

GREAT OFFERS!



Scan to
Subscribe

The Pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer

@TheDailyPioneer

instagram.com/dailypioneer

linkedin.com/in/dailypioneer

TRUSTED SINCE 1865

RNI No. 53466/91. Vol.36 Issue 129

NEW DELHI | MONDAY, MAY 11, 2026 | PAGES 16 | ₹5.00

PUBLISHED FROM: DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL RAIPUR BHUBANESWAR RANCHI CHANDIGARH DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYAWADA



सोमलिङ्गं नरो दृष्ट्वा सर्वपापैः प्रमुच्यते।
लभते फलं मनोवाञ्छितं मृतः स्वर्ग समाश्रयेत्॥

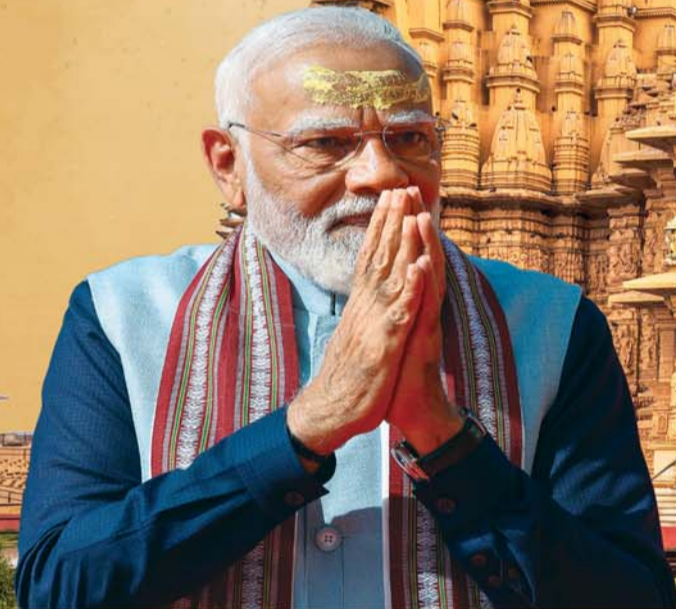
SOMNATH

Virasat Ke 75 Saal

Somnath is a symbol of India's indomitable civilisation. Even after facing destructive attacks for over 1000 years, Somnath continues to stand tall as an embodiment of our pride and courage.

75 years ago, the resolve of the Iron Man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, paved the way for the modern revival of Somnath.

Today, under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, this sacred land proudly heralds India's cultural renaissance.



Be a witness to this golden occasion

Key Activities

Kalash Yatra | Bhajan Sandhya | Chanting of the Omkar Mantra
Mantra Writing in the Somnath Booklet
Narration of Stories Associated with Somnath

Shri Somnath Temple Complex, Prabhas Patan | 8th –11th May 2026

“Somnath is that song of hope which teaches us that the power of creation is far greater than the power of destruction”

– Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi (Chairman, Shri Somnath Trust)



Scan here

To contribute to the divinity and grandeur of Somnath, and become a part of its glorious history.



Govt launches Aftercare Scheme for youth leaving child homes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday announced a new Aftercare Scheme for young adults leaving child care institutions after turning 18, saying the government would continue supporting orphaned and vulnerable children even after they attain adulthood.

The scheme, launched on the occasion of Mother's Day, will focus on education, skill development, employment support, and financial assistance to help beneficiaries become self-reliant.

The Delhi Government has allocated ₹3.5 crore for the scheme in the 2026-27 financial year. Officials said the initiative has been introduced under the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, to provide structured rehabilitation and

support for youth transitioning out of institutional care.

Announcing the scheme, the Chief Minister said no child should feel abandoned after leaving institutional protection. "Every child deserves care, support, and an opportunity to build a dignified future. The Government will continue to stand by them even after they become adults," she said.

The Chief Minister visited the Village Cottage Home in Lajpat Nagar during the day and interacted with children living at the facility run by the Women and Child Development Department. During the visit, she spoke about the challenges faced by young adults after leaving child care institutions and the need for long-term support systems.

According to Government data, Delhi currently has 88 Child Care Institutions oper-



ated by the Government and non-governmental organisations. These institutions provide shelter, education, rehabilitation, and protection to children up to the age of 18. The city also has two aftercare homes, one each for

boys and girls, where young adults above 18 are provided accommodation, food, and educational support for a limited period.

Officials said nearly 150 to 200 young people leave child care institutions in Delhi

every year after becoming adults. Many of them struggle to continue their education, find employment, or secure housing after institutional support ends.

Several beneficiaries also lack family support and finan-

cial stability, making rehabilitation difficult. The new aftercare scheme aims to bridge this gap by extending support beyond institutional care. Under the programme, eligible beneficiaries will receive assistance for higher education, vocational training, and skill development courses. The government will also help connect beneficiaries with internships and job opportunities.

The scheme includes a monthly stipend and financial assistance for young adults to support their transition towards independent living. Counselling services, career guidance, personality development training, and emotional support will also be provided under the programme. Officials said beneficiaries would be selected through need-based assessments. Individual care plans will be prepared for each

beneficiary to address educational, emotional, and rehabilitation requirements. Emergency and case-specific support will also be provided wherever required.

The Chief Minister said the government's focus was not limited to shelter and protection but extended to preparing children for life after institutional care. She said children living in care homes are already being provided educational opportunities, vocational training, counselling, and life skills support to help them lead secure and healthy lives in the future.

To oversee implementation of the scheme, the Delhi government will constitute a State Aftercare Committee headed by the secretary of the Women and Child Development Department. The committee will monitor policy decisions, implementation, and overall supervi-

sion of aftercare services.

District-level Aftercare Committees headed by district magistrates will also be formed to assess rehabilitation needs and review individual care plans. These committees will recommend educational, financial, and livelihood support for eligible beneficiaries.

The government said it would work with different departments and partner organisations to improve access to employment, internships, and livelihood opportunities for aftercare youth. Calling the initiative a "Mother's Day gift" for vulnerable children and young adults, the Chief Minister said the government's objective was to ensure that every child leaving institutional care receives equal opportunities and continued support to become independent and financially secure.

LG Sandhu urges people to follow traffic rules

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Sunday urged people to follow traffic rules and cooperate with the traffic police in ensuring safer and smoother movement on city roads. In a post on X, Sandhu said adherence to traffic regulations is an essential civic responsibility and important for reducing congestion, preventing accidents and lowering air pollution caused by vehicles stuck in traffic snarls.

"I have directed traffic police to expand its enforcement drive across Delhi. You can also empower this movement by using the 'Traffic Prahar' app to report these violations and earn rewards for your contribution to road safety," he said.

The Lieutenant Governor appealed to people to avoid wrong-side driving, signal jumping and dangerous jay-



I have directed traffic police to expand its enforcement drive across Delhi. You can also empower this movement by using the 'Traffic Prahar' app to report these violations and earn rewards for your contribution to road safety

— TARANJIT SINGH SANDHU, LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

walking, while also stressing responsible parking and the use of helmets and seatbelts. "Simple actions such as responsible parking and wearing helmets and seatbelts reflect our concern for fellow citizens as well as

our own families," he said.

Sandhu said a decongested and safer Delhi could be achieved through collective efforts and a commitment to basic traffic discipline. He also called upon residents to support the authorities in

building a "better Capital for all". The Delhi LG had earlier said that the challenge of rapid urbanisation in cities needs to be addressed with commitment, innovation, and ethical clarity by officials.

Addressing these challenges will require not only technical competence but also commitment, innovation and ethical clarity, he said. "We are living in an era of profound transformation. The LG said, "We are currently traversing the 'Amrit Kaal', a defining period where our actions today will determine the India of 2047." Sandhu said the new officials are becoming part of an institution (DDA) that plays a central role in shaping Delhi's future.

"You are entering service at a time when cities are facing complex challenges like rapid urbanisation, environmental pressures and increasing expectations from citizens," Sandhu said.

ABVP pays tribute to organisational ideologue

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad organised a special commemorative programme in Delhi on Sunday to mark the birth centenary year of former ABVP National President and organisational ideologue Prof Yashwantrao Kelkar.

The event, titled 'Priya Kelkar Ji', was held at Dr Shyam Prasad Mukherjee Civic Centre and attended by senior Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh functionaries, ABVP leaders, academics, and students from across the city.

RSS Sarkaryavah Dattatreya Hosabale attended the programme as the chief guest and described Prof. Kelkar as one of the key figures behind ABVP's organisational growth and ideological direction. Speaking at the event, Hosabale said the foundation of his own vision for public life was shaped during his years in ABVP and later



strengthened through the Sangh. He exhorted young women to actively participate in its student wing ABVP.

Hosabale said ABVP ideology and organisational thinker Yashwantrao Kelkar strongly advocated women's participation, full-time involvement of girl students and constructive work in student organisations. He noted that Kelkar played a key role in building the ideology and organisational structure of the student body.

According to him, Kelkar

emphasised discipline, teamwork, simplicity, punctuality, and collective functioning in organisational life. "Prof Kelkar ensured that ABVP was not restricted only to protest movements.

Hosabale said Kelkar developed the "philosophy of a student movement" and explained what should be the ideological basis and thought process of such an organisation.

Several senior ABVP and RSS leaders attended the event, including former ABVP

National President Prof Rajkumar Bhatia, current National President Prof Raghuraj Kishore Tiwari, Akhil Bharatiya Chhatra Karya Pramukh Manu Sharma Kataria, ABVP Delhi President Dr Tapan Bihari, and Delhi Secretary Sarthak Sharma.

The programme was also attended by senior RSS pracharakas, university vice chancellors, professors, registrars, ministers from the Delhi government, the Speaker of the Delhi Assembly, and members of affiliated organisations. As part of the event, a special stage presentation based on the life and work of Prof. Kelkar was performed by a troupe led by Milind Bhadge from Pune.

The presentation highlighted Kelkar's contribution to ABVP's organisational structure and functioning style. The performance focused on themes such as disciplined planning, time management, cadre-building, and collective leadership.

Cyber fraud accused held after forest chase in Jharkhand

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

A 25-year-old man accused of cheating a Delhi resident of ₹80,000 through a malicious APK file was arrested from Jharkhand after a dramatic chase through forested and hilly terrain, Delhi Police said on Sunday.

The accused, identified as Pravin Rana from the Giridih district of Jharkhand, had allegedly been evading investigators for several weeks before he was finally tracked down by a team from the Cyber Police Station of Delhi's Outer North district.

Police officials said the accused repeatedly ignored notices issued through the Cybercrime Investigation and Analysis Reporting portal and deliberately avoided joining the probe.

"Acting on local intelligence, our team conducted a raid at his hideout on May



7. When he noticed the police presence, he tried to escape through nearby forests and hilly areas, but the team chased and apprehended him," the officer said.

Police said the case began after a Delhi resident reported that ₹80,000 had been fraudulently withdrawn from his bank account following his download of an APK file received on his mobile phone. Investigators said the APK link was used to com-

promise the victim's banking credentials. Soon after the application was installed, the fraudsters allegedly accessed confidential financial details. The money was then transferred into another bank account and later withdrawn through ATMs.

Following the complaint, a case was registered at the Cyber Police Station in the Outer North district, and a technical investigation was launched.

Police officials said inves-

tigators closely examined the digital money trail, bank transactions, call detail records, and subscriber details linked to the suspected accounts. The analysis eventually led the police team to Jharkhand.

Officials said Rana had allegedly remained underground for some time and avoided appearing before investigators despite repeated notices. A special team was then sent to Jharkhand after police received information about his location. During the operation, officers conducted surveillance in the area before moving in to arrest him.

Police said the accused attempted to flee immediately after spotting the raiding team. He allegedly ran into nearby forested areas and rough, hilly terrain in an effort to evade capture. However, the police team pursued him and apprehended him after a chase.

A mobile phone allegedly connected to the cyber fraud operation was recovered from his possession during the arrest.

Investigators are now examining the device for evidence related to the fraud and possible links to other cybercrime activities. Officials suspect that the accused may have been part of a wider network involved in online financial fraud using malicious applications and fake links.

Cybercrime investigators said APK-based fraud has become increasingly common in recent years. Fraudsters often send fake applications disguised as banking updates, reward schemes, KYC verification tools, or service apps.

Once downloaded, these applications can gain access to sensitive information stored on the victim's phone, including banking credentials and OTP details.

Fake mobile accessories racket busted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

The Delhi Police Crime Branch has busted an organised racket involved in manufacturing and selling counterfeit mobile accessories of major smartphone brands, including Oppo, OnePlus, and Realme. Two people were arrested and three premises, including two godowns in Karol Bagh and a printing factory in Moti Nagar, were sealed during the operation, officials said on Sunday.

Police said a large quantity of fake mobile accessories, packaging material, and machinery used for branding counterfeit products with names of reputed companies were seized during the raids.

The accused allegedly imported unlabelled accessories in bulk and sold them in the market as original and duty-free products after repackaging them with fake



branding. Harsh Indora, Deputy Commissioner of Police, Crime Branch, said the operation was launched after the police received specific information about a factory in the Rama Road industrial area where fake packaging boxes of mobile brands were being printed.

"The accused were running a full-fledged counterfeit network. Fake accessories were packed in locally printed boxes and sold in the market as genuine

products," the DCP said.

According to police, a dedicated team of the Anti-Gangster Squad unit of the Crime Branch conducted the raid. The team carried out search and seizure operations at multiple locations linked to the racket.

During the raid at the basement factory in Moti Nagar, police found a fully operational printing setup allegedly being used to print counterfeit packaging material of Oppo, OnePlus, and Realme products. Representatives of the companies also joined the raid and confirmed that the seized products and packaging were fake.

Police said the fake accessories were first imported from China without labels. The accused then used machines to engrave brand names on the products and packed them in counterfeit boxes before supplying them to retailers in Delhi and nearby areas.

Form No. INC-26
[Pursuant to rule 30 the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014] Before the Regional Director, Northern Region - I, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, New Delhi
In the matter of sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Companies Act, 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014
AND
In the matter of RGL Ecopak Limited having its Registered Office at C6/60 Safdarjung Development Area, South Delhi, Delhi - 110016
Having CIN: U74140DL1999PLC102869
Petitioner
Notice is hereby given to the General Public that the company proposes to make application to the Central Government under section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking confirmation of alteration of the Memorandum of Association of the company in terms of the special resolution passed at the Extraordinary General Meeting held on April 29, 2026 to enable the company to change its Registered Office from "DELHI" to "State of HARYANA".
Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed change of the Registered Office of the company may deliver either on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing investor complaint form cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his/her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his/her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director at the address B-2 WING, 2ND FLOOR, PT. DEENDAYAL ANTYODAYA BHAWAN, 2ND FLOOR, CGO COMPLEX, NEW DELHI - 110003 within 14 (fourteen) days of the date of publication of this notice with a copy to the applicant company at its Registered Office at the address mentioned below.
Regd. Office: C6/60 Safdarjung Development Area, South Delhi, Delhi - 110016.
For and on behalf of the Applicant
RGL ECOPAK LIMITED
Sd/-
Pratap Burman
Managing Director
(DIN: 00595389)
Place: Delhi
Date: April 29th 2026

NDMC marks Mother's Day with plantation drive

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

New Delhi Municipal Council Vice Chairman Kuljeet Singh Chahal on Sunday launched a special plantation campaign at Ashirwad Old Age Home on Kali Bari Marg to mark Mother's Day, linking environmental protection with care for senior citizens and family values.

The plantation drive was organised under the "Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam" campaign, which encourages people to plant trees in the name of their mothers. Senior citizens residing at the old age home participated in the programme along with NDMC officials and staff members by planting saplings inside the premises.

The event was aimed at spreading awareness about environmental conserva-



tion while promoting respect for motherhood and social responsibility. The campaign is inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for greater public participation in protecting the environment.

Addressing the gathering, Chahal said the campaign was not just a tree plantation programme but a larger social movement connecting emotional values with environmental responsibility. He said

planting trees today would help secure a cleaner and safer future for coming generations while also paying tribute to mothers and nature.

He said the initiative reflected the importance of combining civic participation with sustainable development. According to him, environmental awareness becomes more meaningful when linked with social and emotional values.

Ravinder Indraj Singh inaugurates water pipeline projects in Bawana

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Delhi Social Welfare and Cooperative Minister Ravinder Indraj Singh on Sunday inaugurated new Delhi Jal Board pipeline projects at Jat Khori village and near Kali Mata Mandir in Prakash Vihar under the Bawana Assembly constituency. The project aims to improve access to a clean and uninterrupted water supply for residents in the area.

The minister said the new pipeline works are part of the Delhi Government's effort to strengthen basic civic infrastructure in unauthorised colonies and rural parts of the Capital. He said work related to water supply, drainage systems, roads, and footpaths is being carried out across several localities in Bawana.

Addressing residents during the inauguration pro-



gramme, Singh said the government's focus is on ensuring that development reaches people directly through improved public services and infrastructure. "Development cannot be measured only through announcements. Real development is when facilities reach people's homes," the minister said.

He added that the Delhi government is working to provide better water supply systems, upgraded sewer networks, and improved civic

amenities to residents across the city. According to him, long-pending infrastructure issues in several colonies are now being addressed through new projects.

The minister said many areas in outer Delhi had suffered for years due to poor civic infrastructure, including damaged pipelines, sewer overflow, and waterlogging problems. He said the newly launched projects are intended to provide long-term relief to residents facing such difficulties.

GREAT OFFERS!



Scan to Subscribe

PAGE 5
NATION

Tired of teaching PDP leaders: Omar Abdullah



PAGE 10
LAW & JUSTICE

PIL in SC for reviewing wages of priests, sevadars, temple staff

PAGE 11: BHARAT KI SOCH
Yoga sutra, Neuroplasticity and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy – A Continuum



PAGE 13
GLOBAL

India-Trinidad archival pact to help diaspora trace roots: Jaishankar



PAGE 15
SPORTS

Super Rapid and Blitz: Gukesh ends sixth; Niemann wins



Vijay sworn-in as Tamil Nadu CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Cheered and heralded by sea of delirious supporters, C Joseph Vijay took oath as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu on Sunday with a pledge that "a new era of real, secular, social justice starts now." The ascent of Vijay to the top job marks a significant realignment and a historic political shift in the State after his TVK emerged as the single largest party in the recent Assembly elections, shattering the decades-long dominance of the DMK and AIADMK in the State.

'Bussy' N Anand, Aadhav Arjuna and KA Sengottaiyan were also administered the oath of office of Minister by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium here. The swearing-in ceremony was attended by senior leaders, including Congress' Rahul Gandhi and family and friends of Vijay. Others who took the oath as Ministers in Vijay's cabinet included K G Arunraaj, P Venkataramanan, CTR Nirmal Kumar, A Rajmohan, Keerthana and KT Prabhu.

"It is a fresh, new beginning. A new era of real,



TVK chief C Joseph Vijay taking oath as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister during the swearing-in ceremony at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai on Sunday

secular, social justice starts..." Vijay paused, looked down, pointed at his wrist watch and added with a dramatic flourish: "Now!" This statement was greeted with thunderous applause, cheers and whistles. Ahead of his speech, he also signed three orders —

200 units of free electricity, a task force for women's safety and a task force to tackle the drug menace.

Asserting that he was not from any royal lineage, Vijay, in an emotive speech in chaste Tamil, said people "welcomed and accepted"

him, and he will never deceive them with false promises. Accusing the previous DMK regime of 'burdening' the State with ₹10 lakh crore debt, Vijay asked people to give him time to perform and meet their expectations. He also made it clear that

there was only one power centre and that was him.

He also thanked leaders from parties that supported him, including "brother" Rahul Gandhi and Left leaders, before he concluded his speech with a round of selfies he took with those who shared the dais with him and the crowd. His Cabinet is a mix of young and experienced, with the 51-year-old actor-turned-politician's core team finding a place in his maiden Ministry.

The oath-taking ceremony, reflecting the atmosphere across the city of hard-won victory and high expectations, symbolised the arrival of a new political era, centred around Vijay's mass appeal, youth outreach and anti-establishment approach. Although TVK on its own did not secure the majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, Vijay managed to get support from the Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI (M) and IUML to gather 120 MLAs and cross the 118 majority mark to form the Government, an act that is seen as a demonstration of his political adaptability beyond his image of a popular actor.

PM Modi urges citizens to cut fuel use, revive COVID-era measures

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Hyderabad

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged citizens to reduce petrol and diesel consumption by using metros and public transport wherever available, opting for car-pooling when private vehicles are necessary, preferring railway transport for movement of goods, increasing the use of electric vehicles wherever possible. He also called for revival of COVID-era efficiency measures in national interest, including work-from-home arrangements, Online conferences and virtual meetings.

The PM called for a collective participation to help India face global economic disruptions, supply chain challenges, and rising prices caused by international conflicts.

In a public address at Hyderabad, PM Modi emphasised that patriotism is not only about sacrificing one's life for the nation, but also about living responsibly and fulfilling duties towards the country during difficult times.

The PM simultaneously appealed to citizens to help conserve foreign exchange reserves by avoiding unnecessary foreign travel, overseas vacations and foreign weddings, choosing domestic tourism and celebrations within India, requested people to avoid non-essential gold purchases for one year in order to reduce pressure on foreign exchange outflows.

PM encouraged citizens to prioritise Made-in-India and locally manufactured products, including daily-use



PM Narendra Modi in Hyderabad on Sunday

"CONGRESS A BACKSTABBER"

Bengaluru/Hyderabad: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday attacked the Congress, accusing it of failing to provide good governance due to the internal power struggles in Karnataka, and betraying people.

In a public address at Bengaluru, PM Modi termed Congress a "backstabber" for ditching its older alliance partner DMK and joined hands with Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK), to be in power.

Addressing in Bengaluru, Modi projected the BJP-led NDA as the embodiment of political stability and development, contrasting it with what he described as Congress "politics of betrayal" and administrative failure in states ruled by the party. He said that a "saffron sun" was rising from Bengaluru

amid the BJP's expanding political influence across the country.

"For the past three years in Karnataka, instead of resolving people's problems, most of the government's time here has been spent resolving internal conflicts. The Congress government remained gripped by uncertainty over leadership and power-sharing arrangements," the PM said.

Modi was referring to the ongoing power tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy DK Shivakumar for the past six months. "They cannot decide how long the chief minister will remain. They cannot decide whether another person will get a chance or not. Everything has been kept hanging," he said.

CONTINUED ON >> P7

China warns citizens on entering India via Nepal

ASHOKE RAJ
New Delhi

The Chinese Consulate General in Kolkata has issued a fresh advisory cautioning Chinese nationals against inadvertently crossing into India from Nepal, following a recent case in which a Chinese citizen was detained by Indian border forces for allegedly entering Indian territory without valid documents.

In the advisory, the consulate urged Chinese citizens travelling in Nepal to stay away from areas near the India-Nepal border unless absolutely necessary and to ensure they possess a valid



Representative image
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Indian visa before entering India.

The consulate noted that the Nepal-India border remains largely open and is marked by limited physical barriers in several stretches, increasing the possibility of accidental crossings. It warned that Chinese nationals visiting border regions in Nepal could unknowingly enter Indian territory and subsequently face detention by Indian border security personnel or police if they lack valid travel documents.

According to the consulate, individuals found entering the country unlawfully — whether intentionally or by mistake — may face detention, judicial

proceedings, prison terms ranging from two to eight years, and monetary fines. It further cautioned that securing bail in such cases can often prove difficult.

The consulate advised Chinese nationals not to rely solely on local guides or informal travel routes near border areas, warning of "serious consequences and personal losses" arising from violations of Indian immigration laws. It also reminded travellers that even those holding valid Indian visas may require additional written permission from Indian authorities before entering restricted or protected areas.

CONTINUED ON >> P7

The Bystander



Himanta set for second term

TONY DAS
Guwahati

Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya on Sunday invited Chief Minister-elect Himanta Biswa Sarma to form the next Government. Leaders of the NDA met Acharya at Lok Bhavan and staked claim to form the Government with Sarma at the helm. "The Governor has invited Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma to form the new Government in Assam," Lok Bhavan said in the statement.

Acharya will administer the oath of office and secrecy to Sarma as Chief Minister and to the members of the Council of Ministers, it added. The cere-



Assam CM-designate Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on Sunday

mony is scheduled to take place on May 12, and is to be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home

Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, BJP president Nitin Nabin and other senior leaders.

This will be the NDA's third consecutive term in Assam since the BJP-led alliance first came to power in 2016 under then CM Sarbananda Sonowal. Sarma, who first took office in 2021, is set to become the first non-Congress chief minister of the State to serve two consecutive terms. The NDA secured a two-thirds majority in the assembly elections, winning a record 102 seats in the 126-member House. The BJP won 82 seats, while allies AGP and BPF secured 10 seats each.

CONTINUED ON >> P7

Yogi expands Cabinet with an eye on 2027

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet expanded on Sunday with the induction of two ministers and four ministers of State while two junior ministers were elevated and given independent charges. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Governor Anandiben Patel administered oath to the new ministers at the Gandhi Auditorium of Jan Bhavan filling the six vacancies in the Council of Ministers.

The move is seen as a significant political recalibration by the BJP ahead of the 2027 UP Assembly elections.



UP Governor Anandiben Patel, CM Yogi Adityanath, Deputy CMs Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak during the expansion event of the State Government in Lucknow

With this expansion the Yogi Adityanath led Council of Ministers has reached the maximum 60 ministers permitted constitutionally. The

Council of Ministers now consists of 60 members, including the CM, two deputy CMs, 18 Cabinet ministers, 16 ministers of State with indepen-

dent charge, and 24 ministers of State. The expansion is being seen as an important political message ahead of the 2027 Assembly elections, with the BJP focusing on balancing caste representation across key social groups.

On Sunday, Bhupendra Chaudhury and Manoj Pandey took oath as Cabinet ministers, while Krishna Paswan, Surendra Diler, Hansraj Vishwakarma and Kailash Singh Rajput were sworn in as ministers of State. Ministers of State Ajit Singh Pal and Somendra Tomar were promoted by giving them independent charges.

CONTINUED ON >> P7

PUNJAB MINISTER SENT TO ED CUSTODY

A special PMLA court in Gurugram on Sunday remanded Punjab Industries Minister Sanjeev Arora to seven days' Enforcement Directorate (ED) custody in a ₹100-crore GST fraud-linked money laundering case, saying the allegations against him were "very serious" and custodial interrogation was needed to trace the money trail. Arora, a senior Aam Aadmi Party leader, was arrested from his Chandigarh residence on Saturday following ED raids. The agency alleged that Gurugram-based Hampton Sky Realty Ltd, in which Arora was a director and shareholder, used shell firms and fake invoices to claim fraudulent GST refunds through bogus mobile phone exports. The ED told the court that the company generated ₹102.5 crore in proceeds of crime through forged documents, fake purchases and illicit financial transactions.

