations with Bangladesh based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

UK metropolitan police launch unit to combat antisemitic hate crimes

ADITI KHANNA
London

The Metropolitan Police on Wednesday launched a dedicated Community Protection Team made up of an initial tranche of 100 extra officers to tackle rising antisemitic hate crimes in London.

The new team brings together neighbourhood policing, specialist protection and counter-terrorism capabilities to provide a "more visible, intelligence-led and coordinated" presence focused on protecting Jewish communities across London.

It follows a spate of anti-Jewish crimes in the UK capital, including last week's terrorist attack in Golders Green that left two men with serious stab injuries.

"The creation of a new Community Protection Team of around 100 officers is an important step in strengthening our response to the sustained threats Jewish communities are facing," said Met Police Commissioner Sir Mark Rowley.

"It brings together experienced local officers who know their communities, supported by specialist capabilities, to provide more visible, consistent and intelligence-led protection. A settled, long-term model built around local teams will be far



more effective than repeated emergency responses, reducing risk and delivering lasting reassurance," he said.

The force said it is already deploying an additional 1,000 officer shifts per week, relying on overtime and the short-term redeployment of officers from across London.

The UK's police chief welcomed the government's 18 million pounds funding, which has gone towards thousands of additional officer shifts at a time of "exceptional pressure". But, he stressed, the problem requires long-term investment to sustain the policing response to the "growing threat" of antisemitism.

"We are working with (the) government and the Mayor (Sadiq Khan) to ensure the approach we are building can be sustained over time, not just for Jewish communities, but as a model that can support other communities across London when facing elevated risk," added Mark Rowley. (PTI)

India highlights people-centric migration governance at a global round table

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

India underscored its commitment to people-centric migration governance during a high-level round table on the implementation of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, emphasising inclusive growth, digital innovation, and international cooperation as key pillars of its approach.

Addressing distinguished delegates and global leaders, India reaffirmed that placing people at the heart of migration policy remains a core principle guiding its nation-



al strategy. Officials noted that the country's policies are aligned with the objectives of the Global Compact while remaining adaptable to evolving global migration

trends. India described its migration governance framework as both holistic and pragmatic, shaped by coordinated institutional mechanisms and active societal par-

ticipation. A central aim, representatives said, is to ensure that migration is a matter of choice—supported by opportunity, dignity, and access to resources.

To this end, the government has prioritised inclusive development, livelihood generation, and financial inclusion. Recognising the growing importance of mobility in a globalised economy, India highlighted its expanding network of international partnerships.

The country has established 27 migration and mobility agreements with 23 nations, facilitating structured, skills-based migration

pathways. These agreements place strong emphasis on worker welfare, social protection, and ethical recruitment practices, while safeguarding the rights of Indian nationals abroad.

Officials also stressed the importance of fair and transparent migration systems.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure has played a transformative role in this regard. Platforms such as the eMigrate system, the National Career Service portal, and the Skill India Digital Hub are enhancing governance, improving transparency, and protecting migrant workers from exploitation. These

digital initiatives are complemented by pre-departure orientation programs designed to better prepare workers for overseas employment.

The welfare of migrants, particularly those in vulnerable situations, remains a top priority. India pointed to initiatives such as the India Community Welfare Fund and the MADAD portal, which provide critical support to citizens abroad, including legal assistance, financial aid, and insurance coverage.

Responsive consular services have further strengthened the country's ability to assist its diaspora in times of need. Skilling was highlight-

ed as another cornerstone of India's migration strategy.

Through Skill India International Centres and digital platforms, the country is aligning its workforce with global standards while working with partner nations to advance mutual recognition of skills.

Despite progress, India acknowledged ongoing challenges, including the need to strengthen social protection systems, address migrant vulnerabilities, and improve data collection and analysis.

Officials emphasised the importance of leveraging technology, deepening partnerships, and adopting a life-

cycle approach to migration governance.

Concluding its intervention, India called for sustained international collaboration to translate shared commitments into tangible outcomes. "Our collective effort must be to ensure that migration is safe, orderly, and genuinely beneficial for all," the delegation stated.

The round table brought together global stakeholders to review progress and identify future pathways for implementing the Global Compact, reinforcing a shared commitment to humane and effective migration governance.



PROSPECT

Riafy wins Google Cloud Partner of the year award for Accessibility Innovation

AI company Riafy Technologies has been named a 2026 Google Cloud Partner of the Year in the Social Impact: Accessibility Innovation category at Google Cloud Next 2026. The award was presented to CEO John Mathew and COO Neeraj Manoharan during the event held in Las Vegas. The recognition highlights the increasing role of artificial intelligence in making digital services more accessible, particularly in markets where complexity and usability challenges continue to limit adoption. The announcement comes amid rising global visibility for India's AI ecosystem, following a series of national and industry-level discussions focused on expanding access and driving practical, large-scale applications of AI technologies. Riafy was recognised for its enterprise AI platform, R10, which powers conversational AI agents. These agents enable users to interact with digital systems using natural language, allowing them to complete tasks without navigating complex interfaces. Riafy's AI systems are deployed across multiple industries, including aviation, banking, telecom, automotive, and commerce.



Dibang Valley: Where nature remains untouched



COL DIBYA SHANKAR BHATTACHARYA (RETD)

Tucked away in the eastern edge of Arunachal Pradesh, Dibang Valley is one of the most remote and least populated regions of our country. Located in the eastern Himalayas, this valley shares its northern border with Tibet and is surrounded by the rugged Mishmi Hills. Often called India's least populated district, it is spread over a vast area with very few settlements. The district headquarters, Anini, is one of the most isolated towns in Northeast India.

