

GREAT OFFERS!



Scan to Subscribe

NEW DELHI | WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026 | PAGES 16 | ₹5.00

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



**PAGE 7 NATION**  
 Raj Thackeray questions PM's austerity plea over poll campaign fuel consumption



**PAGE 10 LAW & JUSTICE**  
 SC to hear TVK MLA's plea against Madras HC order

**PAGE 11: BUSINESS**  
 Rising gold imports in India: An explainer



**PAGE 13 GLOBAL**  
 British PM Keir Starmer remains defiant in face of Cabinet rebellion



**PAGE 15 SPORTS**  
 Shabnim Ismail reverses international retirement for women's T20 World Cup



## NEET-UG cancelled after paper leak

What began as a social media claim has snowballed into a massive examination scandal

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
 New Delhi

The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday officially cancelled the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) 2026 examination conducted on May 3, sending shockwaves through India's medical education ecosystem. The decision comes amid allegations of a paper leak involving a widely circulated question-bank that allegedly matched with a significant portion of the actual question paper. Before the exam, the NTA had issued strong advisories dismissing leak rumours circulating on social media and assuring candidates that all question papers and materials were secure.



SFI activists being detained during a protest demanding cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 over the alleged paper leak in New Delhi on Tuesday

The epicentre of the leak appears to be Rajasthan's Sikar and Jaipur regions, with additional links emerging to Nashik and multi-State coaching networks. The controversy erupted days after the exam

when investigative agencies, particularly the Rajasthan Police's Special Operations Group (SOG), uncovered evidence of a suspected organised leak. According to probe details, a 410-question question

bank, allegedly prepared by coaching networks, had been circulating via WhatsApp, Telegram, and other platforms for 15 days to a month before the exam, with some reports indicating circulation as early

as 42 hours prior. Investigators were stunned to find striking similarities between this document and the actual NEET-UG 2026 paper. Around 120 questions from the chemistry section matched exactly. Over 100 questions in biology and chemistry combined showed near-identical content. Some claims suggest questions worth up to 600 marks (out of 720) were compromised, potentially benefiting select candidates who accessed the material. Reports indicate the material was sold at exorbitant prices, up to ₹5 lakh in some cases, two days before the exam, or around ₹30,000 closer to the date. Rajasthan SOG has detained multiple suspects (reports range from 13 to 45, including a possible mastermind in Jaipur), and a medical student from Churu who is currently studying in Kerala has been traced in the chain of command.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Himanta sworn-in for second term

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

The BJP-led NDA assumed power for the third term on Tuesday when Himanta Biswa Sarma was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Assam for the second time in a row, cementing the saffron party's dominance in the State. Four MLAs of the BJP and its alliance partners the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland People's Front (BPF) also took oath as ministers in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office to Sarma and the four legislators in a 25-minute grand ceremony held at the Veterinary Ground in Khanapara area in Guwahati. Union ministers Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Sarbananda Sonowal, Pabitra Margherita, CMs and deputy CMs of BJP-ruled States and BJP president Nitin Nabin were present at the swearing-in ceremony. PM Modi termed it a "great day for Assam" and con-



PM Narendra Modi with newly sworn-in Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma in Guwahati on Tuesday

gratulated CM Sarma on taking oath for the second time. On X, the PM posted that Sarma has made a mark as a "wonderful administrator and has done pioneering work for the State. My best wishes to him for the tenure ahead". Sarma said that it was an extremely emotional moment for him as he took oath as the CM for the second consecutive term and "with all humility I bow down to the people of Assam". He said this would not have been possible without the PM's

guidance which has been the "biggest motivating factor for our Government". It is his "leadership and vision which has guided us in our path of Sewa (service) and Samarpan (dedication)", he added. He further said that the occasion would not have been possible without the "mentorship of Amit Shah who has "stood with us like a rock in our path to bring back peace and prosperity to the state and work towards delivering our promises to the people".

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## Re-examination likely in June

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA  
 New Delhi

The National Testing Agency (NTA) on Tuesday said the schedule for the re-examination would be announced within the "next seven to 10 days". Sources told *The Pioneer* the revised dates of the entrance test will be held anytime around June 20, 2026 so that the academic session for the MBBS, BDS courses are unaffected. Owing up full responsibility for the irregularities, NTA Director General Abhishek Singh said, "For the re-examination date, I will sit with my team and, in the next few days, announce



Security personnel at the NTA headquarters in New Delhi following the cancellation of the NEET-UG 2026

the complete exam schedule and dates. Our effort will be to conduct the exam in the shortest possible time so that the academic calendar and admission schedule of medical colleges are not disrupted. The process will begin within the next seven to 10 days."

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## BAMS student held in Nashik for paper leak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has taken custody of Shubham Khairnar, a 30-year-old Bachelor of Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) student from Nashik in connection with the NEET-UG paper leak. Khairnar was detained earlier in the day by the Nashik Crime Branch Unit 2 from the Indiranagar area of the city. He was reportedly on his way to a temple when police picked him up around noon, acting on specific inputs from Rajasthan Police's Special Operations Group (SOG). A four-member CBI team arrived at the Nashik Crime Branch office in the evening and formally took him into custody for detailed interrogation.



A CBI team takes custody of an accused arrested in the NEET-UG 2026 paper leak case in Nashik

Investigators allege that Khairnar played a key role in the inter-State racket. According to police, he obtained a physical copy of a controversial "guess paper" or question-bank containing 120-140 ques-

tions from the actual NEET-UG 2026 exam, a few days before the May 3 examination. He allegedly purchased it for around ₹10 lakh from a person in Pune and then forwarded a soft copy to a buyer in Haryana for ₹15 lakh. The "guess paper" is at the heart of the scandal that led the National Testing Agency (NTA) to cancel the entire NEET-UG 2026 exam. Khairnar, originally from Nandgaon taluka in Nashik district, lives with his family in Indiranagar. Police noted that he had altered his appearance, including cutting his hair, in an apparent bid to evade detection, but was identified through older photographs and technical surveillance.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## TN CM Vijay cracks down on liquor sale



Tamil Nadu CM C Joseph Vijay addressing the State Assembly in Chennai on Tuesday

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay on Tuesday ordered the closure of 717 State-run retail liquor outlets, including those near places of worship. Closing down of liquor shops has been a demand from women in the State. The move was done keeping in mind the welfare of people, an official release said. Accordingly, 276 outlets near places of worship, 186 shops near educational institutions, and 255 outlets near bus stands will be closed within the next two weeks, it said.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

**ASTROLOGER PICK TRIGGERS ROW**  
 Chennai: Congress MP Sasikanth Senthil on Tuesday questioned the posting of "an astrologer" as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) by the TN State Government. Senthil reposted on his 'X' handle, a copy of the letter purportedly appointing Rickey Radhan Pandit Vetrivel as OSD to Chief Minister with immediate effect. The letter, dated May 12, is going viral online. However, official confirmation of the posting is awaited. (PNS)

## The Bystander



PIONEER IN SHORT

## RAHUL OBJECTS TO CBI CHIEF SELECTION

Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday issued a dissent during the meeting of the high-powered committee chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to select the next CBI director, alleging that the process had been reduced to a formality and lacked transparency. In a two-page note submitted to the Prime Minister, Gandhi said he could not be a "rubber stamp" in what he described as a biased exercise. He alleged that the Government had denied him access to key documents, including self-appraisal and 360-degree evaluation reports of eligible candidates, forcing him to review extensive records without adequate information. Gandhi further accused the government of misusing the agency to target Opposition leaders, journalists, and critics, arguing that his inclusion in the selection panel was meant to ensure institutional accountability.

## In a first, woman principal to lead St Stephen's college

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ New Delhi

Delhi University's St Stephen's College on Tuesday appointed Professor Susan Elias as its 14th principal, making her the first woman to lead the institution in its more than 145-year history, ending an unbroken line of male leadership since the college's founding in 1881. According to an official notification, "The Supreme Council of the college is pleased to announce that Prof Susan Elias will take



St Stephen's college

charge as the XIV (14th) Principal of the College and as its first lady Principal, effective June 1, 2026." It was signed by Rt Revd Dr Paul Swarup, Bishop of Delhi and chairman of the college.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## India to resist BRICS de-dollarisation push

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

New Delhi does not want BRICS to be defined by an anti-dollar or anti-West identity, ahead of this week's BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting on May 14 and 15 at the Bharat Mandapam. Senior officials in India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) have privately underlined that India is not pursuing any de-dollarisation agenda within BRICS and is unwilling to allow the grouping to be framed primarily through the lens of resistance to the US or Western financial power. "We will not let the West drive its agenda in the BRICS fora. India is not considering



**INDIA TO HOST KEY BRICS MEET**

New Delhi: India will host the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on May 14-15 under its 2026 chairship. DETAILED REPORT ON >> P4

the de-dollarisation agenda because several signed trade arrangements continue to operate in dollar terms," the official added. While discussions around local currency trade and alternatives to Western-dominated financial systems continue to attract global attention, Indian officials are signalling that the

country's strategic and economic priorities remain rooted in pragmatism rather than confrontation. Officials said India's focus during its presidency remains on practical cooperation among emerging economies rather than ideological positioning against Western financial institutions.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## After PM's fuel-saving appeal, BJP faces scrutiny over large motorcades

RAHUL DATTA ■ New Delhi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to reduce fuel consumption due to the ongoing West Asia conflict has seen contradictory responses. While some leaders heeded to Modi's exhortation, some others chose to ignore, inviting intense scrutiny. Addressing a public event in Hyderabad on Sunday, Modi said petroleum products should be used only as needed. "Today, the need of the hour is to use petrol, gas, diesel and similar resources with restraint. We must use imported petroleum products only as needed. This will not only save foreign exchange but also reduce the

adverse impact of war," the Prime Minister said. He also suggested using Metro rail services in cities, carpooling, increased use of electric vehicles, utilising railway services for parcel movement, and working from home to conserve foreign exchange amid the crisis in West Asia. In Bhopal, however, Saubhagya Singh Thakur, appointed as chairman of the Madhya Pradesh Textbook Corporation, arrived in Bhopal from Ujjain on Monday with his supporters to take charge of the post. Videos of his convoy, consisting of several vehicles, went viral. The large number of vehicles caused traffic jams. Similarly, Rakesh Singh Jadon, appointed as Vice President of the Khadi Village



Minister of State Ramdas Athawale takes a metro ride from Vidhan Bhavan to Dharavi via Mumbai Metro Line-3 (Aqua Line), in Mumbai

Industries Board, also arrived with a large convoy from Vidisha. The Opposition slammed the ruling party. The State Government recently made political appointments to various corporations and boards. However, Small Industries Corporation Chairman Satyendra Bhushan Singh publicly arrived in an e-rickshaw, while Energy Minister Pradyuman Singh Tomar used an e-scooter. Tomar said he was using an e-scooter in response to Prime Minister Modi's appeal to reduce petrol and diesel consumption. Videos of Tomar using an e-scooter and BJP MLA Bhagwandas Sabnani riding an e-rickshaw went viral. "Prime minister Narendra Modi has urged us all to con-

serve petrol and diesel, improve the environment, and conserve foreign exchange in national interest. For this purpose, I am using an electric scooter," Tomar said. Sabnani, MLA from Bhopal South-West, said he rode an e-rickshaw with his personal staff in response to the PM's appeal. Similarly, in the national capital, Delhi Education Minister Ashish Sood on Tuesday travelled by the metro and then hailed an e-rickshaw to reach an official function. Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis has implemented strict austerity measures restricting, rather than promoting, the use of flights by ministers to save fuel, following a call for austerity from the Prime Minister.

CONTINUED ON >> P4

## CM announces stipend hike for LNJP nursing interns

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Marking International Nurses Day, Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta has announced a 27-fold increase in the stipend for nursing interns at Lok Nayak Jai Prakash (LNJP) Hospital and praised nurses for their selfless service.

According to an official statement, the chief minister also conducted a surprise inspection at the hospital on Monday, where she visited various wards, interacted with nursing staff, and reviewed healthcare facilities. International Nurses Day is observed around the world on May 12 each year to mark



the contributions that nurses make to society.

"Ending a 27-year wait, the Delhi government has approved a substantial hike in the stipend for nursing interns. The amount has

been raised from ₹500 to ₹13,150. This decision has brought significant relief to 180 nursing interns," the statement said.

The Government also distributed appointment letters

to 1,388 nursing officers and 41 paramedical staff members to strengthen and expand healthcare services in the national Capital, it added.

During the visit, the chief minister spent time speaking with nurses, listening to their experiences, and acknowledging the challenges associated with the profession.

"Doctors provide treatment, but it is nurses who give patients emotional strength and care that often helps them heal," the Chief Minister said, adding that the patience and commitment shown by nurses in difficult circumstances were truly inspiring.

## DDA launches single window system under OBPS

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

In an effort to promote ease of doing business and ease of living, the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has launched the Single Window Clearance System under the Online Building Permit System (OBPS).

This step will enable faster, transparent and citizen-centric building approvals in Delhi and achieve marked improvement on the previous processes, which more often than not led to unnecessary red tape, public harassment and complaints of corruption, the civic body said on Tuesday.

It also said Delhi Lt Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu had flagged all these issues while passing directions for the Single Window



OBPS to be launched at the earliest.

The newly launched system will provide citizens, homeowners, architects and developers with a seamless and integrated interface for processing building permissions and related approvals. The system enables online

submission of building plans, documents and multiple No Objection Certificates (NOCs) through a single-window mechanism, thereby reducing procedural complexity and minimising the need for physical visits to DDA offices.

It will also enable applicants to track application

status in real time, make online fee payments and receive digitally signed approvals without repeated visits to DDA offices.

The system integrates AI-powered plan scrutiny, automated compliance checks, geo-tagged mobile inspections, and instant SMS and email notifications.

The initiative is expected to substantially reduce manual intervention, procedural delays and operational errors while improving accountability, efficiency and accuracy in the building approval process.

The initiative marks an important milestone in modernising Delhi's urban planning and development framework through technology-driven governance reforms and streamlined public service delivery mechanisms.

## WCF to host education convening at GGSIPU led by Smriti Irani

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

The Women's Collective Forum (WCF), under the leadership of its advisor former Union Minister Smriti Zubin Irani, will host a high-level education convening at Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University (GGSIPU) on Wednesday, anchored in the India launch of Reforming

Lessons by Rt Sir Nick Gibb, former UK Schools

Minister, and Educating the Educator by Dr Vikram Sahay, Chief Commissioner of Income Tax, Mumbai.

According to a press release, GGSIPU, a leading state university in the national capital with a strong focus on professional education, law, and public policy, provides a credible academic platform for engaging with questions of system reform and institutional delivery.

The convening is anchored in two books that



Smriti Irani FILE PHOTO

approach education reform from complementary perspectives — drawing on UK

experience as well as Indian institutional realities. Reforming Lessons, authored by Sir Nick Gibb, presents an evidence-led account of how England's schools improved through sustained reform.