MHA rule ignites cultural, political row at Vijay's oath taking

RAHUL DATTA
Chennai/New Delhi

As thousands cheered for actor-turned politician C Joseph Vijay during his oath-taking ceremony as the new chief minister of Tamil Nadu, the national song, Vande Mataram, was sung in full, followed by the national anthem the State song Tamil Thaaai Vaazhthu at the packed Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, Chennai on Sunday.

The sequence follows an order by the Ministry of Home Affairs in January stating that all six stanzas of Vande Mataram, written by Bengali poet Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay, shall be sung first when the national song and the national anthem are to be played together.

The Government's directive had triggered a major political row, with Opposition parties sharply criticising the move. The Congress said the move went against a decision taken during its 1937 session on the advice of Rabindranath Tagore to remain sensitive to the sentiments of different communities and religions. The then West Bengal CM, Mamata Banerjee had called the directive an insult to Tagore, arguing that the national anthem, written by Tagore, should not be played after Vande Mataram.

The MHA directive also notified that all the six stanzas that were part of the original Vande Mataram should be sung at official functions. This marked a



Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Arlekar along with Congress MP and Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi, newly-elected State CM and TVK chief C Joseph Vijay, Cabinet Ministers and others during the swearing-in ceremony at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai

departure from the practice of singing only the two stanzas adopted by the Constituent Assembly in 1950.

The sequence, interestingly, was not followed on Saturday in West Bengal, the birth place of Tagore and Chattopadhyay, at the oath taking ceremony of CM Suwendu Adhikari. On Sunday, however, Vande Mataram was sung before the national anthem in the presence of Rahul Gandhi and Vijay, who shared the stage together in Chennai.

"During the ceremony, Tamil Thaaai Vaazhthu was placed third, while Vande Mataram and the national anthem were given the first and second positions, respectively," said CPI State secretary M Veerapandian, adding that Government ceremonies in

Tamil Nadu traditionally begin with the State song and end with the national anthem.

Veerapandian alleged that it had been established during the freedom struggle itself that Vande Mataram could not serve as the national anthem because the song is dedicated to a specific deity and possesses a sectarian religious character.

"In this context, the decision, allegedly taken under the directives of Lok Bhavan, to accord the primary position to 'Vande Mataram' while placing the Tamil invocation third in the agenda of the swearing-in ceremony organised by the Tamil Nadu Government constitutes a violation of established tradition," he alleged.

CONTINUED ON >> P7



Railways approves widening of Haiderpur Badli ROB: CM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi Government has achieved a breakthrough regarding two key traffic projects in North-West Delhi. Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Sunday announced that the Railways has granted approval for the widening of the existing Railway Over Bridge (ROB) located on the Outer Ring Road at Haiderpur Badli, with the aim of alleviating traffic congestion at Mukarba Chowk.

Furthermore, the Railways has also approved the proposed elevated loop connecting Shalimar Bagh to Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar, which crosses over the railway tracks.

These approvals were granted following extensive technical scrutiny and correspondence between the Delhi Government and Northern Railway.

CM Rekha Gupta said the Delhi government is committed to developing a modern,



safe and uninterrupted transport network across the capital. She noted that both these North-West Delhi corridors have long been burdened by heavy traffic movement, with thousands of commuters and goods carriers passing through the area every day. Once completed, the projects are expected to substantially reduce congestion and provide faster, safer and smoother connectivity to the public.

The Public Works Department (PWD) had submitted the required drawings

and technical proposals for both projects to the Railways.

After detailed scrutiny, the Railways found the proposals technically feasible and issued an in-principle No Objection Certificate (NOC) with the approval of the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM).

She added that the Railways has mandated that construction work must be carried out under prescribed safety standards and technical supervision to ensure that railway operations and traffic movement are not

adversely affected in the future. CM Gupta said the Delhi Government is working at a fast pace to identify major traffic bottlenecks across the city and develop long-term solutions for them.

She pointed out that Mukarba Chowk, Outer Ring Road and the Sanjay Gandhi Transport Nagar area are among Delhi's busiest transport corridors. The implementation of these projects, she said, will strengthen regional connectivity, reduce travel time and provide major relief to commuters.

She said infrastructure and transport reforms in Delhi are gaining momentum through the coordinated efforts of the 'double-engine government'. According to the Chief Minister, the capital is being developed in line with 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Viksit Delhi', with a focus on modern, seamless and future-oriented transport infrastructure that ensures better connectivity and congestion-free movement for citizens.

Delhi marks 'Shaurya Diwas' at Connaught Place

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta paid tribute to the Indian Armed Forces during a "Shaurya Diwas" programme organised at Central Park in Connaught Place to mark one year of Operation Sindoor.

The event, organised by the Delhi government, drew a large gathering of citizens, ex-servicemen, youth, and representatives of social organisations. Cabinet Minister Kapil Mishra was also present at the programme, which focused on honouring the courage and sacrifice of the armed forces.

Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister said Operation Sindoor had sent a strong message that India would not compromise on its security, sovereignty, or national dignity. She said the operation reflected the collective emotions and pride of 1.4 billion Indians.

The Chief Minister described the April 22 terror attack as a painful incident that had deeply affected the country. She said the attack on innocent civilians had filled the nation with grief and



anger, prompting a strong response under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"India believes in peace, but the country knows how to respond firmly to those who threaten its security," she said while saluting the role of soldiers deployed on the borders under difficult conditions. The Chief Minister said the armed forces continue to protect the country day and night and deserve the nation's highest respect for their courage and dedication.

The event witnessed patriotic performances and cultural programmes centred on nationalism and the armed forces. Singer Ashish Kulkarni

performed patriotic songs during the evening, while slogans praising the country and the armed forces echoed across the venue.

Cabinet Minister Kapil Mishra said the programme was organised to honour the bravery of Indian soldiers and remember their sacrifices. He said the armed forces, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, had demonstrated India's strength against terrorism and infiltration.

"India does not initiate conflict, but if the nation is challenged, a strong response will follow," Mishra said during his address.

He added that the event

was not only a tribute to soldiers but also an occasion to inspire citizens towards the vision of a developed India.

According to officials, the programme aimed to commemorate the first anniversary of Operation Sindoor and reinforce public support for the armed forces. The venue at Connaught Place was decorated with patriotic themes and witnessed participation from people across different age groups.

The Chief Minister said Operation Sindoor was more than a military mission and had become a symbol of national unity and determination. She said the operation demonstrated the country's resolve against terrorism and highlighted the preparedness of India's armed forces.

Several attendees, including former servicemen and youth volunteers, joined the event carrying national flags and participating in patriotic activities organised during the programme. Officials said the event formed part of a broader initiative by the Delhi government to recognise the contribution of the armed forces and strengthen patriotic awareness among citizens.

Elvish Yadav gets ₹10 crore extortion threat from 'close aide' of Bishnoi gang

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gurugram

Bigg Boss OTT 2 winner and social influencer Elvish Yadav has received an extortion threat of ₹10 crore from a foreign WhatsApp number, with the sender identifying himself as Randeep Malik, having "close links" with the Lawrence Bishnoi gang, police said on Sunday.

Family members of Yadav alleged that the accused threatened to shoot him if he did not pay the money within two days. Police have lodged an FIR based on a complaint filed by Yadav at the Sector 56 police station.

In his complaint, Yadav said he received a WhatsApp call from a foreign number on May 5 but could not answer it at the time. He later received a message on WhatsApp from the same number containing threatening words.

"The sender identified himself as Randeep Malik and claimed to be a close associate of the Lawrence



Elvish Yadav

FILE PHOTO

Bishnoi gang. He demanded ₹10 crore to be paid within two days and threatened to shoot me if I did not pay the sum," Yadav said in his complaint.

The same threatening message was also sent to his father's mobile number, he alleged. The case has been transferred to the Crime Branch, a senior police officer said, adding that efforts are underway to trace the source of the call.

Yadav is currently out of Gurugram for the shoot of a show called 'Laughter Safe'. The social media influ-

encer, who won the second season of Bigg Boss OTT in 2023, has been in the news for varied reasons in recent years. Last August, unidentified gunmen fired more than two dozen rounds outside his residence in Sector 56.

Delhi Police later arrested two shooters in connection with the case.

Before that, Yadav was arrested in March 2024 on charges of supplying snake venom for rave parties. The Supreme Court quashed the FIR and legal proceedings related to the case in March this year.

Police arrest key arms module operative

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police has arrested a 45-year-old, Praveen Kumar alias Tittu, who investigators say is linked to an international arms trafficking and terror network alleged to be backed by Pakistan's intelligence agency, officials said Sunday. His arrest follows an ongoing probe into the Shahbaz Ansari arms trafficking module, and 14 people have now been held in the case.

Police identified the accused as Praveen Kumar operated as a property dealer in the Aaya Nagar area of Delhi and was allegedly involved in illegal land-related activities along with members of gangster Rohit Chaudhary's gang.

Police alleged that the accused was involved in encroachment of disputed and abandoned properties, illegal occupation of forest land, and unauthorised plotting activities in parts of Delhi and nearby regions.

Officials said Kumar later became involved in illegal betting and gambling operations and allegedly used

officer said investigators have so far seized 25 sophisticated foreign-made firearms from members linked to the module. The recovered weapons include a submachine gun along with 221 live cartridges.

According to police, stringent provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Arms Act have been invoked in the case due to the alleged terror and cross-border links associated with the network.

Investigators said Kumar operated as a property dealer in the Aaya Nagar area of Delhi and was allegedly involved in illegal land-related activities along with members of gangster Rohit Chaudhary's gang.

Police alleged that the accused was involved in encroachment of disputed and abandoned properties, illegal occupation of forest land, and unauthorised plotting activities in parts of Delhi and nearby regions.

Officials said Kumar later became involved in illegal betting and gambling operations and allegedly used



proceeds generated through criminal activities to procure sophisticated weapons for gang members. According to investigators, Kumar came in contact with co-accused Nishant Arora while lodged in jail. Police suspect that the connection played an important role in his involvement with the arms trafficking network.

Police said the module was allegedly involved in procuring and distributing foreign-made weapons to criminal gangs and operatives connected to organised crime activities.

The investigation into the network has been underway for several months, with multiple raids and arrests carried out by Delhi Police in connection with the case.

Officials said gangster Rohit Chaudhary, who was

DMRC, AIRTEL LAUNCH ONE CARD FOR METRO TRAVEL



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Metro Rail Corporation and Airtel Payments Bank have partnered to launch co-branded RuPay National Common Mobility Cards aimed at enabling seamless travel and digital payments across metro systems and public transport networks in the country.

The announcement was made on Sunday during an event at the Delhi Metro headquarters attended by DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar, Airtel Payments Bank MD and CEO Anubrata Biswas, and senior officials from both organisations.

The newly launched "On-The-Go" cards include debit cards and prepaid payment instrument cards designed for mass transit systems. The cards will allow commuters to use a single card for metro travel, buses, and other transport services integrated under the National Common Mobility Card framework.

According to DMRC, the cards will be available at all metro stations in Delhi within the next 10 days. Commuters will also be able to recharge the cards digitally through the DMRC mobile application and the Airtel app.

Officials said the initiative is part of the Centre's "One Nation, One Card" programme, which aims to create a unified payment system for public transport across India. Unlike existing Delhi Metro smart cards, which can only be used within the DMRC network, the new open-loop cards can be used across multiple transit systems in different cities.

During the confrontation, the accused and his associates allegedly attacked Ayan with knives and stabbed him multiple times before fleeing the spot.

Fake snatching plot busted in 24 hours

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Delhi Police has arrested three men, including an employee of a chartered accountant, for allegedly staging a fake cash snatching drama to steal ₹6.5 lakh from his employer in north Delhi's Wazirabad area.

Police said the accused initially claimed that two motorcycle-borne men had snatched a bag containing cash near the Old Yamuna Bridge area on May 4.

However, CCTV footage, inconsistent statements and sustained questioning exposed the conspiracy within 24 hours of the complaint. Deputy Commissioner of Police Raja Banthia of North District said the investigation revealed that the complainant himself had planned the fake



robbery along with two associates. "The accused repeatedly changed his version during questioning. CCTV footage and technical investigation raised suspicion, which eventually led to a confession," the DCP said.

Police have identified the accused as Ayush Mishra, 20, Ashu, 28, and Akash, 33. All three were arrested, and the entire stolen amount was recovered.

According to police, a PCR call regarding a snatching incident was received at Wazirabad police station

around 6 pm on May 4. A police team reached near Shiv Mandir at Old Yamuna Bridge, where complainant Ayush Mishra told officers that he worked for a chartered accountant in Burari's Kaushik Enclave area.

He claimed he had been sent to Rajendra Place to deliver ₹6.5 lakh kept inside a black bag. While riding a motorcycle near Wazirabad, two men allegedly snatched the bag and escaped.

Following the complaint, police registered a case and formed a special team to identify the accused and recover the money.

During the investigation, officers scanned CCTV footage from the area and nearby roads. Police said one of the videos showed Ayush smiling while the alleged snatchers followed him carrying the bag.

Investigators also found that the incident had allegedly taken place around 3.30 pm, but the complainant informed police only at 6 pm.

When questioned about the delay and contradictions in his statements, Ayush reportedly failed to provide convincing answers. Police said sustained interrogation eventually led to his confession. He allegedly admitted that he had conspired with Ashu and Akash to steal the money from his employer.

According to investigators, Ayush had shifted to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh's Azamgarh around four to five months ago and had started working with the chartered accountant about two months earlier. During this period, he became friends with Ashu and Akash, who lived in the same locality.

Teen stabbed to death; juvenile held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A 15-year-old boy was stabbed to death allegedly by a juvenile following a dispute in northeast Delhi's New Usmanpur area, police said on Sunday.

The incident came to light on Saturday evening when police received information from the Jag Pravesh Chandra Hospital regarding the admission of a minor with stab injuries, they said.

The boy subsequently succumbed to his injuries. According to the police, the boy was taken to the hospital by his family members after the attack.

Police identified the involvement of a 17-year-old boy in the case during interrogation, the officer said.

The juvenile was appre-



hended and, during questioning, stated that he had a dispute with the deceased, the officer added. At his instance, police recovered the knife allegedly used in the crime.

Police identified the deceased as Ayan Ansari, a resident of Gali Number Seven near Gaddhe Wali Masjid in Gautam Vihar, Brahmpuri. He was a Class 10 student and lived with his parents and two younger brothers. His father runs a scrap shop, police said.

According to police, the

accused juvenile and the victim were known to each other and had a long-standing dispute.

During the investigation, police found that on Saturday evening, the victim's younger brother, Sanib, was returning home when he encountered the accused and his friends in the locality. The accused allegedly scolded and slapped him.

After learning about the incident, Ayan went to K Block, Gali Number Four, Gaddhe Wali Gali on a scooter along with a friend and questioned the accused and his associates over the matter, police said.

During the confrontation, the accused and his associates allegedly attacked Ayan with knives and stabbed him multiple times before fleeing the spot.

Cultural performances celebrate shared heritage at Europe Day reception

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

As part of the Europe Day reception held on May 8, guests witnessed two specially curated cultural performances that highlighted the deep historical and artistic connections between India and Europe. Built around the theme "EUnitedINDiversity," the evening brought together classical traditions, folk expressions, and contemporary storytelling to celebrate unity through cultural exchange.

One of the highlights of the evening was a specially conceptualised dance production tracing the centuries-long cultural exchanges

between India and Europe. The performance explored how the relationship extends far beyond modern diplomacy, rooted instead in centuries of trade, travel, artistic encounters, and storytelling.

Union Finance Minister Dr Nirmala Sitharaman attended the event and represented India at the Europe Day.

Drawing inspiration from historical journeys undertaken by European travellers to India and Indian merchants and emissaries to Europe, the performance portrayed the movement of ideas, aesthetics, and traditions across borders. Through a blend of Indian and European dance



forms, the production reflected how these interactions shaped enduring cultural connections.

The performance featured a vibrant mix of Indian classical and folk traditions,

including Bharatanatyam, Kathak, Kuchipudi, Sattriya, and folk dance forms alongside European styles such as Ballet, Flamenco, and Tarantella. The presentation



culminated in a collective rhythmic convergence where all dance forms moved together in synchrony, symbolising the evolution from historical encounters to contemporary partnership and

celebrating the spirit of unity in diversity.

The production was conceptualised, curated, and coordinated by Vijayawada-based organisation Jignasa Artverse, which also brought

together dancers from both India and Europe for the collaborative performance.

Adding a visually immersive element to the evening, puppet theatre and design collective Puppetshala Performing Arts presented a surprise experiential puppet performance designed around the theme "EUnitedINDiversity."

The performance featured four self-lit giant puppets — two flamingos and two deer — each animated by performers who brought the creations to life through graceful movement and choreography. Set against soulful fusion music, the act explored the elegance, rhythm, and fluidity of nature

in motion while blending Indian artistic traditions with Western imaginative storytelling.

The striking visual spectacle invited audiences to reconnect briefly with the beauty and wonder of the natural world. Through movement, scale, light, and music, the performance celebrated diversity, imagination, and coexistence.

Founded by puppeteer and artist Mohd. Shameem, Puppetshala brings together puppeteers, puppet makers, and multidisciplinary artists to create outdoor spectacles and performances that reimagine puppetry as a playful, thought-provoking, and contemporary art form.



GRAPEVINE

Jo Jeeta Wahi Sikander, Babu

As expected, the Samrat Choudhury Government in Bihar carried out a major bureaucratic reshuffle. It transferred 11 IAS and 16 IPS officers. Even before the entire cabinet was sworn in, hectic lobbying had begun for plum postings. A few were eyeing the Resident Commissioner post in Delhi. The winner in the race was the 2009 batch IAS Manoj Kumar Singh. However, grapevine had it that Santosh Kumar Mall (1997 batch) was also looking for a change in Delhi. He was fortunate to be considered for an additional assignment and was successful to be attached to Bihar Bhawan as OSD besides his regular appointment as principal secretary of the disaster management department, Bihar. Mall had an eventful stint in Delhi, first as Private Secretary to former Union Minister Radha Mohan Singh, and then as the longest serving Commissioner at Kendriya Vidyalyaya Sanghathan.



Young IAS propose nightlife in Kerala

A Facebook post by 2022 batch IAS Dilip K Kainikkara, currently serving as Tirur Sub-Collector in Kerala, has triggered widespread discussion on social media, drawing both support and criticism, even before a new Congress led UDF Government takes over. The young IAS officer has proposed a series of long-term reforms, such as raising the retirement age, promoting nightlife. Kainikkara also urged a review of the unconditional all-pass policy in schools to ensure that students achieve basic educational competencies. In his post he suggested the newly elected Government had a rare opportunity to undertake long-term reforms that may face initial resistance but would ultimately benefit society. He further suggested limiting Malayalam-medium education largely to the lower primary level while gradually transitioning upper primary, high school and higher secondary education to English-medium instruction. Such a shift, he argued, would help prevent new social inequalities linked to language and access to education.



Growing clout of lottery king

Lottery King Santiago Martin's clout is growing in South India. His son-in-law Aadhav Arjuna is Minister in new TVK Government in Tamil Nadu. Martin's wife Leema Rose is AIADMK MLA and working like treasurer of the party. His son Jose Charles Martin floated a new outfit and won as MLA in a Pudukchery and part of NDA. Martin had already paid ₹500 crore to DMK as per declaration of electoral bonds. Martin is so friendly with all parties in Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana also. Latest heard is Tamil Nadu is expected to change its lottery policy by allowing private players. In Kerala, Communist party was embroiled controversy for accepting money from Martin for their newspaper.



Security scare in Bengaluru ahead of PM Modi visit

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH
New Delhi/Bengaluru

Karnataka Police and the central security agencies prevented a major security scare after they recovered two Gelatin sticks from a roadside during routine anti-sabotage drill ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit on Sunday. Immediate heightened security measures were put in place and a full-scale police investigation into the source and intent behind the explosives was launched.

Meanwhile, the police have detained one person for questioning. Sources indicated that the investigating agencies are now focused on determining the purpose behind the storage of the gelatin sticks in the area and ascertaining whether any other individuals or networks were involved.

The discovery occurred near Tataguni in the Kaggalipura police station limits in Bengaluru, close to a route associated with the Prime Minister's movement schedule. Police officials confirmed that the gelatin sticks were found on the side of a footpath, approximately three kilometres away from the main venue where the Prime Minister was scheduled to arrive.

Sources said, the gelatin sticks were located near the Agara Lake area in Tataguni on the city out-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing a public meeting at the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited Airport in Bengaluru, Karnataka on Sunday

skirts, a relatively less crowded stretch that forms part of the approach roads leading towards the Art of Living Centre. Forensic analysis of the materials is underway to trace their origin, while teams are also reviewing CCTV footage from nearby areas and speaking with local residents.

Prime Minister Modi was in

Bengaluru to commemorate the 45th foundation day of the Art of Living Centre located on Kanakapura Road near Kaggalipura. The event, which drew considerable attention, saw the deployment of multi-layered security arrangements across the city, particularly in the southern outskirts. The recovery of the explosive materials,

however, heightened the alert level among various security agencies. A statement from the police issued shortly after the recovery of explosive material, detailed the sequence of events. "On Sunday morning, before the PM's arrival, during the checking, two gelatine sticks were found on the side of a footpath, nearly three kilometres away from the main venue where PM Modi was scheduled to arrive. Further investigation is on," it said.

Although the items were found some distance from the actual event venue, their proximity to the Prime Minister's route necessitated an urgent escalation of security protocols across the city, sources said. Police personnel, along with bomb disposal squads and forensic experts, rushed to the spot for a detailed examination of the explosive materials. The area was cordoned off and thorough checks were carried out to ensure no additional threats existed in the vicinity.

Agencies are trying to determine how the explosives reached the roadside location and if they were deliberately placed or accidentally discarded. Security agencies have described the incident as a matter of serious concern, given the high-profile nature of the Prime Minister's visit. Gelatin sticks, commonly used in controlled industrial and mining

operations, are classified as explosives and their unauthorised possession or presence near sensitive locations raises immediate red flags.

Karnataka Police and central agencies, are monitoring the investigation, with emphasis on both the immediate recovery and the broader intelligence angle to rule out any larger conspiracy. Authorities have appealed to the public for any information that could assist in the ongoing probe. As of now, no further details on the identity of the detained individual or the exact composition of the recovered materials have been made public, citing the sensitivity of the investigation.

The Prime Minister's programme at the Art of Living Centre proceeded as scheduled amid the tightened security blanket. Officials maintained that the event was conducted without any disruption, reflecting the effectiveness of the rapid response mechanism.

Police sources reiterated that the matter is being investigated with utmost seriousness and that every possible lead is being pursued to establish the full facts.

The incident has once again highlighted the constant vigilance required in securing high-value targets in urban and semi-urban settings across the country.

NTA backs probe into NEET-UG 2026 irregularities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

National Testing Agency (NTA) on Sunday said it is cooperating with investigating agencies after reports emerged of alleged irregularities linked to the Rajasthan Special Operations Group probe into the conduct of NEET (UG) 2026.

In an official statement, the NTA said the medical entrance examination held on May 3 was conducted "as scheduled and under a full security protocol," with several layers of monitoring and verification in place.

According to the agency, question papers were transported in GPS-tracked vehicles carrying unique watermark identifiers, while examination centres were monitored through AI-assisted CCTV systems linked to a central control room. The NTA also said biometric verification of all candidates was carried out and 5G jammers were deployed



during the examination. The agency clarified that the examination process itself "proceeded as planned across all centres on the day."

The statement comes amid reports of action by the Rajasthan SOG in connection with suspected malpractice surrounding the examination. The NTA said it received inputs regarding alleged malpractice activity on the evening of May 7, four days after the examination was

conducted. "These inputs were escalated by NTA to central agencies on the morning of 8 May 2026 for independent verification and necessary action," the statement said.

The testing agency credited law enforcement authorities for the subsequent action and detentions reported in the media in recent days, describing them as the result of "professional and timely work." The NTA added that it is working

closely with investigating agencies by providing examination-related data and technical assistance required for the inquiry.

The agency said it would not "pre-judge the inquiry" or speculate on its outcome. It added that any findings requiring further action would be examined transparently and disclosed according to established procedures.

Addressing students and parents, the NTA said the integrity and efforts of the "very large majority of bona-fide aspirants" remain unquestioned.

"The effort and integrity of the very large majority of bona-fide aspirants is not in question, and will not be devalued," the statement said, while acknowledging the anxiety such reports may cause among candidates and families. The agency also said any future steps, if required, would be taken in consultation with the Ministry of Education.

IAF's Surya Kiran to stage air show over Somnath Temple



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Gir Somnath

The Indian Air Force's renowned Surya Kiran Aerobatic Team (SKAT) will present an air show over the Somnath Temple on May 11 as part of the 'Somnath Amrut Mahotsav-2026' celebrations marking 75 years of the temple's reconstruction, which will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, an official said on Sunday.

During rehearsal sorties conducted over the temple on Sunday morning, spectators gathered in large numbers and cheered the pilots as they executed precision formations and close-range flying displays in the skies above the temple town, an official release said.

A major attraction of this year's display would be indigenous smoke pods developed by the Air Force's Base Repair Depot in Nashik, which will release saffron, white and green smoke to create the image of the Indian tricolour in the sky, it said.

Moreover, an Indian Air Force Chetak helicopter will also shower flower petals over the Somnath temple as part of the celebrations.

"The aerobatic display will feature synchronised formations and daring aerial manoeuvres by pilots flying red-and-white Hawk Mk-132 aircraft. The 15-minute show would demonstrate the

pilots' expertise in flying fighter aircraft at extremely close distances from one another," the release quoted Wing Commander Janmeet Sharma as saying. The aircraft will take off from the Jamnagar Air Force Station and reach Somnath within 18 minutes, covering an aerial distance of around 182 kilometres, officials said.

The team, led by Group Captain Ajay Dasharathi, comprises 13 pilots, while 25 to 30 Air Force personnel from the Jamnagar station will manage operational responsibilities, including flypast control, aviation safety, bird hazard management, weather coordination and signal communication, the release said.

The Surya Kiran team, which was established in 1996, has conducted over 800 air displays across India and has represented the Indian Air Force in countries such as China, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand, Singapore and the United Arab Emirates, the release noted.

"The helicopter unit, which also undertakes search and rescue, medical evacuation and disaster relief operations, had already carried out rehearsal flights over the temple during the past two days. The same unit had earlier conducted a flower shower over the Statue of Unity on National Unity Day," an official said.