A Land Shaped by Mountains and Rivers

Dibang Valley is named after the Dibang River, which flows through deep gorges and valleys before joining the Brahmaputra. Its landscape is dramatic and raw, comprising of snow covered peaks, dense evergreen forests, highaltitude lakes, fast-flowing rivers and waterfalls. The region lies at the meeting



point of the Himalayas and the Indo-Burma ranges, with steep terrain and a rich natural diversity.

The environment is still largely untouched, making it one of the last true wilderness areas of India.

Dibang Valley lies within the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot, one of the richest Ecological Zones in the world with over 6,000 plant species, around 100 mammal species and nearly 680 bird species.

Some of the distinct animals found in the valley include Snow Leopard, Red Panda, Mishmi Takin and the Himalayan Black Bear.

This biodiversity thrives because the region remains largely undisturbed.



digital presence. Despite its beauty, it has only recently started gaining attention as a hidden travel destination.

How to get to Dibang Valley

Reaching Dibang Valley requires a mix of air, rail, and road travel, as it is one of the remotest regions in the country. The nearest airport is in Dibrugarh, from where you can travel by road to Roing - the main entry point to the valley. Another option is to take a train to Tinsukia, which is well connected to major cities in India, and then continue by road to Roing via the Bhupen Hazarika Setu (Dhola - Sadiya Bridge).

From Roing, the journey continues by road to Anini, the headquarters of Upper Dibang Valley, though this stretch can take several hours due to its mountainous terrain and road conditions. For those seeking a quicker option, helicopter services sometimes operate between Dibrugarh / Roing and Anini, depending on climatic conditions. Regardless of the route, the journey itself is long but incredibly scenic, offering views of rivers, forests, and the dramatic landscapes of the eastern Himalayas.

The author is a well-known Army veteran, strategic affairs expert and a practicing advocate in Gauhati High Court

Muthoot Finance marks 15 years of listing on Indian stock exchanges; market cap surges from ₹60 billion to ₹1.5 trillion

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ Kochi

Muthoot Finance Ltd., India's largest gold loan NBFC, marks a significant milestone as it completes 15 years since its listing on the Indian stock exchanges. The occasion reflects the company's remarkable journey from its origins in Kerala as a family-owned business to becoming a globally recognised financial services institution and a trusted Indian household name.

Since its listing in 2011, Muthoot Finance has demonstrated consistent growth, operational resilience, and strong financial performance. The company's market capitalisation has grown from approximately ₹60 billion in 2011 to recently crossing ₹1.5 trillion, representing an increase of over 25 times.

This extraordinary achievement is a direct result of public confidence, as reflected by the company's recognition as India's No. 1 most trusted financial services brand for 10 consecutive years as per the TRA Brand Trust Report. Over the past five years alone, the company's stock price has more than doubled, underscoring continued investor confidence and sustained growth momentum.

During this period, Muthoot Finance has significantly expanded its operational scale. The company has played a critical role in unlocking the value of idle household gold and channelising it into productive economic use,



impacting over 2.5 lakh customers every single day across India. At a consolidated level, the Group's branch network has expanded to 7,500+ branches, with nearly 70 per cent located in semi-urban and rural areas, reinforcing its commitment to financial inclusion.

This deep reach is backed by strong consolidated financial milestones, with consolidated loan Assets Under Management reaching an all-time high of ₹1.6 Lakhs crore as on December 31, 2025. Gold loan operations are secured by a state-of-the-art 7-layer safety and security infrastructure, which has resulted in zero successful burglary attempts in the past six years.

Commenting on the milestone, George Jacob Muthoot, Chairman, Muthoot Finance Ltd., said, "Our journey has been guided by the core values of trust, integrity, and customer-centricity. This milestone is not just about numbers, but about the

impact we have created, enabling access to credit, empowering households, and upholding the highest standards of trust and governance. As we move forward, we will continue to build on this strong foundation with a sustained focus on customer service, innovation, and integrity."

George Alexander Muthoot, Managing Director, Muthoot Finance Ltd., added, "Crossing a ₹1.5 trillion market cap is more than a financial achievement; it is a measurable validation of the trust Indian households and investors have placed in us for over 15 years. We pioneered the organised gold loan industry, and our deep understanding of the financial needs of households remains our anchor. We are committed to build on this legacy by accelerating growth and creating long-term value for all our stakeholders."

Muthoot Finance's institutional

strength is reinforced by its pedigree. The company has over three lakh shareholders and has been consistently paying dividends every year since 2012. We are classified as an Upper Layer NBFC by RBI, a constituent of the NIFTY Next 50 index of NSE, and proudly the first listed company from Kerala to cross the ₹1 lakh crore market cap. Furthermore, the company has been certified as a "Great Place to Work" for five consecutive years.

Building on this strong foundation, the Muthoot Group is evolving into a diversified financial services conglomerate, expanding its presence across multiple lending and financial service segments.

This strategic diversification reflects the Group's vision to create a comprehensive financial ecosystem that caters to the evolving needs of customers while ensuring long-term, sustainable growth. This commitment to sustainability includes extensive initiatives in CSR and ISR with over ₹500 crore spent since 2014, impacting over 5 million lives across India.

Muthoot Finance's growth has been anchored in its customer-centric approach, and ability to adapt to evolving market dynamics, enabling it to remain resilient across economic cycles.

As the company enters its next phase of growth, it will continue to focus on expanding access to credit, leveraging technology, and reinforcing its leadership in the gold loan segment.

Homebuyers' cheating case: CBI files chargesheet against builders, bankers



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

The CBI has filed a chargesheet against Greater Noida-based AVJ Developers (India) Pvt Ltd, bank officials and others for allegedly cheating financial institutions and homebuyers, officials said Wednesday. In its chargesheet filed before a special CBI court here, the agency has listed AVJ Developers, its sister concern Kesar Builders Pvt Ltd, their directors, officials from Bank of India, UCO Bank and ICICI Bank, and proxy homebuyers as accused, they said.