It highlights the role of phonics-based instruction, knowledge-rich curricula, and strong accountability frameworks in translating policy intent into measurable classroom outcomes. Rt Sir Nick Gibb brings

over a decade of ministerial leadership in education reform, having served as Schools Minister under four Prime Ministers and leading major changes in curriculum design, teacher training, and assessment frameworks.

Educating the Educator by Dr Vikram Sahay examines the structural challenges within India's teacher education ecosystem and makes the case for practice-based training and outcome-driven reform.

## CM congratulates Himanta Biswa Sarma on second term as Assam CM

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Chief Minister Rekha Gupta on Tuesday attended the swearing-in ceremony of the newly elected BJP Government in Guwahati, Assam.

She extended her heartfelt congratulations and best wishes to Himanta Biswa Sarma on taking oath as Assam Chief Minister for a second consecutive term.



Calling the verdict a historic mandate, the chief minister said it reflected Dr Sarma's leadership, his unwavering commitment to public

service and the immense trust reposed in him by the people of Assam.

She said Assam had made remarkable strides in recent years in areas such as development, governance, infrastructure, investment, cultural preservation and public welfare. Under Dr Sarma's leadership, she noted, the state has emerged as a new development model for the Northeast.

### Public Notice / General Information

The general public is hereby informed that my client is lawfully purchasing the below-described land/property/agricultural land from 1. Mr. Suresh Kumar, S/o of Sh. Chhabil Das Arya, R/o H.No C-26A, Rajan Babu Road, Near Syndicate Bank, Adarsh Nagar, Azadpur, Delhi - 110033, 2. Mrs. Suman W/o Sh. Santaraj, R/o Pipal Ka Surajpur, Post office Bilaspur, District Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-203131, 3. Ashok S/o Sh. Kare @ Kare Singh R/o Gaon Shekhpur, Shaikpur (195), Palwal, Haryana-121102, 4. Smt. Laxmi W/o Rambir R/o Village Bhoood, Bhud (194), Moha, Palwal, Haryana-121004 ("Seller").

Mr. Suresh Kumar is having share in the land as details hereunder in Khawat/Khata No.104 min/155 min, Rect. No. 10, Killa No. 16, 18, 23, Rect. No. 14, Killa No. 4 situated at Village Jhuppa, Tehsil Palwal, District Palwal, Haryana, as per Jamabandi for the year 2019-2020 and mutation no 938 sanctioned vide dated 13.10.2023.

Mrs. Suman is having share in the land as details hereunder in Khawat/Khata No.106/159-160, Rect. No. 37, Killa No. 10/1 Min, Rect. No.38, Killa No.4 and Khawat/Khata No.112/169, Rect. No.33, Killa No.1/2, 2 and Khawat/Khata No.113/170, Rect. No.22, Killa No.18/2, 22, Rect. No.33, Killa No. 3/1/2, 13/2 situated at Village Jhuppa, Tehsil & District Palwal, Haryana, as per Fard Jamabandi for the year 2019-2020 and Mutation No. 1058.

Ashok is having share in the land as details hereunder in Khawat/Khata No. 223/242 Min, Rect. No. 28, Killa No.7, Rect. No. 31 Killa No. 19, 20/2 21/1, 21/2, 22, Rect. No. 44 Killa No.1, 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11/1, 12/1, 13/1 situated at Village, Nagalia, Tehsil & District Palwal, Haryana as per Fard Jamabandi for the year 2021-22.

Smt. Laxmi is having share in the land as details hereunder Khawat/Khata No. 58/64 Min, Rect. No. 31 Killa No. 16/2, 18, 23 and Khawat/ Khata No. 85/101 Min, Rect. No. 31, Killa No. 17, 19, 20, 22, Rect. No.39 Killa No. 2, 3, 8, Khasra No. 43/2 situated at Village Jaibabad Kherli, Tehsil & District Palwal, Haryana, as per Jamabandi for the year 2020-2021. The above said person have agreed to sell their entire respect shares in the aforesaid Khawat(s)/Khandoni(s) to my Client (hereinafter collective share of all is referred as "Scheduled Property/Land").

The Seller has declared that the said Scheduled Property/Land is completely free from all kinds of encumbrances including but not limited to charges, mortgages, loans, claims, disputes, litigations, attachments, stay orders, ceiling proceedings, acquisition, surplus land, government dues, or any third-party rights or claims whatsoever, and that the title of the Scheduled Property/Land is clear, clean, and marketable. The Seller has further represented and warranted that the Seller has clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership and is in actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession of the said Scheduled Property/Land and that no prior, existing, or subsisting agreement, transaction, understanding, or arrangement of any nature whatsoever, whether oral or written, in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land has been entered into with any third party in respect thereof. It has also been declared that no case, proceeding, or dispute in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land is pending before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

Therefore, any person, bank, financial institution, government department, or any other party, firm, company, or entity, who has or claims to have any valid, legal, or equitable right, title, interest, claim, demand, charge, or encumbrance of any nature whatsoever in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land—whether by way of sale, gift, lease, tenancy, license, exchange, partition, mortgage, lien, inheritance, succession, agreement, litigation, decree, stay order, possession, or otherwise—shall intimate the undersigned in writing, along with full particulars of such claim/objection and supporting documentary evidence, within fifteen (15) days from the date of publication of this notice.

In case no information or objection is received within the stipulated period, it shall be conclusively and lawfully presumed that there exists no encumbrances including but not limited to third-party claim, right, or dispute etc. in respect of the said Scheduled Property/Land, and my client shall be free to proceed with and complete the proposed sale transaction with the Seller and shall be legally deemed to have clear, valid, absolute, and marketable right, title, interest and ownership therein along with actual, vacant, peaceful physical and legal possession thereon, entitling my Client to lawfully proceed with and complete the proposed sale transaction of the Scheduled Property/Land with the Seller. Thereafter, any such claim, objection, or dispute shall be treated as legally untenable, deemed to have been waived, and my client shall not be held liable for the same in any civil or criminal proceedings before any court, tribunal, or any competent legal or quasi-legal authority/forum.

The Scheduled Property/Land shall be deemed to include all rights, easements, pathways, appurtenances, standing crops, trees, plants, constructions, fences, boundary walls, etc. attached thereto.

The general public is hereby cautioned not to deal or enter into any transaction concerning the Schedule Property/Land with any person, party, or entity, failing which such transaction shall be at their own cost, risk and consequences.

This public notice is issued on behalf of my Client with complete bona-fide, transparency, and good faith so as to safeguard my client against any future allegations of fraud, misrepresentation, or collusion or any other allegations whatsoever in relation to the Schedule property. This notice is being issued without prejudice to any of the legal rights, contentions and remedies available to my client under applicable law.

Durga Lal - Advocate, Law Consultant Office,

Office No. 57 Nehru Ground Near Main Post Office,

B.K. Chowk, NIT Faridabad, Haryana. ENR/01. No. PH/5563/2022

Mobile No.7303834091, Email- lawconsultantsoffice@gmail.com

### PUBLIC NOTICE

It is notified to all concerned that the original Conveyance Deed registered at Serial No. 9990 in Book No. 1. Vol. No. 9701 on page 16 to page 17 on the 6th day of October 2000, in the name of Mr. Rajendra Singh S/o Hari Singh, R/o C2/29, Janakpuri, New Delhi - 110058, and the said Deed was lost on 12.05.2026 and the present owners Mrs. Manjeet Kaur W/o Rajendra Singh and Mrs. Nardeep Kaur W/o Davinder Singh, both residents of the plot/house situated at C2/29, Janakpuri, New Delhi-110058, are measuring around 150 Sq. Yards, and they have also lodged a lost report with the Delhi Police on 12.05.2026 vide LR Number is 297094/2026. Anybody having the custody of the said Deed or any information or having any claim over the said Deed may kindly intimate the undersigned person within 15 days.

Sd/- Jaskaran Singh, Advocate, Delhi High Court

Mobile No. +91 8588897108.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

General public is hereby informed that my client Sh. TOTTA RAM S/o Sh. VIDYA, aged about 79 years, residing at House No.84, Street No.2, Karawal Nagar Road, Near Primary School, New Chauhan Pur, North East, Delhi-110094, has executed an MOU/settlement deed and WILL, dated 12.05.2026, in which my client entrusted his Son Vinod Kumar to transfer property bearing no. B-161 out of khasra no.39/20 Gali no. 4/3 Rama Garden, Chouhan Pur, Karawal Nagar, measuring 235 sq yard to my client's grandson Mayank Gautam S/o Rishi Kumar. My client, out of love and affection, also handed over a cheque of Rs. 10,00,000/- to Mayank Gautam and a cheque of Rs. 15,00,000/- to his granddaughter, Tanura Gautam, along with Policy No. 7089378. My client declares that all other movable and immovable properties, whether specifically mentioned here or not, shall devolve upon my clients Son, Vinod Kumar, Koushal (Daughter-in-law), Mayank, and Tanura shall not be entitled to any movable or immovable property, except for the property specifically mentioned hereinabove.

Adv. Yogesh Kumar (D/4374/18), Mob: 9555330209

### Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot

Ph: 01639-256232, 256236

Advt. No. BF.U-26/14

#### VACANCIES

Online applications are invited w.e.f 13/05/2026 to 02.06.2026 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfuhsc.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of Radiographer and Operation Theater Assistant for Civil Hospital, Jalalabad, Civil Hospital Badal and Civil Hospital, Khadoor Sahib under Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot.

For Application form, fee, Category wise distribution and other terms & conditions, visit University website: www.bfuhsc.ac.in

Sd/- REGISTRAR

3108/12/2026-27/11443 Dated CHD :- 12/05/2026

### Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot

Ph: 01639-256232, 256236

Advt. No. BF.U-26/13

#### VACANCIES

Online applications are invited w.e.f 12/05/2026 to 21.05.2026 from eligible candidates through University website i.e www.bfuhsc.ac.in for the recruitment to the posts of Associate Consultant, Assistant Consultant and Emergency Medical Officer for Civil Hospital, Jalalabad under Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot.

For Application form, fee, Category wise distribution and other terms & conditions, visit University website: www.bfuhsc.ac.in

Sd/- REGISTRAR

3108/12/2026-27/11441 Dated CHD :- 12/05/2026

### UTTARAKHAND SEEDS AND TARAI DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD. PANTNAGAR, P.O. HALDI-PATHARCHATTA DIST. UDHAM SINGH NAGAR

Email: tdc@uaseedsandtdc.com

#### E-TENDER NOTICE NO. R03/SP/2026

#### PURCHASE OF CHEMICALS

Thiram 75% WDP, Carbendazim 50% W.P. Deltamethrin 2.8% W.P

Cost of Tender Form Rs. 2000.00 + GST 18% (Non Refundable).

EMD Form Rs.1.00 Lac to 25 Lacs 3% & Above Rs. 25 Lacs 2% (Minimum Rs. 75000.00)

#### E-TENDER NOTICE NO. R04/SP/2026

#### PURCHASE OF PROCESSING MATERIAL

Multilayered Fumigation Cover, Jute Bags, Cloth Bags and Other Allied Items.

Cost of Tender Form Rs. 2000.00 + GST 18% (Non Refundable).

EMD Form Rs.1.00 Lac to 25 Lacs 3% & Above Rs. 25 Lacs 2% (Minimum Rs. 75000.00)

Date of Publication on E-Procurement Portal : 13.05.2026 03:00 PM

Starting Date of Tender Document Upload : 13.05.2026 03:00PM

Last Date of Tender Document Submitted : 20.05.2026 05:00PM

Note:- Further Details can be seen from the E-Procurement portal- www.uktdc.com & Mob-9568995689, 7830664580 /c Store & Purchase Website: www.uktdc.com & www.pantnagarseeds.com

नोट:- उपरोक्त विषयक सामग्री निम्न में क्रम की जा रही है जिसकी गुणवत्ता नमूना एवं प्री डिस्क्रिप्च जॉब हेतु अपनी संवेदनशीलता के साथ निम्न के पंजीकृत कार्यालय पर दिनांक: 20.05.2026 तक उपलब्ध कराने का कट कर है। अधिक जानकारी के लिए E-Procurement portal- www.uktdc.com पर देखी जा सकती है।

### कार्यालय, नगर पालिक निगम, कोरबा (छत्तीसगढ़)

ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट निविदा सूचना

क. निर्माण/2026 दिनांक 08.05.2026

एकीकृत पंजीयन प्रणाली अंतर्गत सक्षम श्रेणी में पंजीकृत ठेकेदारों से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु (Online) आनलाईन निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

| क्र. | कार्य का विवरण   | अनुमानित लागत (रू.लाख में) | निविदा डालने की अंतिम तिथि |
|------|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1    | कोरबा जॉन पावर हाउस रोड फाटक से पुराने बस स्टैंड (अंडर ब्रिज रोड) तक सड़क डामरीकरण कार्य (अधोसंरचना मर) (द्वितीय निविदा)   | 132.96                     | 25.05.2026 (T.No. 190569)  |
| 2    | कोरबा जॉन में सुनालिया ब्रिज से पावर हाउस रोड फाटक (अंडर ब्रिज रोड) तक सड़क डामरीकरण कार्य (अधोसंरचना मर) (द्वितीय निविदा) | 95.38                      | 25.05.2026 (T.No. 190570)  |

उपरोक्त कार्य की निविदा की जानकारी ई-प्रोक्वोरमेंट वेब पोर्टल <http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in> से डाउनलोड की जा सकती है, साथ ही निगम के वेब साइट [www.korbamunicipal.in](http://www.korbamunicipal.in) पर भी देखी जा सकती है।

। स्वच्छ भारत निर्माण में योगदान दें।

हस्ता/-

अधीक्षक अभियंता

नगर पालिक निगम

कोरबा (छत्तीसगढ़)

### GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER PWD BUILDING ASSAM:: GUWAHATI

CE/TB-II(Bldg.)/23/2026/6

#### PRESS NOTICE (RE-TENDER)

The Chief Engineer, PWD (Building), Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-03 on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites fresh bid through Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) Mode-1 of contract for the work detailed in the table below, from eligible Firm/Contractor of reputed having experience in similar nature of work. Details of bid may be seen at e-procurement portal i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)

The bidders must be enrolled with e-tendering web portal [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in)

| Sl. No | Name of work  | Approx. Value of work (in Rs) | Bid Security   | Bid Processing Fee | Completion period    |
|--------|---|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1      | Construction of Judicial Guest House at Kaziranga, Assam. | 9,10,58,184.00                | 2 % for General category or 1 % for Reserved category on value of work | 18,212.00          | 18 (Eighteen) Months |

#### Note:-

(i) Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT.

(ii) All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents.

(iii) The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

(iv) The work will be allotted only after receipt of A/A from the competent authority.