Tired of teaching PDP leaders: Omar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Jammu

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah on Sunday said he is "tired of teaching" PDP leaders.

Taking strong note of the allegation that the National Conference Government in Jammu and Kashmir has resorted to backdoor appointments, the Chief Minister said he is "tired of teaching" PDP leaders. Omar was interacting with the reporters in the central Kashmir district of Ganderbal.

"Name one place where a backdoor appointment has taken place. Outsourcing is not a backdoor appointment. How much do I need to teach the PDP people? I am tired of teaching them now. Urdu, they do not know; English, they do not understand.



Do you explain to them in French?" he asked.

Abdullah said there is a vast difference between backdoor appointments and outsourcing jobs.

"We are providing jobs (on regular Government rolls), and we outsource only where a scheme's requirements necessitate it. The PDP is making baseless allegations against us to hide its own sins. First, they tried to use Urdu, but it failed. Now, they have raised backdoor appointments, that has also failed," he said.

Omar also accused PDP president Mehbooba Mufti of levelling false and baseless allegations against his Government, alleging that she wants to divert people's attention from her party's "help" to the BJP in winning a Rajya Sabha seat from the Union Territory last year.

"I was listening to her speech yesterday in which she claimed that an officer was asked for a bribe for a transfer. She also claimed that there was no inquiry because the person who had sought the money was a minister. Madam, please tell me which minister is the treasurer of the National Conference? As far as I know, the treasurer of the NC is Member of Parliament, Shammi Oberoi. So far, Oberoi is neither a minister in Jammu and Kashmir nor at the Centre," Abdullah told reporters in Ganderbal.

RSS leader Hosabale exhorts young women to actively participate in ABVP activities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
New Delhi

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) general secretary Dattatreya Hosabale on Sunday exhorted young women to actively participate in its student wing, Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).

Hosabale said ABVP ideology and organisational thinker Yashwantrao Kelkar strongly advocated women's participation, full-time involvement of girl students and constructive work in student organisations. He noted that Kelkar played a key role in building the ideology and organisational structure of the student body.

The RSS leader was addressing the "Priye Kelkar Ji" special recitation pro-



gramme organised by the ABVP's Delhi unit at the Kedarnath Sahni Auditorium here to mark Kelkar's birth centenary year. Hosabale said Kelkar developed the "philosophy of a student movement" and explained what should be the ideological basis and thought process of such an organisation.

"Overall, the Vidyarthi

Parishad functions through three dimensions—constructive work, representative work and agitational work," Hosabale said while Kelkar, regarded as one of the principal architects of the ABVP, is credited with shaping the organisation's ideological framework and stressing constructive social work alongside student activism.

PM applauds Art of Living Foundation's contribution to society

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Bengaluru

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the role of the Art of Living Foundation in promoting service, spirituality and social transformation, and called for collective efforts to build a developed India through environmental responsibility, youth empowerment and inner well-being.

Addressing the gathering at the Art of Living International Centre here to mark 45 years of the foundation and participate in celebrations linked to founder Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Modi said Bengaluru has not only emerged as a global technology hub but also elevated India's spiritual and

cultural consciousness. The Prime Minister also inaugurated a new meditation hall at the sprawling campus and congratulated the organisation for creating what he described as a centre of peace and healing for generations to come.

Referring to India's civilisational values, he said the essence binding the country's immense diversity was selfless service.

He said India's spiritual movements had historically expressed themselves through service to humanity and praised Art of Living for embodying that principle through welfare-oriented programmes, including tribal empowerment initiatives and efforts to improve the mental



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Shankar during a meeting in Bengaluru, Karnataka

health of prisoners. "Spiritual movement in India lays emphasis on serving mankind," Modi said.

The PM emphasised that societal participation was more powerful than political systems and was essential

for nation-building. No Government can succeed unless society itself actively participates in nation-building, he said, citing the success of the Swachh Bharat mission as an example of a campaign sustained by public ownership.

Highlighting India's transformation in the digital era, Modi said the country had become a global leader in digital payments, developed one of the world's fastest-growing startup ecosystems and was making unprecedented advances in infrastructure and space technology, driven largely by its youth.

"India is not only partnering in scientific innovation, but also leading in many areas," Modi said. He credit-

ed institutions such as Art of Living with helping young people navigate the challenges of modern life.

Noting that technology allowed people sitting far apart to connect instantly, he underscored that whether or not we connect with the world, we must connect with ourselves.

He said a developed India would be built by youth who were mentally peaceful, socially responsible and sensitive towards society, underlining the importance of spiritual well-being, yoga, meditation and mental health initiatives.

The Prime Minister also urged the organisation's volunteers to intensify their engagement in natural

farming and environmental conservation.

"Today, even in illness, people are seeking natural healing. Our Mother Earth also needs natural healing. Chemical fertilisers have exhausted our fields and harmed Mother Earth. Protecting Mother Earth from chemicals is also the Art of Living," he said.

He called for greater support for the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, stressing that protecting the environment was inseparable from sustainable development.

"Ecology and economy cannot be separated," Modi said. He also exhorted volunteers to promote water conservation ahead of the

monsoon, expand awareness around electricity conservation, discourage single-use plastic and encourage local products.

Pointing to the Centre's Mission LiFE initiative, Modi said it represented a conscious and responsible lifestyle rooted in harmony with nature.

"In my view, Mission LiFE too is, in a way, a manifestation of Art of Living," he said. Expressing confidence that Art of Living would continue expanding its social outreach and strengthen its role as an agent of transformation, Modi said he hoped all these goals would be realised by the time the organisation celebrated Ravi Shankar's centenary.

Nine-member Cabinet in Tamil Nadu takes oath with Vijay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Chennai

C Joseph Vijay on Sunday took oath as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, days after trouncing the DMK in elections. A 9-member Cabinet, an amalgamation of youth and experience, was sworn-in to assist the CM in administration.

Here is a look at the profiles of the TVK ministers.

KA Sengottaiyan: From his early days as a leader of Kullapalayam Panchayat in Coimbatore during the 1970s, Sengottaiyan has carved out a storied 50-year career in Tamil Nadu politics. His journey from a grassroots party worker to a 10-time legislator stands as a testament to his political endurance. Born in 1948, Sengottaiyan's ascent began when he was just 29 years old.

His tireless work earned him his first MLA seat from the Sathyamangalam assembly constituency in 1977, when the AIADMK first rose to power under its legendary founder MG Ramachandran, who was fondly called MGR.

After MGR's passing, Sengottaiyan emerged as a staunch loyalist of J Jayalalithaa.

Throughout AIADMK's various terms in power, he held several key portfolios, most notably serving as the Revenue Minister. His influence continued in the administration of Edappadi K Palaniswami, where he served as the School Education Minister.

In this role, he was credited with



Tamil Nadu CM and TVK chief Vijay, party MLAs N Anand, KG Arunraj, Aadhav Arjuna, KA Sengottaiyan, S Keerthana, P Venkataraman, Nirmal Kumar, Rajmohan Arumugam, during the swearing-in ceremony of the State Government at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai on Sunday

introducing ambitious reforms.

He was expelled from the AIADMK in November 2025 after a series of public disagreements with Palaniswami, and he soon joined the Vijay-led TVK, where his decades of political experience proved invaluable.

Aadhav Arjuna: Perhaps TVK's most visible face, Aadhav Arjuna is a basketball player and is currently the president of Basketball Federation of India. A political strategist, he briefly served as Deputy General

Secretary for Viduthalai Chiruthaigal Katchi (VCK) before parting ways with its chief Thol Thirumavalavan. The Villivakkam MLA-elect is the son-in-law of 'lottery king' Santiago Martin and has been credited for TVK's growth.

N Anand: Also known as 'Bussy' Anand, he is recognized as one of the closest political associates of TVK president Vijay. He played a key organizational role during the formation and growth of the party,

helping build its ground network and campaign machinery across Tamil Nadu. He earned his nickname 'Bussy' after winning the election from the Bussy constituency in Pudukcherry in 2006 in Pudukcherry Munnetra Congress.

Anand will have the distinction of serving the 17th Tamil Nadu Assembly, after having previously been MLA in Pudukcherry. He is known for doing voluntary services in his assembly segment ensuring a garbage free area.

S Keerthana: TVK MLA-elect from the Sivakasi constituency, S Keerthana has been making headlines after the 29-year-old became the first woman MLA to achieve victory in the constituency, putting an end to nearly seven decades of male domination.

Born in 1996 in Virudhunagar, Keerthana studied in a Tamil-medium Government school before building a career in political consulting. She completed her BSc in

Mathematics from a college affiliated with Madurai Kamaraj University and later pursued MSc in Statistics from Puducherry University in 2019.

Before entering active politics, Keerthana worked as a political consultant and digital campaign strategist with Showtime Consulting and IPAC.

She was also involved in election campaigns for the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK).

Over the years, she worked with former CMs Stalin, Mamata Banerjee and incumbent AP CM Chandrababu Naidu.

KG Arunraj: A former Indian Revenue Service officer and a medical doctor by profession, Arunraj was sworn in as a minister in Vijay's cabinet on Sunday. Kottai Palayam Ganesan Arunraj, aged 46 now, gave up his prestigious Government job and joined Vijay's Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam. He served as its general secretary, policy and propaganda, before becoming the minister of the first-ever TVK cabinet under Vijay.

Arunraj had won from Tiruchengode Assembly constituency in Namakkal district, securing 79,500 votes and trouncing his nearest rival SRMT Sekar of the AIADMK by a margin of 28,172 votes.

He earned his MBBS from Madras Medical College and had served as Government medical officer at the primary health centre in Krishnagiri.

He completed his schooling in Salem district.

R Nirmal Kumar: A prominent leader of TVK, who played a crucial role in post-poll negotiations in meeting the left party leaders and securing their support for Government formation, Nirmal Kumar had headed the IT and social media unit of the TVK.

He won from the Thirupparankundram Assembly constituency in Madurai. He was with the BJP initially heading its IT and social media wing and following a brief stint with the AIADMK, Nirmal Kumar joined the TVK in 2025.

He became a key strategist for the TVK and is credited with building the digital presence for the TVK while serving as deputy general secretary of IT and social media wing. He holds degrees in engineering and law.

A Rajmohan: Rajmohan, an actor, stand-up comedian, television anchor, and director who took the oath of office as a minister, was TVK's propaganda secretary. He won from Egmore Assembly constituency.

P Venkataraman: TVK treasurer P Venkataraman who assumed charge as minister, is a practicing advocate and he won from Mylapore Assembly constituency. He is the Brahmin face of TVK. In October 2024, at the first State conference of TVK he had administered the oath to thousands of party activists.

Governor stops Vijay's off-script oath-speech at swearing-in



TN Governor Rajendra Arlekar in conversation with newly-elected State Chief Minister and TVK chief C Joseph Vijay during the latter's swearing-in ceremony at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai on Sunday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

TVK chief C Joseph Vijay on Sunday attempted to make a powerful address during his oath-taking as CM, but Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar intervened and asked him to confine to the official oath. Vijay tried to go off the script by making hand gestures to signify strength and power.

Immediately after the Governor began to administer the oath to him, Vijay went off-script and started saying, "I, C Joseph Vijay, will stay true to the legally established Constitution of India... as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, I will work honestly and dedicatedly to fulfill my responsibilities. I will adhere to the rule of law, work with honesty, remove hate, and will work honestly for all sections of the people. This I

swear on god and take the oath," saying thus, Vijay raised his right hand as he swore on god and clenched his fist.

Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam MLA-elect A Rajmohan, who was standing behind Vijay, clapped his hands in jubilation and party workers too erupted in joy.

Vijay's parents, film maker SA Chandrasekhar and Shoba, present in front of the dais, turned emotional.

The Governor intervened and asked Vijay to read out the official oath from the paper provided to him. Vijay sought some clarification from the Governor and read out from the written oath.

He took the oath on god and shortly after his ministers were sworn in, Vijay announced three people welfare schemes related to electricity, women's safety and eradication of drugs, at the stadium.

CM Vijay chairs first law and order review

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph C Vijay chaired a review meeting with top officials on Sunday to take stock of the law and order situation in the State.

This was Vijay's first review meeting after assuming office as CM.

Although TVK on its own did not secure the majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, Vijay managed to get support from the Congress, VCK, CPI (M) and IUML to gather 120 MLAs and cross the 118 majority mark to form the Government.

According to a press release, a comprehensive assessment of the



Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay chairs a review meeting on the law and order situation in the State

law and order situation in Tamil Nadu was carried out during the meeting. Vijay also discussed measures to

enhance women's safety, as well as strategies to prevent drug-related crimes and take stringent action against offenders.

Vijaya's film *Jana Nayagan* eyes release in two weeks: Producer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
Chennai

The highly anticipated Vijay-starrer '*Jana Nayagan*' is slated to hit theatres within the next two weeks, its producer confirmed on Sunday. Speaking to reporters at the swearing-in ceremony of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph Vijay, Venkat K Narayana, founder of KVN Productions, said that the final certification process for '*Jana Nayagan*' with the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) is currently underway.

"Final processes are underway, and we are in discussions with them. We are very happy and excited," he said, adding that '*Jana Nayagan*' is expected to be released in approximately 14 days.

The producer, who has collaborated with Vijay on what is being described as the actor's final film before his full-time transition into politics, praised his commitment. "I know Vijay sir personally. He is very dis-



ciplined and dedicated, and whatever he promises, he fulfils. He walks the talk," Narayana said.

He further suggested that the film's title and themes align with a "new era" for Tamil Nadu under Vijay's leadership.

"I think a new leadership, a new era begin. He has turned out to be '*Jana Nayagan*' (a man of the people) for the people of Tamil Nadu," the producer added.

TN CM visits Periyar Thidal, meets DK president

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Chennai

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Joseph C Vijay on Sunday visited Periyar Thidal to meet Dravida Kazhagam president K Veeramani, officials said. The meeting was described as a courtesy call.

On his arrival, Vijay paid floral tributes at the memorial of E V Ramasamy, popularly known as Periyar.

The CM later held a brief discussion with Veeramani on the current socio-political situation in the state, officials added. The visit is seen as a symbolic nod to the self-respect movement.

Periyar Thidal serves as the headquarters of the Dravida Kazhagam, an organisation rooted in the



TN CM C Joseph Vijay with DMK leader K Veeramani during a meeting in Chennai on Sunday

Dravidian ideological movement in Tamil Nadu. The complex also houses the Periyar Museum and the memorial of the social

reformer, making it a symbolic "pilgrimage" site for political leaders seeking to reaffirm their Dravidian ideological credentials.

From silver screen to seat of power in South India

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Chennai

In the rich tapestry of South Indian public life, the transition from the silver screen to the seat of power is a cultural phenomenon. For decades, the boundary between celluloid heroics and legislative leadership has been porous, driven by a unique blend of charismatic stardom and deep-rooted regional identity.

The blueprint for this crossover was laid in the mid-20th century by M Karunanidhi (aka Kalaikannan), MG Ramachandran (MGR) in Tamil Nadu and NT Rama Rao (NTR) in Andhra Pradesh.

Karunanidhi, though a titan of politics, first conquered the world of cinema as a revolutionary screenwriter. Over five decades, he transitioned from being a scriptwriter to a five-time chief minister of Tamil Nadu.

MGR, a superstar who personified the "man of the masses", became chief minister in 1977, cementing a legacy of welfare that lasted decades. Following him, his protegee J Jayalalithaa transitioned from a celebrated actress to a formidable political force known as 'Amma'.

In Andhra Pradesh, NTR achieved the nearly impossible. Often cast as Krishna or Rama on screen, he formed the



Top row, from left to right, former TN CMs J Jayalalithaa, M Karunanidhi, former State MLA Vijayakanth. Bottom row, from left to right, former MoS Chiranjeevi, Andhra Pradesh Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan and TN CM S Joseph Vijay. The transition from the silver screen to the seat of power is a cultural phenomenon

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) in 1982 and became chief minister within nine months, riding a wave of "Telugu pride".

While the titans dominated the early years, Vijayakanth, affectionately known as "Captain", carved out a unique space in Tamil Nadu. In 2005, he launched the Desiya Murpokku

Dravida Kazhagam (DMDK) as a direct alternative to the established DMK and AIADMK. In neighbouring Andhra Pradesh, brothers Chiranjeevi and Pawan Kalyan both entered politics, but it was 'Power Star' Kalyan who proved his resilience, suffering electoral setbacks for nearly a decade.

Congratulatory messages pour in for TN's new CM

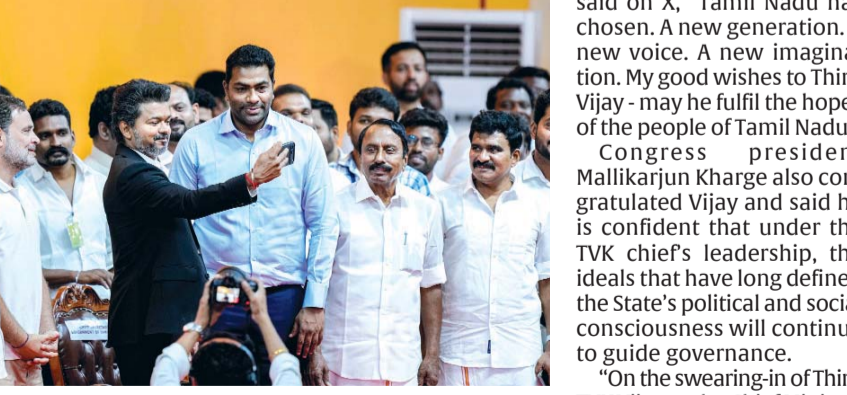
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
New Delhi

Leaders from across the political spectrum on Sunday congratulated TVK chief C Joseph Vijay on taking oath as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying the Centre will keep working with the State Government to improve the lives of people.

The Congress, which has extended support to the TVK, hailed the actor-turned-politician following his swearing-in ceremony, as party leader Rahul Gandhi said Tamil Nadu has chosen "a new generation and a new voice".

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake also extended congratulations to Vijay, highlighting the deep historical and cultural ties between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu.

In a social media post, Dissanayake said Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu are "connected through history, culture, enterprise, and enduring people-to-people ties across



Newly-elected TN CM and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) chief C Joseph Vijay takes a selfie with Congress MP and Lok Sabha LoP Rahul Gandhi and his party cabinet members during the TVK cabinet's swearing-in ceremony at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium in Chennai on Sunday

generations". Vijay was sworn-in as the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on Sunday in a colourful ceremony, ushering in the first non-DMK, non-AIADMK Government in the southern State in 60 years with promise of transparent governance and an assertion that he will be the sole power centre in the State.

In his post on X, Prime Minister Modi said, "Congratulations to Thiru C Joseph Vijay on taking oath as Tamil Nadu Chief Minister. Best wishes for his tenure ahead. The Central Government will keep working with the Tamil Nadu Government to improve the lives of people." Congress leader Gandhi, who attended Vijay's swearing-in ceremony in Chennai,

said on X, "Tamil Nadu has chosen. A new generation. A new voice. A new imagination. My good wishes to Thiru Vijay - may he fulfil the hopes of the people of Tamil Nadu."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge also congratulated Vijay and said he is confident that under the TVK chief's leadership, the ideals that have long defined the State's political and social consciousness will continue to guide governance.

"On the swearing-in of Thiru TVK Vijay as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, I extend my heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to him, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam party and the entire progressive alliance," Kharge said on X.

The formation of this Government reaffirms the enduring strength of self-respect, social justice, empowerment and rational thought, are values that have long defined Tamil Nadu's political and social consciousness, he said, adding this is the "legacy shaped by Periyar and Kamraj".



IN FOCUS

PM's appeal for judicious use of fuel most appropriate: Fadnavis

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Nagpur

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal for judicious use of petroleum products in the wake of the West Asia crisis. Replying to a question on the sidelines of an event in Nagpur, he said the PM has made the most appropriate request to the citizens. "We all know that there is a shortage of fuel and gas across the world due to the



West Asia war involving America, Israel and Iran. Our neighbouring countries are facing a huge fuel crisis, and prices have gone up there.

The fuel price in Pakistan is (Pakistani rupees) 450 per litre," he told reporters. Despite all this, PM Modi ensured that fuel supplies

were not affected in India, he said. "We are getting an adequate fuel supply," Fadnavis said.

The country may also face a tough situation if people do not understand the global problem properly and do not use fuel judiciously, he said.

"Hence, all the citizens of India should follow what the PM has said," stressed the CM.

Addressing a public event in Hyderabad earlier in the day, Modi said petroleum products should be used only as needed.

Gandhinagar to host Asian Senior Weightlifting Championship 2026

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gujarat

Gandhinagar is set to host the prestigious Asian Senior Weightlifting Championship 2026 at the Mahatma Mandir from May 11 to 17, bringing together leading athletes and officials from across Asia.

Organised by the Indian Weightlifting Federation, the week-long international event is expected to witness participation from nearly 200 elite weightlifters representing 31 countries. Around 200 coaches and team managers, along with 50 international technical officials, are also expected to



attend the championship.

The competition will feature several top-ranked athletes, including Olympic medal winners and World Championship medallists, making it one of the biggest sporting events hosted by Gujarat in recent years. Officials said the tourna-

ment will also serve as a qualifying event for the upcoming Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, adding further importance to the championship. India has been awarded hosting rights for the event for the fourth time, following earlier editions held in Pune, Greater

Noida and Ahmedabad. The inaugural ceremony is scheduled to be held on May 12 at Mahatma Mandir in the presence of Gujarat ministers and senior officials. Deputy Chief Minister Harsh Sanghavi and Minister of State for Sports Jairam Gamit are expected to attend the event.

Senior representatives from the international weightlifting community, including Mohammed Hasan Jalood, President of the International Weightlifting Federation, and Mohammed Bin Youssef Al Mana, President of the Asian federation, are also likely to participate in the opening ceremony.

AAP protests ED action against Punjab minister; unrest in three districts

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Ludhiana/Hoshiarpur (Punjab)

The AAP held anti-BJP protests across Punjab on Sunday over the ED action against State minister Sanjeev Arora, accusing the Centre of misusing agencies against its leaders, while the saffron party slammed the workers of the ruling outfit for their "unruly behaviour."

Tension prevailed at a few places when workers of the AAP and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) came face to face, prompting police to intervene.

In Ludhiana, a scuffle broke out between AAP and BJP workers during a protest outside the saffron party's district office near the grain market on Gill Road.

In Shaheed Bhagat Singh Nagar district's Balachaur, the BJP accused rebel Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD)

MLA Sukwinder Kumar Sukhi, who is now with the AAP, of indulging in "hooliganism" and demanded the registration of a case against him. Sukhi rejected the allegation, saying he had only objected to BJP district president Rajwinder Lucky calling the protesters "chor" (thieves).

AAP's protests came a day after the Enforcement Directorate (ED) arrested Punjab Industries Minister Arora in connection with an alleged Rs 100-crore GST fraud-related money-laundering case involving certain entities linked to him.

Arora, 62, was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) following a raid at his official residence in Chandigarh's Sector 2 on Saturday morning. While the AAP dubbed the ED raid at Arora's residence



and his subsequent arrest politically-motivated acts, Hampton Sky Realty Limited, in which the Punjab minister served as a director, said the company has faith in the legal process and is fully cooperating with all the statutory authorities and will continue to do so. Arora's arrest has triggered a fresh political confrontation between the AAP and the BJP. The ruling party in Punjab had given a call to "gherao"

and his subsequent arrest politically-motivated acts, Hampton Sky Realty Limited, in which the Punjab minister served as a director, said the company has faith in the legal process and is fully cooperating with all the statutory authorities and will continue to do so. Arora's arrest has triggered a fresh political confrontation between the AAP and the BJP. The ruling party in Punjab had given a call to "gherao"

BJP offices across the State. Leaders and volunteers of the Arvind Kejriwal-led party burnt effigies of the BJP-led Centre and raised slogans against it. They also carried placards that read "ED-BJP gathjod murdabad" (down with the ED-BJP nexus).

The protests were held in districts, including Hoshiarpur, Patiala and Mohali, where AAP leaders accused the BJP of using investigative agencies as "political

Yogi Adityanath declares film Krishnavataram tax-free in UP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Lucknow

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday announced that the film 'Krishnavataram' has been made tax-free in the State after attending its special screening at the Lok Bhavan auditorium here.

According to an official statement, the screening was organised after the expansion of the State cabinet on Sunday and was attended by Governor Anandiben Patel, deputy chief ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak, other cabinet ministers, BJP State president Pankaj Chaudhary and other public representatives.

The statement said the auditorium reverberated with chants of "Krishna-Krishna" and "Radhe-Radhe" during the screening.

The chief minister also congratulated the artistes associated with the film on the stage.

Adityanath said the film presents the life of Lord Krishna from a human perspective and depicts the Dwapar era, Sanatan culture and Indian traditions on a grand scale. He said stories of Radha, Rukmini and Satyabhama have also been shown in the film.

The chief minister direct-



ed the Information Department to organise special screenings of the film in every district so that children and youth could connect with Indian culture and heritage.

Adityanath described the occasion as a matter of pride for Governor Anandiben Patel, whose granddaughter Sanskruti plays the role of Satyabhama in the film.

Patel said more films based on Indian culture and traditions should be made. The film released on May 7 in Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. Directed by Hardik Gajjar, the film stars Siddharth Gupta, Sanskruti, Sushmita Bhatt and Nivassini Krishnan in lead roles. Actors Jackie Shroff and Ashutosh Rana have also played key roles in the film.

Economic empowerment of women key priority for Rajasthan Govt: CM Sharma



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajpal Sharma on Sunday said around 17.5 lakh women in the State have become "Lakshmi Didi", underscoring the Government's focus on women's economic empowerment.

Addressing a Gram Vikas Chaula programme in Kadal village of Pushkar, Sharma said several welfare measures launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi are aimed at strengthening women socially and financially through access to toilets, cooking gas connections, tap water and direct benefit transfers.

He said women associated with the Rajasthan Rural Livelihoods Mission are con-

tributing significantly to the rural economy by taking up roles such as "Krishi Sakhi", "Bank Sakhi" and "Pashu Sakhi", helping them achieve financial independence.

The chief minister said the loan limit under the Lakshmi Didi scheme has been raised to Rs 1.5 lakh, while the interest rate has been reduced to 1.5 per cent to support women entrepreneurs.

During an interaction with women beneficiaries, Sharma praised their contribution in improving household incomes through activities such as animal husbandry and small businesses, and assured continued Government support for self-employment and livelihood generation.

Several ministers and public representatives were present at the event.

Congress claims Instagram blocked Rahul Gandhi's reel, photo post featuring Vijay due to MeitY rules

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

The Congress on Sunday claimed that Instagram has "blocked" Rahul Gandhi's reel and photo post featuring him and actor-politician Vijay due to the rules of the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, even as Government sources denied the charge.