The case pertains to large-scale cheating of homebuyers by the builders and public servants causing wrongful loss to financial institutions and innocent homebuyers, a CBI spokesperson said in a statement. "Investigation conducted by the CBI has revealed that the accused builder company and its directors, in conspiracy with public servants and other private persons, allegedly induced homebuyers/investors through false assurances and fraudulent representations and obtained financial benefits by resorting to illegal and

deceptive means," she said. The accused bank officers allegedly abused their official position to facilitate the illegal acts of the builder extending undue pecuniary advantage to the company causing corresponding wrongful loss to the concerned financial institutions and the homebuyers, the spokesperson said.

The CBI investigation also showed that some of the accused private persons acted as proxy and fictitious homebuyers, and in connivance with the builder, misrepresented facts before the financial institutions to obtain home loans.

DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

HOW TO SOLVE IT

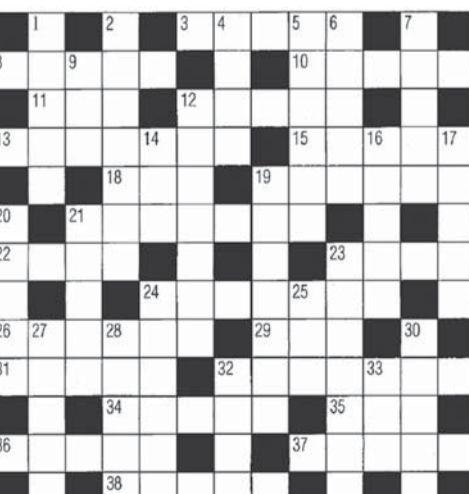
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction - no maths involved.



SOLUTION (6.5.26)

8	2	3	7	4	6	9	5	1
7	6	5	1	8	9	2	3	4
1	4	9	3	2	5	7	8	6
6	7	4	2	5	3	1	9	8
3	1	2	9	6	8	4	7	5
9	5	8	4	1	7	6	2	3
5	9	7	6	3	1	8	4	2
4	3	6	8	9	2	5	1	7
2	8	1	5	7	4	3	6	9

DOUBLE CROSSWORD THURSDAY | MAY 7, 2026



ACROSS

- Snappy contribution from Murphy? (5)
- Where to shoot a vehicle out of a race (5)
- Where Americans get cross when drinks are interrupted (5)
- Don't allow extra decoration (3)
- He can make the grade (5)
- Shorten the crossing (7)
- Historic mines around central Whitechapel (5)
- Many an own goal by one of the Rovers (3)
- Like the effort by everyone supporting the strike (3-3)
- Gas with me and an old bigwig (7)
- Makes low noises (4)

DOWN

- Vessel getting past, broad in the beam (5)
- In Australia, worn steps (7)
- A trip on the line in red, possibly (4)
- Such a diet presumably has iron in it (6)
- Threat by the Italian (5)
- Language of a social worker in hearty rebuke (5)
- Jack's grateful utterance (3)
- Intellectual, possibly hard boiled leader (7)
- Little girl, so how can she be in her dotage? (3)
- Managed to catch a boy (5)

- Gregory, perhaps, joined by a lesser actor in London (4)
- United with the right one in a dream set-up (7)
- Moved upon seeing a strange dove with the tail of a thrush? (6)
- As mined in Korea? (3)
- Can she wail alluringly? (5)
- Entertaining purveyor of nonsense at the end of the pier? (7)
- Said to have stayed sober (5)
- A United Kingdom flier (3)
- Writer who always had a plot (5)
- She nags restlessly about an early start (5)
- Can this zodiacal sign mean birds? (5)
- Minced steak? You bet! (5)
- In making such a barometer, an emperor had to help out (7)
- Just one failure is wrong (5)
- Drive in the open country around central Austria (5)
- Look to grow old in an ennobling way (7)
- He advises soldiers to finish war (6)
- An heiress's displeasure (3)
- Silly rhyme, not plain (5)
- Heavenly figure on a broken seat (5)
- He's a card! (5)
- Fortune made by one sort of driver (4)
- Maybe an extra bit of exercise (3)

SOLUTION (6.5.26)

- ACROSS
- Champ
 - SI-IF
 - Allerion
 - Fru-it
 - Pours
 - Crep-t
 - Be-ever-ed
 - VIM
 - Anon
 - Alsace
 - PI-ny
 - 20.liches
 22. Side
 24. Die
 25. Pi-cad-or
 26. Basil
 27. Spoon
 28. Du-sty
 29. Scot-ter
 30. Jesse
 31. Snare (drum)
- DOWN
2. Hard-EN
 3. Maiden
 4. PH (rev.)
 5. Be-ar-d
 6. Sopilly
 7. Knot
 8. For-MIC
 12. Cells
 13. Rabid
 14. V-O-ice
 15. Val-fo
 16. Meter
 18. Anvil
 19. Pen-ance
 21. Ti-py-le
 22. Sa-tur-n
 23. Doctor
 25. Pinta
 26. B-O-S-s
 28. Des

NBCC marks new milestone with foundation stone for state-of-the-Art IIFT campus in Delhi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

■ New Delhi

NBCC (India) Limited, the Navratna Central Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, on May 5 laid the foundation stone for a new campus of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade (IIFT) at Maidangarhi, New Delhi. The project, is being executed on a design, engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) basis, carries a sanctioned cost of around ₹350 crore.

The ceremony was presided over by Dr KP Mahadevaswamy, Chairman & Managing Director of NBCC (India) Ltd., who served as the Chief Guest. The function was also attended by Dr Suman Kumar, Director (Commercial), alongside senior dignitaries, institutional stakeholders, and officers from NBCC.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Mahadevaswamy emphasised that this project is not merely an expansion of IIFT's physical footprint, but a long-term investment in the institution's ability to compete and collaborate on the world stage.