Sd/- Chief Engineer, PWD (Building) Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

DIPR/C/PIO/36/13-May-26

### GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER::P.W.D.:SILCHAR

BUILDING CIRCLE,SILCHAR

NO-SBC/CS/2026-27/01/G4

#### PRESS NOTICE

The Superintending Engineer, PWD, Silchar Building Circle, Silchar, Assam on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites Bids with approximate Bid price of (1) **Rs. 28,33,036.00 (Rupees twenty eight lakhs thirty three thousand thirty six)** only for the "Construction of model public toilet block In the Court complex at Lakhipur under the Cachar District Judiciary, Assam (2) **Rs. 13,53,781.00 (Rupees thirteen lakhs fifty three thousand seven hundred eighty one)** only for "Up-gradation of toilet facilities In Court complex at Hailakandi, Assam" with a validity of 180 (one hundred eighty) days from the date of opening, of the tender from registered APWD (Building) Contractor/Firm/Pvt, limited Co. of **Class (A,B & C) and Class-II** category (Registered under Silchar Building Circle). Details of the Bid and Details Notice Inviting Bid may be seen In the P.W.D. portal [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in).

The bidders must be registered with the E-tendering system (ETS) of the Govt. of Assam(website:<http://www.assamtenders.gov.in>)

The Press Notice will be n part of the bidding Documents.

#### Note:-

1. NIT value may be changed during uploading of tender in the website, which may be seen in Detailed NIT of the bid document.

2. Bidder must submit a completion certificate of a 100% completed similar nature of works in Barak valley.

3. Bidders must have to submit Site verification report from the Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Silchar, Udharbond, Sonai & Dhola(SC) Territorial Building Division, Silchar with the Bid for the work under SI No.I and from the Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Hailakandi District Territorial Building Division, Hailakandi for the work under SI No. 2 respectively.

4. Contractor must complete the work within the stipulated time irrespective of payment received or not.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer PWD Silchar Building Circle Silchar

DIPR/C/PIO/34/13-May-26

### GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER, PWD, DIBRUGARH ROAD CIRCLE, DIBRUGARH

No. DRC.XIII/16/98/NIT/DIB/Pt-I/I/71

#### SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

This office of the Superintending Engineer P.W.D, Dibrugarh Road Circle, Dibrugarh on behalf of Governor of Assam invites bid from the approved and eligible contractors/Firms registered with Assam PWD (Roads) for the following work.

| SL NO | NAME OF WORK   | ESTD Value (in Lakhs) (Approx) | EMD/Bid Security (In Rs) | Tender Fee (in Rs) | Pre Bid Date & Time | Last Date & Time of Bid Submission | Date & Time of Bid Opening |
|-------|--|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1     | Construction of 4-lane approach to Khanikar Multi-Disciplinary Sport Complex from Dibrugarh Bypass including R.C.C drain cum footpath, Beautification etc. for the year 2025-26 in Dibrugarh | 472.73000                      | 945500.00                | 10000.00           | N/A                 | 02/06/2026 up to 14.00 Hrs         | 02/06/2026 At 14.30 Hrs    |

The Details of Tender Documents form may be seen and can be Downloaded from Website - <https://assamtenders.gov.in> from 16/05/2026 and also at the office of the undersigned during office hours. The Bid will be opened on the E-procurement portal as per the scheduled mentioned above.

The tender inviting authority reserves the right to accept and reject any Bid/Tender, and to cancel/annul the Bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to the award of contract.

Sd/- Superintending Engineer PWD, Dibrugarh Road Circle, Dibrugarh



## Shock, outrage among aspirants as NEET-UG 2026 cancelled

**KHUSHI MEHROTRA**  
New Delhi

Shock and frustration swept amongst medical aspirants and their guardians on Tuesday across India after the National Testing Agency (NTA) cancelled the NEET-UG 2026 examination over alleged paper leaks and announced a re-test.

The decision triggered anger, frustration and anxiety among students and parents in cities and on social media. Many said years of hard work had been undermined by repeated controversies surrounding competitive examinations.

Speaking to *The Pioneer*,

Delhi-based student, Pavika\* (name changed to maintain anonymity) said, "I was finally beginning to relax after the exam and was waiting for my Class 12 CBSE results when my father called on Tuesday and told me the exam had been cancelled. I was shocked."

Adding to the frustration, she said, "For the past two years, I have had no weekends, holidays or breaks while preparing for NEET. I expected to score around 500 marks and thought the pressure was finally over. Now, we have to go through the entire process again, which is extremely painful. Those playing with the lives

and careers of students should be punished."

Anshul Garg, founder and CEO of Satnara Academy in Delhi, told *The Pioneer* that the high cost of private medical education was one of the reasons paper leak rackets continued to thrive.

"Completing an MBBS degree from private colleges in India costs crores of rupees. For many, getting access to leaked papers for a few lakhs becomes a convenient shortcut to fulfil their dream of becoming doctors," he said.

Calling the cancellation necessary under the circumstances, Garg said it was still unfair to students who would now have to reappear



NEET aspirants at an examination centre in Patna FILE PHOTO

for the examination.

"Paper leaks point to corruption within the authorities, and the NTA must be held accountable. They are making a mockery of stu-

dents' careers, dreams and aspirations," he added.

Another aspirant, Satyam, questioned the credibility of the examination system, saying repeated leak allega-

tions were eroding students' trust in competitive exams.

In Varanasi, NEET aspirant Shreya Jaiswal spoke to media and described the cancellation as "deeply unfair", saying students dedicate years to preparing for the highly competitive medical entrance test. She said, "I worked hard for two years for this exam and now it feels like all our efforts have gone in vain."

Parents too expressed frustration over the alleged leak. A parent waiting outside a coaching centre in Varanasi said middle-class families bear the brunt of such incidents as they spend heavily on coaching and study mate-

rial in the hope of securing their children's future.

"Children study throughout the year, but someone with money gets hold of leaked papers, and honest students suffer," he said, demanding strict action against those responsible.

Speaking to the press, Suresh Chouhan, director of Career Coaching in Prayagraj, said repeated paper leaks and exam cancellations place an immense emotional and financial burden on students.

"We see children from villages and small towns collecting money note by note to pay coaching fees. They live in tiny rooms and study for an entire year hoping to

fulfil their dreams. When papers get leaked, it is truly heartbreaking," he said.

He added that uncertainty surrounding re-examinations also affects students psychologically and impacts their performance.

The NTA said the May 3 examination would be conducted again on dates to be announced later, while the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) would carry out a detailed probe into the allegations. Protests staged by student unions erupted in New Delhi demanding the resignation of Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and sought accountability.

## Massive protest by NSUI after NEET exam cancellation

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Anger spilled onto the streets of central Delhi on Tuesday as the National Students' Union of India (NSUI), affiliated with the Congress party, gathered outside the Shastri Bhawan to protest the cancellation of the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) over paper leak allegations.

Intense sloganeering demanding Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan's resignation and justice for the students took place in Central Delhi amid heavy police deployment and barricading. Several protesters, including students and NSUI members, were detained, according to the organisation. Heavy police forces have been deployed in key areas.

The protest came hours after the National Testing Agency announced the cancellation of the May 3 medical entrance examination, stating that NEET-UG 2026 would be conducted



Members of NSUI stage a protest in front of the Education Ministry, Shastri Bhawan, against the alleged NEET 2026 scam, in New Delhi PANKAJ KUMAR

again on dates to be announced later. The agency said the decision, taken with the approval of the Government, aimed to maintain transparency and public trust in the examination system. A CBI probe into the alleged paper leak has also been ordered.

The controversy revived memories of the 2024 NEET row, when allegations of paper leaks and irregularities triggered nationwide outrage, although the examination was not cancelled at the time.

Addressing the media, NSUI National President Vinod Jakhar termed the cancellation a "victory of

student power" and alleged that the government acted under pressure from students and opposition groups. He also demanded Pradhan's resignation and called for the NTA to be disbanded, alleging repeated lapses in national-level examinations.

NSUI further questioned who would be held account-

able for the alleged leak network and the "mental, emotional and financial suffering" caused to students and their families following the cancellation. The organisation said protests demanding accountability and reforms in the examination system would continue.

Meanwhile, the Bharatiya Janata Party's (BJP) student unit, the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad, also expressed concern over the alleged irregularities and demanded an impartial, time-bound probe by central agencies.

In a statement, ABVP said any compromise with the sanctity of entrance examinations was "completely unacceptable" and warned that a paper leak would amount to a grave injustice to lakhs of students.

The organisation urged the Centre to take strict action against those involved, including alleged examination mafias, and called on the NTA to maintain transparency throughout the investigation.

## Kejriwal slams Govt over paper leak

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) National Convener Arvind Kejriwal has called out the Modi government after the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) examination was cancelled following a paper leak, asserting that repeated leaks are happening because of political collusion and protection.

Referring to earlier NEET paper leaks in 2017, 2021 and 2024, he revealed that the examination has now been compromised four times under the Modi government, yet not a single person involved has been punished, and even the previous accused are out on bail.

Calling it a betrayal of crores of students who spent years preparing for the examination, the AAP chief said the youth would now have to take to the streets, and the Aam Aadmi Party would stand with them.

During a press conference, Arvind Kejriwal shared, "I want to express my deepest sympa-



**I want to express my deepest sympathies to the lakhs of children and their parents who have been affected by the cancellation of this examination.**

— ARVIND KEJRIWAL, AAP NATIONAL CONVENER

thies to the lakhs of children and their parents who have been affected by the cancellation of this examination. I too appeared for the IIT examination in my life and later for the Civil Services examination. I know the kind of intense hard work and penance it requires."

Recalling his own preparation days, he said, "We had a very small house in Hisar, and we had built a tiny room

upstairs where I would sit and prepare the whole day. Fortunately, in those days papers were not leaked.

There are so many poor families in this country. Coaching has become so expensive. Many students come to Delhi and stay here on rent for coaching. Many parents mortgage their gold and even sell their land to pay for their child's coaching.

## St Stephen's College ready for next era with focus on AI: Susan Elias

**AHILI DAS**  
New Delhi

St Stephen's College is ready to enter the next era with a focus on artificial intelligence (AI), said the newly-appointed principal, Susan Elias. She was appointed as the college's first woman principal in its 145-year history on Tuesday.

"This is a big opportunity for me to bring my strengths to the table and make college students AI-ready and quantum aware," said Elias, who has more than a decade of experience in AI and research.

Elias said that while protecting the college's strengths and legacy, she will focus on encouraging research and entrepreneurship.

"Delhi University's St Stephen's has always nurtured leaders and great minds. But what India needs right now, besides that, is researchers, entrepreneurs and job creators who are ahead of their time," she said over the phone.

Elias said she wants to introduce certification courses as soon as she joins. "Our students need to learn the skills required to enter the quantum computing era, as that is the immediate future



SUSAN ELIAS  
PRINCIPAL, ST STEPHEN'S COLLEGE

**I INTEND TO INTRODUCE CERTIFICATE COURSES IN AI FOR STUDENTS AS WELL AS ALUMNI, FOR EXAMPLE, COURSES FOR DESIGNERS, LAWYERS AND JOURNALISTS. EVERYONE CAN LEARN THE SKILLS REQUIRED IN THEIR FIELDS**

we are facing," she said, adding that India has already invested huge amounts in the quantum valley down south.

"I intend to introduce certificate courses in AI for students as well as alumni, for example, courses for designers, lawyers and journalists. Everyone can learn the skills required in their fields," she said.

According to Elias's LinkedIn profile, she served as the pro vice chancellor (research) at Chandigarh University, situated in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, from January to May 2026.

Before that, she served as the director of research at Hindustan University between October 2024 and December 2025.

She has also served in several roles at the Vellore Institute of Technology, including professor and dean of the School of Electronics Engineering, professor and deputy director at the Centre for Advanced Data Science, and associate professor and head of the School of Electronics Engineering.

According to the college's official notice, Elias is set to assume office on June 1, 2026.

## 1,700 kg seized narcotics worth ₹72 crore destroyed

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Overseeing the disposal of about 1,700 kilograms of seized narcotic substances in Delhi, Lieutenant Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu on Tuesday said the destruction symbolised "the victory of law over criminality and hope over addiction." The narcotics were worth nearly ₹72 crore in the international market, officials said.

The "Mega Drug Destruction Event" was attended by Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golchha, which was held at

Biotic Waste Solutions on GT Karnal Road near Jahangir Puri Metro Station.

Addressing the event, the Lieutenant Governor said the programme was not merely about destroying narcotics but about dismantling an ecosystem that threatens the youth, weakens families and harms society. He reiterated the Centre's "zero tolerance" policy against drugs and urged all stakeholders to work together to achieve the goal of a drug-free Delhi by 2027.

Officials noted that 1700 kg of narcotics worth 72 crore rupees had been destroyed



by 12 May 2026. According to Delhi Police, the destroyed contraband included 1,610 kg of cannabis, 21 kg of charas, 11 kg of heroin, 591 grams of cocaine, 21 kg of cannabis sativa and 30 kg of alprazo-

lam tablets seized by the Crime Branch and South District Police.

Delhi Police also carried out the ninth round of its Drug Destruction Programme, destroying the

drugs seized by the Crime Branch and South Delhi district. The campaign was launched in line with the Centre's "Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyan" and the Prime Minister's vision of a "Drug-Free India", alongside the Union Home Ministry's policy of "zero tolerance" against narcotics.

Delhi Police said it had intensified action against drug trafficking through special drives such as "Operation Kavach", coordinated anti-narcotics operations, financial investigations and preventive detention measures.

## Census 2027 adds QR code verification for door-to-door visits

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Amid a rise in cyber fraud cases involving impersonation and fake government officials, authorities have implemented a QR code-based verification mechanism for enumerators and supervisors visiting households for Census 2027 in the capital.

This move aims to make the door-to-door enumeration in Municipal Corporation of Delhi areas, beginning May 16, more secure and effective. Officials of the Office of the

Registrar General and Census told PTI that all enumerators and supervisors (E&S) deployed for the exercise will carry an appointment letter and an identity card issued by the charge officer. Both documents will have embedded QR codes that residents can scan to verify their authenticity.

"If there is any doubt or suspicion, household members can verify the visiting personnel by checking their appointment letter and identity card. They can also scan the QR code printed on these documents to confirm



authenticity," officials said. The safeguard comes when several cyber fraud cases have surfaced across the country.

Fraudsters pose as law enforcement or government officials to dupe people using fake documents, impersonation and digital verification

requests. Officials said recent "digital arrest" scams and fake census-related messages circulated online have heightened concerns over impersonation-based fraud.

Officials reported that under the ongoing self-enumeration exercise, 93,521 self-enumerations were recorded on Monday, including 77,372 completed cases and 16,149 initiated cases, resulting in an overall completion rate of 82.73 per cent.

Officials said most entries were registered by residents of the North East, South West, and North West Delhi dis-

tricts. According to officials, if a household cannot geo-tag its location with exact precision, it may tag a nearby location instead. In such cases, the enumerator will download the map of the concerned HLB (House listing and Housing Phase) and all self-enumeration IDs linked to that block for verification during field visits.

During door-to-door House Listing Operations (HLO), enumerators will ask households to provide their self-enumeration IDs and match them with the tagged households in the HLB.