Sources in the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) clarified that it had nothing to do with the action, and it was because the platform's internal system mistakenly flagged the post for blocking. Gandhi was in Chennai on Sunday to attend the oath-



taking ceremony of Vijay as the Tamil Nadu chief minister and later shared several pictures with the actor-politician on social media.

In a post on X, Congress leader and Gandhi's aide Srivatsa claimed that

Instagram has "blocked" Gandhi's reel and pictures post featuring him and Thalapaty Vijay at today's swearing-in ceremony.

The viral reel had gathered 12 million views in less than an hour, while the viral

picture post had already reached 46 million people, Srivatsa.

"Meta cites no reason as to why his account has become inaccessible. The 'glitch' is because of MEITY rules! Rahul Gandhi's social media accounts have been suppressed for a long time. His X reach, YouTube views, and Insta followers have all been suppressed," he alleged.

This is how India's Opposition leader's voice is curtailed, Srivatsa added.

Responding to the claims, sources in the MeitY said it has been wrongly claimed by certain social media handles that certain posts of the leader of the Opposition were restricted by the ministry.

In our country, every day is dedicated to mothers: Shah

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said every day in India is dedicated to mothers while recalling a personal note that he used to touch his mother's feet every day and continues to light a lamp before her picture even after her death.

Addressing a gathering at the launch of two books authored by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, The Bench, the Bar and the Bizarre and The Lawful and the Awful, Shah said, "I used to touch my mother's feet every day, and even after she is no more, I light a lamp before her picture every day."

"In our country, every day is dedicated to mothers," he said.

Amit Shah appreciated Tushar Mehta for dedicating the books to his mother and launching them on Mother's Day. The home minister described Mehta as not only the



A mother carries her child on the occasion of Mother's Day in Kolkata, West Bengal on Sunday

solicitor general of India and a knowledgeable lawyer, but also his friend. Shah also said that the

Constitution and the judiciary have made significant contributions in strengthening and deepening the roots of India's democracy.

Congress a backstabber: PM Modi

Modi said the Congress Government invariably faced anti-incumbency within months because the party lacked a governance agenda. Claiming that the BJP represented stability in an uncertain global environment, Modi said recent election results across States reflected growing public support for the NDA's governance model.

Referring to the NDA returning to power in Puducherry for a second consecutive term, forming Government again in Assam, BJP's electoral gains in West Bengal, and the party's sweeping victory in Gujarat local body polls, he said the results indicated a decisive political shift.

In his second public address during the day at Hyderabad, Modi said people of Telangana is now looking for a change where a Congress Government is installed. PM reminded a BJP Government has been formed in Bengal with massive majority and he could visualise similar enthusiasm in Telangana like Bengal people.

China warns citizens on entering India via Nepal

The renewed warning comes amid heightened vigilance along the India-Nepal border following the arrest of a Chinese national near the Joghani checkpoint in Bihar's Araria district on Monday evening.

Security agencies, including local police and central intelligence units, have launched an investigation into the incident to determine the individual's intent, travel history, and possible connections. Authorities are also verifying the authenticity of the documents recovered during the arrest. Janardan Mishra, Commandant of the Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) 56 Battalion, identified the detained individual as Zhou Huan, 41, a resident of China's Hunan province. He said the man was intercepted during routine surveillance operations.

"The Chinese national is being interrogated by central and State agencies to ascertain the motive behind his entry, background, and possible links. He has been handed over to Joghani police station for further action," Mishra said.

According to officials, more than 40 foreign nationals attempting to enter India illegally

FROM PAGE - 3

through the India-Nepal border have been intercepted in 2025 so far.

MHA rule ignites cultural, political row at Vijay's...

"The Tamil Nadu Government must provide a public explanation identifying those responsible for this error," he said, adding that the Tamilaga Vetti Kazhagam (TVK), as a participant in the ceremony, must ensure that the "Tamil Thaa Vaazhthu" is restored to its rightful place and that such an error is not repeated.

Although TVK on its own did not secure the majority in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly, Vijay managed to get support from the Congress, VCK, CPI, CPI (M) and IUML to gather 120 MLAs and cross the 118 majority mark to form the Government.

The Centre is observing the 150th year of Vande Mataram, which played a historic part in the struggle for freedom from British rule. In the latest move just days ago, the Union Cabinet approved an amendment to the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, granting

Vande Mataram the same statutory protection as the national anthem.

Himanta set for second term

Earlier in the morning, Sarma was elected as the leader of the BJP-led NDA in the Assam assembly. Union Minister JP Nadda and Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini were present at the meeting as central observers and co-observers. Eight BJP legislators proposed the name of Sarma as its legislature party leader, Nadda said. The BJP partners in the alliance, Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and Bodoland People's Front (BPF), also supported Sarma's nomination, leading to his unanimous election as the NDA leader, Nadda said.

Yogi expands Cabinet with an eye on 2027

Chaudhary, a Jat leader from western UP, is former State BJP president and a member of the Legislative Council, earlier served as Cabinet minister for

Panchayat Department. Pandey is a defector from Samajwadi Party and MLA from the Unchahar Assembly constituency in Raebareilly district. Paswan, a Dalit leader, is an MLA from Khaga constituency in Fatehpur district. Diler is MLA from Khair in Aligarh district, Rajput from Tirwa in Kannauj district while Vishwakarma is a member of the Legislative Council. The development comes at a politically crucial time for the ruling BJP, which is looking to consolidate its social coalition after the setbacks it faced in Uttar Pradesh during the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

The party is expected to use the cabinet expansion to send a message to key caste groups and regions ahead of the next State election battle. The last Cabinet expansion in the State was held on March 5, 2024, ahead of the Lok Sabha elections held in May-June 2024.

Also present at the oath taking were, Union Minister of State for Finance and BJP State president Pankaj Chaudhary, BJP general secretary (organisation) Dharampal, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak and other senior party leaders.



Editor's TAKE

Cleaning up India's sacred and scenic spaces

The Supreme Court has brought long-overdue urgency to cleaning up India, but lasting change will require commitment from both governments and citizens

Mahatma Gandhi once said, "Cleanliness is next to godliness." This statement did not come from his conviction alone, but out of the observations that he saw around him. Let us face it, cleanliness is secondary to us; we litter at will, spit wherever we want to and clean our homes and throw the trash on the street, caring little about throwing wrappers and bottles when visiting a tourist place or a monument. Perhaps this is the reason that the cleanliness drive undertaken by the Modi Government has met with limited success; despite years of implementation, it is yet to become a habit, and till that happens cleanliness will always elude us. The Supreme Court's recent directive mandating strict implementation of the Solid Waste Management (SWM) Rules, 2026, at tourist destinations and pilgrim centres is well-intentioned and timely, as it is a reminder that cleanliness, environmental responsibility and civic discipline are inseparable and must be taken care of. By asking states to create dedicated mechanisms for waste management at beaches, tourist hotspots and religious sites, the court has addressed one of India's most visible and persistent failures: cleaning up our public places. The ruling is timely, yet its success will ultimately depend on political will, administrative efficiency and public participation. Public awareness in this regard is paramount.

From the ghats of Varanasi and the hills of Vaishno Devi to Goa's beaches, these places are littered with plastic waste, filthy and unclean. Such scenes not only damage fragile ecosystems but also tarnish the country's global image. The Supreme Court rightly noted that keeping these places "spick and span" is essential both for preserving nature and enhancing India's international standing. The significance of the order lies in its practical and decentralised approach. By empowering district collectors and directing them to create special monitoring cells, the court has moved accountability closer to the ground. The requirement for fortnightly inspections and reports introduces an element of regular oversight.

Another notable aspect is the recognition that waste management is an administrative and financial challenge as well. The court acknowledged the constraints of budget and manpower faced by states and urban bodies. Its suggestion to involve Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds in establishing compressed biogas and waste-to-energy plants could help bridge the financial gap. In India, rivers, mountains and forests are deeply tied to spiritual and cultural identity, yet are often subjected to neglect and pollution. The court order puts the onus on governments to address the issue. However, the challenges remain formidable. India's waste management system continues to suffer from poor segregation at source, inadequate recycling infrastructure and weak enforcement.

Many municipalities lack scientific landfills, modern processing plants and trained sanitation staff. Rural pilgrimage centres face severe infrastructural deficits. The Supreme Court's intervention has provided direction and urgency to an issue long ignored. But judicial orders alone cannot clean India. Collective action can.

Pokhran II: When India claimed its strategic voice

The defining technologies of the twenty-first century such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum computing, cybersecurity, and space systems may seem far removed from nuclear weapons, but the underlying logic remains unchanged



UTTAM KUMAR SINHA

Every year on May 11, National Technology Day commemorates India's 1998 nuclear tests at Pokhran (Operation Shakti). However, viewing this day as simply a scientific and technological milestone overlooks its deeper significance. The tests conducted on May 11 and 13 were also an expression of political will, strategic clarity, and a decisive assertion of national identity within a hierarchical global nuclear order that had long privileged a few and constrained many.

When Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee addressed the nation that afternoon in 1998, his words were measured, almost clinical, "At fifteen forty-five hours, India conducted three underground nuclear tests..." It was a declaration not just of capability, but of intent.

India's strategic community had long grappled with the implications of a nuclearised world. Following China's nuclear test in 1964, Indian thinkers confronted a difficult question. Could India afford to remain outside the nuclear order? As early as 1966, Major General Som Dutt, the first director of the Institute for Defence Studies, warned that if China possessed strategic options India lacked, "India could be blackmailed into paralysis." His stark conclusion was that India might have little choice but to develop its own nuclear capability.

This line of thinking was later refined and forcefully articulated by K Subrahmanyam, one of India's foremost strategic thinkers. For him, nuclear weapons were more than just instruments of war. They were political legitimacy. "India wants to be a player and not an object of this global nuclear order," he often stated. In Amitav Ghosh's 1998 essay Countdown in The New Yorker, Subrahmanyam offered a vivid analogy drawn from the Gregory Peck film The Million Pound Note. A nuclear weapon, he suggested, functions like a million-pound note. It buys credit, and that credit translates into influence and deterrent power. It was a candid formulation of deterrence, not merely as military capability, but as political psychology.

This intellectual foundation is crucial because Pokhran-II was not an impulsive decision. Rather, they represented the culmination of decades of debate over sovereignty, status, and India's place in the international system. India had consistently rejected the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty on the grounds that it institutionalised inequality between nuclear "haves" and "have-nots." The issue, therefore, was never solely about weapons. It was whether India would



accept a structurally unequal order or seek to challenge it.

The decision of 1998, however, was as much political as strategic. The BJP government which had returned to power in March that year, had explicitly committed in its manifesto to exercising India's nuclear option. Despite heading a fragile coalition of 41 parties, the Vajpayee government authorised one of independent India's boldest decisions within weeks.

The risks were considerable. India was fully aware that the tests would trigger international sanctions, diplomatic censure, and economic pressure. The US quickly imposed sanctions under the Glenn Amendment and the UNSC condemned the tests. Predictions of prolonged isolation and economic disruption were widespread, and not without basis.

Domestically, too the decision provoked sharp debate. Congress leader Sonia Gandhi remarked that "true power lies in restraint and not in showing-off." P Chidambaram argued the tests went against India's moral commitment to a nuclear-free world. The Left dismissed them as "nuclear jingoism", and critics labelled the tests a "BJP bomb," suggesting political opportunism rather than strategic necessity. These criticisms reflected genuine concerns about escalation, global standing, and the moral implications of nuclearisation.

Such criticism tended to underestimate the deeper strategic logic behind the decision. The tests were not simply reactive measures driven by immediate threats from China or Pakistan. They were about long-term positioning, ensuring that India possessed the technological and strategic capability to act autonomously in a system structured by power asymmetries.

Indeed, subsequent events only reinforced this logic. Within weeks Pakistan responded by conducting its own tests at Chagai, formally ushering South Asia into the nuclear age. The US had made determined efforts to prevent this outcome. President Bill Clinton had personally

urged Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif not to proceed. Domestic pressure in Pakistan proved overwhelming, as one stark warning reportedly put it: "If you don't explode, we're going to explode you."

This rapid escalation revealed an uncomfortable truth. Nuclear decisions are rarely shaped by strategic calculation alone. Domestic politics, national prestige, and perceptions of status often exert equal, if not greater, influence.

What is striking in retrospect is not only that India conducted the tests, but that it successfully absorbed their consequences. In fact, India succeeded in preserving complete operational secrecy around the tests. Senior scientists such as K Santhanam, who later served as Director of the IDSA, ensured that the preparations remained undetected until the detonations themselves. Despite sanctions and widespread criticism, the economy remained resilient, and diplomatic engagement gradually resumed. Within a decade, nations that had condemned India began engaging it as a responsible nuclear power.

This is perhaps the most enduring lesson of May 11. Technological capability, when coupled with political resolve and strategic clarity, can alter international outcomes. States willing to bear short-term costs in pursuit of long-term autonomy can, over time, reshape the very structures that constrain them.

That lesson is even more relevant today. The defining technologies of the twenty-first century such as artificial intelligence, semiconductors, quantum computing, cybersecurity, and space systems may seem far removed from nuclear weapons, but the underlying logic remains unchanged. While technological dependence constrains; technological capability empowers. Nations that fail to invest in critical technologies risk strategic marginalisation, regardless of their economic or demographic weight.

At the same time, the legacy of Pokhran-II encompasses a crucial moral dimension. Nuclear weapons remain among humanity's most destructive inventions. India has consistently emphasised restraint and supported the goal of universal, non-discriminatory disarmament. Strategic capability, in this sense, is not about warfighting but about deterrence and prevention. In 1998, an editorial in the *Pioneer* by its editor Chandan Mitra famously described the tests as an "explosion of self-esteem." The phrase captured a deeper transformation. It reflected a shift in India's self-perception; from a state constrained by history to one capable of shaping its own destiny.

As we mark National Technology Day, that spirit remains vital to recall. It marked India's resolve to engage the world on its own terms.



IN 1998, AN EDITORIAL IN THE PIONEER BY ITS EDITOR CHANDAN MITRA FAMOUSLY DESCRIBED THE TESTS AS AN "EXPLOSION OF SELF-ESTEEM." THE PHRASE CAPTURED A DEEPER TRANSFORMATION. IT REFLECTED A SHIFT IN INDIA'S SELF-PERCEPTION; FROM A STATE CONSTRAINED BY HISTORY TO ONE CAPABLE OF SHAPING ITS OWN DESTINY

The author is Senior Fellow at the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi

@dailypioneer
@UKSinha_idsa
uttam-sinha-a58926a

PIC TALK



Tiger cubs cool themselves in a pond to get relief from the scorching summer heat at Nahargarh Biological Park in Jaipur. PHOTO: PTI

How school groups are fueling parenting anxiety



SAKSHI SETHI

2ND OPINION

In today's digitally connected world, parenting no longer unfolds only within the quiet spaces of the home. Increasingly, it is shaped by the constant buzz of notifications on mobile phones. What began as a practical way for schools and parents to stay informed has gradually evolved into something far more complicated. School WhatsApp groups, originally created for sharing homework updates, notices and reminders, are now often turning into arenas of comparison, pressure and silent competition.

Across India, millions of parents are members of school-related WhatsApp groups. While the intention behind these forums is useful, their growing misuse is creating an unhealthy atmosphere not only for parents but, more importantly, for children. A quick look through many such groups reveals a familiar pattern. One parent proudly

announces that their child has already completed the syllabus. Another questions why a teacher is moving slowly. Someone else shares marks, rankings or achievements. Individually, these messages may appear harmless. Together, however, they create an invisible race that gradually enters homes and classrooms alike.

The issue is not technology itself, but the mindset that often accompanies it. Parents, knowingly or unknowingly, begin comparing their children with others. Instead of focusing on their child's strengths, interests and pace of learning, they start measuring progress against what they see on their phone screens. A child who was comfortably learning suddenly appears "behind" because another student has moved ahead faster. The consequence is predictable — stress replaces curiosity, and speed becomes more important than understanding.

In many households, this pressure plays out in subtle but damaging ways. A parent scrolling through messages may suddenly ask, "Why are you still studying this chapter? Others are already ahead." For the child, such remarks can create feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. Learning, which should ideally be an enjoyable and exploratory process, begins to feel like a competition with no finish line. Children who once studied with confidence may start fearing that they are not good enough.

Another troubling aspect is the public questioning of teachers within these groups. A delayed assignment, a minor classroom issue or confusion over a test schedule can quickly escalate into lengthy online debates. Constructive communication between parents and schools is important, but constant public scrutiny risks undermining teachers' authority.

These groups also become breeding grounds for misinformation. Half-read messages, misunderstood instructions and rumours often spread rapidly, leading to unnecessary panic among parents. Instead of simplifying communication, the flood of messages frequently creates confusion and anxiety.

This does not mean school WhatsApp groups are entirely harmful. When used responsibly, they can be extremely helpful for sharing genuine updates and strengthening coordination between schools and families. The solution, therefore, is not complete withdrawal but mindful participation. Parents must learn to filter information and avoid reacting to every message. Schools, too, have a responsibility to establish clear guidelines so that these groups remain spaces for communication, not unhealthy comparison.

The writer is an educator and a councillor

DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

www.dailypioneer.com

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

JUSTICE MUST BALANCE SEVERITY WITH SAFEGUARDS

Swearing-in ceremonies are intended to symbolise democratic continuity and constitutional responsibility, not political extravagance. However, in recent years, such events have increasingly turned into large public spectacles held in sprawling grounds under temporary sheds, resulting in unnecessary expenditure of public money. Huge sums are spent on seating arrangements, cooling systems, food, water supply, decorations and crowd management. In many cases, people attending these functions are mobilised through buses, cash incentives and food packets rather than voluntary participation.

These events also create severe traffic congestion and place enormous pressure on police and municipal authorities,

diverting them from essential civic duties. The environmental cost is equally worrying, with large quantities of plastic bottles, food covers and leftover waste littering public spaces after the ceremonies conclude. A more dignified and responsible approach would be to hold swearing-in ceremonies within Assembly Halls or at the official residences of Governors or Chief Ministers. These venues already possess constitutional sanctity and require minimal additional arrangements. Governments must demonstrate respect for taxpayers' money, civic order and environmental responsibility. Swearing-in ceremonies should reflect the seriousness of governance rather than the grandeur of political display.

O PRASADA RAO | HYDERABAD

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Rising threat of drug abuse

The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released its latest report on May 6, 2026, highlighting a sharp rise in drug overdose fatalities. The data reveals 978 overdose deaths in 2024, marking a 50 per cent increase from 654 the previous year. Tamil Nadu topped the list with 313 deaths, far ahead of Punjab's 106. While Punjab has achieved limited success in curbing the drug problem, significant challenges persist. The crisis is now spreading to other states, including Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Kerala, indicating that the issue is no longer confined to border regions.

Conventional supply-side measures focused on street-level peddlers are proving ineffective against well-organised trafficking networks and international syndicates. Compounding the problem are underreporting, inadequate forensic infrastructure and socio-economic factors such as unemployment, mental health issues, peer pressure and migration.

A robust response is essential, combining targeted intelligence operations against major traffickers with comprehensive demand-reduction initiatives. A coordinated national public health approach, supported by real-time surveillance and strong inter-agency collaboration, is critical to prevent systemic collapse.

SK PRABHAKAR | GURUGRAM

Technology driving national progress

A country's scientific temperament and all-round progress largely depend on the culture of learning and innovation. India has gone that extra mile to become technologically self-sufficient over the years. The significance of a sustainable future through innovation cannot be stressed enough. National Technology Day is observed on May 11 to celebrate the successful conduct of the Pokhran-II nuclear tests under Operation Shakti. The maiden flight of the indigenous Hansa-3 and the successful testing of the Trishul missile were also major milestones achieved on May 11, 1998. Stalwarts APJ Abdul Kalam and R Chidambaram were behind these remarkable achievements that laid the foundation for strengthening India's military capabilities.

Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was the guiding force behind these visionary efforts. Boosting development through innovation and research remains one of the key objectives of National Technology Day. Although India has consistently advocated peace through strength, strategic readiness has always remained a priority for successive governments. National Technology Day serves as a reminder that innovation, scientific progress and strategic preparedness remain central to India's growth and self-reliance.

GANAPATHI BHAT | AKOLA

Trump's Bengal poll remark questioned

It is reported that US President Donald Trump has congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the BJP's victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections. The remarks appear premature and misplaced. State elections in India are an internal matter of the country's federal democratic system, and external endorsements amount to interference in the nation's democratic process. The remarks came days after the BJP secured a historic victory in West Bengal, ending the Trinamool Congress' 15-year rule under Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The BJP also retained power in Assam for a third consecutive term.

Earlier this week, a White House spokesperson said President Trump had congratulated Modi on what was described as a "historic and decisive" electoral victory. However, the West Bengal polls took place amid allegations of fear, intimidation and systemic pressure. There was also a widespread perception that the Election Commission of India failed to act impartially, raising concerns about institutional neutrality.

Democracy is not only about conducting elections, but also about ensuring that they are free, fair and credible. Serious allegations require scrutiny rather than celebration.

BHAGWAN THADANI | MUMBAI

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



Orchestrating tech-innovation on 'National Technology Day'

As India advances towards 2047, Science, Technology and Innovation will continue to play an increasingly important role in catalysing economic growth, strategic autonomy, societal transformation, and a sustainable future



JITENDRA SINGH

National Technology Day — 'Tech', celebrated on May 11, commemorates India's landmark technological achievement marked by the successful Pokhran nuclear tests of 1998. The occasion also highlights the nation's enduring commitment to scientific innovation, technological advancement, and the synergy between science, society, and industry in shaping India's development journey.

Over the last decade, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India's technological ecosystem has witnessed unprecedented growth, marked by rapid innovation, expanding digital infrastructure, and significant advancements across emerging sectors. There has been a greater emphasis on self-reliance and the translation of scientific innovations into real-world impact. Considerable progress has been made in frontier technology-driven areas such as quantum communication, space, biotechnology, artificial intelligence, semiconductors, renewable energy, and climate-resilient systems. Biomanufacturing is a key technology for Viksit Bharat, enabling sustainable innovation, healthcare resilience, and a strong bioeconomy through the production of high-value biologics, vaccines, fuels, and materials using biological systems. India's success with the Chandrayaan-3 mission and recent milestones, such as the attainment of criticality in the indigenous Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor at Kalpakkam, further highlight the country's progress in strategic sectors and its commitment to long-term technological sovereignty.

This progress is also reflected in various key national metrics. India has significantly improved its position in the Global Innovation Index released by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), rising from 81st in 2015 to 38th in 2025. The number of patents granted in the country has increased from a few thousand in 2014-15 to around 1.5 lakh in 2025. India's startup ecosystem has also expanded significantly, with more than 1.5 lakh DPIIT-recognised startups across sectors, including nearly fifteen thousand working in emerging technology domains such as AI, robotics, and additive manufacturing. The transformation is further evident in the expansion of renewable energy capacity to over 250 GW of non-fossil sources and the growth of the bioeconomy from \$10 billion to \$195 billion in a decade.

Policy reforms implemented by the Government over the past decade have played a crucial role in this transformation. These include the rapid expansion of the startup and incubation ecosystem, opening strategic sectors such as space and nuclear energy to private players, and the establishment of enabling frameworks such as the ANRF, the BioE3 (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment and Employment) Policy, and the recently launched ₹1 lakh crore Research, Development and Innovation (RDI) Fund. These initiatives have strengthened India's innovation architecture and reinforced the focus on translating scientific outcomes into societal and economic impact. Science is now moving from laboratories to markets and from ideas to impact.

The Government is providing the right impetus through proactive policies, the removal of outdated regulations, and is successfully creating an ethical yet level-playing field for Indian innovators. It is also moving beyond being merely a primary funder to becoming a primary enabler. With the establishment of the Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) as the central apex body designed to provide strategic direction for research, innovation, and entrepreneurship across India, the aim is to transition India into a knowledge-driven economy and a global leader in innovation. The broader objective is to ensure that this journey is powered by indigenous intellectual property, ethical frameworks, and a "whole-of-government" approach for a "whole-of-society" commitment to



AS INDIA ADVANCES TOWARDS 2047, SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY AN INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN CATALYSING ECONOMIC GROWTH, STRATEGIC AUTONOMY, SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION, AND A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The writer is the Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science & Technology

@dailypioneer
 /DrJitendraSingh
 dr-jitendra-singh-84971433a

science and technology.

'Tech' reflects this journey, with science as the foundational core, technology as the enabler, and innovation as the outcome. The national exhibition, scheduled for May 11, 2026, at the BRIC-National Institute of Immunology (NII), New Delhi, showcases over 350 deep technologies developed indigenously by leading national research institutions and laboratories under 14 Ministries and Departments of the Government of India. These indigenous technologies span key thematic sectors including Biopharma and Health Technologies, Bioindustrial and Green Chemicals, Space and Geospatial Technologies, Climate and Agri-Food Technologies, Deep-Tech Materials and Advanced Engineering Technologies, Electronics, Semiconductors and Energy, and Deep Sea and Atmospheric Technologies. Many of these technologies have already been licensed or commercialised, while others will soon be available for licensing and deployment.

The common thread across these innovations is the shift from siloed research to an integrated, ecosystem-driven approach. Public research institutions are increasingly working closely with startups and industry to ensure that technologies move rapidly from laboratories to markets.

India's next phase of technological growth would require deeper integration between academia, industry, startups, and government, beginning from the stage of conceptualisation of research programmes itself. Stronger industry-academia partnerships can improve alignment of research with national priorities, market needs, and societal challenges, while fundamental research must continue to be encouraged for breakthrough innovation and scientific excellence. National institutions and laboratories would also need to work in a more collaborative and mission-mode manner to address emerging challenges in frontier areas such as artificial intelligence, robotics, advanced materials, quantum technologies, space exploration, and medical technologies.

As science and technology evolve at an unprecedented pace, regulatory frameworks must also become more adaptive, streamlined, and innovation-friendly. Emerging domains such as cell and gene therapy, monoclonal biologics, synthetic biology, and autonomous systems require agile and evidence-based regulatory frameworks that balance innovation, safety, and ethics. Dynamic mechanisms such as regulatory sandboxes can help accelerate responsible innovation. Greater participation of States (e.g. BioE3 Cells) and regional innovation ecosystems, especially in Tier-II and Tier-III cities, can help promote a more decentralised and bottom-up approach to scientific and technological development aligned with regional priorities and challenges, ensuring that science and technology become powerful instruments for improving quality of life across the country.