The new IIFT campus is being developed on a 7.55-acre site in South Delhi, strategically located near Chhatarpur with excellent connectivity to key parts of the city, including metro stations, arterial road networks, and the Indira Gandhi International Airport. Envisioned as a modern and integrated academic hub, the campus will



have a total built-up area of nearly 54,000 sq. m., designed to complement and expand the capabilities of the institute's existing campus. The project aims to provide a holistic environment that fosters academic excellence, research innovation, and global engagement.

The development incorporates energy-efficient systems such as LED lighting, solar photovoltaic installations and advanced HVAC systems, along with passive design strategies that enable over 80 percent daylight utilization in regularly occupied spaces. The campus will also feature rainwater harvesting, water recycling systems, low environmental impact construction materials and efficient waste management practices, ensuring reduced ecological footprint and enhanced resource

efficiency. In addition to its academic and residential features, the campus will be equipped with modern infrastructure including two-level basement parking with capacity for over 400 vehicles, barrier-free access in compliance with universal design standards, advanced fire safety systems and well-planned circulation networks for pedestrians and vehicles. The design integrates landscaped courtyards, open spaces, and interconnected pathways, creating a dynamic and interactive campus environment. For NBCC, this project adds another landmark to a portfolio that spans some of the country's most significant institutional and government infrastructure. As a Navratna CPSE with deep expertise in large-scale project execution, NBCC's involvement is a mark of the project's ambition and the confidence placed in its delivery capabilities.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar Advertisement No.4/2026

Online applications are invited for the various Non-Teaching posts in the University. Online registration of application for these posts will start w.e.f. 07-05-2026 and end on 28-05-2026. Last date for submitting Hard Copy of the online submitted application is 04-06-2026. For further details visit University Website: <http://www.digital.gndu.ac.in>. Amritsar Registrar 06-05-2026 2426/12/2026-27/11242 Dated CHD :- 06/05/2026

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar Advertisement No.03/2026

Walk-in-Interview

Eligible candidates desirous to Join the post of Medical Officer (Male) in the University Health Centre on contract basis on a fixed salary should attend the walk-in-interview. As per details on www.digital.gndu.ac.in. 06-05-2026 Registrar Amritsar 2426/12/2026-27/11243 Dated CHD :- 06/05/2026



BRIEFLY

IGU TO SEND THREE-MEMBER TEAM FOR QUEEN SIRIKIT CUP



Young golfer Guntas Kaur Sandhu will spearhead the Indian challenge at the Queen Sirikit Cup after the IGU named a three-member squad for the prestigious Asia-Pacific amateur team championship to be held in Indonesia from May 12 to 15. Organised by the Asia-Pacific Golf Confederation (APGC) in association with The R&A (world golf rules governing body), a total of 15 countries, including defending champions South Korea, will be competing in the tournament.

The other countries include Australia, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar, New Zealand, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. India will be led by Sandhu, the 2025 Ladies Order of Merit champion. The Chandigarh golfer has been consistent in 2026 as well with six wins under her belt and 17 top-10 finishes from 20 starts in the 2025-26 Indian Golf Union (IGU) season.

The other members of the team are Haryana's Ceerat Kang and Keya Badugu of Delhi. (PTI)

MARTA KOSTYUK WITHDRAWS FROM ITALIAN OPEN



Fresh off the biggest title of her career, Marta Kostyuk of Ukraine withdrew from the Italian Open due to hip and ankle issues. Kostyuk won the Madrid Open on Saturday and is up to a career-best No. 15 in the rankings this week. Having also won another clay-court title in Rouen, France, the week before Madrid, Kostyuk is on an 11-match winning streak. "After the best stretch of my career, I was looking forward to Rome. But sometimes your body has other plans, and over the past few days I've been dealing with a hip issue. With my ankle still not fully at 100 per cent, it's just not smart to keep pushing right now, so I won't be competing there this year," Kostyuk posted on Instagram on Tuesday as the tournament in Rome began. (AP)

Arsenal enters Champions League final after 20 years

MATTIAS KAREN
London

Arsenal is back in the Champions League final for the first time in 20 years thanks to a late first-half goal from Bukayo Saka that secured a 1-0 win over Atletico Madrid on Tuesday.

Saka was on hand to slot in the rebound after Leandro Trossard's shot was saved by Jan Oblak in the 45th minute to put Arsenal up 2-1 on aggregate in the second leg of their semifinal.

The Gunners' stingy defense did the rest as Arsenal has now kept a clean sheet at home in all three knockout rounds. The team also conceded a competition-low four goals in winning all eight of its matches in the league phase. It will be only Arsenal's second final in Europe's premier competition, having



lost the 2006 title match to Barcelona.

This time it will face either defending champion Paris Saint-Germain or Bayern Munich in Budapest, Hungary, on May 30. PSG

won the pulsating first leg of their semifinal 5-4, and the second leg is in Munich on Wednesday.

It could prove a special season for the London club, which is now one game

away from its first European Cup title and three games away from a first Premier League crown in 22 years.

The Gunners are guaranteed the domestic league title if they win their remain-

ing three matches, after closest rival Manchester City was held to a 3-3 draw at Everton on Monday.

Atletico had a chance to equalise in the 51st when Giuliano Simeone chased down a poor backward header from William Saliba to round goalkeeper David Raya, but center back Gabriel did just enough to make him put his effort wide.

Atletico was then denied a possible penalty when Arsenal defender Riccardo Calafiori stepped on the foot of Antoine Griezmann in the area, as referee Daniel Siebert awarded a free kick to the hosts for an earlier incident instead.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone, clad in his customary all-black attire, grew increasingly agitated on the sidelines as the decisions went against his club and the search for an equaliser

proved fruitless.

He was eventually booked for his remonstrations in stoppage time. Simeone led his team to the Champions League final in 2014 and 2016, losing both times to Real Madrid, but will have to wait for a third chance to deliver the club's first European Cup.