## Discoms advise consumers for proper maintenance of wirings, ACs to prevent fires

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

In the wake of recent fire tragedies leading to loss of lives, the power discoms have issued an advisory for people to prevent electrical accidents by avoiding overloaded circuits, faulty wiring and ensuring regular checks of air conditioners.

Air conditioners, often used continuously, are especially prone to overheating if not properly maintained or connected to adequately rated circuits, says the advisory. The overloaded circuits, faulty wiring and lack of regular servicing of air conditioners can turn homes into fire zones. However, simple precautions taken in

time can prevent devastating electrical fires, discom officials said.

In most cases, electrical fires originate within homes due to internal faults like loose connections, damaged cables or the absence of safety devices such as Residual Current Circuit Breakers (RCCBs) and Earth Leakage Circuit Breakers (ELCBs).

Understanding these risks and taking simple, preventive steps, from upgrading wiring and installing certified protection systems to servicing ACs and avoiding overloading circuits, can go a long way in safeguarding lives and property, officials said.

Increased heat and an

increased power demand strain electrical systems, raising the risk of overheating and electrical fires at a consumer's premises. The excessive use of power, often exceeding the sanctioned load at residents' premises, especially for appliances like air conditioners, can overload circuits or cause electrical short circuits, they said.

Further, internal wiring in some consumer premises may not be designed to handle the load-carrying capacity required in summer. Improper maintenance of air conditioners, power theft and other electrical equipment also contribute to the increased risk of fire incidents.

Fire incidents at a con-



sumer's premises are almost always due to internal factors. These include faulty wiring, loose connections, overloaded circuits, damaged electrical cords/plugs, sockets or outlets. Old or poorly main-

tained electrical equipment and air conditioners are also causing fire incidents.

Use of ELCBs or Residual Current Breakers (RCBs) to trip circuits in case of overloading and short circuits can significantly reduce the

risk of fire incidents, said the advisory.

Regular inspection of home wiring, installation of ELCBs and RCCBs, use of ISI-marked wiring and appliances, and avoiding overloading sockets with multiple devices can prevent mishaps, according to the advisory. Some simple things like switching off appliances when not in use, unplugging power cords safely and servicing of air conditioners periodically also reduce the risk of overheating and sparking.

According to power distribution officials and safety experts, electrical fires during summer are primarily caused by excessive load on domestic circuits as air

conditioners, coolers, geysers and other heavy appliances operate continuously for long durations.

Old and poorly maintained air conditioners have become a major source of concern. Experts warned that ageing AC units consume more electricity and place additional stress on circuits, increasing the possibility of short circuits and compressor failures.

In some cases, overheating compressors and airflow obstruction due to clogged filters or condenser coils can even lead to fires or explosions.

To minimise risks, consumers have been advised not to run air conditioners continuously for extended

periods and to keep outdoor units free from dust and debris for proper airflow.

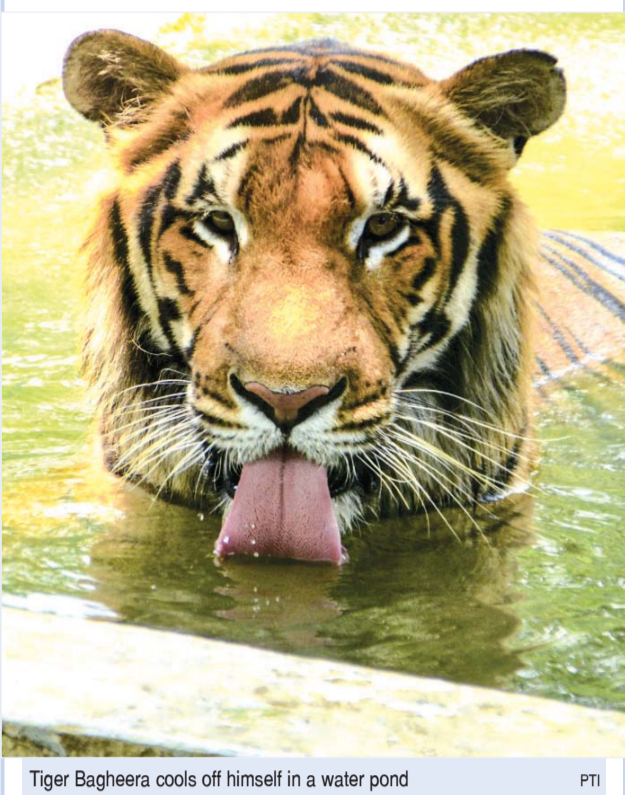
Using voltage stabilisers, setting thermostats at 24 degrees Celsius and operating ACs in "Auto" mode instead of continuous "on" mode can also help reduce stress on electrical systems, added the advisory.

Nine people were killed in a recent incident of fire at a residential building in East Delhi's Vivek Vihar area. The fire was reportedly caused by a blast in an air conditioner in the building.

A fire reportedly caused by an electrical short circuit in a residential building in South West Delhi's Palam area claimed nine lives in March.



## IN FOCUS



Tiger Bagheera cools off himself in a water pond

PTI

## AI cannot replace moral weight of doctor, says Vice President

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Vice President CP Radhakrishnan on Tuesday asserted that no Artificial Intelligence (AI) can replace the moral weight of a doctor at a patient's bedside and asked the medical practitioners to be "patient with patients".

Addressing the 51st convocation of All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here, he said doctors should not miss the opportunity to study in prestigious institutions abroad, but they must come back to serve their people back home.

He said AI-driven technology is taking over various sectors, including medicine. "But no AI can replace the moral weight of a doctor at



the bedside of a patient," he said. "Your humane touch and a few humble words can cure more than what the medicine can," the Vice-President told doctors, urging them to be "patient with patients" when they ask foolish questions. "When you explain, they will understand," he said.

Radhakrishnan noted that the opening of AIIMS in other places has taken healthcare to previously unserved areas, and people from far-off places do not have to rush to Delhi for treatment now.

He also lauded the Union health ministry for opening new medical and nursing colleges in several states to meet the students' aspirations. Union Health Minister JP Nadda was also present at the function.

## India to host BRICS foreign ministers' meet



ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India is set to host the BRICS Foreign Ministers' Meeting in New Delhi on May 14-15 under its 2026 chairship of the expanded bloc, amid growing geopolitical tensions in West Asia and increasing calls for reforms in global governance.

The high-level meeting will be chaired by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and is expected to bring together foreign ministers and senior representatives from BRICS member and partner nations. Delegates are also scheduled to call on Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the summit.

The gathering marks the first major ministerial-level engagement under India's current BRICS chairship and is expected to shape the agenda for the BRICS Leaders' Summit later this year.

Speaking during the weekly media briefing in New Delhi, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed the participation of senior diplomats and outlined the summit's broad agenda.

According to the Ministry of External Affairs, discus-

sions will focus on pressing regional and global developmental, strengthening multi-lateral cooperation, and reforming global governance institutions in response to changing geopolitical realities.

"The meeting of the BRICS Foreign Ministers is scheduled for the 14th and 15th May, and we are presiding over it," Jaiswal said during the press briefing. He added that participating countries would decide their respective representation and details would be shared as delegations arrive in New Delhi.

India recently unveiled the official logo and website for its BRICS 2026 chairship under the theme: "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability." The theme reflects India's "Humanity First" and people-centric approach championed by Prime Minister Modi during the 2025 BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro.

This will be the fourth time India hosts a BRICS summit-level engagement, underscoring New Delhi's growing role within the bloc and among Global South nations.

## Was PM Modi unaware of forex concerns during Assembly polls, asks Owaisi

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Hyderabad

Criticising the Prime Minister's austerity call, AIMIM president Asaduddin Owaisi on Tuesday sought to know why Narendra Modi and the BJP did not highlight the need to save forex during the recent State elections.

He also alleged that one of the purposes of calling for austerity measures is to save dollars so that the Government can "give to Trump" to purchase oil from the US.

"The question is, was the Prime Minister asking for votes during the elections without telling people that they are going to raise petrol, diesel and aviation fuel prices after the polls? And now he is presenting this as patriotism, saying that a true patriot is someone who tolerates all these hardships," he told reporters here.

According to the Hyderabad MP, people of the country would get an "invoice" that there will be a sharp rise in prices of petrol, diesel and aviation fuel.

He wondered whether the BJP was not aware of these issues during the recent State elections.

"(US President Donald



All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) President Asaduddin Owaisi addresses media in Hyderabad, Telangana on Tuesday

PTI

Trump says you purchase from me to overcome your energy crunch since you have the trade agreement. PM says don't purchase gold, avoid foreign travel, reduce consumption of edible oil. Why is he saying all this? So that he can save dollars and give to Trump in Houston. That is the real purpose. You see whether it is patriotism or not," he said.

Claiming that the West Asia conflict is coming to an end, the AIMIM leader asked why the Centre cannot take the burden of fuel crisis when it bore the brunt for so long. He said the poor would be hit heavily if there is a rise in fuel prices, besides

rise in inflation. Alleging that foreign investors withdrew ₹one lakh crore from the Indian market in March this year, he said the Modi Government is not ready to accept that "micro economics is bleeding".

"Ours is worst performing currency among emerging markets," he said.

Owaisi further said the RBI is continuously increasing gold reserves, which is "exact opposite of what the PM advised". In March 2026, 77 per cent of the RBI's total gold reserves were held domestically, whereas in 2023 it was only 38 per cent, he said.

## Punjab minister Sanjeev Arora moves HC challenging his arrest by ED

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Chandigarh

Punjab Cabinet Minister Sanjeev Arora on Tuesday moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court challenging his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) as "illegal and unconstitutional".

His plea came up before a bench of Chief Justice Sheel Nagu and Justice Sanjiv Berry which heard arguments of Arora's counsel Puneet Bali and adjourned the matter to May 14.

The ED on May 9 arrested Punjab industries minister Arora in connection with



an alleged ₹100-crore GST fraud-linked money laundering case involving certain entities linked to him.

Arora, 62, was taken into custody under PMLA following raids conducted at his official residence in Chandigarh's Sector 2.

In his plea, Arora sought directions for quashing the May 9 remand order passed

by the Special Court in Gurugram that had sent him to ED custody till May 16.

The petitioner contended that his arrest was "illegal and unconstitutional", being in "complete violation" of the mandatory statutory safeguards governing arrest under Section 19 of the PMLA and the constitutional protections guaranteed under Articles 14, 21 and 22 of the Constitution.

Senior counsel Puneet Bali and advocates Vibhav Jain and Viren Sibal, representing Arora, submitted that Arora is the promoter and erstwhile Chairman of Hampton Sky Realty Limited, formerly known as Ritesh Properties and Industries Limited.

## Delhi Police returns 12,600 stolen, lost mobile phones to owners

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

The Delhi Police on Tuesday handed over more than 12,600 stolen and lost mobile phones to their rightful owners under its special initiative 'Operation Vishwas'.

The phones were returned during a program held at the Multi-Purpose Hall of Delhi University's North Campus in the presence of Lieutenant

Governor Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Delhi Police Commissioner Satish Golcha.

According to the police, more than 19,000 mobile phones have been recovered in the last 45 days with the help of the Central Equipment Identity Register (CEIR) portal, pushing the recovery rate of stolen and lost phones to 74 per cent in 2026, compared to 12 per cent in 2025 and five per cent in 2024. "Dedicated



police teams across all districts worked for the last few months to trace and recover the devices, travelling to several states during the operation," a senior police officer said. "I witnessed the reason of citizens, receiving their phones back. This device, carries a person's world — photographs, contacts, banking access, work, and memories. Losing it, creates anxiety, and distress.

## NEET-UG cancelled after paper leak

The move underscores growing concerns over the integrity of one of India's largest competitive examinations, which serves as the gateway to undergraduate medical, dental, and AYUSH courses. In 2026, nearly 23 lakh (or over 22 lakh, as per some reports) candidates registered for the exam, which was held in pen-and-paper mode on May 3, 2026, in 551 cities in India and 14 cities abroad.

As per the official complaint and the CBI statement, the FIR was registered based on a written complaint from the Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India. The CBI has invoked offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), the Prevention of Corruption Act and offences under the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024.

Special CBI teams have been formed and dispatched to multiple locations, including Rajasthan, where the initial probe by the state's Special Operations Group began. The agency has confirmed a comprehensive investigation to identify all individuals and entities involved.

Special teams have already been dispatched to key locations, primarily Rajasthan and neighbouring states such as Maharashtra and Haryana, to conduct coordinated raids, searches, and seizures of evidence, including question papers, digital devices, communication records (WhatsApp/Telegram groups), and financial transactions.

CBI teams are looking for forensic evidence, including any leaked guess papers matching the actual exam. CCTV footage, call records, and tower location data to trace the leak's origin, reportedly from a printing press in Nashik to intermediaries in Gurugram, Sikar coaching hubs, and beyond. Agency sources said they will interrogate suspects, witnesses and possible insiders (NTA officials, printers, or intermediaries) while examining any larger conspiracy involving coaching institutes or public servants.

## Himanta sworn-in for second term

He also thanked BJP workers across Assam, who toiled hard to achieve this historic victory. The Chief Minister, attired in dhoti and kurta with the traditional gamosa draped around his neck, took oath in Assamese.

The BJP's Rameshwar Teli and Ajanta Neog,

AGP's Atul Bora, and Charan Boro of BPF also took oath as ministers, representing the tea community, women, the regional community and the indigenous Bodo tribe, respectively. Teli, Bora and Neog took their oath in Assamese while the BPF minister took in Bodo.

Neog, Bora and Boro were members of Sarma's first cabinet, while Teli, a former Union Minister, returned to state politics. Neog was the Finance Minister, while Bora was in charge of the agriculture department and Boro held the transport department in the outgoing Government.

The NDA won a record 102 seats of the 126-member Assembly, including 82 from the BJP. The BJP allies, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and the Bodoland Peoples' Front (BPF), bagged 10 seats each.

## India to resist BRICS de-dollarisation push

New Delhi's statement on de-dollarisation comes at a sensitive geopolitical moment, as BRICS expands in size and influence while global economic fragmentation deepens amid sanctions, supply-chain disruptions and intensifying US-China competition.

The issue has gained wider international attention after US President Donald Trump repeatedly warned BRICS countries against attempts to weaken the dominance of the dollar in global trade.

Originally founded as BRIC by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2006, the grouping expanded into BRICS after South Africa joined in 2010.

The bloc has since widened significantly. Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the UAE became full members in 2024, while Indonesia joined in 2025.

BRICS accounts for nearly half of the world's population, around 40 per cent of global GDP and over a quarter of global trade.

The grouping has increasingly emerged as an influential voice for the Global South on issues ranging from development financing and multi-lateral reforms to trade and climate negotiations.

At the same time, discussions around reducing dependence on the US dollar in cross-border transactions have periodically surfaced within BRICS amid rising geopolitical tensions and sanctions-related disruptions in global trade. Policy conversations within the grouping have also explored payment system interoperability, local currency trade and digital financial infrastructure.