The transformative power of science and technology will play a pivotal role in realising the vision of Viksit Bharat by driving economic growth, improving governance, enhancing productivity, and fostering inclusive development. Government initiatives such as the India Semiconductor Mission and the National Quantum Mission, alongside advancements in biomanufacturing, precision biotherapeutics, and AI-enabled solutions in agriculture and healthcare, highlight India's strategic focus on strengthening innovation and leadership in emerging technologies. India is transitioning from being primarily a consumer of technology to becoming a global hub of innovation.

As India advances towards 2047, Science, Technology and Innovation will continue to play an increasingly important role in catalysing economic growth, strategic autonomy, societal transformation, and a sustainable future.

BJP reshapes Bengal politics



TUHIN SINHA

There are electoral victories, and then there are moments that alter the very grammar of politics. The Bharatiya Janata Party's triumph in West Bengal belongs unmistakably to the latter category. Much like 1977 marked the defeat of authoritarianism, or 2014 heralded a new aspirational India, Bengal's verdict represents a tectonic civilisational shift — one that transcends the arithmetic of seats and speaks to the deeper churn within the Indian psyche.

For decades, Bengal had politically remained an ideological outlier — first under Left hegemony and later under the violent authoritarian grip of the All India Trinamool Congress. The victory of the Bharatiya Janata Party is therefore not merely political — it is civilisational. It is a homecoming.

At its core, this moment is a tribute to Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, the founder of the Jana Sangh, who envisioned a united India where cultural nationalism would serve as the binding force. Bengal, his karmabhoomi, had long seemed estranged from that vision. Today, it has reclaimed it with conviction.

Equally, this victory must be dedicated to the countless foot soldiers of Sanatan Dharma - ordinary karyakartas who faced unspeakable violence merely for supporting the BJP. The post-poll violence of 2021 stands as one of the darkest chapters in Bengal's history, a grim reminder of how dissent was crushed under a regime that mistook coercion for governance.

What changed this time?

Two words: Bhoj versus Bharosa.

The BJP's articulation of this fault line was not just politically astute - it was existentially resonant. For years, the people of Bengal had lived under a pervasive climate of fear, where political allegiance was dictated not by conviction but by coercion. Leaders of the TMC repeatedly issued veiled and overt threats to BJP supporters during the campaign, reinforcing the perception of a political formation that had morphed into a mafia-like enterprise. Against this backdrop, the BJP's promise of "bharosa" - trust, rule of law, and constitutional governance — struck a powerful chord.

Equally significant were the turning points that exposed the moral bankruptcy of the incumbent regime. The episodes in RG Kar and Sandeshkhali were not isolated aberrations; they became symbols of a deeper rot. They revealed a disturbing pattern where the ruling dispensation appeared complicit in shielding criminal elements, eroding the faith of the average Bengali bhadralok. Bengal's proud legacy of intellectualism and moral courage found itself suffocated under a culture of impunity. This election became a referendum on that betrayal.

In the midst of this charged atmosphere, the Prime Minister once again demonstrated his unmatched ability to connect with the cultural pulse of the masses. His now-iconic "jhal muri moment" was not a trivial anecdote — it was a masterstroke in political communication. By embracing a quintessentially Bengali symbol, he dismantled the TMC's propaganda that painted the BJP as culturally alien or insensitive to local traditions. It was a reminder that the BJP's nationalism is inclusive, not



exclusionary; rooted, yet expansive.

Perhaps the most decisive factor, however, was the silent but resolute assertion of women voters. In overwhelming numbers, women in Bengal chose the BJP - not merely as a political alternative, but as a guarantor of dignity and safety.

This carries a profound lesson for Indian politics: welfare schemes for women can yield electoral dividends only when accompanied by an environment that ensures their basic security. In a state where lawlessness had become normalised and perpetrators enjoyed political patronage, women voters delivered a verdict that was as much about self-preservation as it was about empowerment.

The implications of the verdict

History offers a clear pattern: political formations dislodged by the BJP rarely regain their former dominance. The decline of the RJD in Bihar post-2005 and the prolonged eclipse of the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh after 2017 are instructive precedents. The TMC now faces a similar existential crisis. Stripped of state power, it will find it increasingly difficult to sustain its patronage networks.

More importantly, as institutions regain their autonomy, the long arm of the law may begin to catch up with those who operated with impunity. The party that thrived on fear may well fade into irrelevance in an environment governed by accountability.

Bengal's verdict is thus not an isolated political event - it is a reaffirmation of India's democratic resilience and civilisational continuity. It signals that no region, however historically entrenched in a particular ideological mould, is immune to the winds of change when governance fails and people's aspirations are betrayed.

In choosing bharosa over bhoj, Bengal has not just elected a new government — it has rewritten its destiny.

The writer is the national spokesperson of the Bharatiya Janata Party and an acclaimed author

@dailypioneer
 /tuhins
 tuhin-a-sinha-6388b490

BRICS: India's path to economic growth through cooperation



T SENTHIL SIVA SUBRAMANIAN | **YADU KUMAR YADAV**

● 2026-27 - BRICS Presidency [People-Centric Approach]

2023-24 | 2025-26 - Global Presidencies | Chairmanship

The proven example was the use case of the G20 Summit. This united several countries under one umbrella called the vibrant mantra - "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam".

Following this, India has assumed its Chairmanship of the Asian Productivity Organization, Tokyo, Japan (APO). This position enhances collaboration and partnership with 21 APO member countries in the Asia-Pacific region. This initiative will play a key role in promoting grassroots innovation-led green productivity and digital manufacturing transformation of SMEs, including climate change, sustainability and inclusive growth across the member countries in the Asia-Pacific.

2026-27 — BRICS presidency

Presently, India has successfully joined the BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC) in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the National Productivity Council (NPC) under the Department of Commerce and Industry, Government of India. NPC is officially designated as the India Centre and will play a key role in connecting industry, academia, startups and MSMEs for capacity building, improvement of green productivity, climate change adaptation and adopting best practices in lean



manufacturing.

This programme aims to provide compounded and integrated support services to small, medium and large manufacturing industries, including Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), across BRICS countries and the Global South.

BRICS Presidency will boost the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS), which is a flagship initiative of the Government of India under the Ministry of Science and Technology, focused on designing, developing and commercialising future-generation fourth/fifth Industrial Revolution technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Industrial Internet of Things (IIoT), cyber security, blockchain, AR/VR and robotics. BRICS will push various essential elements of industrial competencies such as smart manufacturing through "e/silent

factories" (like Bajaj Auto, Pune, and Havells-Lloyd, Rajasthan), quality (Zero Defect Zero Effect - ZED) and packaging, which align with the vibrant vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi: "Make in India, Make by India, Make for India and Globe."

The BRICS programme focuses on "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability". India has strengthened resilience and innovation through digital infrastructure, semiconductor plants, green hydrogen technologies and quantum innovations like QNu Labs' Quantum Random Number Generator.

Government initiatives like the National Semiconductor Mission, National Green Hydrogen Mission and NM-ICPS are strengthening innovation, sustainability and economic stability. BRICS will further boost manufacturing, supply chains, employability and economic partnerships across the Global South. It will also become a cornerstone for social security coupled with labour market formalisation, participation of the women workforce and development of a skilled workforce for India and BRICS countries. BRICS will enhance the participation of women in leadership roles in promising growth sectors. This initiative will pave the way for India to achieve global economic leadership and will facilitate the gig economy across BRICS countries as well. BRICS will also address the gap in digital technologies and gig employment.

The National Productivity Council is actively

working by forming a BCIC platform that allows collaboration among academia, industry, startups and MSMEs. This will pave the way for training students, faculty members, industry practitioners and startups. NPC specialises in facilitating lean philosophy and smart manufacturing, including green productivity such as Total Factor Productivity (TFP) and Labour Productivity (LP).

Way forward for Viksit Bharat@2047

BRICS Presidency and APO Chairmanship for India will together form strong pillars for fostering vocational development across different sectors, especially benefiting youth, women and gig workers, while strengthening digital transformation technologies, green productivity, sustainability and inclusive growth across India, the Global South and the Asia-Pacific region. BRICS for India will place the nation on the global map as a forefront leader ("Vishwa Guru") in leadership and economic excellence with the support of the Global South, creating a foundation and growth pathway for Viksit Bharat@2047.

T Senthil Siva Subramanian is Head of the Institute Industry Interface Program at Hindustan College of Science and Technology, Mathura. Yadu Kumar Yadav is Deputy Director at the National Productivity Council under the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India

@dailypioneer
 @TheDailyPioneer
 ThePioneer



**TRANSGLOBE
ADVISORS**

Your Trusted Management Advisory

www.transglobeadvisors.in

Order Order

One vote margin: DMK leader challenges election of TVK candidate

The Madras High Court on Sunday adjourned to May 11, further hearing on the petition filed by former DMK minister KR Periyakaruppan, who sought to restrain the TVK candidate who defeated him in election by one vote from taking oath as MLA. The DMK's Tirupattur candidate for the April 23 Assembly polls moved the HC against TVK's R Srinivasa Sethupathi, who won by just one vote.



A vacation bench comprising Justices L Victoria Gowri and N Senthikumar, which heard the petition for over three hours in a special sitting, adjourned to Monday, further hearing of the case.

Raising certain queries, the bench directed the Election Commission to file an affidavit on May 11.

Periyakaruppan contested from the Tirupattur assembly constituency in Sivaganga district as a DMK candidate while Srinivasa Sethupathi contested on behalf of TVK.

While Sethupathi secured 83,365 votes, Periyakaruppan secured 83,364 votes.

Srinivasa Sethupathi was declared elected by a margin of just one vote. In his petition, Periyakaruppan sought a recount of votes and also an interim order to restrain Sethupathi from taking oath as an MLA. (PTI)

Allahabad HC sets aside order to revise merit list for CLAT UG-2026

A two-judge bench of the Allahabad High Court has set aside a single-judge order that directed the Consortium of National Law Universities to revise the merit list for the Common Law Admission Test (CLAT) UG 2026. The bench comprising Justices Saumitra Dayal Singh and Swarupama Chaturvedi restored the final answer key released by the Consortium on December 16, 2025, after expert committees reviewed the objections raised.



The bench allowed the Consortium's appeal against the single-judge order by observing that courts cannot act as appellate authorities over decisions of subject experts in academic matters. Earlier, a writ petition was filed by a CLAT undergraduate (UG) candidate before the single judge order by observing that courts cannot act as appellate authorities over decisions of subject experts in academic matters.

On February 3, the single judge partly allowed the petition and directed the Consortium to publish a revised merit list for the subsequent counselling rounds. The two-judge bench, while allowing the Consortium's appeal, said the final answer key was the outcome of a structured and layered scrutiny mechanism involving subject experts and an oversight committee.

In its judgment passed on Friday, the bench said, "Such an exercise by experts in the related field establishes a strong presumption of correctness, particularly in academic matters, unless a clear and demonstrable error is established." (PTI)

Thane court acquits two charged under MCOCA for robbery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Thane

A Thane court has acquitted two men accused of robbery under the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA), noting that the prosecution failed to provide "substantial or corroborative evidence" linking them to the crime.



The prosecution could not show that the alleged crime was committed for gaining pecuniary benefits by the accused as a member of an organised crime syndicate, Special MCOCA Court Judge VG Mohite observed in the judgment on Friday.

The case pertained to an incident on September 11, 2022, in the Kalyan area of Thane district, where a woman's gold chain was allegedly snatched.

While the police invoked MCOCA based on the criminal antecedents of the accused, Jaykumar Komal Rathod (38) and Gazi Dara Irani alias Sayyad (33), the

court found the evidence regarding the specific incident severely lacking.

"The prosecution has failed to establish the identity of the accused persons beyond a reasonable doubt. The Test Identification Parade was not conducted in accordance with the prescribed manual, making the identification in court vulnerable," the court noted.

"The recovery of the alleged stolen property (gold chain) from the accused has not been proved by the prosecution through independent and reliable panch witnesses. The witnesses turned



PIL in SC seeks review of wages of priests, sevadars

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Centre and state Governments to constitute a judicial commission or an expert committee to review the wages and other benefits given to priests, sevadars and temple staff in State-controlled temples.

The PIL filed by advocate Ashwini Upadhyay said that the writ petition seeks directions to the Centre and States to constitute a judicial commission or an expert committee to review the remuneration and other benefits given to the priests and temple staff in State-controlled temples.

"Petitioner also seeks a declaration that priests and temple staff are 'employee' under Section 2(k) of the Code on Wages, 2019. Petitioner submits that once the State



assumes the administrative, economic and financial control over temples, an employer-employee relationship arises and denial of dignified wages to priests and temple staff violates the right to livelihood guaranteed

under Article 21," it said. Upadhyay said that the cause of action accrued on April 4, when he went to Varanasi to attend a public programme and after performing 'Rudrabhishek' in the Kashi Vishwanath temple, which is

controlled by the state, he came to know that even the minimum wages to live with dignity are not given to the priests and temple staff.

"Recently, in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, priests and temple staff

organised a large-scale protest demanding the minimum wages. Priests and temple staff are not getting even the minimum wage prescribed by the State for unskilled and semi-skilled workers.

This is a systemic exploitation. State is acting as a model employer through the endowments department, but violating the minimum wages Act and the directive principles of state policy (Article 43)," it said.

The plea further said that the continued refusal to minimum wages with the 2026 inflation-adjusted cost of living index has forced the petitioner to seek judicial intervention to prevent the further marginalisation of priests and temple staff.

Upadhyay further said that the precarious nature of livelihood was starkly exposed on February 7, 2025, when a Tamil Nadu department issued a circular at the

'Dandayuthapani Swami Temple' in Madurai, strictly prohibiting priests from accepting 'dakshina' in 'aarti plates'.

"It is necessary to state that priests in such temples often receive no formal salary from the State and rely entirely on 'Dakshina'; the State's administrative order directly threatened them with starvation. Although withdrawn due to public outrage, the incident highlights the State's arbitrary power over the survival of the priests.

This is also a bitter truth that States are controlling lakhs of temples but not a single mosque or church," the PIL claimed.

The petition, alternatively, sought direction to the Centre and states to take appropriate steps for the welfare of priests, sevadars and other temple staff in the spirit of the Allahabad High Court's earlier judgments.

CJI denies, condemns casteist statement on social media attributed to him

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

In an unusual outburst, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant on Saturday condemned and denied a casteist statement attributed to him, calling it a "vile, brazen and mischievous" concoction.

"To manufacture a fictitious quote, and to attribute it to the highest judicial office of the land, is an act of rank dishonesty, deliberate social incitement, and contempt for constitutional values," CJI Surya Kant said in a statement to PTI on Saturday.

"Such reckless conduct strikes at the very foundation of public trust in the judiciary and the rule of law," the statement said.

He was referring to certain posts currently in wide circulation on social media platforms, and specifically mentioned an account by the name



@UnreservedMERIT on X. The CJI's statement said that the social media account has falsely attributed the following statement, originally in Hindi, to him: "If a society, even after producing IAS, IPS, CJI, President, and PM from its ranks, still chooses to remain exploited, then the fault lies not with the Brahmins but with its own mentality."

"These attributions are wholly baseless, malicious, and demonstrably false," the statement said.

Constitution, not Parliament, supreme in India: Gavai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

A constitutional democracy is not organised around a single centre of power, former chief justice of India BR Gavai said on Saturday while emphasising that Parliament is not supreme in the country but the Constitution is.

Speaking at the 19th Sujata Jayawardena Memorial Oration organised by the University of Colombo, Justice Gavai said clashes between Parliament and the judiciary have led to the evolution of constitutional safeguards and doctrines to manage such conflicts.

The former judge said it is not Parliament, nor the executive, nor even the judiciary that is supreme, but it is the Constitution.

All three derive their authority from it and all are bound by its limits," Justice Gavai said.

Referring to BR Ambedkar's speech in the constituent assembly, Gavai said each organ of the State has its domain.



institution exercises unchecked authority. Rather, it is a carefully-calibrated arrangement in which power is distributed, structured and limited.

"In the Indian constitutional scheme, Parliament is not supreme in any absolute sense. Nor is any other organ. The only supremacy that the Constitution recognises is its own. All institutions derive their authority from it and all are bound by its limits," Justice Gavai said.

Referring to BR Ambedkar's speech in the constituent assembly, Gavai said each organ of the State has its domain.

Each is supreme within that domain, but only to the extent permitted by the Constitution, he pointed out.

The former CJI said the relationship between Parliament and the judiciary is not always adversarial. "At times, it is collaborative, where judicial innovation identifies constitutional gaps and Parliament responds by institutionalising those principles within a democratic framework."

"Overall, the Indian experience shows that parliamentary authority, like the authority of any institution, is balanced by constitutional limitations and restraints.

This is how a modern constitutional democracy is expected to function. Sri Lanka, too, appears to reflect a similar trajectory," he said.

Justice Gavai said for a constitutional democracy to function well, all three organs of the State must operate within the boundaries assigned to them by the Constitution.

"At the same time, a certain degree of friction between them is inevitable. It is through this friction that constitutional meaning is tested, refined and sustained. Within this framework, the judiciary plays a crucial role as a constitutional watchdog.

"It must ensure that the exercise of power by the legislature and the executive remains within constitutional limits. At the same time, the judiciary must remain conscious of its own limits. Judicial review must not slide into judicial overreach. Activism must not become adventurism," Justice Gavai said.

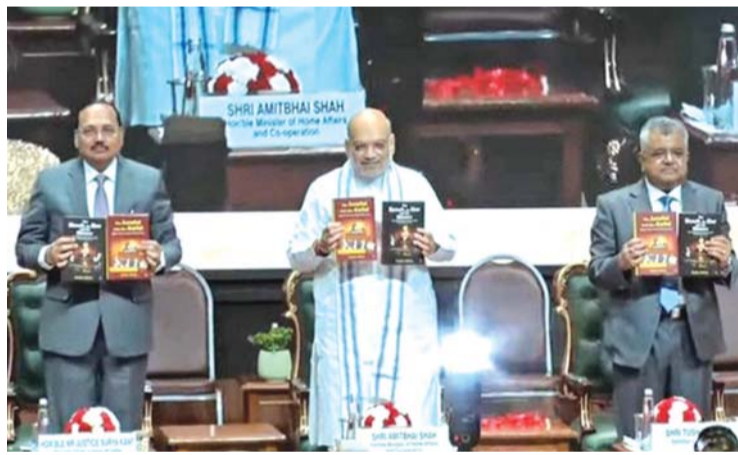
Strength of democracy lies not in conflict but in institutional balance: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the strength of democracy lies not in conflict but in institutional balance and mutual respect.

Speaking at the launch of two books authored by Tushar Mehta — "The Bench, the Bar and the Bizarre" and "The Lawful and the Awful" — Shah said the author is not only the solicitor general of India and a knowledgeable lawyer, but also his friend. He said the Constitution and the judiciary have made significant contributions in deepening the roots of India's democracy.

"Since 1947, changes brought by Parliament and the assemblies have been accepted without shedding a drop of blood, which shows how deeply rooted democracy is in our country. Courts and the Constitution



Solicitor General Tushar Mehta's two books — 'The Bench, the Bar and the Bizarre' and 'The Lawful and the Awful' — launched by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, CJI Surya Kant and Attorney General R Venkataramani on Sunday

have a big role to play in achieving this," the home minister said. He said people across the country have

faith that in case of any injustice, the Constitution is there to protect them. "If there is an assault on

rights, the doors of justice are open, and if anywhere the voice of a weak person is suppressed, the courts will surely hear those voices," he said.

Shah said the faith of the common man, the functioning of the society and the proof of a nation's character lie in a strong justice system, in maintaining trust, in which "we as a society have, by and large, succeeded". Whatever the loopholes may be, the executive and the judiciary have to plug those through a concrete, time-bound roadmap, he said.

"The beauty of our democracy is that the Constitution has created institutions not for confrontation but to balance one another. The executive takes decisions and the judiciary conducts its judicial review. Our Constitution-makers wrote the Constitution with a spirit of maintaining dialogue, decorum

and balance in a very fine manner," the home minister said. He said in 76 years, hardly any other country has advanced while preserving such values.

"It is a matter of great joy for all of us that here, by and large, all constitutional proprieties have remained intact and we have carried those forward through traditions as well. "The strength of democracy comes not from confrontation, but from institutional balance and mutual respect. And when I speak of mutual respect, our Constitution has accepted this spirit in many places, which all of us have also seen," Shah said.

The spirit should be taken further ahead, strengthening and advancing the good practice of maintaining a balance between the executive and the judiciary that has developed over 76 years, and everyone should work together for this, he asserted.

Delhi HC protects Shashi Tharoor's personality rights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court has protected the personality rights of Congress MP Shashi Tharoor and directed X to take down an AI-generated deepfake video purportedly showing him praising Pakistan's diplomacy.

Justice Mini Pushkarna, in an interim order passed on Tharoor's lawsuit, also restrained the misappropriation of the Thiruvananthapuram MP's name, image, distinct voice, "signature oratorical cadence and manner of speaking", "highly refined vocabulary" and other facets of his persona to create and publish any deepfakes, voice-cloned audio, morphed videos, etc. for any commercial, political, or malicious purpose across any physical or virtual medium. The court also asked Meta to ensure that certain offending reels on Instagram, which it made inaccessible, continue to remain so.

Tharoor earlier moved the court against the repeated publication of deepfake videos purportedly showing him making "politically sensitive" statements. His senior counsel asserted that such content not only tarnished his reputation but also affected India's international standing.

Justice Pushkarna, in the interim order, said Tharoor is a "respected and recognised public figure", who has "exclusive control" over the utilisation



of his personality, and misappropriation of any attribute of his personality without his express permission and any consequent harm to his reputation is liable to be restrained.

"It is no more res intergra that personality rights/publicity rights are protectable under Articles 19 and 21 of the Constitution of India, 1950. The plaintiff's reputation, goodwill, name, physical appearance/image/likeness, voice, mannerisms, styles, signature oratorical style, and other attributes are uniquely identifiable and associated with the plaintiff. The same form the plaintiff's 'personality', over which the plaintiff enjoys sole and exclusive control," the court stated.

"Defendant no. 1 (Ashok Kumar /John Doe) are restrained from reproducing, misappropriating, or imitating any facet

of the plaintiff's persona, including, but not limited to his (i) name, (ii) visual likeness and image, (iii) distinct voice, (iv) signature oratorical cadence and manner of speaking, and (v) highly refined vocabulary, to create, publish, or disseminate any synthetic media, deepfakes, voice-cloned audio, or morphed videos, through the use of AI, Generative AI, Machine Learning, or any other technology, for any commercial, political, or malicious purpose, across any physical or virtual medium. Defendant no. 2 is directed to forthwith take down and block access to the following link as available on its platform 'X'," it ordered.

The court clarified that in case of further "false, fake and infringing videos", Tharoor shall be at liberty to approach the social media platforms for taking them down.

It also asked the social media platforms to give Tharoor the complete identity, registration particulars, Basic Subscriber Information, IP login details, phone numbers, and email addresses of the uploaders, creators, and registrants of the infringing accounts within three weeks.

In the lawsuit, Tharoor said that in or around March 2026, he discovered a "sophisticated, malicious campaign orchestrated by unknown infringers" across social media platforms, maliciously depicting him making politically sensitive statements praising Pakistan.

2,07,66,548 cases amicably settled at National Lok Adalat across country

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The National Legal Services Authority on Saturday organised the second National Lok Adalat of the year across the country. According to a release, "A total of 2,07,66,548 cases were amicably settled, comprising 1,87,63,883 pre-litigation matters and 20,02,665 pending cases, involving an overall settlement amount of ₹3,440.81 crore."

It attributed the comparatively lower figures, vis-a-vis some previous National Lok Adalats, primarily to the staggered schedule in certain states and Union territories and the ongoing consolidation of data from various jurisdictions.

The Lok Adalat was organised across 21 States and six Union territories through thousands of benches constituted at various courts, tribunals, consumer commissions, and permanent Lok Adalats.

Yoga sutra, Neuroplasticity and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy - A Continuum



MANOJ K ARORA
HONY. VISITING FELLOW,
BHARAT KI SOCH
FORMER IRS OFFICER



shrinking the amygdala, provided there is consistency, repetition and salience in the process. Further, while abhyasa builds new pathways, vairagya (dispassion/detachment) serves to weaken old ones. In CBT, this is the process of de-centering where a patient learns to distinguish between having a thought and the thought is the reality. This detachment

Human brain is probably the most complex creation in the universe. Modern science has achieved elementary understanding of the human brain despite neurology being one of the most researched fields of science. While, we know something about the structure of the brain, its functions and treatment of malfunctioning, there is very little understanding about the relationship between brain and consciousness.

Cut back to the 2nd CE when Patanjali wrote the Yoga Sutra, one of the six schools of philosophical thought of Hindu religion. This article explains how Yoga Sutra forms the basis of two fundamental concepts of modern clinical psychology - Neuroplasticity and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT). Neuroplasticity, attributed jointly to William James (Psychologist, 1890s) and Jerzy Konorski (Neuroscientist, 1950s), is our brain's ability to reorganize and rewire its neural connections so as to learn new skills, adapt to new environment, heal from injuries and even develop new ethos. CBT, attributed Aaron T Beck (Psychiatrist 1960s), is now an umbrella term for a number of psychotherapy tools that utilize neuroplasticity to affect corrective changes in cognition and behavior.

First, the foundational relationship between Yoga sutra, Neuroplasticity and CBT. Patanjali opens with one of the most cited aphorisms, "Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah" (Sutra 1.2) or "Yoga is the cessation (nirodha) of the fluctuations (vritti) of the mind (chitta)". This also forms the basis of neuroplasticity and CBT. That mind is not fixed, it is dynamic and these modifications can be regulated or even stilled. Yoga sutra and CBT seem to be identical in their diagnostic approach: that mind's tendency to generate inaccurate, habitual patterns of interpretation is the source of suffering.

The second part of foundational relationship lies in Sutra 2.33, Vitarkabadhane pratipaksha bhavanam, and Sutra 2.34, vitarkaa hinsadayah kritakaritanumodita lobhakrodhamahapoorvaka mridumadhyadhimatra dukhajnananantafala iti pratipakshabhavanam. Together they say when one is disturbed by negative thoughts, the opposite should be cultivated and that violent, avaricious, or deluded thoughts, whether acted upon, caused, or merely permitted, lead to suffering and ignorance. CBT's cognitive restructuring is Pratipaksha bhavana only. It is how a therapist helps a patient identify an automatic negative thought, examine the evidence

for and against it, and replace it with a more balanced positive thinking. Repeated activation of a thought pathway increases synaptic efficiency along that route and deliberate activation of alternative patterns begins to build competing neural pathways.