Arsenal striker Viktor Gyokeres had a great chance to double the lead on a counterattack in the 66th when Piero Hincapie picked him out with a cross but he side-footed his effort over the bar.

As expected, though, this matchup never looked likely to descend into the kind of free-flowing back-and-forth attacking play of the PSG-Bayern game, as Arsenal's defence held firm.

Whichever team wins that second semifinal, the final in Budapest promises to be a contrast in styles. (AP)

Football club fined for not doing enough on mental health issue

ASSOCIATED PRESS
Melbourne

Australian football club Carlton has been fined 75,000 Australian dollars (USD 54,000) for its lapse handling of a player's on-field mental health episode.

Elijah Hollands played in Carlton's Australian Football League game against Collingwood on April 16, with film footage from the game causing concern for his welfare from fans and others.

The footage showed Hollands appearing confused and moving erratically, with some noting his unusual actions during the warm-up, including an attempted kick at goal which traveled only a few meters.

Hollands, 24, was admitted to hospital five days later. Elijah Hollands's father, former AFL player Ben Hollands, pledged on social media to help his son and urged others to check on their friends if they are struggling.

Australian Football League chief Andrew Dillon on Tuesday said there were sufficient visual cues and performance data from the game,



in addition to knowledge of Hollands' history, to know that "he should have been removed from play earlier than he was." The failure to remove Hollands from play earlier brought the game into disrepute, Dillon said, adding that the charge was against the club rather than individuals. Carlton will pay the fine to the AFL's mental health partner, Headspace, which supports youth mental health.

"What transpired during the game was something we haven't seen before, and while Elijah did undergo checks, he should not have been left on the field for that period of time," Dillon said. "The incident has highlighted something important for our game: While our physical injury protocols are strong and well-understood, mental health presentations can be variable, and are complex."

LIV Golf had a blank canvas, the PGA Tour could use one as it tries to solve a packed schedule

DOUG FERGUSON
New York

LIV Golf had a seemingly endless supply of Saudi money that suddenly is coming to an end. Overlooked is another of its assets — one with no price tag — the PGA Tour would love to have.

A blank canvas. Even as LIV Golf CEO Scott O'Neil was trying to present hope for a future without the financial muscle of Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, the PGA Tour was moving from one signature event to another on the short road to Aronimink for the PGA Championship.

It's a schedule that doesn't make sense.

From the first major at the Masters through the second major at the PGA Championship, the top players face three \$20 million signature events and two majors over six weeks. That followed another brutal stretch of three \$20 million events and The Players Championship over five weeks on both sides of the country.

What's the solution? The

Future Competition Committee is working on it, and no doubt has found it difficult to blow up and rebuild a model in place for 100 years with tweaks along the way.

The idea was to get the best players competing against each other more often, and not many would be opposed to a concept like that. It was four years ago when 23 players met privately in Delaware to rally around the tour and against LIV Golf (three of them later defected to LIV).

From that emerged a 2023 schedule where the top players committed to a 20-event schedule in which they would compete against each

other at least 17 times. Rory McIlroy skipped two of them.

And McIlroy already has missed two signature events this year after winning another Masters. Four other players from the top 15 in the world didn't enter the Cadillac Championship last week at Doral. World No. 1 Scottie Scheffler isn't playing this week at Quail Hollow because he faces as many as four in a row — two of them home events in the Dallas area — starting with the PGA Championship. Brian Rolapp, the PGA Tour CEO who appointed Tiger Woods to lead the competition committee, was aware of this crunch when it was announced last August. (AP)



Shanghai World Cup: Compound teams flop, back empty-handed



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Shanghai

Indian compound men's and women's teams, considered strong medal contenders, endured a disappointing outing in Stage 2 of the Archery World Cup, failing to secure a podium finish after crumbling in crunch situations here on Wednesday. The biggest setback came from the women's team, who had won India's only gold medal at the season-opening World Cup in Mexico last month. The trio of Jyothi Surekha Vennam, Pragati and Aditi Swami crashed out in the quarterfinals, losing 227-233 to Turkey.

The Indian trio failed to match the consistency of Hazal Burun, Defne Cakmak and Emine Rabia Oguz, who seized control from the second end and never let go, sealing a comfortable six-point win.

The men's team of Ojas Deotale, Sahil Jadhav, and Kushal Dalal raised hopes by reaching the semifinals but faltered when it mattered the most, returning empty handed after back-to-back defeats under pressure. In the bronze medal match, India lost to China in a dramatic shoot-off after scores were tied at 234-234.

Even the shoot-off ended level with three perfect arrows each, but the Chinese had two arrows closer to the centre (X) compared to India's one, clinching the contest.

India had led by one point (118-117) at the halfway stage, but Shi Jingyu, Liu Jinyu and Qi Xiangshuo fought back to level scores in the third end. A tense final end saw both teams tied at 58, with India dropping crucial points under pressure. The semifinal defeat was equally telling.

The third-seeded Indians lost 234-235 to seventh-seeded USA despite leading through the first three ends. After a perfect opening end of 60, India held a 177-176 advantage but managed only three 10s in the final six arrows, compared to five by James Lutz, Louis

Price and Gaius Carter. The twin losses once again exposed India's inability to hold nerve in decisive moments — a worrying trend for a team that has long relied on compound events as their biggest medal prospect. With less than four months to go for the Asian Games, the results also underline deeper issues.

The continued absence of a full-time foreign coach and lack of structured planning have started to show on the field, raising serious questions about India's medal prospects in the continental showpiece in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan.

The mixed team pair of Ojas Deotale and Aditi Swami now remains India's only hope in the team events.

Indians qualify in individual section: There was, however, some respite in the individual section, with all Indian compound archers progressing to the round of 32.