Despite periodic discussions around alternative payment systems, BRICS has so far stopped short of proposing any formal common currency framework.

## FROM PAGE - 1

India, however, has maintained a cautious position on the issue. New Delhi's approach has been pragmatic because global trade, energy imports and several strategic agreements continue to be heavily dollar-linked.

## After PM's fuel-saving appeal, BJP faces...

Moreover, Ministers and senior officials in Maharashtra must now obtain prior approval from the Chief Minister's office before using Government aircraft or chartered planes for official travel. Adhering to Modi's appeal, senior police officers in Chhattisgarh's Kabirdham district swapped their official vehicles for cycles as they headed to work on Tuesday, setting an example the call for public austerity.

Superintendent of Police Dharmendra Singh Chhavai, accompanied by his deputies, cycled from his residence to the district headquarters, urging personnel to walk or cycle to minimise fuel consumption whenever feasible, an official statement said.

Chhavai described the initiative as a step towards energy conservation, environmental protection and promotion of a healthy lifestyle, and said all officers and staff whose homes are near their workplaces should avoid using vehicles unnecessarily.

Additional Superintendent of Police Pushpendra Baghel and Deputy Superintendent of Police Sanjay Dhruv, along with several police personnel, also joined the SP by cycling to their offices. The SP also appealed to all district police personnel to use bicycles or walk to work at least once a week to promote both energy conservation and personal health.

Speaking to reporters, he said citizens should contribute towards saving energy, particularly during challenging times when the country needs collective support.

"As the prime minister has appealed for maximum energy conservation, I urge the public and Government employees to avoid using vehicles as much as possible. If their homes are nearby, they should come on foot or by bicycle. It will be beneficial for their health and help save the country's energy resources," Chhavai said.

## In a first, woman principal to lead...

The principal's post had been vacant since March 2026, following the end of the previous principal's term amid administrative challenges,

which Elias is expected to navigate in her new position. Professor Elias brings with her more than three decades of academic, research and administrative experience, largely in engineering and research institutions in South India.

According to details available on her professional profile, she recently served as pro vice chancellor (research) at Chandigarh University Uttar Pradesh from January to May 2026.

Before that, she served as the director of research at Hindustan University between October 2024 and December 2025. She has also served in several roles at Vellore Institute of Technology, including professor and dean of the School of Electronics Engineering, professor and deputy director at the Centre for Advanced Data Science, and associate professor and head of the School of Electronics Engineering.

The announcement sparked several reactions online, with users on X congratulating Professor Elias and calling the appointment a proud moment for the college. One user wrote, "Such excitement over this news! First woman principal for St Stephen's College. All the best Prof Elias!" Another said, "Delhi's St Stephen's College, my alma mater, appoints first woman principal in 145 year history. A big congratulations to Prof Susan Elias!" A third user reacted, "Heartiest congratulations to her," while another wrote, "As an alumna, I am so happy."

## TN CM Vijay cracks down on liquor sale

Liquor sales is one of Government's key revenue generators in Tamil Nadu.

Responding to the move, DMK spokesperson Saravanan Annadurai claimed such outlets were not present outside places of religious worship and educational institutions. "Will they open new shops and close them down. This is mere PR (public relations)," he posted 'X'.

The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), a strong votary of prohibition, welcomed Vijay's announcement. PMK leader Dr Anbumani Ramadoss further demanded for the implementation of prohibition in the State.

The Tamil Nadu State Marketing Corporation (TASMAR) operates 4,765 retail liquor outlets across the State. In 2025, the revenue from liquor sales in Tamil Nadu was ₹48,344 crore. TASMAR sells 551 brands of liquor imported from foreign countries, including 223 brands of wine being sold through licensed retail outlets.

Further, in his first missive to the Union Government after taking over as CM, Vijay raised the emotive issue of arrest of Indian fishermen by the Sri Lankan navy and the repatria-

tion of the fishers and the boats. Vijay's party, Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) also banned its cadre from erecting banners and placards in public spaces.

## Re-examination likely in June

All previous registration data, candidature details, and chosen examination centres will be carried forward and aspirants need not register again. For the revised entrance there will be no additional fee charged from the candidates and the fees paid earlier will be refunded.

Investigations revealed some questions circulating in PDF format among students before the examination matched the actual question paper, prompting the agency to recommend cancellation of the medical entrance test.

"I would not say that the entire paper was leaked. But I will definitely say that even if a single question matches our question paper, our commitment to zero tolerance and zero error is violated, and our entire process is compromised. We will take responsibility for it and take action accordingly," the NTA DG said.

Earlier in the day NTA posted a detailed statement on its social media platforms stating based on inputs and the investigative findings the NTA with the approval of the Government of India, has decided to cancel the NEET (UG) 2026 examination conducted on 3 May 2026, and to re-conduct the examination on dates that will be notified separately. The agency emphasised that the 'present examination process could not be allowed to stand' in the interest of transparency and trust in the national examination system.

## BAMS student held in Nashik for paper leak

The CBI has registered an FIR for offences including criminal conspiracy, cheating, criminal breach of trust, theft, destruction of evidence, and violations under the Prevention of Corruption Act and the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024. At least nine people have been arrested across states so far, with nearly 45 individuals detained for questioning in a multi-state network spanning Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Haryana, and others.

The NTA announced the cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 on Tuesday and confirmed that a re-examination will be held on dates to be notified later. The case was handed over to the CBI to ensure a thorough probe into the leak and restore faith in the examination system.

## Opposition slams Govt over NEET-UG row

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

Opposition leaders on Tuesday attacked the Government after the cancellation of the NEET-UG examination, alleging administrative failure and insensitivity toward students, and also slammed the "repeated lapses" in the conduct of national-level competitive examinations.

Several Opposition leaders took to X questioning the functioning of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and demanding accountability over the recurring controversies surrounding entrance tests. The NTA on Tuesday cancelled the NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on May 3 amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

The examination for students seeking admission to undergraduate courses in



Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh

medical colleges will now be held afresh on dates to be notified separately.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi targeted the Government over the cancellation, saying Prime Minister Narendra Modi's so-called *mrit kaal* has turned into a *vish kaal* (poison-filled era) for the country and this instance is "not just a failure — it's a crime against the future of the youth".

He said the hard work, sacrifices, and dreams of more than 22 lakh students

have been "crushed by this corrupt BJP regime".

He also alleged that Modi and the BJP are "partners in the theft" of students' future. "The only rule in the market where your hard work and dreams are being auctioned is this: the bigger the theft, the bigger the reward," Gandhi said.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the Government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has destroyed the decades-old admission



AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal

process by replacing it with a central agency that is rife with corruption and beyond Parliamentary accountability.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav questioned the credibility of conducting the examination and said what was the guarantee that papers won't get leaked again if the test was re-conducted. He alleged that the examination system would continue to suffer from paper leaks as long as the BJP remained in power.

AAP national convener Arvind Kejriwal said affected students will have to resort to mass protests as the Government only understands the language of agitation.

At a press conference, he alleged "political patronage" in paper leaks, saying the NEET question paper was leaked four times in the past nine years and none of the accused were punished.

He said that paper leaks did not happen out of nowhere, as he alleged com-

plicity of higher ups, and accused the Government of toying with the future of lakhs of students.

"I want to tell the students that they will have to come out on the streets. This government understands only the language of mass agitation ... Kejriwal is with you," he said.

BRS working president KT Rama Rao alleged that the NEET paper leak occurred due to the inefficiency of the NDA Government in conducting the exam in a fool-proof manner and demanded that it should apologise to the students and their parents.

Trinamool Congress Rajya Sabha member Sagarika Ghose said the cancellation had thrown the lives of lakhs of students into "disarray and anxiety".

In a post on X, she alleged there was "zero accountability" in the Narendra Modi government and accused it of being "incapable of daily administration".

## Window for dialogue should remain open with Pakistan: Hosabale



RSS General Secretary Dattatreya Hosabale speaking during an interview with PTI in New Delhi on Tuesday

VIJAY JOSHI ■ New Delhi

Noting that trust in Pakistan's military and political leadership is completely missing in India, top RSS functionary Dattatreya Hosabale on Tuesday said that people-to-people contact is the best way to break the deadlock.

"That should be tried more and more now," he said in an interview to PTI Videos. "This is the one hope I think, because I believe strongly that ultimately the civil society relations (will work). Because we have a cultural relation and we have been one nation," he said.

"So, that has to be emphasised," he said. He was asked how India should deal with Pakistan and its continued sponsorship of terrorism.

"See everything has been tried (diplomatically) and

Pakistan keeps making pin-pricks," he said, citing terrorist attacks such as 26/11, Pulwama and Pahalgam.

"The security and self-respect of a country have to be protected and the Government of the day should take care of it. But at the same time, we need not close the doors. We should always be ready to engage them in a dialogue," he said. Trade and commerce, issuance of visas should not stop, because "there should be a window (open) always for a dialogue", he said.

That's why diplomatic relations have been maintained, Hosabale added.

He said academicians, sportspersons, scientists and community leaders should come forward there, as their political leadership and military leadership have developed some aversion to India. (PTI)

## CBI carries out high-drama raid at Punjab vigilance office

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
New Delhi/Mohali

In a lightning late-night operation straight out of a Bollywood thriller, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) stormed the Punjab Vigilance office in Mohali. The CBI team arrested two key intermediaries and one accomplice near Ambala at the Punjab-Haryana border, triggering a high-speed chase through the city streets, all to bust a brazen ₹13-lakh bribery racket involving senior officers of the department.

The sensational crackdown came hours after the CBI registered an FIR based on a complaint by a Punjab

State Tax Officer. The officer alleged that the accused, Vikas Goyal, and his son, Raghav Goyal, had demanded a whopping ₹20 lakh in illegal gratification to bury a complaint pending against him before the Director General (Vigilance), Punjab.

Acting swiftly on the complaint, CBI sleuths laid a trap and zeroed in on the intermediaries allegedly facilitating the payoff within the very corridors of the vigilance department, the agency tasked with rooting out corruption.

Sources said the arrested trio were caught red-handed as they tried to clinch the deal. When officers moved in for the arrest, two of the



A CBI vehicle at the Punjab vigilance bureau office in Mohali

suspects attempted a desperate getaway, sparking a nail-biting chase through Mohali's dimly lit roads before they were finally cornered and nabbed. After a chase, the accused, namely Raghav

Goyal, Vikas@Vicky Goyal and two gunmen were apprehended by the CBI team near Ambala at the Punjab-Haryana border. However, the accused, OP Rana, reader to the DGP

Vigilance, is still absconding, and efforts are being made to arrest him.

"The arrests expose a deep-rooted nexus inside the vigilance office itself," a senior CBI official said on condition of anonymity. "The middlemen were working hand-in-glove with senior officials to fix complaints for hefty bribes."

The ₹13 lakh recovered is believed to be part of the larger ₹20 lakh demand, with the rest reportedly still under negotiation. The CBI has sealed the vigilance office premises and launched a massive probe to identify the senior officers allegedly involved in the racket. This high-profile bust has sent

shockwaves through Punjab's bureaucracy, raising fresh questions about the very department meant to keep corruption in check.

The CBI investigation exposed an exchange of sensitive information relating to pending vigilance matters between Rana and Goyals.

"The wider conspiracy, including possible illegal gratification nexus and the role of other persons, is under investigation. The accused private persons were given police gunmen officially. The role and attachment of Punjab Police gunmen carrying AK-47 rifles with the private accused persons is also being examined," the CBI spokesperson said.

## Indian Army neutralises Pakistani intruder along LoC in Poonch

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
Jammu

Alert troops of the Indian Army neutralised a Pakistani intruder while foiling a major infiltration bid in the Krishna Ghati sector along the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch on Tuesday.

According to official sources, suspicious movement was detected around 300 metres inside Indian territory in the Krishna Ghati sector at about 4 pm on Tuesday.

Nagrota-based White Knight Corps posted on X that alert troops swiftly responded and foiled the



infiltration bid, ensuring that there was no breach of the LoC. "One intruder has been neutralised," the post said.

Army troops continue to dominate the area and maintain a high state of operational readiness across the sector.

## President confers National Florence Nightingale Awards to 15 awardees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
New Delhi

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday conferred the National Florence Nightingale Awards for 2026 on 15 nursing professionals in recognition of their exemplary service and contribution to strengthening public healthcare delivery.

"Nursing personnel exemplify the highest standards of service and play a crucial role in delivering quality healthcare, often in the most challenging circumstances. I commend all the awardees for their inspiring devotion to duty and their tireless efforts in upholding the highest standards of patient care,"

the president said on the occasion. A total of 15 nurses from diverse regions and healthcare settings were honoured for their unwavering dedication to strengthening public health delivery and outstanding commitment to the welfare of the community.

The awards were presented at a ceremony held at Rashtrapati Bhavan in the presence of Union Health Minister JP Nadda.

In her message, the President said that the occasion is a fitting tribute to the invaluable contribution of nursing personnel and healthcare professionals who serve the nation with compassion and unwavering dedication.

Instituted by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, the National Florence Nightingale Award honours the dedication, compassion and resilience of nursing professionals, including registered nurses, midwives, auxiliary nurse midwives (ANMs) and lady health visitors serving in central and State Governments, Union Territories and voluntary organisations.

The award carries a Certificate of Merit, a cash prize of ₹1 lakh and a medal. Among the awardees were six ANMs and nine nurses from different parts of the country, including Ladakh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, West



Bengal, Delhi, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Lakshadweep.

The health ministry statement said nurses play a

pivotal role in addressing multiple health challenges and are central to evidence-based and accessible healthcare delivery. (PTI)

## NEET-UG 2026 cancelled: What students should know next

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

The cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 has left over 22 lakh medical aspirants and their families anxious about the next steps, including the fresh examination date, admit cards, examination centres and the counselling timeline. While the National Testing Agency (NTA) is yet to issue detailed guidelines, here is an explainer on what is known so far.

**Q) Why was NEET-UG 2026 cancelled?**

The NTA announced the cancellation of the May 3 examination following allegations of irregularities linked to the test. The matter is being probed by the Rajasthan Special Operations Group (SOG) and other agencies.

The agency has maintained that the examination was conducted under a "full security protocol", including GPS-tracked movement of question papers, biometric verification, AI-assisted CCTV monitoring and deployment of 5G jammers.

**Q) When will the re-exam be held?**

The fresh dates have not yet been announced. The NTA has said the examination will be reconducted on dates to be notified separately through official channels in the coming days.

**Q) Will students have to register again?**

No. The NTA has clarified that the registration data and candidature for the May 2026 cycle will be carried forward to the reconducted examination.

**Q) Will candidates have to pay the examination fee again?**

No additional examination fee will be charged. The NTA has also said that fees already paid by students will be refunded.

**Q) Will fresh admit cards be issued?**

Yes. The NTA has said the "re-issued admit-card schedule" will be communicated through official channels.