The third part of foundational relationship is what Patanjali introduces a powerful distinction. Drashta drishmatrah shuddhopi pratyayanupashyah (Sutra 2.20), or the seer (drashta) is pure awareness but appears to take on the forms of the mind. This suggests that there is a "witness consciousness" separate from thoughts and suffering arises when that witness begins to identify itself with the thoughts. Modern psychology also echoes this when it prescribes, you are not your thoughts and you should be observing thoughts without attachment (cognitive diffusion) or asks you to observe thoughts as passing events (Mindfulness based CBT).

Finally, the fourth foundational relationship which is perhaps the most profound overlaps. Patanjali says samskara sakshat karanat purva jati jnanam (Sutra 3.18), or through direct perception of samskaras, knowledge of acquired tendencies arises. And te pratiprasava heyah sukshmah (Sutra 2.10), or subtle impressions are resolved by reversing their process. Samskara are neural pathways and encoded neural patterns and therapy comprises of reprocessing and weakening maladaptive neural pathways, patterns and circuits.

Next, the method or the path. Patanjali emphasizes two pillars. "Abhyasa vairagyabhyam tan nirodhah" (Sutra 1.12) or the fluctuations are stilled through practice (abhyasa) and detachment (vairagya). Further, "Sa tu dirgha kala nairantarya satkara asevitah dridha bhumi" (Sutra 1.14) or practice becomes firmly grounded when done for a long time, without interruption, and with devotion. This almost describes neuroplasticity and CBT in entirety. That the brain can physically restructure itself by thickening the prefrontal cortex or



Wisdom Word Search

H G N M A I B A H I K A I
I A A L I B O J A S A N M
D L K Q C H I N J A A K A
A R A S A N Y A I L K I N
K P A D H J A M E T P A A
L A J P T E T Q P I O J M
O A T X Y L L G A I T K A
N M M W T Y I V S K L S S
I E A P O M B I R O L H I
T T A Q P Q A L A S D X N
I P G P R M A I B I U L G
S I D A H I D A K O I W X

WORDS TO FIND

Ametpa, Ametpi, Chinjaak, Haksheh, Hidaklon, Maiba, Maibi, Mana-Masing, Pombirol, Sida-Hidak

AMETPA - Male traditional therapeutic practitioner in Manipur who provides traditional healings treatments.
AMETPI - Female counterpart of the Ametpa.
CHINJAAK - Food; nourishment essential for sustaining life and health.
HAKSHEL - Health and overall well-being, encompassing physical and mental balance.
HIDAKLON - The traditional science of medicine (Hidak = medicine, Lon = treatise); also refers to ancient medicinal manuscripts of the Meitei knowledge system.
MAIBA - Male traditional healer and spiritual practitioner among the Meiteis, skilled in herbal medicine and ritual mediation between humans and deities.
MAIBI - Female counterpart of the Maiba, serving as healer and ritual specialist.
MANA MASHING - Plants and herbs used in traditional healing as well as everyday consumption.
POMBIROL - Science of human physiology and anatomy, indigenous medical understanding.
SIDA HIDAK - Life-saving or potent medicinal remedies in traditional practice.

Note: These terms come from Manipuri, one of India's 22 Scheduled Languages, and reflect Manipuri's living indigenous healing traditions.

Marvels of India

YOGA

A Wholesome Means of Health and Well-being Among Bharat's greatest gifts to humanity is Yoga, concretised in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras through the eight limbs (Ashtanga): Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara,



Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi, i.e., a comprehensive scheme for physical, mental and spiritual well-being.
Its Historical Journey
Yoga is one of Bharat's most enduring civilisational contributions, with a long evolution through Vedic, Upanishadic, Buddhist, Jain and classical traditions. The classical period is particularly associated with Patanjali's systematisation, who organised earlier Yogic ideas into a lasting framework.
A Device of Discipline as well as Physical and Mental Control
Yoga became a disciplined path of ethical restraint, breath control, concentration, meditation and contemplative absorption, rather than only a set of physical postures.
An Innovative Way of Practice and Self-Transformation
Yoga developed as a practical science of self-mastery across traditions, with later forms expanding emphasis on bodily techniques while preserving the broader aim of inner transformation. Reliable histories show that it was not a single frozen method but a living tradition that evolved over centuries through multiple Indian philosophical streams.
A Vehicle of Bharat's Soft Power
International Yoga Day, now a vibrant global movement, affirms that Bharat's influence on the world stage remains one of inspiration.

Fable with Moral

Abhinha Jataka No. 27

(Book 1 Ekanipat)



Jataka tales are part of Buddhist Theravada literature, which depict earlier incarnations of Gautama Buddha. Long ago, one of the royal elephants became best friends with a mahout's dog. The dog used to go to the stall of the elephant, and eat the portions of rice which fell where the elephant was fed. Frequenting the place for food's sake, the dog grew very friendly with the elephant. The dog would often swing on the elephant's trunk. There came a point when the two would not eat without each other and always longed for togetherness.

One day a villager bought the dog and took it home. The elephant missed its friend so much that it refused to eat, drink, or bathe. When the crowned head heard of the elephant's behavior, he sent the Bodhisatta to inquire into the matter. He examined the elephant and concluded that nothing physically ailed it. Pondering over the problem further, he guessed the cause to be emotional. He wondered if it was missing a close friend. The Bodhisatta asked the elephant's mahout if the elephant had any friends, and learnt

about the dog. He was told that the dog had been sold, but he did not know where the buyer resided. The Bodhisatta explained the situation to his majesty and requested for an official proclamation that whoever possessed the dog would face punishment. As soon as the dog's new owner heard the official order, he released the dog which ran back to the palace. The elephant cried tears of joy upon reuniting with its friend and the two once again ate a meal together.

In the lifetime of the Buddha the elephant and the dog were earlier births of two inseparable friends; one a disciple of the Buddha who lived at the monastery and the other a lay follower. The two men shared such camaraderie that they sat and talked together through the day. When the Buddha heard some of his disciples discussing the two men's friendship, he told them this story so they knew that the pair had also been best friends in the past.

Moral of the Fable
Friendship is immortal!

Did you know?

The Power of Fermentation

Did you know the humble Idli and Dosa are nutritional powerhouses? The natural fermentation of rice and urad dal is a biological marvel. This process breaks down complex starches and phytic acid, significantly enhancing the bioavailability of essential nutrients like Vitamin B12, Folic Acid and Iron. Rich in live probiotics, these staples support gut health and improve digestion. The result is a light, protein



complete meal with a low glycemic index, proving that traditional wisdom and modern science make a perfect pairing for your plate.

QUIZ Health, Nutrition & Well-Being

Questions	Option A	Option B	Option C	Option D
1 Who developed the "cheek flap" method for repairing nose in ancient India?	Mathara	Sushruta	Charaka	Nagarjuna
2 Which of these limbs of Ashtanga Yoga means "personal discipline"?	Pranayama	Dharana	Samadhi	Niyama
3 What does the letter 'S' stand for in the AYUSH acronym, which represents the official traditional medical systems of India?	Shunya	Siddha	Spiritual	Surgery
4 What is the term for body's inherent power of natural healing or self-preservation in Unani medicine?	Tabiyat	Mizaj	Arwah	Nabz
5 Which path did Lord Buddha advocate to achieve wellbeing, avoiding the extremes of self-indulgence and self-mortification?	The Path of Happiness	The Path of Kindness	The Ascetic Path	The Middle Path

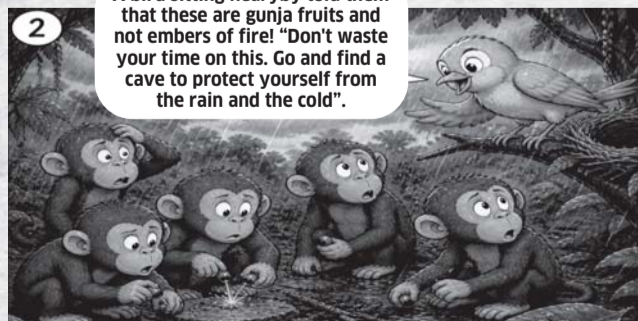
ANSWERS: 1 - B, 2 - D, 3 - B, 4 - A, 5 - D

panchatantra

The Angry Monkey and the Bird



1 A group of monkeys were trying to light a fire in the jungle to escape from the cold on a rainy day. They were trying to light the fire with gunja fruit!



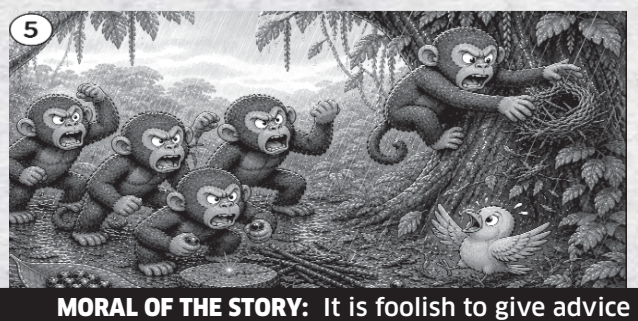
2 A bird sitting nearby told them that these are gunja fruits and not embers of fire! "Don't waste your time on this. Go and find a cave to protect yourself from the rain and the cold".



3 The monkeys were irritated with the bird. They were already wet, hungry and frustrated. They had no desire to take advice. "Go away!" they shouted at the bird.



4 The bird ignored their rebuke and hopped closer to the ground to give them her advice.



5 The bird kept giving her unsolicited advice to the monkeys. By now the monkeys had lost their temper. One of the monkeys climbed up the tree and destroyed her nest in anger.



6 The nest fell to the ground. The horrified bird had learnt a valuable lesson.

MORAL OF THE STORY: It is foolish to give advice to deaf ears!



Bangladesh seeks friendly ties with India, raises concern over killings at border



Prime Minister Political adviser Ruhul Kabir Rizvi

A senior adviser of Bangladesh Prime Minister Tarique Rahman on Sunday said that Dhaka wants "friendly relations" with New Delhi as he voiced concern over the killing of two Bangladeshi nationals along the border with India last week.

Two suspected Bangladeshi smugglers were shot dead by Border Security Force in Tripura's Sepahijala district on Friday night, and the bodies were handed over to their relatives through Kamalasagar BOP in the presence of BSF and Border Guards Bangladesh officials.

"We want friendly relations, but good ties cannot be maintained if the border is repeatedly turned bloody," PM's political adviser Ruhul Kabir Rizvi said on Sunday.

Rizvi mentioned the killing of two suspected smugglers during his address at the national convention of diploma engineers.

"Even yesterday, two people were shot dead at the Brahmanbaria border," he added.

Rizvi, also ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party's (BNP) senior joint secretary general, said that the people of India too did not want to see such a phenomenon.

In reference to recent State elections in India, the BNP leader said it was "entirely an internal matter" for the Indian people to decide.

Cruise passengers airlifted amid Hantavirus scare

IAIN SULLIVAN/SUMAN NAISHADHAM ■ Tenerife (Spain)

The first plane carrying passengers evacuated from the hantavirus-hit cruise ship departed from Tenerife in Spain's Canary Islands on Sunday for Madrid, where they will go to a military hospital.

Spanish nationals were the first to leave the MV Hondius, which remains anchored off Tenerife after arriving hours earlier, and they will be under quarantine after they reach Madrid, Spanish health authorities say.

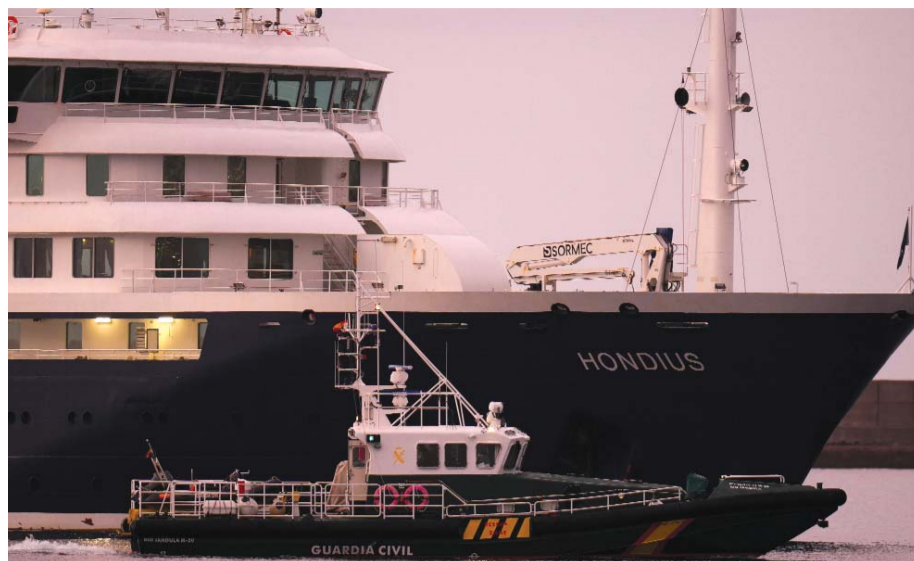
Only Spanish nationals will quarantine in the country. The cruise operator Oceanwide Expeditions listed 13 Spanish passengers and one Spanish crew member on board.

Nobody among the more than 140 people on the Hondius is showing symptoms of the virus, Spain's health ministry, the World Health Organisation and cruise company Oceanwide Expeditions said.

Passengers and some crew members of other nationalities will be evacuated throughout Sunday into Monday. There are people of more than 20 different nationalities on board.

Those disembarking and personnel working at the port of Granadilla in Tenerife were wearing protective gear during the evacuation process, including face masks, hazmat suits and respirators.

The cruise ship reached Tenerife early Sunday



Hantavirus-stricken cruise ship MV Hondius is seen at anchor after arriving at the port of Granadilla in Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain

morning, after leaving Cape Verde on May 6.

Three people have died since the outbreak, and five passengers who left the ship are infected with hantavirus, which can cause life-threatening illness.

Everyone disembarking will be checked for symptoms and will be taken off the ship only once evacuation flights are ready to fly them to their destinations.

"The entire operation is proceeding normally," Spanish Health Minister Monica Garcia said. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, along with Spain's health and interior ministers, are supervising the operation in Tenerife, the largest of Spain's Canary Islands off

the coast of West Africa. Authorities have said the passengers and crew members who will disembark will have no contact with the local population.

Hantavirus usually spreads when people inhale contaminated residue of rodent droppings and isn't easily transmitted between people. But the Andes virus detected in the cruise ship outbreak may be able to spread between people in rare cases. Symptoms usually show between one and eight weeks after exposure.

Passengers and crew members disembarking are leaving behind their luggage, and are allowed to take only a small bag with essential items, a cellphone, a charger and documentation. (AP)

Iran war could make Trump's trip to China a bit chillier

WILL WEISSERT ■ Washington

Weeks before his trip to China, President Donald Trump was already predicting on social media that his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, would "give me a big, fat hug when I get there."

But Beijing's deep economic ties to Iran, as well as trade tensions over tariff threats stretching back to Trump's first term, could crimp the good feelings when Trump flies to Beijing this week — even though the Republican president has for years effusively praised Xi, making it clear he sees China's leader as a competitor strong enough to warrant his respect and admiration.

Trump isn't fond of long plane rides or extended stretches away from the



White House or his properties in Florida and New Jersey. He is expected to only spend parts of three days on the ground in China.

There will be plenty of pomp, but the grandeur is not expected to rival Trump's first visit to China in 2017,

which Beijing dubbed a "state visit-plus".

"Even before this whole conflagration with Iran, they weren't going to go state visit-plus like last time, just because things are tense," said Jonathan Czin, a former director for China at

the National Security Council during the Biden administration.

On Trump's first-term trip, China rolled out the red carpet for his arrival, with a band playing military music and children waving flags and chanting "Welcome".

Xi offered a tour of the Forbidden City. Trump and first lady Melania Trump even had a private dinner there. Trump was the first foreign leader since the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949 to experience what was once reserved for emperors.

The following morning brought another welcome ceremony at the Great Hall of the People and featured a military parade. There also was a state banquet in Trump's honour with video

highlights from the Chinese leader's previous visit to Florida and a clip of Trump's granddaughter Arabella singing in Chinese.

Beijing does not offer this level of spectacle to most visiting foreign leaders. When British Prime Minister Keir Starmer visited the Forbidden City in January, Xi did not attend and the site remained open to the public. Starmer had to contend with tourists.

Ali Wyne, senior US-China research and advocacy adviser for the Washington nonprofit the Crisis Group, said the "Chinese delegation will likely do its utmost to ensure that Trump leaves Beijing believing that he has just concluded the most extraordinary state visit of his two presidencies." (AP)



Bangladesh's High Court rejects detained Hindu monk's bail petition

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Dhaka

Bangladesh's High Court on Sunday rejected a bail petition of Hindu monk Brahmachari Chinmoy Krishna Das since he is being tried in a lower court in connection with a lawyer's murder in 2024.

Das, a spokesperson for the Bangladesh Sammilita Sanatani Jagran Jote, was arrested from Dhaka's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport on November 25, 2024 for alleged sedition.

He was jailed after he was denied bail by a court in the southeastern port city of Chattogram, which prompted his followers to protest in Dhaka and other places the next day. The protest turned violent in Chattogram, where the lawyer, a junior government prosecutor Saiful Islam Alif, was killed.

"The High Court bench rejected our bail petition as

recording of witnesses testimony is underway in the trial (lower) court in Chattogram," Das' lawyer Apurba Kumar Bhattacharya told reporters.

Bhattacharya said the two-judge bench of Justice KM Zahid Sarwar and Justice Sheikh Abu Taher, however, set Monday for hearing bail petitions on four other cases against Das.

Chattogram Divisional Speedy Trial Tribunal on January 19 indicted Das, a former ISKCON leader, and 38 others in connection with the death of the lawyer in Chattogram and opened a trial against him.

Prosecutors in Chhattogram earlier said 39 people were accused of Alif's murder while 23, including Das, were in custody to stand the trial in person with the remaining 16 absconding.

Das' lawyer sought the bail saying the monk was languishing in jail for a long time with ailments.



Workers hang lanterns for upcoming celebrations of Buddha's birthday on May 24 at Jogye temple in Seoul, South Korea

Iran war ceasefire tested as cargo ship catches fire

JON GAMBRELL/SAMY MAGDY ■ Dubai

The shaky ceasefire in the Iran war was tested again on Sunday when drones of unclear origin set fire to a cargo ship off Qatar's coast and entered Kuwaiti airspace before dawn, authorities said.

Qatar and Kuwait said that no casualties were reported from either attack. The events marked the latest threats to a month-old ceasefire, which the Trump administration says remains in effect.

The pause in fighting has faced difficulties, with Iran restricting traffic through the Strait of Hormuz, a

strategic waterway key to the global flow of oil, and the US imposing a blockade of Iranian ports.

Washington has been awaiting Iran's response to a new proposal for a deal to end the war, reopen the strait to shipping and roll back Iran's nuclear program. US President Donald Trump has reiterated threats to resume full-scale bombing if Iran doesn't accept an agreement to reopen the strait and roll back its nuclear program.

Iran has mostly blocked the waterway since joint strikes on Feb. 28 by the US and Israel launched the war, which has caused a global



spike in fuel prices and rattled world markets.

One of the main sticking points in the negotiations is the fate of Iran's stockpile of highly enriched uranium. The UN nuclear agency says Iran has more than 440 kilo-

grams (970 pounds) of uranium that is enriched up to 60 per cent purity, a short, technical step from weapons-grade levels.

In an interview with Iranian state media, a spokesman for the Iranian

military said that forces were on "full readiness" to protect nuclear sites where the uranium is stored.

"We considered it possible that they might intend to steal it through infiltration operations or helicopter operations," Brig. Gen. Akrami Nia told the IRNA news agency late Saturday. He didn't offer further details.

The majority of Iran's highly enriched uranium is likely still at its Isfahan nuclear complex, International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Mariano Grossi told The Associated Press last month. The Isfahan facility was

bombarded by US-Israeli airstrikes in the 12-day war last year, and faced less intense attacks in this year's war.

In Sunday's naval attack, Qatar's Ministry of Defence said that a drone targeted a commercial ship coming from Abu Dhabi into a southern port, setting a small fire that was extinguished. The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations Centre said that the attack happened 23 nautical miles (43 kilometres) northeast of Qatar's capital, Doha. It gave no details on the owner or origin of the ship, and there was no claim of responsibility. (AP)

Russia accuses Ukraine of violating US-brokered truce

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Moscow

Russia accused Kyiv of breaking a US-brokered ceasefire on Sunday, while Ukrainian officials said that one person had been killed and more injured by Russian drone and artillery strikes in the past 24 hours.

Two people were injured by Ukrainian shelling in the Russian-occupied part of Ukraine's Kherson region, the area's Moscow-installed leader, Vladimir Saldo, said.

Separately, Russia's Ministry of Defence accused Kyiv of committing more than 1,000 ceasefire violations, state media reported, citing a daily briefing on Sunday. The ministry said Ukrainian forces had attacked civilian targets in several Russian regions and carried out strikes against Russian military positions on the frontline.

Russia's military "respond-

ed in kind" to the ceasefire violations, the ministry said.

Ukrainian officials said Russia had launched attacks, although they stopped short of accusing Moscow of violating the US-brokered truce that came into force on Saturday. Ivan Fedorov, head of Ukraine's southeastern Zaporizhzhia region, said one person had been killed and three more injured by artillery and drone attacks in the past 24 hours.

Oleksandr Prokudin, the head of Ukraine's Kherson, said that seven people had been wounded over the same period.

Five people were also injured when a Russian drone attack damaged a nine-storey apartment block in the industrial district of Ukraine's second-largest city, Oleh Syniehubov, the head of the Kharkiv regional administration, said late Saturday.



Pakistan emerged as responsible nation of global peace: PM Sharif

SAJJAD HUSSAIN ■ Islamabad

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said that Pakistan is now recognised as a "responsible" nation that not only knows how to defend itself, but has also emerged as a "guarantor of global peace and stability".

In a message issued by his office late Saturday night, marking the first anniversary of 'Marka-e-Haq', the name given by Islamabad to last year's four-day conflict with India, Shehbaz also praised the role of the armed forces during the hostilities.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 people, mostly



tourists, were killed, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, elimi-

nating at least 100 terrorists. The action triggered a rapid escalation in tensions, with Pakistan launching retaliatory strikes, though most of them were thwarted by the Indian military. (PTI)

White House to turn into UFC cage fight arena on June 14

SAGAR KULKARNI ■ Washington

It has been a place of political intrigue and welcomed world leaders, but the White House, on June 14, will witness a clash of titans in an octagon-shaped cage as it hosts Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) bouts on the South Lawn.

The bouts are part of the 250th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the US.

The event, featuring leading UFC fighters, will also coincide with President Donald Trump's 80th birthday and is billed as a premier affair on the Washington DC calendar.

Last week, Trump unveiled a rendering of the octagonal



cage surrounded by thousands of spectators with the White House standing tall in the background.

The 5,000-seat makeshift arena will be built on the sprawling South Lawn, which is usually the venue to

doesn't really do athletic events, and these are all the greatest champions. They're the greatest fighters in the world. You can tell by looking at it, these are the greatest fighters in the world," Trump said when the UFC fighters visited the White House on May 6.

On Saturday, Trump shared images of the UFC arena on his Truth Social account, and the White House also released a promotional video of the event.

The invitations to the actual event at the White House are much coveted and the general public can watch the bouts for free on giant screens to be erected on a large circular lawn called The Ellipse south of the presidential residence.

Trump welcomed UFC fighters Justin Gaethje and Ilija Topuria, who are facing off in the headline fight in the lightweight category, as well as heavyweight fighters Alex Pereira and Cyril Gane, who will compete in one of the other seven bouts, to the White House on Wednesday.

"These are real warriors. When we talk about warriors, these are warriors," Trump said, referring to the four UFC fighters.

The winners of the bouts will be awarded USA-themed UFC Belts to mark the 250th anniversary of US Independence. Before politics, Trump hosted major boxing events at his casinos, often appearing ringside for heavyweight stars like Mike Tyson. (PTI)

India-Trinidad archival pact to help diaspora trace roots: Jaishankar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Port of Spain

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said an archival cooperation agreement between India and Trinidad and Tobago would help members of the Indian diaspora trace their ancestral roots and reconnect with families, as he underlined New Delhi's efforts to preserve the legacy of the Girmitya community.

Girmitya refers to Indian indentured labourers transported by the British to colonies in Fiji, South Africa, Mauritius, and the Caribbean between the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Addressing a gathering at the historic Nelson Island on

Saturday, Jaishankar recalled the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers in Trinidad and Tobago 180 years ago and paid tribute to their "fortitude, determination and resolve" in building new lives under difficult circumstances.

He said the immigrants had carried with them their traditions, faith and way of life, adding that it was fitting for such history to be preserved as a heritage site.

Jaishankar said Prime Minister Narendra Modi attached high importance to creating a database of the Girmitya community and conducting research on its legacy.

He said India was working towards establishing a dedi-

cated Girmitya Studies Centre on Modi's directions.

Referring to an MoU signed between the National Archives of India and Trinidad and Tobago, Jaishankar said he hoped the agreement would help many people in the Caribbean nation in "tracing their ancestral roots and reconnecting with their families in India".

He also noted that the Indian High Commission in Trinidad and Tobago was receiving a growing number of applications for Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) cards after Modi announced the extension of OCI eligibility up to the sixth generation during his visit to the country.

"The number of OCI applications received by the High



Commission is growing, and we will endeavour to facilitate others who may not necessarily have access to the required paperwork," the minister said.

Jaishankar joined the

launch of a Quick Impact Project for the upgradation of cultural heritage facilities at Nelson Island with grant assistance from India. The project includes a memorial monument, creation of a

INDIA SIGNS 8 MOUS WITH TRINIDAD, TOBAGO

Port of Spain: India and Trinidad and Tobago have signed eight agreements in sectors including tourism, healthcare, infrastructure and Ayurveda during External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's two-day visit to the Caribbean nation, according to an official statement. Jaishankar, who visited the Caribbean nation on May 8-9, held talks with Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and other senior leaders on expanding bilateral cooperation and reviewed progress on announcements made during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Trinidad and Tobago last year, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in its statement on Sunday. "A total of 8 MoUs were signed between the two sides in the areas of tourism, solarisation of T&T's Ministry of Foreign and CARICOM Affairs building, vector control, infrastructure upgrade of Nelson Island where the Indian immigrants stayed initially, and for setting up of an Indian Chair on Ayurveda at the University of the West Indies," it said. (PTI)

digital hub of historical data from the national archives and a digital audio-visual experience.