In the men's draw, Abhishek Verma, Sahil Jadhav, Kushal Dalal and Ojas Deotale won their respective matches to advance. Verma is set to face Jadhav in an all-India round of 32 clash. Among women, 33rd seed Madhura edged past China's Wang Yue 148-147 but faces a tough test against top seed Alexis Ruiz of the USA next.

Jyothi, who had a disappointing 21st-place finish in qualification, bounced back in style with a perfect 150 to defeat Diana Yunusova of Kazakhstan. Former world champion Aditi, India's best performer in qualification at 13th, dropped just three points in a convincing win over Great Britain's Isabelle Carpenter. Pragati also survived a close contest, edging out Ong Madeleine Xue Li of Singapore 143-142.

The recurve qualification rounds are currently underway, but given their poor showing in Stage 1 and the presence of dominant Korean archers this time around, India's chances in that section appear slim.

Atletico Madrid's Champions League hopes dashed yet again

TALES AZZONI
Madrid

After yet another Champions League elimination, Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone rallied with his players in front of the team's fans. He yelled, pumped his fists and applauded as the Atletico fans chanted support despite a 1-0 semifinal loss to Arsenal that ended the team's hopes of winning the European competition for the first time.

There was no desperation, no anguish, no extreme sadness. Simeone was at peace, proud of how far Atletico made it. "No one expected that we would be here," Simeone said.

"We competed with a team that had so much strength and power. We gave it our all and now we have to accept the place that we're in. I'm grateful to our supporters and our players. I feel proud to be where I am right now."

Simeone wasn't even complaining with the refereeing despite two penalty calls that didn't go Atletico's way in the second half. "If we got knocked out, it's because our opponents deserved to get through," Simeone said.

"If you ask me how I feel, I feel calm and peaceful. The team gave



absolutely everything." Atletico, the third power in Spanish soccer behind Barcelona and Real Madrid, was playing in the Champions League semifinals for the first time in a decade — since it lost the final to rival Madrid in 2016.

It was the only Spanish team to reach the last four of the European tournament this season, eliminating five-time champion Barcelona in the quarterfinals. Atletico ended the season without lifting a trophy after

not reaching the final in the Spanish Super Cup, losing the final of the Copa del Rey to Real Sociedad, and struggling in the Spanish league, where it sits in fourth place, 25 points behind leader Barcelona with four games remaining.

"There were high hopes for us in the Copa and in the Champions League," Atletico midfielder Koke Resurreccion said. "We were not consistent in the league, we were not at the level we should have been. But we

lost the Copa in a penalty shootout and in the Champions League we were this close to advancing." "This group has been improving a lot and we have very young players who certainly will help this team fight for many great things in the near future," added the 34-year-old Koke, whose future with Atletico remained unclear.

Griezmann's European dream over: The loss to Arsenal likely put an end to Antoine Griezmann's hopes of adding a Champions League title to his career achievements. The Franco forward is joining MLS club Orlando City after the season.

The 35-year-old Griezmann missed a penalty kick in the 2016 Champions League final that Atletico lost to Real Madrid.

"He has been an amazing player," Atletico goalkeeper Jan Oblak said. "We are sad not just for him but for all the fans of Atleti, too. Everyone was looking for this final but we didn't reach it, so it's a difficult moment."

Simeone praised both Griezmann and Koke after the loss. "We competed well with Barcelona in the quarterfinal, and in the semifinal against Arsenal. We have done incredibly well, and that's down to the hard work by players, including Antoine Griezmann," the coach said. (AP)

FIFA extends ban on Argentina's Gianluca Prestianni

GRAHAM DUNBAR
Geneva

FIFA confirmed a global ban Wednesday for Gianluca Prestianni that will rule the Benfica winger out of two World Cup games in the United States if he is selected in Argentina's squad. UEFA imposed a six-game ban — with three games deferred on probation — on Prestianni two weeks ago for his verbal abuse of Real Madrid's Brazilian forward Vinicius Junior in the Champions League. Prestianni covered his mouth with his jersey while using the insult. FIFA has now, as expected, fulfilled UEFA's request to apply the ban beyond European competitions to the World Cup that starts next month.

"The FIFA Disciplinary Committee has decided to extend the six-match ban imposed by UEFA on Benfica

player Gianluca Prestianni to have worldwide effect," the soccer body said in a statement.

It is unclear if Prestianni is still in Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni's plans to defend the World Cup title. Argentina starts against Algeria on June 17 in Kansas City and plays Austria five days later in Arlington, Texas. The group also includes World Cup debutant Jordan.

The 20-year-old winger made his first and only appearance for Argentina in a friendly in November. He was an unused substitute in Argentina's most recent game, a World Cup warmup against Zambia on March 31.

When Scaloni called up Prestianni in March for the warmups, he did not address the ongoing UEFA investigation. Scaloni noted he needed the Benfica player because Paulo Dybala



was unavailable.

UEFA had investigated Prestianni for a racist insult alleged by Vinicius with support from Madrid teammate Kylian Mbappe.

They claimed Prestianni used the Spanish word for "monkey," which he disguised by raising his red jersey to cover his mouth.

UEFA could not prove the racial insult which Prestianni denied, though he admitted using a homophobic slur.

Prestianni already served the first game of his ban when UEFA barred him playing against Madrid in the second leg of their Champions League knockout playoff in February.

Last week, FIFA's push to make it a red card offense for World Cup players to cover their mouth when insulting an opponent was passed by soccer's rulemaking panel known as IFAB.

If Prestianni is not selected by Argentina, he will serve the rest of his ban in a UEFA-organized European competition next season. (AP)



RCB look to rediscover batting rhythm against struggling LSG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Lucknow

Royal Challengers Bengaluru will look to rediscover their batting rhythm after a rare collapse in their previous outing as they aim to strengthen their play-off push against bottom-placed Lucknow Super Giants in a reverse leg IPL match here on Thursday.