**Q) Will students get the same examination centres?**

The NTA has said the examination centres opted for in the May 2026 cycle will be carried forward to the reconducted examination. However, the agency has not yet clarified whether there could be any changes in centre allotment.

**Q) Will the examination be conducted again using external agencies?**

The NTA has said the examination will be reconducted using its "internal resources".

**Q) What has the Government decided?**

The government has decided to refer the matter to the CBI for a comprehensive inquiry. "NTA will extend full

cooperation to the Bureau and will provide all materials, records, and assistance the inquiry requires," the agency said.

**Q) Why did the NTA decide on a re-test?**

According to the agency, the decision was taken "in the interest of students and in recognition of the trust on which the national examination system rests".

"The Agency is conscious that re-conduct will cause real and significant inconvenience to candidates and their families," it said, adding that allowing the examination process to stand would have caused "greater and more lasting damage" to public trust.

**Q) What should students do now?**

Candidates and parents have been advised to rely only on official NTA channels for updates regarding re-examination dates, fresh admit cards and examination-related instructions. The agency has also asked students to disregard unverified reports circulating on social media.

**Q) Has NEET faced controversies earlier too?**

Yes. The National Eligibility cum Entrance Test has faced scrutiny in recent years over allegations of paper leaks and examination irregularities.

Here are some major NEET



examination controversies over the years:

**\*2013: NEET Faces Legal Challenge**

NEET was introduced as a single entrance examination for medical admissions across India in 2013. However, a three-judge bench headed by then Chief Justice of India Altamas Kabir had then struck down NEET as unconstitutional on 18 July 2013.

**\*2016: NEET Restored, Conducted in Two Phases**

The Supreme Court revived NEET in 2016 after recalling its earlier judgment. In 2016, the examination was conduct-

ed in two phases.

**\*2017: Tamil Nadu Protests, Anitha Case**

NEET became a major political issue in Tamil Nadu following the Anitha case, which intensified the debate around the examination in the state. Medical aspirant S Anitha, who had challenged NEET in court, died by suicide after failing to secure admission. The incident led to intensified political opposition to the examination in the state.

**\*2019: Tamil Nadu Impersonation Scam**

NEET came under scrutiny in 2019 after a major imper-

sonation racket was uncovered in Tamil Nadu involving medical admissions.

Investigations revealed that several candidates had allegedly used proxy candidates to write the NEET examination and secure admission in medical colleges. The case came to light after discrepancies were noticed in students' appearance, signatures and academic records during verification processes.

The probe led to multiple arrests, including students, parents, intermediaries and coaching centre-linked individuals. Cases were regis-

tered in cities including Chennai, Theni and Dharmapuri. The controversy raised serious concerns over identity verification mechanisms in NEET and prompted tighter biometric checks and scrutiny during admissions and examinations.

**\*2020: COVID-19 Concerns**

The conduct of NEET during the COVID-19 pandemic sparked nationwide debate. Students and opposition parties sought postponement, citing public health risks, transport restrictions and flooding in some regions. The Supreme Court, however, allowed the examination to proceed.

**\*2022: Kerala Dress Code Row**

A controversy erupted in Kerala after female candidates alleged they were asked to remove innerwear containing metal hooks before entering examination centres.

**\*2024: Paper Leak, Grace Marks Controversy**

NEET-UG 2024 witnessed massive controversy over allegations of paper leaks and award of grace marks.

Questions were raised after an unusually high number of candidates secured top ranks, including scores such as 718 and 719. A total of 67 candidates secured a perfect score of 720 out of 720. A re-exam for 1,563 candidates who

received grace marks was held on June 23, 2024.

NTA later said compensatory marks had been awarded to some candidates due to "loss of examination time". The matter reached the Supreme Court, while investigations into alleged paper leaks in Bihar and other states were handed over to the CBI.

In July 2024, the Supreme Court declined to order a nationwide re-test, saying there was insufficient evidence to establish a systemic breach affecting the entire examination.

**\* Radhakrishnan Panel Recommendations On NEET**

Following the NEET-UG 2024 controversy, the Centre constituted a high-level committee headed by former ISRO chief K Radhakrishnan to recommend reforms in the functioning of the NTA and conduct of entrance examinations. Among the key recommendations being considered were minimising the outsourcing of staff and examination centres, conducting maximum entrance examinations online and adopting hybrid examination models where complete transition to computer-based testing may not be feasible.

The panel also proposed capping the number of attempts in major entrance examinations, including NEET, to streamline the process and reduce pressure on the system.

## States Focus

# NDA rule changed Assam to a hub of learning, says Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Guwahati

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said that the 10 years of the NDA Government have transformed Assam from the "epicentre of violence" to a hub of learning, healthcare and development.

Attending the swearing-in ceremony of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma here, he said people continue to elect the BJP-led Government repeatedly for their track record of accomplishments.

"In the last 10 years, Assam has been transformed from an epicentre of violence to a hub of learning, healthcare, and development," Shah said in a post on X.

The northeastern State had witnessed insurgent activities for several decades.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Union Home Minister Amit Shah at Khanapara in Guwahati

The NDA Government has laid a robust foundation of development and security, on which now a grand edifice of progress will be built, he added. "Electing the BJP-led NDA for the third consecutive term, the people

of Assam have reaffirmed that the BJP-NDA Governments are the dispensations of trust... I bow to the people of Assam for the historic mandate," the Union Home Minister said.

The Government will

leave no stone unturned to fulfil the aspirations of the people of Assam, he said while congratulating Sarma and his newly sworn-in ministers. Sarma acknowledged Shah's wishes and blessings and appreciated his presence during the swearing-in function.

"Under the leadership of Adarniya @narendramodiji and your support, our Govt will continue to deliver good governance to the people of Assam," he added. Earlier during the day, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to Sarma as the chief minister, along with a new council of ministers. Besides Sarma, four MLAs — the BJP's Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora and Charan Boro of BPF — took oath as ministers.

# Assam's double-engine Govt to push growth: Nitin Nabin



BJP National President Nitin Nabin with family members during a visit to Kamakhya Temple in Guwahati

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Guwahati

BJP president Nitin Nabin on Tuesday said the 'double-engine' Government in Assam will accelerate development activities, investment and public welfare programmes.

He attended the swearing-in ceremony of Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and congratulated him on taking charge for the second time.

"This occasion marks a renewed momentum for Assam's ongoing journey toward good governance, stability, and development. As the 'Double Engine' NDA Government, this coordination between the Centre and the state will infuse new energy and pace in areas such as foundational infrastructure, investment, connectivity, and public welfare," Nabin said on X.

The term "double engine" is used by BJP leaders to refer to the party being in power at the Centre as well as in a state. Nabin exuded confidence that under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Sarma's administration will take the

state to new heights of progress and prosperity.

"Under the guidance of the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodiji, Assam is today emerging as the 'development engine of the Northeast,' leading the progress and prosperity of the entire region," the BJP chief said.

The unprecedented efforts toward connectivity, peace and preservation of cultural identity have given the state a new identity of development, he added.

"This resounding mandate is a testament to the unwavering trust of the people of Assam and their clear support for the politics of development," Nabin said, referring to the massive victory of the NDA in the Assembly elections. Earlier in the day, Assam Governor Lakshman Prasad Acharya administered the oath of office and secrecy to Himanta Biswa Sarma as Chief Minister, along with a new council of ministers.

Along with Sarma, four MLAs — the BJP's Rameswar Teli and Ajanta Neog, AGP's Atul Bora and Charan Boro of BPF — also took the oath as ministers.



## BE BRAVE AND STRONG: MAMATA BANERJEE POST-DEFEAT MESSAGE

In a reflective yet combative literary response to her party's recent poll defeat, Trinamool Congress (TMC) supremo Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday shared a poem titled "Brave", invoking courage, dignity and inner strength in the face of adversity. Written in simple, direct lines that are characteristic of Banerjee's political poetry, the poem comes across as both a personal reflection and a message to the demoralised TMC cadre after the BJP's victory in the just-concluded West Bengal Assembly polls that ended the party's 15-year rule in the state. "Be brave and strong," the former West Bengal chief minister wrote in the opening line.



## TVK EFFECTS FIRST RESHUFFLE OF SENIOR IAS OFFICERS

TVK Government on Tuesday effected the first reshuffle of senior bureaucrats posting N Muruganandam, on return from leave, as Additional Chief Secretary/Commissioner of Revenue Administration and Disaster Management vice P Amudha holding additional charge. MA Siddique, MD, Chennai Metro Rail Limited, has been posted as Additional Chief Secretary, Finance department, vice T Udhayachandran. Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, has been posted as Principal Secretary to Government, Tourism, K Manivasan, holding additional charge, as per an order signed by Chief Secretary M Sai Kumar.

## Tapas sworn in as Bengal Assembly pro tem speaker

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
■ Kolkata

Senior BJP leader Tapas Roy was on Tuesday sworn in as the pro tem Speaker of the West Bengal Assembly, setting in motion the formal proceedings of the newly constituted House following the BJP's historic victory in the recent Assembly elections.

The election for the Speaker's post would take place on Friday, Roy said.

Roy was administered the oath as pro tem Speaker by West Bengal Governor RN Ravi at Lok Bhavan in the presence of Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, newly inducted ministers and several newly elected MLAs.

Roy, veteran TMC leader and four-term MLA, had quit the party and had joined the BJP ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

He later said that oath-taking of the newly elected legislators would be held on Wednesday and Thursday, while the election for the Speaker's post would take place on Friday.

Adhikari attended the ceremony shortly after returning to Kolkata from Assam, where he had participated in the swearing-in ceremony of Himanta Biswa Sarma earlier in the day.

The Assembly premises and adjoining areas were a saffron hue on Tuesday evening, with parts of the Vidhan Sabha complex illuminated in saffron lights, reflecting the political transition in the state following the BJP's maiden ascent to power in West Bengal. Although the state Assembly has 294 seats, oath-taking will be held for 290 MLAs over the next two days.



## Sanatana Dharma divides, must be abolished: DMK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE  
■ Chennai

DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin on Tuesday called for the "abolition" of Sanatana Dharma, claiming it divides people, repeating similar controversial remarks he made in September 2023.

The BJP hit out at the DMK leader for his remarks.

In his maiden speech as the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the DMK leader also said the opposition "will not permit" any attempt to sideline "Tamil Thai Vazhuthu," the Tamil invocation song.

"Sanatana Dharma, which divides the people, must certainly be abolished," he said in his speech in the House. His similar remarks in 2023 had created a major row, with the leader facing flak and court cases from pro-Hindu outfits over his remarks.

Udhayanidhi was highlighting a specific grievance regarding the recent swearing-in ceremony of the new Government, observing that the State anthem was pushed to the third position in the order of events rather than its traditional priority. "...such an incident, which



Udhayanidhi Stalin

happened during your Government's swearing-in ceremony, was a mistake and you should not permit it to happen again in this Assembly. We will not permit it," said the LoP. He added that not just in the Assembly, but in any Government event or any event held in Tamil Nadu, the 'Tamil Thai Vazhthu' must always be given the primary position. "I request this Government to ensure that this is never compromised. We must be very vigilant in protecting our rights and traditions," said the LoP.

The deviation, he claimed, caused significant anger and shock among the people of the State. He also reminded the house of the 2023 instance where the then DMK Government had resisted attempts by the Governor to alter the protocol.

## Chief Ministers of Assam

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Gopinath Bordoloi</b> (Cong)<br>Jan 26, 1950 to Aug 5, 1950      | <b>Syeda Anwara Taimur</b> (Cong)<br>Dec 6, 1980 to Jun 30, 1981  | <b>Bhumidhar Barman</b> (Cong)<br>Apr 22, 1996 to May 15, 1996                       |
| <b>Bishnu Ram Medhi</b> (Cong)<br>Aug 9, 1950 to Dec 28, 1957       | <b>President's Rule</b><br>Jun 30, 1981 to Jan 13, 1982           | <b>Prafulla K Mahanta</b> (AGP)<br>May 15, 1996 to May 18, 2001                      |
| <b>Bimala Prasad Chaliha</b> (Cong)<br>Dec 28, 1957 to Nov 11, 1970 | <b>Kesab Chandra Gogoi</b> (Cong)<br>Jan 13, 1982 to Mar 19, 1982 | <b>Tarun Gogoi</b> (Cong)<br>May 18, 2001 to May 24, 2016                            |
| <b>Mohendra M Choudhury</b> (Cong)<br>Nov 11, 1970 to Jan 31, 1972  | <b>President's Rule</b><br>Mar 19, 1982 to Feb 27, 1983           | <b>Sarbananda Sonowal</b> (BJP)<br>May 24, 2016 to May 10, 2021                      |
| <b>Sarat Chandra Sinha</b> (Cong)<br>Jan 31, 1972 to Mar 12, 1978   | <b>Hiteswar Saikia</b> (Cong)<br>Feb 27, 1983 to Dec 24, 1985     | <b>Himanta Biswa Sarma</b> (BJP)<br>May 10, 2021 to May 12, 2026                     |
| <b>Golap Borbora</b> (Janata Party)<br>Mar 12, 1978 to Sept 9, 1979 | <b>Prafulla K Mahanta</b> (AGP)<br>Dec 24, 1985 to Nov 28, 1990   | <b>Himanta Biswa Sarma</b> (BJP)<br>Sworn in as Chief Minister again on May 12, 2026 |
| <b>JN Hazarika</b> (Janata Party)<br>Sept 9, 1979 to Dec 12, 1979   | <b>President's Rule</b><br>Nov 28, 1990 to Jun 30, 1991           | <b>KBK Infographics</b>  |
| <b>President's Rule</b><br>Dec 12, 1979 to Dec 6, 1980              | <b>Hiteswar Saikia</b> (Cong)<br>Jun 30, 1991 to Apr 22, 1996     |  |

Source: Assam Legislative Assembly

# His hard work for Assam has paid off: Himanta's family

TONY DAS ■ Guwahati

After Himanta Biswa Sarma took oath as the Chief Minister of Assam for the second time in a row on Tuesday, his family members said it was the blessings of the people and his hard work for the State's development that led him to this position. They maintained that Sarma will continue to work with the same zeal for the State and its people, as he became the only non-Congress Chief Minister to assume office for the second consecutive term.

"I am feeling very happy today. And I want to share this joy with the people, with the youth and with everyone. This happiness belongs to all," Sarma's mother, Mrinalini Devi, who attended the swearing-in ceremony in a wheelchair, told the media. She said her son will continue to work for the State and its people, and contribute to nation-building. "My blessings are always with him," Devi added. Sarma's wife Riniki Bhuyan Sharma credited the wishes of the people for his success and said it was a humbling moment for the entire family.

"It is because of his hard work, the blessings of the Almighty and the blessings of the people of Assam that he has reached this position," Riniki Bhuyan said. She said that Sarma has always maintained the lifestyle of a common man and worked hard, with the people of Assam believing in his vision for development. People have com-



Newly sworn-in Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's wife Riniki Bhuyan Sharma and family members during the swearing-in ceremony of the State Government at Khanapara in Guwahati

plete faith in the BJP and trust in Himanta, and he will continue to work even harder to remain in the hearts of the people of Assam, the CM's wife said. "Today, we are proud and humbled because the people of Assam have trusted him once again and given him a mandate with the belief that he can do even more for them," she said.