According to the website of the Indian High Commission here, approximately 143,000 indentured workers from the

Indian subcontinent migrated to Trinidad between 1845 and 1917. A vast majority of these Indian emigrants came from northern India and Bihar. The descendants of those indentured workers, now in their fifth or sixth generation, form nearly 40-45 per cent of the total population of 1.36 million (as of 2024), constituting an integral part of the country's economic, political, and social fabric, it states.

Jaishankar concluded his visit to Trinidad and Tobago on Saturday. He was in Port of Spain on the concluding leg of his three-nation tour of Jamaica, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago, aimed at deepening India's engagement with the Caribbean nations.

Syria interim President removes brother in Cabinet reshuffle



ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Damascus

Syria's interim leader has reshuffled several top Government posts and removed his brother from a key position that had drawn accusations of nepotism as his administration struggles to unite a divided nation after a brutal civil war.

President Ahmad al-Sharaa's brother, Maher al-Sharaa, had served as secretary-general to the presidency in Damascus. His initial appointment last year had triggered parallels with the practices under Syria's former President Bashar Assad and his father and predecessor, Hafez Assad.

Ahmad al-Sharaa led an insurgent offensive that ousted Bashar Assad in December 2024 after a nearly 14-year civil war. During his rule, the younger Assad also placed family members, including his wife and brother, in influential positions. Assad's brother, Maher Assad, was commander of the Syrian military's 4th Armoured Division — a unit accused by opposition activists of killings, torture, extortion and drug trafficking.

15 security officials killed in militant attack in Pak

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Peshawar

At least 15 security officials were killed and several were injured in a suicide attack and ambush at a police post in Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, the police said.

The incident took place on Saturday in the northwest district of Bannu where an explosive-laden vehicle approaching a police post was fired at by security personnel, leading to a blast, the police said.

The impact of the explosion led to the collapse of the roofs of several houses in the vicinity. The police post building was also razed to the ground, and several



security personnel were buried under the rubble. After the explosion, the police said, a large group of militants launched an attack on the police post, triggering heavy exchange of fire.

A spokesperson of Bannu police told PTI that 15 security officials were killed in

the attack and several were injured. There is no clarity yet on the number of militants killed in the incident or whether any of them were held.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Sohail Afridi condemned the "terrorist attack" and

expressed sorrow over the loss of lives. His office said he has directed the authorities to ensure the best possible medical treatment for the injured.

He termed the attack on the police post as "highly tragic and a cowardly act," adding that such attacks could not undermine the morale of the police and the public.

In a similar incident last week, Pakistani security forces gunned down a suspected militant who was approaching a check post in an explosive-laden vehicle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's South Waziristan region.

The vehicle hit a nearby building, causing an explosion that injured seven

people, but no casualties were reported.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has faced recurring unrest over the years, driven by militant violence, cross-border movement of fighters from Afghanistan and repeated military operations. Its mountainous terrain and porous frontier add to the challenges for security forces.

No particular group has claimed responsibility for the recent incident. But, in the past, the Pakistan government has accused the banned terror outfit Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan of carrying out violence in the region, especially after a ceasefire deal between the two ended in 2022.

India and Sri Lanka agree to expedite Ditwah relief package



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Colombo

India and Sri Lanka on Sunday agreed to expedite the implementation of the post-Ditwah reconstruction package of \$450 million that New Delhi offered after one of the worst natural disasters hit the island nation.

The issue was discussed when Indian High Commissioner in Colombo Santosh Jha met Sri Lanka's Labour Minister and Deputy Minister of Finance & Planning Anil Jayantha Fernando here. "Agreed to expedite implementation of the post-Ditwah reconstruction package of USD 450 million," Jha said in a post on X.

On November 27 last year, Sri Lanka was hit by Cyclone Ditwah that affected over 3 million people, caused widespread flooding and landslides, and resulted in over 640 deaths.

India, as the first responder, launched 'Operation Sagar Bandhu' on November 28 to provide relief, recovery

assistance and restore connectivity in Sri Lanka. That was in addition to the medicine and field hospitals that India set up in the island nation. On December 23, India announced a reconstruction package of \$450 million for Sri Lanka, as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar met with the island nation's top leaders and assured Delhi's steadfast commitment to Colombo's rebuilding post-cyclone.

The assistance package included \$350 million in concessional Lines of Credit and \$100 million of grants. Jha further added that he discussed other bilateral projects by reviewing their progress. "Briefed him on the progress on various bilateral projects." Indian projects currently in Sri Lanka cover housing, health, water, infrastructure and technology in addition to the cultural sector. The two sides also discussed and exchanged ideas on potential collaboration in domains of modern financial frameworks and cybersecurity, Jha added.

Prachanda calls for unity among all communist forces

SHIRISH B PRADHAN
■ Kathmandu

Former Prime Minister and coordinator of Nepali Communist Party Pushpakamal Dahal "Prachanda," has underscored the need for unity among the communist forces in the country.

Speaking at the 26th Nirmal Lama Memorial Programme organised at the party's office in Kathmandu on Sunday, Prachanda said: "Voice has been raised from the grassroot level that all communists should join hands at this moment."

The voice for communist unity is being raised in all



communist parties and among the general public as well, he pointed out, adding that it has "become essential to forge unity among the true communist forces."

Prachanda also claimed that the communist forces have been defeated in the recently concluded elections as per a "greater design" without naming anyone. (PTI)

Sri Lanka, Tamil Nadu linked by history, culture: Dissanayake congratulates Vijay

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Colombo

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Sunday highlighted the deep historical and cultural ties between Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu as he congratulated actor-turned-politician Chandrasekar Joseph Vijay on being sworn in as the Chief Minister of the southern Indian State.

In a social media post, Dissanayake said Sri Lanka and Tamil Nadu are "connected through history, culture, enterprise, and enduring people-to-people ties across generations."

"Our future holds



immense economic promise and opportunity as Sri Lanka and India continue to build ever closer ties and a stronger partnership," he said.

Dissanayake said he looked forward to working

together within the framework of the India-Sri Lanka partnership towards "greater prosperity and progress".

"The people of Sri Lanka join me in wishing you and the people of Tamil Nadu every success," he added.

Former UK minister challenges PM Starmer's leadership

ADITI KHANNA
■ London

Catherine West, a former Indo-Pacific minister in British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Government, has given Labour ministers an ultimatum to unite behind a successor after the party's disastrous local election results.

The Labour MP from north London on Saturday launched a 'stalking horse' leadership bid aimed at encouraging a stronger contender to emerge.

West said that Labour's poor performance in Thursday's elections for local councils across England and devolved administrations in Wales and Scotland was a "message from the working people" and the party must



act to keep Reform UK leader Nigel Farage out of Downing Street.

"I was honoured to serve under Keir Starmer's leadership, both in Opposition and in Government. All of us in the Labour Party are thankful to Keir for the 2024

General Election and the good work since. I personally get on well with Keir," said West. "But his approach is not cutting through, and the results over the past 48 hours are nothing short of disastrous. Unless things change, we risk Nigel Farage becoming prime minister. That's why, with regret and significant sadness, I firmly believe that Keir should outline his intention to resign as Prime Minister and oversee an orderly transition. "The Labour Party need the chance to have an honest conversation about how we deliver the change we promised in 2024, and that requires new leadership which understands the urgent and real concerns of people across the UK," she

said. Starmer has indicated plans for a major speech on Monday to set out his strategy to revive the Labour Government's electoral fortunes before a general election in 2029, starting with the appointment of former Prime Minister Gordon Brown as advisor.

However, West has demanded that Starmer must use the speech to set out a timetable for his exit as party leader to make way for a new PM. "Keir has demonstrated significant leadership on the world stage and is well placed to represent the UK's national interest while this process takes place and may even continue in an international role in the future but for now I know I speak for more

Labour people than just myself in wanting him to step aside as our Leader," she added in a social media post.

Speaking to reporters on Sunday, the former Foreign Office minister said that she will be forced to enter the race to trigger a leadership election unless ministers choose a credible successor. "Once I've listened carefully to what he (Starmer) says (on Monday), I will be demanding a timetable for an orderly transition," West told reporters. "What I want the Cabinet to do is to close themselves into a room today and come up with somebody who they can all get behind, which would mean we wouldn't have to have a leadership election," the Labour MP said. (PTI)

Bodies retrieved from Indonesian volcano after eruption kills 3 hikers

NINIEK KARMINI AND EDNA TARIGAN
■ Jakarta

Rescuers on Indonesia's remote island of Halmahera found the bodies of two Singaporean hikers on Sunday, two days after they were caught in a volcanic eruption on Mount Dukono, officials said.

The bodies of the men, aged 30 and 27, were located a few metres from where the first victim, an Indonesian female hiker, was found dead on Saturday, Abdul Muhari, the National Disaster Management Agency's spokesperson, said. All three had been about 50 metres (165 feet) from the rim



of the main crater. The men's bodies were covered by thick layers of volcanic material, Muhari said, adding that the densely packed material had complicated evacuation efforts and significantly slowed progress.

"The bodies were buried under deep, densely packed

volcanic material that is difficult to dig through," Muhari said. "Rescue teams must proceed cautiously to ensure safety." The trio were among 20 hikers who set out to ascend the 1,355-metre (4,445-foot) volcano in North Maluku province, in defiance of safety restrictions. (AP)

Indian student elected member of Scottish Parliament

ADITI KHANNA
■ London

Q Manivannan, an India-born anthropologist who identifies as non-binary, has been elected to the devolved Scottish Parliament on a platform of "kinder politics" for the region.

The newly elected member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) secured a win on the Edinburgh and Lothians East list for the pro-independence Scottish Greens in Thursday's polls.

The student from Tamil Nadu was able to contest as a result of a rule change that allowed foreigners on even short-term visas and without indefinite leave to

remain (ILR), or permanent residency, to be eligible for elections in Scotland.

"As a queer Tamil immigrant, I am standing to be an MSP to bring a politics of care and compassion to Holyrood, to fight for the radical change our working-class and marginalised communities need," said Manivannan in his poll pitch for the Scottish Greens. "So, I am passionate about more caring politics rooted in the working class, the queer, and the solidarity politics that includes, that listens to people. "Building on my experience as a community organiser, teacher, and policy expert, having worked with the United Nations, trade



unions, Scottish human rights groups, and voluntary organisations to improve disability inclusion, create accessible and feminist cities, and improve human rights, I know what it means to stand up for justice and make

change happen," he said.

He has pledged to inject "brave, new energy to Holyrood", as the Scottish Parliament is known.

"I want to continue standing unwaveringly for solidarity for oppressed commu-

nities — whether its immigrants or asylum-seekers in Edinburgh, Scottish diaspora communities abroad, or suffering Palestinians.

"Foremost, I would be the voice for my constituents across Edinburgh and Lothians East, speaking up for our local communities and fighting for the change we want and need," he stated.

An online fundraiser on the Crowdfunder platform raised 1,600 pounds towards Manivannan's election campaign. He was elected on Friday under Scotland's complex electoral system that assigns 56 seats to parties based on a form of proportional representation.

"The Scottish Greens are proud of our record election result and to have Q elected to represent Edinburgh and Lothians East," said a Scottish Greens spokesperson.

"The Scottish Parliament rightly and explicitly chose to permit everyone with the right to live here to stand in elections, including new Scots on visas. Q is on a valid visa with the right to work and live in Scotland, and is a Commonwealth citizen. "The UK's visa system is needlessly expensive and hostile, and we are determined to replace it with one that welcomes people with care rather than throwing up hurdles and barriers," the spokesperson said. (PTI)

Iran war disruptions spark higher costs in Bangladesh

JULHAS ALAM
■ Dhaka

Tariquul Islam lost his savings after setbacks in his clothing business about a year and a half ago and turned to ride-sharing on his motorbike to make ends meet. Until recently, he spent hours in fuel lines as supply disruptions linked to the war in Iran ripple into Bangladesh.

The 53-year-old father of four fears the strain will worsen if the war drags on, saying long hours waiting for fuel have sharply cut his income and made it increasingly difficult to support his family in



Dhaka, the nation's capital, including a daughter at university and a son in college. "My family was managing fairly well through ride-sharing," he said. "But after the fuel shortage began, I would buy fuel one day and run the bike for two days. As a result, I had to sit idle for one day, which reduced my income." (AP)



PROSPECT

1,000 AI staff terminated in 3 years for ethical breaches: CEO

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Mumbai

Air India has terminated more than 1,000 staff in the last three years for ethical breaches, including those for misusing the employee leisure travel system, according to the airline's chief Campbell Wilson.

Flagging that hundreds of employees are terminated every year due to non-compliance, Wilson has also emphasised that the staff need to act in the right way even when others are not looking.

As Air India implements cost-saving measures amid significant financial headwinds, Wilson made the remarks during the town hall meeting with the staff on Friday, according to sources. Tata Group-owned Air India has around 24,000 employees now.

The airline's CEO and MD said that over the past three years, "we have terminated more than 1,000 people for



ethical breach" such as smuggling things off the plane and allowing excess baggage onto the aircraft without being charged.

He also mentioned hundreds of staff who had misused the Employee Leisure Travel (ELT) system and added that such things should not happen. In March, sources told PTI that the airline has detected large-

scale discrepancies in the utilisation of its leisure travel policy, involving more than 4,000 employees and has initiated corrective actions, including imposing penalties on the erring staff.

Air India has resorted to cost-cutting measures, including holding back annual increments for staff and asking them to cut discretionary spending as well

as non-critical expenditures, warning of "tough times". On Friday, Wilson told the staff it is going to be a "very, very difficult year" if things don't improve on the Middle East front.

The Air India Group — Air India and Air India Express — is projected to have incurred more than ₹22,000 crore loss in the financial year ended March 2026.

Competition Commission orders probe against Pernod Ricard, 7 others

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Competition Commission has ordered a detailed probe against French spirits major Pernod Ricard and seven other entities for alleged cartelisation in the Indian-made foreign liquor market.

The seven entities that have come under the watchdog's lens are Indo Spirits, Pathway HR Solutions, Universal Distributors, Khao Gali, Bubbly Beverages, Shiv Associates and Organomix Ecosystems.

Ordering the investigation, the regulator said it is of prima-facie view that Pernod Ricard's restrictive conduct with its retailers/wholesalers, purportedly, to induce brand pushing and achieve higher market share in IMFL market in Delhi, falls within the purview of 'exclusive dealing agreement' under the Competition Act.



Such conduct violates the Act, according to a 26-page order, dated May 5, by the Competition Commission of India (CCI).

The complaint was filed before the CCI in 2024.

CCI's Director General (DG) will carry out the investigation that will also look into the role of the persons/officers who were responsible for the conduct of the activities of such entities as well as individuals whose consent or connivance was involved during the time of the contraventions.



Union Minister JP Nadda and Haryana CM Nayan Singh Saini visiting Maa Kamakhya Temple, Guwahati on Sunday

Community healthcare initiatives through free medical camps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Chandigarh

Chandigarh-based homeopathic physician Dr Vikas Singhal has been gaining recognition for his continued contribution to community healthcare through free medical camps and awareness initiatives. Known for combining medical practice with social service, Dr Singhal regularly organises health consultation camps aimed at helping underprivileged and working-class individuals who may not have easy access to proper healthcare facilities.

Through these initiatives, patients receive free consultations, guidance on preventive healthcare, and treatment support for various health conditions. The camps are designed to spread awareness about maintaining a healthy lifestyle while also ensuring that people from economically weaker sections receive timely medical attention.

Dr Singhal is particularly known for his expertise in treating bone and joint disorders. He specialises in conditions such as osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteomyelitis, and other joint-related diseases that commonly affect individuals due to ageing, lifestyle changes, and physical stress. These conditions often impact mobility and overall quality of life, making



specialised treatment essential for patients. In addition to bone and joint care, Dr Singhal is also recognised for his treatment of skin disorders, especially vitiligo. His approach to healthcare focuses on holistic and long-term healing rather than temporary symptom management.

Apart from his clinical work, Dr Singhal is actively associated with several national and international medical organisations, including bodies related to homeopathy and alternative medicine.

Hindu Shree Foundation demands minority language status for Sanskrit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ New Delhi

The Hindu Shree Foundation on Sunday urged the Union Government to grant "Minority Language" status to Sanskrit which is needed to revive and re-discover India's rich cultural heritage and classical literature.

In its National Executive Committee meeting held in the Capital, the Hindu Shree Foundation said it is high time that the Union Government granted "Minority Language" status to Sanskrit to save this language which is deeply rooted into our ancient civilisation.

"Sanskrit is the bedrock of India's traditional knowledge and the mother of many world languages. But it has lost its significance over the years. Minority status is essential for its institutional support, promotion, and preservation," said Dr Kaushal Kant Mishra, Founder and Convener of Hindu Shree Foundation. "Sanskrit is not just limited to our philosophical and reli-



gious subjects, it is a treasure trove of ancient times covering all important subjects — from Ayurveda to science, yoga, astronomy, astrology, arts and crafts. All these subjects today hold high significance and can help students explore and enhance their knowledge," he said.

In the its meeting, the Hindu Shree Foundation also discussed ways to expand the organisation, its participation in the upcoming Kumbh Mela in Haridwar, and creation of a comprehensive "Hindu Cultural Calendar".

Justice (Retd) Shiv Kirti Singh suggested that promotional material related to Hindu Shree Foundation should be circulated in Hindi, English, and Sanskrit so that the organisa-

tion's ideology and activities could be promoted. HSF's office bearer and former bureaucrat Chitrnanj Khaitan proposed that special camps of the Hindu Shree Foundation should be set up at upcoming Kumbh Mela. To digitally connect people with the organisation, senior member Jitin Jain will prepare HSF's Google page and Google form, making the registration and coordination process easier. For this work, the HSF President, Shiv Chaudhary, will constitute a four-member committee.

Alok Mohan Nayak suggested that active workers should first be connected to the national body through programs, and later included in relevant verticals once State-level executive bodies are formed.



BCCI Secretary Devajit Saikia, on behalf of the Assam Cricket Association on Saturday extended a warm felicitation to the Chief Justice of India Surya Kant during his visit to the ACA Stadium, Guwahati, on the occasion of the prestigious CJI Cup, 2026

DAILY SUDOKU

6	4	1	7			5	8
	3					6	
							4
		6	9		5	4	7
4	9	7			5	2	
1							
	4						9
5	7			2	3	4	1

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

HOW TO SOLVE IT

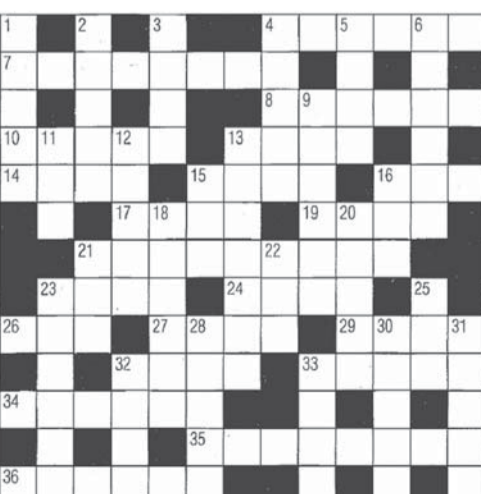
Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.



SOLUTION (9.5.26)

3	2	5	7	1	4	6	9	8
8	6	7	2	9	5	3	1	4
1	4	9	6	3	8	7	2	5
7	5	1	8	2	6	4	3	9
9	8	6	3	4	1	5	7	2
4	3	2	9	5	7	8	6	1
2	1	4	5	7	3	9	8	6
5	7	8	1	6	9	2	4	3
6	9	3	4	8	2	1	5	7

DOUBLE CROSSWORD MONDAY | MAY 11, 2026



ACROSS

- 4 A force for good (6)
- 7 Battle station (8)
- 8 Slow starting runner, but a cheerful one (6)
- 10 Jumps around with much pleasure (5)
- 13 How one's ears can burn! (4)
- 14 Nominally a bit of a setback for ASLEF (4)
- 15 Country dance hall (4)
- 16 Pointed end of a lancet, I presume (3)
- 17 Stray sheep going round the ring (4)
- 19 You won't find this in the North Atlantic! (4)
- 21 Old-fashioned fellows (9)
- 23 In more ways than one, I'm clued up (4)

DOWN

- 1 River of Wales? (5)
- 2 It's bound to be cartographic (5)
- 3 She opens up when the lights are low (4)
- 4 Problem confronting the artist? (5)
- 5 Retreat by rail, possibly? (4)
- 6 Cried movingly at the perfect ending, we believe (6)
- 9 Apparently a prayer to make a man sit up! (6)
- 11 Timber used in wheel making (3)
- 12 A centre for continental capitalists (5)
- 13 Need it contain Russian tea? (7)
- 15 Flier with a hang-up? (3)
- 16 Brown ant maybe (3)
- 18 Being catty, is spotted in a nice fur coat (6)
- 20 Going to church, headgear provides a certain cover (5)
- 21 Enough energy for six million? (3)
- 22 In dire disappointment, visibly angry (3)
- 23 Bird possessing a warm heart in a London street (6)
- 25 Managed to appear in opera nightly (3)
- 28 Less than pleased when relieved (5)
- 30 Jump over the thing and buzz off (3,2)
- 31 The weather not to be out, with little sunshine around (5)
- 32 It's after the job's finished that there are offcuts (4)
- 33 Shopping for a kimono, you may see one in the window (4)

SOLUTION (9.5.26)

ACROSS	2, Pe-r-il	15, Log-ic
1, Loof-a-h	23, Pa's-t	18, On-ion
7, Or-di-n-ary	26, Board	19, Ca-t
8, Hal-L	28, Cop	20, Mel
10, Pla-c-ed	29, Unborn	21, Redress
11, Thr-I've	30, Patent	22, Pro
14, Rat	31, I-be-X	23, Po-ten-t
16, Tomes	32, Crossing	24, Ape-X
17, Tots	33, Sateen	25, Tit-tan
19, Come-T		26, But-CH
21, Raged 2		30, Pigs

NTPC prepares first feasibility study for nuclear project; to apply for approval soon

ABHISHEK SONKAR
■ New Delhi

Power giant NTPC will soon submit its first feasibility study for a nuclear project with the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and seek its nod to go ahead with the plan, sources said.

The approval will pave the way for NTPC to begin work on its first standalone nuclear project in India as the PSU is keen to achieve at least 2 GW of nuclear capacity by 2032.

Further, the company is in process of conducting feasibility studies in two more states and in the latest development has received a go-ahead



from the Bihar Government to conduct a feasibility study for a nuclear project in the state's Banka district, they said.

As part of its energy diversification strategy, NTPC is looking to set up 30 GW of nuclear projects in at least 14 states with investments worth lakhs of crores to con-

tribute to the Government's ambitious 100 GW nuclear capacity target by 2047.

NTPC has completed feasibility study in one of the states, while it is in the process of undertaking feasibility studies in another two states, two sources aware of the development told PTI.

"The company will be very soon submitting the completed feasibility study for the nuclear project in the state," one of the sources said requesting anonymity.

He did not divulge any site-related information due to the sensitivity of the subject. As per the process, the Standing Site Selection Committee of

the DAE reviews any such proposals, and if found technically feasible puts it to the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) for further process.

Another source said NTPC is nearing completion of feasibility studies for nuclear projects in two more states, and recently Energy Department of the Bihar Government has given its support to the company to conduct a feasibility study for a project in the Banka district.

Sources further said that a feasibility study comprises rough estimates related to investments, land and water, among other requirements. (PTI)

Indian Army facilitates women led cafe at 13,000 ft to boost tourism and livelihoods in East Sikkim



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
■ Gangtok

A cafe operated by an all-women local team has been established at an altitude of 13,000 ft in close proximity to the Baba Harbhajan Singh Shrine, a prominent site in East Sikkim.

The initiative reflects resilience, enterprise and

self-reliance in a remote high-altitude region, and is expected to further enhance visitor experience in the area.

The project has been conceptualised and facilitated by Trishakti Corps in coordination with civil administration and local stakeholders. As part of the broader Rambahoomi Darshan initiative, it aims to promote



tourism in border areas while showcasing the region's heritage and strategic significance.

The cafe is generating local employment opportunities, particularly for women, thereby contributing to economic empowerment in remote communities.

By integrating livelihood generation with tourism, the

initiative is expected to support sustainable development and increased tourist inflow to the shrine. The effort stands as a reflection of effective military-civil collaboration, reinforcing the Indian Army's commitment to inclusive growth and development in border areas, while fostering stronger connections with citizens of India.



BRIEFLY

Inter beats Lazio 3-0 in Italian Cup warmup



After helping Inter Milan to the Serie A trophy, captain Lautaro Martinez also looks set to win the top goal-scorer's prize. Lautaro scored one and set up another to help Inter win at 10-man Lazio 3-0 on Saturday in a warmup for the Italian Cup final. That took his tally to 17 in the league, four clear of his nearest rival, teammate Marcus Thuram. Como duo Tasos Douvikas and Nico Paz have five fewer than the Argentina World Cup winner. There are three rounds remaining after this weekend. Inter clinched Serie A last Sunday and can secure a league-cup double in the Italian Cup final on Wednesday, when it will again face Lazio at the Stadio Olimpico. On Saturday, Inter took an early lead in the sixth minute as a long throw-in was nodded on by Thuram for Lautaro to volley in from close range. Inter doubled the lead shortly before halftime. Lautaro and Andy Diouf exchanged several passes on the left side of the area before Lautaro rolled it across for Petar Susic to fire into the top left corner from just outside the area. Lazio's hopes of salvaging something diminished in the 59th when defender Alessio Romagnoli was sent off for a high, studs-up challenge on Ange-Yoan Bonny - the Inter forward was fortunate to come away unscathed. Romagnoli will be suspended when Lazio faces Roma next Sunday. Henrikh Mkhitaryan capped the result for Inter. (AP)

Real Betis squander chance to pull away from Celta Vigo



Real Betis missed a chance to take a step toward sealing its return to the Champions League after squandering a two-goal lead in a 2-2 draw at Real Sociedad La Liga. Betis remained in fifth place with a four-point advantage over sixth-placed Celta Vigo, which put the pressure on the Seville-based side after it won at Atletico Madrid 1-0. There are three games - and nine potential points - left for the two teams this season. Spain clinched a bonus fifth entry into the Champions League on Thursday when Rayo Vallecano's win against Strasbourg in the Conference League semifinals gave Spain an insurmountable edge over Germany in the race for an extra berth. Barcelona, Real Madrid, Villarreal and Atletico all have spots in Europe's elite club competition locked up. Barcelona can clinch the Spanish title on Sunday with at least a draw when it hosts Madrid in a clasico at Camp Nou. Manuel Pellegrini has coached Betis into either the Europa League or Conference League for the past five campaigns. But the Seville-based team hasn't played in the Champions League since 2005-06. (AP)

Man City beat Brentford to close gap on Arsenal

JAMES ROBSON
■ Manchester

Manchester City kept the pressure on Arsenal at the top of the Premier League after beating Brentford 3-0.