RCB are currently placed second on the table but remain tied on 12 points with four other teams. They will need to regroup quickly after suffering a four-wicket defeat against Gujarat Titans in Ahmedabad.

RCB's batting imploded dramatically in that match, slipping from 79 for 2 to 96 for 6 in the space of three overs before being bowled out for 155.

Despite the collapse, RCB's batting this season has largely revolved around aggressive intent. Virat Kohli has been in sublime form with 379 runs, while Devdutt Padikkal and skipper Rajat Patidar have also made important contributions.

With regular opener Phil Salt ruled out due to a finger injury, the responsibility of providing explosive starts alongside Kohli will rest on Jacob Bethell. Bethell showcased his immense talent during the recent T20 World Cup and it is only a matter of



time before unleashes his full range of strokes in the IPL.

Having had a week's break, RCB will head into the contest fresher than their opponents. In contrast, LSG are languishing at the bottom of the standings after losing their last six matches.

They were beaten by Kolkata Knight Riders via a Super Over in a tied game, and then failed to arrest their slide as they were comprehensively beaten by Mumbai Indians by six wickets in their

previous outing.

LSG's campaign has unravelled due to inconsistent performances, tactical instability and repeated failures to close out matches.

Key batters such as Mitchell Marsh, skipper Rishabh Pant, Aiden Markram and Nicholas Pooran have struggled for consistency, while frequent reshuffling of the batting order has further compounded their problems. Pant, in particular, finds himself under scrutiny

over his white-ball form.

LSG's batting line-up now faces a formidable RCB bowling attack spearheaded by veteran Bhuvneshwar Kumar and Australia pacer Josh Hazlewood.

The experienced duo have operated effectively in tandem this season, notably dismantling Delhi Capitals for just 75 on April 27. Seamer Bhuvneshwar has been among the leading wicket-takers, making the most of the new-ball, while Hazlewood has consistently delivered high-impact spells.

Krunal Pandya too has enjoyed an impressive campaign, claiming nine wickets and troubling batters with an effective bouncer variation.

Suyash Sharma and Romario Shepherd also impressed in the previous game, although RCB's batting collapse proved decisive in the defeat to GT.

For LSG, Prince Yadav and Mohsin Khan have been the stand-out bowlers with 13 and 10 wickets respectively. Mohammed Shami started the season strongly but has struggled for consistency and leaked runs in recent matches.

LSG's pace attack has repeatedly lost control in the death overs, allowing opponents to accelerate sharply and will face a tough task when they face RCB batters.



IPL final in Ahmedabad, playoffs in Dharamsala, New Chandigarh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

Ahmedabad will host the IPL final for a second successive season on May 31 replacing the "originally designated" Bengaluru, the BCCI announced on Wednesday while allotting Qualifier 1 to Dharamsala and two other playoff games to New Chandigarh.

Bengaluru was to host the final going by convention as Royal Challengers Bengaluru are the defending champions. Apart from last year, Ahmedabad has previously hosted the IPL finale in 2022 and 2023.

"Bengaluru was originally designated to host the Final. However, owing to certain requirements from the local association and authorities that were beyond the scope of BCCI's established guidelines and protocols, the venue has been shifted and reassigned," the Board stated in a press release without specifying the exact requirements in the Karnataka capital.

The Board also said it is increasing the playoff stage venues to three as a special case this year



PLAYOFFS SCHEDULE

QUALIFIER 1	ELIMINATOR	QUALIFIER 2
May 26 - HPCA Stadium, Dharamsala	May 27 - New International Cricket Stadium, New Chandigarh	May 29 - New International Cricket Stadium, New Chandigarh
FINAL May 31 - Narendra Modi Stadium, Ahmedabad		

"owing to certain operational and logistical considerations."

"Qualifier 1, featuring the top two teams in the standings, will be played on May 26 at the HPCA Stadium in Dharamsala, with a

direct berth in the Final at stake," the BCCI stated in the press release.

"The action will then move to the New International Cricket Stadium in New Chandigarh, which will host the Eliminator on May 27 between

the third and fourth-placed teams. The same venue will also stage Qualifier 2 on May 29," it added.

Dharamsala would be hosting an IPL playoff game for the first time.

Qualifier 2 will feature the loser of Qualifier 1 and the winner of the Eliminator to determine the second finalist. "The season will conclude with the grand Final on May 31 at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad — the world's largest cricket stadium — setting the stage for a spectacular finale," the Board said.

Sources in the BCCI said the Ahmedabad was preferred because of its massive capacity, which would ensure higher footfalls.

It is also learnt that the Board does not agree with the Karnataka government's decision to have a quota of three complimentary IPL tickets each for the state's MLAs, MLCs and MPs this season given the relatively low capacity of the venue.

The M Chinnaswamy Stadium can hold around 35,000 spectators and it was the site of a deadly stampede last year in which 11 people lost their lives during RCB's trophy celebrations.

Punjab Kings pay for poor fielding as SRH 'OutKlaas' them to top points table

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

A profligate Punjab Kings put down catches at the drop of a hat as Sunrisers Hyderabad buried them under a huge total, winning their IPL contest by 33 runs to move to the top of the points table here on Wednesday.

Heinrich Klaasen continued his manic consistency with a 43-ball-69 while Ishan Kishan struck 32-ball-55 in Sunrisers' more than healthy total of 235 for 4.

On a placid track, SRH skipper Pat Cummins (2/34 in 4 overs) and their best bowler of the season Eshan Malinga (1/34 in 4 overs) not only provided breakthroughs but also bowled 21 dot balls to restrict the visitors to 202 for 7.

Cooper Connolly's (107 not out off 59 balls) century was the only saving grace for PBKS



who were never in the contest after a disappointing power-play show.

PBKS thus lost their ninth consecutive IPL game in Hyderabad.