Riniki Bhuyan Sharma maintained that she has always stood by her husband under all circumstances. "Keeping my fingers crossed that Assam becomes one of

the top five states in the country soon," she said. Sarma's children, Nandil and Sukanya, both pursuing higher education, also expressed delight at their father's achievement. "In the last five years, Papa has done very good work as chief minister, and we hope he continues to work for the people of Assam in the same way," Nandil said.

"This has been a significant phase in Assam's political discourse and political landscape. Over the past five years, the BJP Government has done commendable work. From what we

have seen so far, it appears that the good work will continue." Sukanya said that while working for the State, Sarma has not neglected his duties towards the family. "As far as I have seen, he has worked day and night for the development of Assam.

Sometimes, even in his sleep, he talks about how to develop Assam and work more for the people," she said. "However, we have never felt that he has not given time to the family. He has taken care of the smallest of our needs," Sukanya added.

# Suwendu Adhikari's aide murder case handed over to CBI day after 3 arrests

PRAMOD KUMAR SINGH  
■ New Delhi

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has formally taken over the probe into the sensational murder of Chandranath Rath, personal assistant to West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari, registering its own FIR and forming a dedicated seven-member Special Investigation Team (SIT). The move comes just days after the high-profile killing that has triggered political uproar in the state.

Rath, a former Indian Air Force technical tradesman and Adhikari's trusted aide since around 2019-2021, was shot dead at point-blank range on the night of May 6, 2026, barely two days after the BJP's landslide victory in the West Bengal Assembly elections. The ambush occurred near Doharia crossing in Madhyamgram, North 24 Parganas, just 170 metres from his



Central Bureau of Investigation and Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL) officials inspect the crime scene where West Bengal Chief Minister Suwendu Adhikari's personal assistant Chandranath Rath was allegedly shot dead in Madhyamgram

residence. Bike-borne assailants intercepted his Scorpio SUV, with one vehicle ramming it before gunmen opened fire in a swift,

premeditated operation lasting under a minute.

West Bengal Police recovered spent cartridges and described it

as a ₹30-40 lakh contract killing involving up to eight people.

Vehicles used in the crime had forged registration plates and

tampered engine and chassis numbers; two motorcycles linked to the attack were later abandoned nearby.

The West Bengal Police's Special Investigation Team (SIT), along with the CID, quickly swung into action. Investigators traced a crucial UPI payment at a Howrah toll plaza, using CCTV footage and cross-state technical surveillance. On May 11, they arrested three suspects, Mayank Raj Mishra, Vicky Maurya (from Bihar), and Raj Singh (a Ballia-based sharpshooter from Uttar Pradesh)—in a joint operation with UP and Bihar police.

The trio was remanded to 13 days' custody till May 24 by a Barasat court. Interrogation revealed possible interstate links, but the full motive, mastermind, financing, and exact sequence of Rath's movements remained unclear.

Acting on a formal recommendation from the West Bengal

Government and state police, the CBI assumed charge of the investigation late on May 11 and re-registered the original Madhyamgram Police Station FIR (No. 353/2026) as its own case.

A seven-member multi-disciplinary SIT, comprising seasoned officers drawn from multiple states, has been constituted under the supervision of the Joint Director, CBI Kolkata Zone. DIG Pankaj Kumar Singh leads the team. According to a senior CBI official, the agency has formed the team "to ensure a comprehensive and time-bound investigation." The SIT will independently review and verify all evidence collected by state police while launching fresh inquiries.

Key focus areas include: unravelling the larger conspiracy behind the murder; examining all possible angles, including interstate criminal links, reconnaissance, logistics, shelter, and movement of shooters; tracing the full money

trail, arms supply, and investigating the involvement of at least five more believed to be part of the criminal network. CBI SIT is likely to reconstruct Rath's movements and establish the exact motive behind the cold-blooded killing, and identify the mastermind, the official added.

The CBI team has reached Kolkata, taken custody of the evidence, and is expected to interrogate the arrested accused.

Rath's killing has sparked sharp political reactions, with the BJP alleging targeted revenge and the Trinamool Congress condemning the crime while welcoming the CBI probe. Adhikari himself described it as a "pre-planned murder" with prior reconnaissance.

"The case remains under active investigation, with the CBI emphasising a thorough, evidence-based approach to deliver justice in this politically sensitive matter", the sources added.



## Protecting terror base hurts reputation: India

ASHOKE RAJ ■ New Delhi

India on Tuesday intensified its diplomatic response toward both China and Pakistan following reports that Beijing provided on-ground support to Islamabad during Operation Sindoor. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said nations attempting to shield terror infrastructure must consider the consequences such actions could have on their international reputation and credibility.

Addressing the issue during the weekly media briefing, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said recent reports only confirmed India's earlier assessment regarding external backing received by Pakistan during the conflict.

"We have seen reports that corroborate what was known earlier," Jaiswal stated. Reaffirming New Delhi's position, the MEA described Operation Sindoor as part of India's

broader counter-terrorism campaign targeting Pakistan-backed militant infrastructure. "Operation Sindoor was a precise, targeted, and calibrated response to the terrorist attacks in Pahalgam aimed at destroying terrorist infrastructure operating out of Pakistan and at its behest," Jaiswal said.

He further added, "It is for nations that consider themselves responsible to reflect whether supporting attempts to protect terrorist infrastructure affects their reputation and standing." The comments represent one of India's strongest public responses so far to reports alleging Chinese operational or strategic assistance to Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, which was launched after the deadly Pahalgam terror attack earlier this year.

Although the MEA stopped short of directly accusing China of military involvement, the remarks signalled increasing concern in New



MEA DESCRIBED OPERATION SINDOOR AS PART OF INDIA'S BROADER COUNTER-TERRORISM CAMPAIGN TARGETING MILITANT INFRASTRUCTURE

Delhi over Beijing's continued strategic alignment with Pakistan, particularly during India's counter-terror operations.

India has consistently maintained that Operation Sindoor specifically targeted terror camps and infrastructure linked to militant groups operating from Pakistani territory. Officials have repeatedly described the strikes as "measured" and "non-escalatory," emphasising that the operation was focused solely on dismantling terror networks rather than provoking wider military escalation.

## India ready to quell any cross-border misadventure: Navy chief designate



Indian Navy chief designate Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

concerned, India will remain prepared, and if any misadventure comes from that side, we are actually ready to quell it," Swaminathan said.

He was responding to reports of remarks made by Field Marshal Asim Munir, also the Chief of Defence Forces of Pakistan that any future misadventure against Islamabad will result in extremely widespread and dangerous, far-reaching and painful consequences for New Delhi.

In response to the Pahalgam terror attack in which 26 persons, mostly tourists, were gunned down, India launched Operation Sindoor on May 7 last year, carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, eliminating at least 100 terrorists.

Swaminathan said Operation Sindoor is important to make sure India does not continue to be a victim of terrorism. It also reminds about what needs to be done to make the country stronger. As far as the Indian office is concerned, Operation Sindoor is ongoing, he maintained.

Indian Navy chief designate Vice Admiral Krishna Swaminathan has said the country has been a victim of terrorism for several years, and asserted that it remains prepared to counter and quell any "misadventure" from across the border.

Operation Sindoor was targeted specifically at terrorist camps that participated in a very dastardly incident in Pahalgam in 2025, said Swaminathan, the Flag Officer, Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.

The country cannot accept terrorist activities in the country, especially when they come from foreign soil, he asserted at an event organised by the Brahma Research Foundation, a think tank, in Mumbai on Monday.

"Anybody sensible in the world knows the misadventure does not come from anywhere or anytime from India. India has always been in a responsive kind of mode.

The misadventure comes from across the border. People can say what they want, but as far as we are

## Raj Thackeray questions PM's austerity plea over poll campaign fuel consumption

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Mumbai

MNS president Raj Thackeray on Tuesday asked if austerity was meant to be practiced only by common people, and flagged the fuel consumption during the recent election campaigns where thousands of cars were used and roadshows were conducted.

In a post on Facebook after Prime Minister Narendra Modi made an appeal to people to reduce fuel consumption and use public transport among other things, Thackeray said the prime minister and senior leaders continue to travel across the country with massive convoys.

"They also hold roadshows, use helicopters, receive flower showers, and conduct extravagant political campaigns," the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena chief added. "Will the prime minister admit that 'such political excesses were our mistake, and all of us including me will not repeat them'? Why should the common man suffer for your mistakes? Is austerity meant only for citizens and never for the political class?" Thackeray asked. Crude prices



touched these levels during the 2008 financial crisis, the Arab Spring of 2011, during 2013-14 phase when the BJP aggressively attacked the UPA over domestic fuel prices, and again during the OPEC production cuts in 2022-23, Thackeray said.

"The PM asked people to reduce fuel consumption, but why didn't this wisdom emerge during the massive election campaigns involving thousands of vehicles, endless roadshows and the transportation of lakhs of supporters across states like West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala? That itself would have burnt crores of litres of petrol and diesel," he said.

## Minister Sanjay Kumar's son moves Telangana HC for anticipatory bail

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Hyderabad

Union Minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar's son Bhageerath on Tuesday moved the Telangana High Court seeking anticipatory bail in a POCSO case registered against him here following allegations of sexual harassment of a minor girl.

Bhageerath also filed another petition seeking to quash the criminal case registered against him under the provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act.

The date of next hearing on the petitions would be known soon, sources said.

The case was registered on May 8 based on a complaint by the mother of a 17-year-



old girl, who alleged that Bhageerath was in a relationship with her daughter and sexually harassed her. The alleged relationship began about seven-eight months ago, police said.

Kumar's son had denied the charge and alleged extortion and criminal intimidation by the teen and her parents. Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday directed DGP CV

## Police seize ₹1 crore cash, arms from Maoist dumps

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Narayanpur

Security forces have seized more than ₹1 crore cash and a huge cache of arms, ammunition and explosive materials from Maoist dumps hidden in forests of Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district in a month-long operation, police said on Tuesday.

A special anti-Naxal operation was launched in the district after the state was declared free from armed Maoists on March 31 to trace and recover materials concealed by ultras in the past, Narayanpur Superintendent of Police Robinson Guria said.

Personnel from the district police, District Reserve Guard (DRG), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Border Security Force (BSF) were involved in the operation carried out under the "Maad Bachao Abhiyan", mainly in the forests of Abhujmad, he said.

He said that the action, carried out based on intelligence inputs and active support from villagers, led security forces to multiple

Maoist dumps hidden in remote forest areas. During the operation, security personnel recovered ₹1.01 crore cash, including ₹14 lakh from one dump alone, along with 28 weapons, cartridges, explosive materials and items of daily use, the SP said.

As many as three AK-47 rifles, three SLR rifles, 303 rifles, one .315 bore rifle, two 12-bore guns, two country-made pistols and one air gun were recovered, he said.

Security personnel also seized a huge cache of cartridges, two BGLs (Barrel Grenade Launcher), 132 BGL shells, eight electronic detonators, six bundles of cordex wire, and two bundles of electric wire, among other materials, Guria said.

He termed the recovery a major success in the anti-Maoist campaign and said that similar operations would continue in the future, as more weapons and explosives hidden by Maoists killed in previous encounters could still be concealed in the forests of Abhujmad.

Security forces to multiple



School students taking part in Anti-drug awareness rally in Jammu and Kashmir

## PM's call for austerity indicates advent of financial emergency: Kuldeep Singh

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shimla

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent call for austerity signals that the country is moving towards financial emergency, All India Congress Committee's national spokesperson Kuldeep Singh Rathore said on Tuesday.

He said the Prime Minister's appeal urging people to refrain from purchasing gold, curtail foreign travel, limit consumption of petrol and diesel, and cut down on expenses has created an atmosphere of insecurity and anxiety across the nation.

Rathore, a former state Congress chief and the sitting



All India Congress Committee's national spokesperson Kuldeep Rathore

MLA from Theog constituency, remarked that before imposing austerity measures on the public, the Central government must curb its own unnecessary expenses. The prime minister should curtail the foreign tours

undertaken by ministers and officials, as well as the overall government extravagance, he said.

He further said that Modi should clarify the prevailing economic situation in the country.

## Gang-rape incidents driven by social tolerance: Bihar DGP

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Patna

Expressing concern over the increasing frequency of gang-rape incidents in the State, Bihar DGP Vinay Kumar on Tuesday said such crimes have become more common over the past two decades, resulting in growing social tolerance towards them.

Speaking at a State-level workshop on gender-based violence at the police headquarters in Patna, he said incidents of gang rape, which once triggered widespread public outrage, are now occurring more frequently.

"Two decades ago, gang-rape incidents were rare and attracted considerable public uproar, but nowdays the frequency of such incidents has increased, leading to a growing tolerance level in society," Kumar said. He also claimed that only around 2 per cent of cases



Vinay Kumar, DGP Bihar

related to sexual harassment and violence are reported in Bihar, attributing the low rate to police inaction and suppression of victims.

The DGP stressed the need for stricter implementation of laws related to gender-based crimes,

including acid attacks and domestic violence. He urged police, prosecutors and courts to act proactively to ensure timely justice for victims. Kumar also warned police personnel against insensitive behaviour towards the public, saying officials who fail to treat people properly "should tender resignation and sit at home".

Referring to a recent allegation from Motihari, where a woman police personnel was accused of extorting money from a rape survivor for recording her court statement, the DGP said such actions amount to revictimisation and that officers involved in such conduct deserve no place in the force.

He criticised what he described as an "insensitive approach" in policing and called on officials, including women personnel, to behave politely and empathetically with the public. He advocated zero toler-

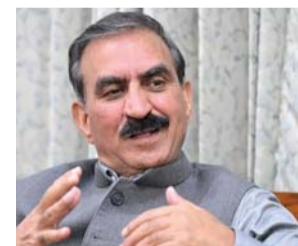
ance towards dowry practices, particularly within the police force.

Kumar said personnel found engaging in dowry-related practices or remarrying despite having a legally wedded spouse should face social boycott and departmental suspension.

He said women now account for over 30 per cent of the Bihar Police workforce, adding that around 11,000 women constables are currently undergoing training and that specialised police units have been created to address women-related issues.

Despite the expansion of schemes and greater representation of women in the force, Kumar said the desired results have not been achieved due to persistent social attitudes. "A change in mindset is necessary to curb gender-based crimes against women," he said.

## HP CM directs developing nutrition policy



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Shimla

Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Tuesday directed the health department to formulate a nutrition policy before May 31 this year.

Presiding over a meeting of senior officers of the health department here, he said there is a need to create widespread awareness among the people regarding the nutritional value of food to achieve the vision of a 'Fit Himachal', a statement issued here said.