Cheers rang around Etihad Stadium after second half goals from Jeremy Doku, Erling Haaland and Omar Marmoush helped second-placed City close the gap on leader Arsenal to two points. It was a different atmosphere at Anfield where Liverpool fans jeered as the defending champion dropped more points in a 1-1 draw with Chelsea.

Third-placed Manchester United drew at Sunderland 0-0 while there were wins for

Champions League-chasing Bournemouth and Brighton.

City keeps title hopes alive. Another big goal from Doku settled City nerves and kept manager Pep Guardiola in contention for a seventh Premier League title.

"I love it. I love to be here again," Guardiola said, adding he feels no tension in the heat of the title race.

A well-organised Brentford managed to frustrate City until Doku came up with a moment of magic on the hour - curling a right-footed shot into the far corner.

It was a near-carbon copy of his late equaliser against Everton that salvaged a 3-3 draw for Guardiola's team on Monday. That draw put the



title race in Arsenal's hands, but victory against Brentford ensured the pressure remained on the Gunners to get a win at West Ham on Sunday. "Come on you Irons!"

Guardiola said at the end of his post-game news conference in reference to West Ham's nickname. Haaland bundled the ball over the line in the 75th of City's

second and his 50th of the season for his club and national team Norway.

Substitute Marmoush got the third in added time.

Jeers for Liverpool: The draw with Chelsea at Anfield saw Liverpool move a step closer to guaranteed Champions League qualification - fourth in the table with two rounds left - but another unconvincing performance sparked a frustrated reaction from the crowd.

There were boos at the final whistle to mark growing unrest from Liverpool supporters in a season that has seen the team tamely surrender the title despite spending around \$570 million in the transfer market.

There has been speculation about the job of coach Arne Slot, who insists there will be improvements next term.

"This season they (fans) will have their opinion and it will not change, but if we can have the summer that we are planning to have I am 100 per cent convinced we will be a different team next season," he said. "Different in terms of results, different in how things look." Liverpool can make certain of a place in the Champions League with a victory at Aston Villa next Friday. But it could find itself in fifth place by the time that game kicks off. Villa was fifth and would leapfrog Liverpool by beating relegated Burnley on Sunday. (AP)

India stun China for recurve team gold in Shanghai World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Shanghai

Indian women's recurve team of Deepika Kumari, Ankita Bhakat and Kunkum Mohod defeated hosts China in a dramatic shoot-off to clinch the gold medal at the Archery World Cup Stage 2 on Sunday.

In a tense final marked by ups and downs, India took the opening set before China fought back to level the contest and force a shoot-off after the four-set regulation ended in a tie.

Holding their nerves in the decider, the Indian trio prevailed 5-4 (28-26), with



veteran Deepika delivering a crucial 9 under pressure in the final shoot-off arrow to seal India's first World Cup

gold since 2021. Earlier, India had stunned record 10-time Olympic champions South Korea in the semifinals.

Udinese's Keinan Davis alleges racist slur by Cagliari's Alberto Dossena

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Cagliari (Italy)

Udinese forward Keinan Davis has accused Cagliari defender Alberto Dossena of calling him a "monkey" during Saturday's Serie A match. Dossena denied any wrongdoing.

Towards the end of Udinese's 2-0 victory at Cagliari, Davis - who is Black - reacted angrily and alerted the referee to something said from the stands.

Tension then rose after the final whistle when Davis and Dossena had to be separated by teammates. Davis posted a story on



Instagram after the match, tagging Dossena and using a picture of the player with the comment: "This racist coward called me a monkey today during the game. I hope the Serie A association

will do something about this but we will see." Dossena posted a statement on his own Instagram account about an hour later.

"Being accused of racism saddens and hurts me," Dossena wrote.

"It is a very serious accusation, it would never cross my mind to address another person, a colleague with an insult of that kind."

"It is the first time that such a situation has happened to me in which I have to defend myself from a defamatory accusation. Such behaviour is the furthest thing from my culture and education."

Messi becomes fastest player in MLS history to reach 100 goal contributions

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Toronto

Lionel Messi had a goal and two assists to become the fastest player in MLS history to reach 100 goal contributions, and Inter Miami doubled up Toronto FC 4-2, upping its winning streak on the road to six.

Messi's effort gives him 59 goals and 41 assists in 64 regular-season matches, shattering the previous record of 95 set by Toronto's Sebastian Giovinco. Messi has piled up 87 goals and 57 assists in 101 career appearances in all competitions.

Rodrigo De Paul also had a goal and two assists to help Inter Miami bounce back from a 4-3 home loss to Orlando City in a match it led 3-0. The club is 0-1-3 at home

since moving to Nu Stadium.

De Paul scored off a free kick in the 44th minute to give Inter Miami a 1-0 lead. The midfielder corralled the ball after it ricocheted off the wall of players and banged a second shot off the left post and into the net. Messi usually takes all of the club's direct free kicks but he yielded to De Paul, who delivered his third career goal - all this year - in his 21st appearance over two seasons.

Messi and De Paul both picked up their third assists of the campaign when they set up Luis Suarez for his second goal and a 2-0 lead in the 56th minute. It was the 32nd goal in 63 career matches for Suarez.

Defender Sergio Reguilon made his third appearance when he subbed into the



match in the 68th minute before scoring his first goal in the 73rd - with an assist

from Messi - for a three-goal lead. De Paul set up Messi for his ninth goal - one off the

league lead - in the 75th minute to make it 4-0. De Paul has three assists after

collecting his first four in 11 appearances last season.

Toronto avoided the shutout on a pair of goals by rookie Emilio Aristizabal. The 20-year-old scored in the 82nd and 90th minutes, giving him three goals in his first 11 matches. Daniel Salloi had his fourth assist on the first goal. Kobe Franklin snagged his second assist this season and fellow defender Walker Zimmerman earned his first to help Aristizabal complete the brace.

Dayne St. Clair finished with three saves for Inter Miami (6-2-4).

Luka Gavran stopped two shots for Toronto (3-4-5).

The match was stopped a couple of times when fans jumped onto the field to try and get close to Messi.

Asian Cup: Japan lands defending champion Qatar in a tough draw

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Riyadh

Four-time winner Japan was grouped with defending champion Qatar at the 2027 Asian Cup in the draw.

Saudi Arabia will host the 24-team tournament for the first time from January 7 to February 5. The Asian Football Confederation will be hoping the competition will be held without any further complications. The draw was originally set for April 11 but was postponed because of the conflict in the Middle East. The final field is still incomplete because the Lebanon-Yemen match was not played as scheduled on March 31 and



has been postponed to June.

As well as Qatar, the champion in 2019 and 2023, Japan will take on Indonesia and Thailand in Group F.

"Japan is one of the leaders in Asian football, always," Qatar coach Julen Lopetegui said. "They have quality

players and we have to believe in ourselves."

Saudi Arabia, which will also stage the 2034 World Cup, will face Kuwait, Oman and the Palestinian team in an all-West Asia group as it seeks to win the title for the first time since 1996.

"When we reach the Asian Cup in our country, we will be ready to reach the final and to win the title," said Saudi Arabia coach Giorgios Donis, who was appointed in April to replace Herve Renard.

Uzbekistan and Jordan are preparing for their first World Cup appearances in June, and were drawn in Asian Cup Group B along with North Korea and Bahrain.

Kane's Bundesliga penalty streak ends with miss

JAMES ELLINGWORTH
■ Munich

Harry Kane's remarkable penalty conversion streak in the Bundesliga has ended at 24 as the Bayern Munich and the Palestinian team in an all-West Asia group as it seeks to win the title for the first time since 1996.

Kane stepped up to the penalty spot at 0-0 against Wolfsburg after teammate Michael Olise was fouled by defender Konstantinos Kouliourakis. Kane seemed to slip slightly as he approached the ball and his shot went wide of the right-hand post.

Bayern still got a 1-0 win in its second-to-last Bundesliga game of the season but it needed a spectacular curling

goal off the underside of the crossbar by Olise, and Wolfsburg's Mattias Svanberg hitting the bar in the 89th minute with only the goalkeeper to beat.

Kane hadn't missed a penalty in the Bundesliga since he joined Bayern in 2023, with 10 of his 24 scored this season alone.

Across all competitions, Kane has failed to convert three penalties for Bayern this season. One was saved by third-division Wehen Wiesbaden's Florian Stritzel in the German Cup and Kane hit the crossbar against Union Saint-Gilloise in the Champions League.

Relegation scenarios: Wolfsburg stayed 16th and in danger of relegation. It last



played outside the top division in 1997.

American midfielder Kevin Paredes and Algerian striker Mohamed Amoura were "not in the squad for disciplinary reasons," Wolfsburg said without giving further

details. The bottom three teams - Wolfsburg, St Pauli and Heidenheim - are battling to avoid ending next week in the bottom two and being relegated.

Their only chance is to finish 16th and reach a pro-

motion-relegation playoff against a second-division team.

Wolfsburg visits 17th-placed St Pauli next Saturday in the final round of regular season games. Wolfsburg will be relegated with a loss but could survive with a draw. St Pauli must win.

Last-placed Heidenheim has two games to play and could yet overhaul both Wolfsburg and St Pauli, but needs to avoid defeat against Cologne on Sunday first.

Leipzig's Champions League return: Leipzig survived a late scare to secure a Champions League return for next season and a 2-1 win over St Pauli made sure of third place in the Bundesliga. (AP)

Iran demands visa guarantees for IRGC-linked soccer players

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Dubai

Iran's soccer federation said the country "definitely" will participate in the 2026 FIFA World Cup and insisted that tournament hosts - the United States, Canada and Mexico - consider Tehran's concerns around the team's travel and how it will be treated.

"All players and technical staff, especially those who served their military service in the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), should be granted visas without problems," Football Federation Islamic Republic of Iran president Mehdi Taj said, according to Iranian media. The team represents a



country in a fragile ceasefire with the United States after the US and Israel sparked a war with attacks on Iran on February 28, and whose citizens are subject to a travel ban imposed by the Trump administration. In the state-

ment carried by the state-run IRNA news agency, Taj said Friday that Iran had presented conditions tied to participation - including guarantees over visas, security and treatment of Iranian players and officials - and added that

the Islamic Republic would take part "without retreating from our beliefs, culture and convictions." The remarks came after Canadian authorities last month denied entry to Taj ahead of a FIFA Congress, reportedly because of his past ties to Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard, which both the US and Canada have designated as a terrorist organisation.

Taj has repeatedly said that Iran would seek assurances from FIFA that Iranian officials, players, national flag and anthem would be treated with respect during the World Cup.

Concerns over issuing visas to people who completed their mandatory military service in the Guard had

been raised previously by others. The matter potentially could affect one of Iran's key players, Mehdi Taremi, team captain and a striker who had completed his mandatory military service in the Guard. In Iran, conscripts also can be assigned to the police or the army, often at random.

Iran's team has drawn with Belgium, New Zealand and Egypt in Group G and opens the World Cup against New Zealand in Inglewood, next to Los Angeles.

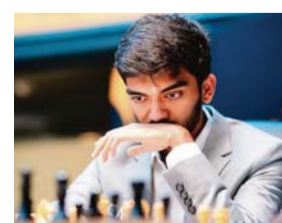
Iran has qualified for four consecutive World Cups and seven overall but has never advanced out of the group stage. Currently ranked No. 21 in the world, Iran lost just one match in the Asian qualifying.

Super Rapid and Blitz: Gukesh ends sixth; Niemann wins

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Warsaw

World champion D Gukesh had to be content with a sixth-place finish while Hans Moke Niemann of the United States kept his nerves towards the end to win the Super rapid and blitz, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Gukesh ended his stint with 17 points out of a possible 36 that included 9 rapid and 18 blitz games. With each rapid game worth two point and blitz one point, Gukesh scored nine points in rapid and eight points in blitz. Things could have been



worse but Gukesh won the last round against Duda Jan-Kryzstof of Poland to finish around the middle bracket.

It may be recalled that Gukesh had withdrawn from the main events of GCT and will only be playing the rapid and blitz this year. The youngest ever world champion is also slated to play his match against Javokhir

Sindarov of the United States later this year apart from the Norway chess tournament. Gukesh's three victories on the last day came against Wesley So of the United States, Niemann and Duda while most notable of his four losses was against Sindarov who won the personal battle against the Indian by 2-1 margin out of the three games played between them here.

Meanwhile, Hans Niemann showed his steely nerves and won the last two rounds to finish on 22.5 points that was enough to clinch the trophy as well as the first prize of \$50000.



RCB send MI out of IPL play-offs contention with 2-wicket win

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Raipur

Royal Challengers Bengaluru beat Mumbai Indians by two wickets in a last-ball IPL thriller here on Sunday. MI were thus knocked out of playoffs.

Sent in to bat, MI were 28/3 in three overs. Naman Dhir (47) and Tilak Varma (57) added 82 off 57 balls to steady the innings but Bhuvneshwar Kumar snapped four wickets as RCB bowlers limited them to 166 for seven.

In reply, Krunal Pandya made a fighting 46-ball 73 but RCB needed 15 from last the six balls. Bhuvneshwar Kumar then blasted a six before Rasikh Salam Dar knocked off the winning runs.

Earlier in the game, Tilak

Varma scored a tenacious 57 but a splendid 4/23 from Bhuvneshwar Kumar helped Royal Challengers Bengaluru restrict Mumbai Indians to a scratchy 166 for seven in their Indian Premier League match here on Sunday.

On a pitch replete with cracks and uneven bounce for fast bowlers, senior Indian seamer Bhuvneshwar returned 4-0-23-4 while making the most of the conditions on offer, which included a three-wicket burst to put his side on top.

Bhuvneshwar ran through MI's top-order dismissing Ryan Rickelton (2), Rohit Sharma (22) and stand-in skipper Suryakumar Yadav (0) to leave them tottering at 28 for three early on.



But to their credit, Tilak (57 off 42 balls; 3x4s, 2x6s) and Naman Dhir (47) dug in deep for a resolute 82-run stand for the fourth wicket to lay the foundation for an at-par total on a pitch which forced the batters to work hard for their runs throughout.

Tilak also had Suyash Sharma to thank for dropping a sitter when he was on nine in the sixth over, since another wicket might have completely derailed a struggling MI.

Tilak was beaten by an off-space delivery from Rasikh Salam and a top edge flew to Suyash at midwicket, where the ball went through the fielder's hands for an embarrassing drop.

Coming together in a perilous situation, both Tilak and

Dhir showed great resolve during their fourth-wicket stand in rotating the strike and playing the ball as per merit. While he was undone by a cross-seam delivery which kept low, Dhir struck five fours and two sixes to make 47 off 32 balls.

Before it all, ace Indian seamer Bhuvneshwar put RCB in commanding position with an early burst for three wickets which was also the sixth occasion the 36-year-old has taken a three-wicket haul in this IPL.

Bhuvneshwar struck on the final ball of the opening over to remove an in-form Ryan Rickelton (2). The Protea batter went for a lofted drive but extra bounce had him hitting it in the air and straight to RCB skipper Rajat Patidar at mid-off.

Having cracked a four off Josh Hazlewood in the next, Rohit Sharma (22) sent the ball flying over the ropes twice in a row to get off the blocks.

However, the brilliance of Bhuvneshwar came to the fore again despite being hit for a four past short third in the third over. Bhuvneshwar floated a knuckle ball while taking pace off it outside off, which had Rohit reaching out for it but only to edge it behind.

Suryakumar Yadav's (0) forgettable IPL season had another failure when he too went with hard hands against one that was comparatively quicker yet probing outside off. A thick edge flew to Virat Kohli who was jubilant having completed a perfect catch to leave MI reeling.

Urvil's exploits power CSK to five-wicket win over LSG

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Chennai

The swashbuckling Urvil Patel equalled the record for the fastest fifty in IPL history as Chennai Super Kings (CSK) edged out Lucknow Super Kings (LSG) by five wickets to keep their play-off hopes alive here on Sunday.

Batting first, Josh Inglis played a sensational 85-run knock before CSK bowlers rallied to stop LSG at 203 for eight. With the defeat, their eighth in 11 matches, LSG's play-off hopes went up in smoke.

A lot of credit for the CSK comeback must go to Jamie Overton (3/36), who took the big wickets of Inglis and Rishabh Pant in a space of three balls, before Shahbaz Ahmed chipped in with a useful 43 off 25 balls.

Thanks to Urvil's exploits and some sensible batting by Shivam Dube (15 not out off 7 balls) and Prashant Veer (17 not out off 12 balls), CSK chased down the target of 204 with four balls remaining.

Dube sealed the issue for CSK with two successive sixes. Urvil, who blazed away to 65 in 23 balls with the help of eight sixes and two fours, reached his half-century in 13 balls to join current record holder Yashasvi Jaiswal.

Sanju Samson provided the early momentum with a brisk 28 before Urvil unleashed a stunning assault on the LSG attack, targeting the likes of Digvesh Rathi and Avesh Khan while not sparing even sea-



soned campaigners such as Mohammed Shami.

Sent in at number 3, Urvil hammered three consecutive sixes off Avesh and went on to clobber 25 runs off Rathi, hitting three more maximums and a four. He also went after India pacer Shami, blasting the bowler over his head for another huge hit over mid-wicket before completing his fifty with a single to the off-side.

After reaching his half-century, Urvil looked skyward and took out a piece of paper from his pocket with the line "This is for you Papa" written on it, turning a record-equalling feat into a deeply personal tribute for his father Mukesh Patel, who played a key role in developing him into a professional cricketer.

GT have got apex predators at the top of the order: Matthew Hayden

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Gujarat Titans batting coach Matthew Hayden believes they possess a destructive bowling attack and are loaded with "apex predators" at the top of the order, with the side beginning to peak at the right time in the Indian Premier League.

The Titans have won four matches on the trot, including a 77-run victory over Rajasthan Royals here on Saturday, to move into second spot as the race for the playoff intensifies.

"It is a very good team. It is a dangerous bowling side, and that is what we have seen tonight. It can be a very destructive bowling side." We

have just got so many apex predators at the top of the batting order, that one, two, three is such a solid unit," Hayden said at the post-match press conference. The Titans' also boast of a varied bowling attack that includes the likes of Kagiso Rabada, Mohammed Siraj, Rashid Khan, Jason Holder, Prasidh Krishna, Washington Sundar and Sai Kishore.

"We did not even play Prasidh Krishna, another international player. We have got versatility as a side, and saw tonight with Sai Kishore. And we are starting to play with great confidence."

"Tonight was actually the first game as a coach that I thought like we put all of those departments together



really nicely so this win away from home was an important win for us," he added. In the era of brutal power-

hitting, GT have charted their own formula for success, relying on their top three of skipper Shubman Gill, Sai Sudharsan and Jos Buttler to do the heavy lifting. "Gujarat Titans have gone about this tournament their own way. They have constructed a line-up that revolves around consistency. Not exactly going to set the world on fire with star power."

Against RR, openers Sudharsan and Gill laid the platform for a huge total of 229/4 with a 118-run opening stand before Rahul Tewatia blazed his way to 14 off four balls. The Australian batting great feels teams chasing targets in excess of 200 need to bat deeper, which the GT top 3 have managed to do.

"Well, tonight was a good example, right, of an exciting young talent in Vaibhav Sooryavanshi. He batted, got 30 runs at a strike rate of 300.

"But when you're chasing 220 odd, you need to bat longer and deeper. So the advantage that we have is that we get players, like the top three that you mentioned, who are striking at 150." "As a batter, that is really hard, and they're doing it for a long period of time, they're constantly getting into the back half of the game, not just batting inside the powerplay. They're going right through with their fitness and their ability to be able to really play Test match-type cricket, and ODI cricket in particular."

Bowlers must innovate to survive T20 era: Shane Bond

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Former New Zealand pacer Shane Bond believes bowlers must evolve and innovate to keep pace with increasingly "ultra-aggressive" batting in T20 cricket, saying those who successfully expand their skillsets can potentially become "superstars" in the format.

Rajasthan Royals' struggles with the ball this season continued on Saturday as they conceded 229 against Gujarat Titans in a crushing 77-run defeat. It marked the seventh time in 11 matches that the Royals have allowed opponents to cross the 200-run mark.

Bond, the Royals' bowling coach, admitted his side has



failed to adapt well enough to familiar conditions.

"We just haven't played well enough in conditions that we know. We've been outplayed by our opposition. I look at bowlers, they

just have to be better, right? You've got to think a bit outside the box," Bond said at the post-match press conference. "There's two things: decision-making and execution. I think tonight, you

would have probably noticed that execution just wasn't consistent enough for long enough. And I think if you look across the board in the IPL, that's just been the case."

With batting standards and scoring rates continuing to rise in the IPL, Bond said bowlers need to rethink their methods and become far more adaptable. "The batsmen, they're coming out, they're playing ultra-aggressive, and putting pressure on bowlers. So as a bowler, you've got to ask, well, what can I do differently?" "They have got to spend more time with the analysts knowing exactly where each batsman's going to... the zones they're going to score at. I may have to bowl off a shorter run and a longer

run. I've got to be able to come around the wicket and bowl on both sides."

In the ongoing season of the IPL, teams have been chasing 200 plus targets with relative ease.

"When you see the bowlers are doing the same thing, game after game after game after game, getting the same result, then my question would be: you've got to be doing something different and developing your game," Bond pointed out how batters have expanded their scoring arsenal, forcing bowlers to evolve at a similar rate. "You look at batsmen now, they're playing the uppercut, they're reversing, they're scooping. They've developed a range of shots.

INDIAN WOMEN'S TEAM TO HAVE SHORT CAMP BEFORE FLYING OUT TO AUSTRALIA



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ New Delhi

Hockey India will conduct a short camp in Bengaluru from Monday for the national women's team ahead of its tour of Australia.

The preparatory camp is important as the team will travel to Australia for an exposure tour ahead of the FIH Nations Cup, which will take place in Auckland from June 15 to 21.

The Women's World Cup 2026 is also scheduled in Belgium later this year as well as the Asian Games.

The upcoming camp will feature the same set of 31 players who were part of the previous national camp held in April under Chief Coach Sjoerd Marijne.

"This will be a short camp ahead of our upcoming tour to Australia. The integral focus of the camp will be on the fitness aspects of the game and improving in those areas. We want to be consistent in this regard and take the next step as a team," said Marijne in a statement.

Justina crowned singles champion at Tumakuru Open ITF W35

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Tumkur (Karnataka)

Top seed Justina Mikulskyte was crowned champion after second seed Zuzanna Pawlikowska was forced to retire due to injury in the singles final of the ITF W35 Tumakuru Open tournament here on Sunday.

Pawlikowska, who had already withdrawn from the doubles final on Saturday owing to a shoulder injury, showed tremendous courage by taking the court for the title clash despite discomfort at the Tumakuru District Tennis Association courts.

However, after the opening game, the Polish player was unable to continue, leading to a premature end to the summit clash and disappointment for the large gathering



of spectators who had turned up expecting a thrilling finale between the top two seeds.

The title marked the eighth ITF singles crown for Mikulskyte, who added another milestone to an impressive season on the international circuit. Along

with the trophy, the Lithuanian pocketed a winner's cheque of USD 4,860 and earned 35 valuable WTA ranking points.

Pawlikowska, meanwhile, received USD 2,637 and 23 WTA points for finishing runner-up.

Mehidy Hasan claims 5 wickets as Bangladesh takes slim lead over Pakistan in first test

ASSOCIATED PRESS
■ Dhaka

Mehidy Hasan claimed five wickets with his crafty off-spin as Bangladesh fought to regain control of the first cricket test against Pakistan on Sunday.

Mehidy finished with 5-102 to help Bangladesh dismiss Pakistan for 386 and take a 27-run first-innings lead on a rain-affected third day. Bangladesh then moved to 7 for no loss, stretching the overall lead to 34, before bad light forced an early close of play. Opener Azan Awaish hit 103 on his debut to lead Pakistan's batsmen. Three other batters - debutant Abdullah Fazal, Salman Agha and Mohammad



Rizwan - hit half-centuries to complement him, but Mehidy ensured Bangladesh took the lead.

Pakistan appeared set for a big first-innings total after resuming at 179-1.

Azan began the day fluently, hitting two fours in the first four overs to reach

only the third Bangladeshi pacer after Mashrafe Bin Mortaza and Shahadat Hossain Rajib to reach the milestone.

Taskin then sent back captain Shan Masood to trigger a mini collapse as Pakistan lost three wickets for four runs.

Mehidy struck twice, including the wicket of another debutant in Abdullah Fazal, who made 60, leaving Pakistan at 230-5. Salman Agha and Rizwan mounted a strong recovery with a 119-run partnership, which frustrated Bangladesh's bowlers and revived Pakistan's hopes.

But left-arm spinner Taijul Islam broke through with the wicket of Rizwan, dismissing him for 59.

99. He then nudged Nahid Rana to point for a single to raise his century off 153 balls, becoming the 15th Pakistan batter to hit a ton on debut. But the brilliant knock came to an end when Taskin (2-70) dismissed him for his 50th test wicket. In doing so, Taskin became

Twisted my ankle while taking a run: Shubman Gill

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

Gujarat Titans captain Shubman Gill on Saturday said he twisted his ankle during his sublime knock of 84 off 44 balls but was able to continue his innings to help his side beat Rajasthan Royals by 77 runs in their Indian Premier League match here.

Gill's knock, studded with nine fours and three sixes,

was a masterclass in timing and strokeplay as he mixed elegance with aggression despite struggling briefly with discomfort in his left foot before reaching his fourth IPL fifty this season. He shared a commanding 118-run opening stand with Sudharsan (55 off 36 balls) to take GT to 229 for 4 after being asked to bat first.

Chasing 230, RR were bowled out for 152 in 16.3



overs with veteran leg spinner Rashid Khan returning with impressive figures of 4/33 while Jason Holder took 3/12. "While taking run, I think I twisted my ankle a little bit. It was painful. But I think after half an hour or so, it settled down," Gill said at the post-match presentation.

"Very happy (for the win). Next game is at home and hopefully we will have another good match."

Wouldn't mind watching Sooryavanshi in all three formats for India: Ashwin

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
■ Jaipur

India spin great R Ashwin wants to see teen sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi play all three formats for the national team.

Opening for the Rajasthan Royals, the Sooryavanshi has continued to carve a fearless reputation, taking



on the best with remarkable ease in the ongoing IPL season. "He is taking every bowler down. I wouldn't mind watching him in a Test match, and I wouldn't mind watching him in all three formats of the game. Get him onto cricket grounds, get people coming along, because he is going to entertain you.