The seventh win took SRH to 14 points and on top of the 10-team table. One more victory in remaining three

games will take them to magic figure of 16 points which will be good enough to ensure a play-off spot.

Once skipper Cummins exposed the faulty technique of Priyansh Arya, whose game is devoid of any tangible footwork, there was no looking back for SRH.

Ban on bilateral sports with Pakistan to continue, multi-national events exempted: Sports Ministry

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ New Delhi

The Sports Ministry on Wednesday said the blanket ban on bilateral sporting ties with Pakistan that was imposed last year will remain in force but athletes from across the border will not be stopped from coming here for multi-lateral events.

The ministry also reiterated its commitment to simplify the visa process for sports persons, team officials, technical personnel, and office-bearers of International Sports Governing Bodies to position India as a "preferred sporting destination".

"In so far as bilateral sports events in each other's country are concerned,

Indian teams will not be participating in competitions in Pakistan. Nor will we permit Pakistani teams to play in India," the ministry stated in a circular issued to all National Sports Federations (NSFs), the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) and the Sports Authority



of India (SAI) among others.

"With regard to international and multilateral events, in India or abroad, we are guided by the practices of international sports bodies and the interest of our own sportspersons.

"Accordingly, Indian teams and individual players will take part in international events that also have teams or players from Pakistan.

Similarly, Pakistani players and teams will be able to participate in such multilateral events hosted by India," it added.

The policy was first announced last year in August after an uproar over India's participation in cricket's Asia Cup in the UAE that also featured Pakistan, within months of the Pahalgalam terror attack that killed 26 people.

KSCA disappointed after losing IPL final, playoffs

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Bengaluru

The Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA) on Wednesday expressed its "disappointment" after the IPL 2026 final was shifted from Bengaluru to Ahmedabad by the BCCI.

Bengaluru was to host the final going by convention as Royal Challengers Bengaluru are the defending champions, but the BCCI shifted the venue to Ahmedabad without specifying the exact reason.

The Board, however, said that final venue was shifted "owing to certain requirements from the local association and authorities that were beyond the scope of BCCI's established guidelines and protocols".

At the start of IPL 2026, KSCA president Venkatesh Prasad announced that the BCCI had decided to allot seven matches to Bengaluru — five home matches of Royal Challengers Bengaluru along with a play-off and the final.

"At the outset, KSCA expresses its disappointment that the IPL Playoff



matches have been allotted to other centres. KSCA president Venkatesh Prasad was in touch with the BCCI in this regard and had also formally conveyed KSCA's preparedness, willingness, and keen interest in hosting the IPL Playoffs at the iconic Chinnaswamy Stadium," said Vinay Mruthyunjaya, KSCA's official spokesperson.

Mruthyunjaya said the BCCI is yet to convey the "specific reasons" to shift the play-off matches to other centres.

"Despite our preparedness and

willingness to host the Playoffs, we understand that the BCCI has taken a decision to allot these matches to other venues.

"While the specific reasons for the same have not been formally communicated to KSCA, we fully respect the prerogative and decision-making authority of the BCCI in this regard," he added.

The KSCA, in association with RCB and other State Government authorities, undertook large-scale renovation and security enhancement works ahead of IPL 2026 after 11 fans were killed in a stampede during the franchise's victory celebrations last year.

Both the State Government and

the Board were satisfied with the efforts made before green lighting the return of cricket to the venue.

The five IPL matches held in the city went without any incidents and there was a marked improvement in security and crowd management.

"The IPL matches conducted in Bengaluru during the current season were widely appreciated for their smooth execution, crowd management, operational efficiency, and overall spectator experience.

"In this regard, KSCA had addressed a detailed communication to the BCCI outlining its preparedness and explaining the operational framework under which the current IPL season was conducted in Bengaluru," he said.

Despite the non-allocation of IPL play-off matches, Mruthyunjaya reiterated that the KSCA is now "fully prepared" to host matches at all levels.

"KSCA would like to reiterate that it remains fully prepared to host matches of national and international importance and will continue to extend its fullest support and cooperation to the BCCI, franchises, government authorities, and all stakeholders for the successful conduct of cricketing events in India," he said.

Akeal Hosein bosses powerplay overs with 'skill and mental fortitude'

BHARAT SHARMA ■ New Delhi

For a spinner who bowls majority of his overs in the powerplay, Chennai Super Kings' West Indian import Akeal Hosein relies as much on mental fortitude as his skills to excel in the most unforgiving phase of the game.

With just two fielders in the deep in the first six overs, the margin for error is minuscule and the pressure is sky high.

However, Hosein thrives in that tense environment. The left-arm spinner returned with frugal figures of 3-0-15-1 in the powerplay to play a crucial role in his team's eight-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in an IPL match here on Tuesday.

"You need both of them (skill and mental toughness). Especially when you come upon pitches that aren't conducive to spin and it's just about being disciplined as

well," he said. "Having two fielders out in the power play. It's not a job that you can go searching for wickets or you can be too greedy. It's just about sticking to the plan," he explained.

Hosein got the all-important wicket of an in-form K L Rahul, who was foxed by the West Indian as he stepped out to smash him for an inside out six.

Hosein's inclusion in the playing eleven after not being picked in



the initial phase of the tournament has allowed CSK to win more games. On Tuesday, the pitch offered him a bit of help and he ended up dominating the batters. After the win over DC, Hosein was asked about his recipe for success in the powerplay.

"...it's a bit scripted because you only have two guys out so it's just about being disciplined and trying to do the job for the team. At the end of the day if you don't

get wickets and you bowl economically in the power play, that's a damn good job you've done for the team," said Hosein.

He has taken seven wickets in five games at an impressive economy rate of 7.25. Fully aware that the batter is a mere couple of hits away from putting the pressure back on him, Hosein says practising for high-pressure situations helps him stay in the present. (PTI)