He said Himachal Pradesh is set to become the first state in the country to formulate such a comprehensive policy. He also maintained that digitisation in the health department is important to make patient records available online, saying that it will enable people to receive faster and easier healthcare services. Sukhu said that with this system, patients will not need to carry paper registration slips or medical test reports.

## Gujarat self-enumeration for Census 2027 starts from May 17

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ Gandhinagar

The first phase of Census 2027 in Gujarat will begin from June 1, with authorities announcing a fresh schedule for door-to-door house listing operations after the exercise was deferred due to local body elections.

Director of Census Operations Sujal Mayatra said the exercise, originally slated for April, will now see field enumerators visiting households across 34 districts and

17 municipal corporations throughout June to collect data on housing conditions and assets via a dedicated mobile app.

He said citizens will be able to participate in the census using a self-enumeration portal from May 17 to May 31, while house listing operations (HLOs) will be carried out from June 1 to June 30.

Addressing a press conference here, Mayatra said that the census exercise in Gujarat was initially scheduled to begin in April, but was



postponed following the announcement of local body elections.

The census will be conducted in two phases, with the first phase comprising House Listing Operations (HLO), to be held in June, and the second phase involving population enumeration in February 2027. For the first time, citizens will be able to submit information regarding their houses, household amenities and assets online on the Government of India's portal 'https://e.census.gov.in', he said.

Mayatra said the move reflected a greater emphasis on digital governance compared to previous census exercises.

He said the HLOs would be carried out using a dedicated mobile application developed for Census field enumeration. More than 1.10 lakh personnel, including supervisors and enumerators, would be involved in the exercise across Gujarat's 17 municipal corporations and 34 districts, the official said.

"They have 30 days, cover-

ing data for an estimated 700 to 800 individuals per enumerator," he said, adding that the timeline was adequate for completion of the exercise. Mayatra appealed to citizens to cooperate with enumerators and provide complete and accurate information during the exercise.

He also stressed that all information collected during census operations would remain strictly confidential under provisions of the Census Act, 1948.



## Editor's TAKE

### Beyond austerity: The need for Economic Strategy

PM Modi calls for austerity measures as global instability, rising energy costs and pressure on foreign exchange reserves test India's resilience

First came the Trump tariffs, which negatively affected the Indian economy. As the country was coming to terms with the reciprocal tariffs, the West Asia crisis began, leading to global uncertainty and a surge in crude oil prices. Indeed, these are tough times, and the country is going through an economic lean patch which, if not checked, could snowball into a much bigger crisis in no time. The West Asia crisis has thrown the world's economies into disarray, and emerging countries, including India, are feeling the impact. The impact is not the same for every country, but those countries that substantially rely on imported crude, like ours, are particularly vulnerable.

It is a situation which has seriously hampered the growth of the country, and economic disruptions are now affecting the common man. The Prime Minister's recent appeal to reduce petrol and diesel consumption, postpone foreign travel, avoid buying gold, cut cooking oil use, and embrace "self-reliant" habits reflects the gravity of the situation. This is an appeal that must be adhered to, as in the short term, austerity is a sane approach which can provide relief from economic stress. Yet the deeper question is whether this crisis is due to external factors or a consequence of our structural vulnerabilities and policy choices. And the bigger concern is whether we saw this coming, and if yes, what did we do about it?

There is no denying that global conditions are in flux. Rising freight costs, volatile commodity prices, and currency pressures have together strained the economy. Foreign exchange reserves, though still substantial, have fallen from their earlier peaks, raising concerns about the sustainability of imports. However, external factors alone cannot explain the present economic hardships. India's dependence on imported crude oil, edible oils, fertilisers, gold, and electronic goods has existed for years. Successive governments have spoken about self-reliance, but structural reforms in manufacturing, energy diversification, and agricultural productivity have moved too slowly. Even after years of the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" campaign, India continues to remain heavily import-dependent in several critical sectors.

Some of the suggestions made by the Prime Minister are reasonable. Greater use of public transport, carpooling, work-from-home arrangements, and energy efficiency can make a difference. Reducing excessive edible oil consumption could benefit both health and import bills. But asking people to avoid buying gold may not work, as it is both culturally and financially important for households. Similarly, asking farmers to drastically reduce fertiliser use risks harming agricultural productivity. Moreover, the government's handling of the crisis has been mixed. The government deserves credit for avoiding panic and continuing infrastructure investment. Yet the government has also struggled to create durable energy security. Fuel taxes remained high for long periods even when global prices softened earlier. Manufacturing growth has not expanded to the desired level. Nor has the government adequately addressed concerns over unemployment and stagnant household incomes. People's austerity is necessary, but so is policy clarity. The government must provide confidence, direction, and accountability.

## India's Trincomalee gambit

Nearly four decades after the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord first envisioned Trincomalee as a strategic pillar of regional cooperation, India and Sri Lanka now appear closer than ever to transforming the historic harbour into a major energy hub in the Indian Ocean



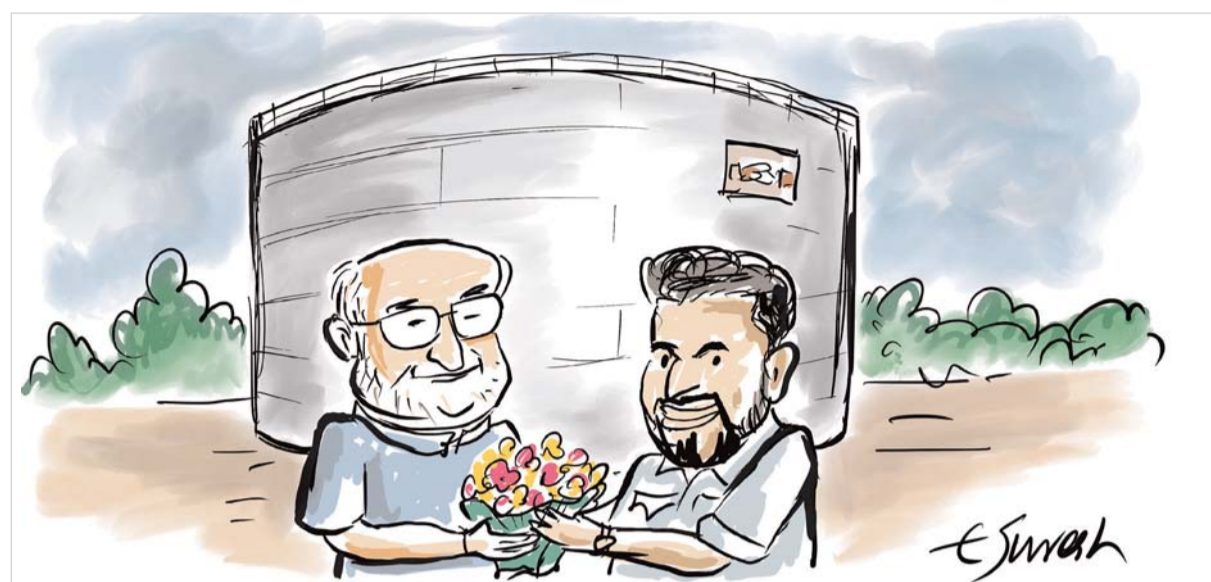
ASHOK K MEHTA

Forty years after the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord, which provided for the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) to assist Sri Lanka in dealing with its twin insurgencies — JVP and LTTE — and gave first right to India to develop Trincomalee Port, the visit of Vice President CP Radhakrishnan last month appeared to have finally sanctified the inter-governmental treaty, making Trinco the energy hub for the region. This could not have come a day too soon, with oil and gas prices rocketing due to the on/off Gulf War. Radhakrishnan was accompanied by Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri, who has been chargé d'affaires in Colombo. Focus was on two issues: the Trinco energy project and the Tamil question, languishing due to lack of interest by successive governments in Colombo.

The political upheaval in Sri Lanka, like the Gen Z movement in Nepal, ushered in a brand-new Marxist political outfit, JVP, in its new avatar as the National People's Power alliance, had been involved in two insurrections in 1971 and 1988, and in both instances New Delhi was the first responder.

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, in his discussions with Mr Radhakrishnan, highlighted India's Neighbourhood First policy and its three critical interventions: the economic crisis of 2022, the financial lifeline during the debt crisis, and Cyclone Ditwa. Radhakrishnan noted: "We stand with your successes and struggles like an affectionate elder brother". The term 'elder brother' (Daju in Nepali) did not please all Nepalese, as it is patronising. New Delhi's \$4 billion assistance package consisted of a USD 1 billion credit line for food and medicines, a currency swap of USD 400 million, USD 500 million for fuel, help in the IMF bailout, loan deferment, and foreign exchange support. India's help during the dire crisis has, to a large extent, transformed its image from that of an interventionist during the three-decade Eelam war to that of a friend, as noted by President Dissanayake. The anti-India sentiment has almost evaporated, though New Delhi has diluted its stand on the Tamil question.

Part of the blame for this lies with Sri Lankan Tamils for creating divisions within Tamil political parties. The Tamil question over the years has been relegated to 'Tamil aspirations', especially after the political mauling of the fractured Tamil parties in the Northern Province. NPP won three of nine seats in Jaffna district, topping for the first time the vote share of a Sinhalese-led national alliance, with NPP winning seats in Jaffna. The Tamil National Alliance, which at one time had 16 seats and, with other Tamil parties, 25 seats, is today reduced to 12 seats, including



EARLIER, IN 2003, IOC HAD SIGNED A 35-YEAR LEASE TO DEVELOP 15 OIL TANKS, PAYING AN ANNUAL FEE OF USD 100,000. WHILE IOC IS OPERATING 15 OIL TANKS, SRI LANKA OIL CORPORATION IS UTILISING ITS 16 OIL TANKS FOR FUEL STORAGE AND OFFSHORE BUNKERING, AND PRIME FLOUR MILL SINGAPORE HAS THREE FOR WATER STORAGE

The writer, a retired Major General, served as Commander, IPKF (South), Sri Lanka, and was a founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, now the Integrated Defence Staff

dailypioneer  
@dailypioneer  
The Pioneer

Muslim seats. In 1977, the Tamil United Front was the main opposition party in the Sri Lankan Parliament with 18 seats. Dissanayake has been telling Tamils that the new constitution, which has no timeline, will address the Tamil question. Radhakrishnan informed Tamil leaders that he had discussed the issue with his Sri Lankan interlocutors. Provincial Council elections have not been held in seven years, and there is no indication they will be held anytime soon.

Tamils have genuine grievances. They say the spirit of the ISLA has not been realised and the 13th Amendment to the Constitution, which opened the door to a federal model of power sharing and devolution within a 'united, undivided and indivisible Sri Lanka', has not been implemented because of the unitary system. The late Tamil leader R Sambanthan had said: "India has a special duty in ensuring resolution of the Tamil question". India's fading interest was reflected in 2015 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi merely mentioning 'cooperative federalism'. No longer do Indian leaders mention implementation of 13A or reconciliation following the military excesses during the Eelam war. But Colombo has done well to build a memorial recognising the sacrifices of 1,257 IPKF soldiers who facilitated the LTTE defeat in 2009.

The most critical contemporary issue is the Trinco energy hub project, which Misri described at length in his briefing to the Colombo media last month. Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath encapsulated the significance of the Trinco project, calling it a "permanent solution to the energy crisis in India's neighbourhood". As GoC IPKF South, which included the Trinco region during the de-induction of the IPKF, we studied in detail the strategic salience of Trinco in the Indian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean region. The history of the harbour was marked

by contests for its possession among the Dutch, French, and British. Adm Horatio Nelson called Trinco the world's deepest and finest harbour and the gateway to the Bay of Bengal, which Britain secured but had to abandon after 162 years. It built, in 1935 with impregnable Manchester steel, 100 oil tanks, of which Tank No. 91 was destroyed by Japanese bombers during World War II. There was no oil tank with the number 99, considered ominous. Instead, there were oil tanks numbered 101 and 102. These oil tanks had the capacity to store 1 million tonnes of petroleum.

The British abandoned Trincomalee Harbour only in 1956, even after Sri Lanka's independence in 1948, similar to their strategy of retaining the Chagos group of islands in Mauritius. A number of agreements and MoUs were signed with India over the renovation of the upper and lower oil tank farms, but due to the three-decade-long Eelam war, none could fructify until January 2022, when an MoU for a joint venture for renovation of 61 upper oil tank farms was signed. However, it never took off, as Sri Lanka considers it a vital national asset and politically a very sensitive issue to hand over to a foreign power.

Earlier, in 2003, IOC had signed a 35-year lease to develop 15 oil tanks, paying an annual fee of USD 100,000. While IOC is operating 15 oil tanks, Sri Lanka Oil Corporation is utilising its 16 oil tanks for fuel storage and offshore bunkering, and Prime Flour Mill Singapore has three for water storage. Following Radhakrishnan's visit, conversation on the renovation of oil tanks has been revived, and a multipurpose oil transfer pipeline between Karaikal/Chennai and Trincomalee is on the cards. In its election manifesto, NPP said: "Trinco oil farm will be renovated with support of a friendly foreign country". Fingers crossed.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

## PICTALK



Workers harvest maize in a field on a hot summer day on the outskirts of Jagdalpur in Bastar district, Chhattisgarh.

PHOTO: PTI

## Rebelling against God leads to a sorry end



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

### 2ND OPINION

Imagine about a young boy from a rich family landing in jail due to a traffic offence. The jailor is sympathetic and explains to the boy the Jail Code. There is provision for early release by serving other prisoners. We, souls, who are 'sat' (eternal), 'chit' (conscious) and 'ananda' (blissful) are in a cycle of birth death in material bodies. However, there is relief available if we follow God's instructions.

Let us start with childhood. There are lots of fun. Youth follows with many sense pleasures and plentiful energy. A wrong impression forms that life is full of fun. Unfortunately, what follows is not so pleasant; middle age comes followed by old age and, yes, death. No preparation is made for these eventualities. God is not unkind. He is prepared to help, but no connection is made with him when going is good. Stuck? Not really! Become aware of God in childhood with prayers for guidance and help. By the time middle age comes more spiritual practices should be done. God's help will become available, especially in old age.



What are these spiritual practices? I will just name one. Buy a large photo of an incarnation of God like in a large calendar. Watch for the eyes, which should be painted such that they follow you wherever you go. This done, hang it in the room where you spend most of your time; I have hung a large photo of Lord Krishna in my bedroom.

Now this is what has happened with me. Have you see a magnet attracting a piece of iron, and that in turn attracting an iron clip? And if the iron piece is in contact with magnet in a certain way for a period of time, it also develops the quality of a magnet. Do you see the connection? As I spend a lot of time in company of my Lord knowingly or unknowingly, I am getting more and more attracted to my Lord. Yes, I am increasingly becoming God conscious. Surely, several spiritual practices are coming into play. 'Darshan' (seeing) is one. Prayers for whatever I need is second, in which guidance is also included. As I am very grateful, I thank God a lot for his 'kripa' (grace). 'Naman' (namaste) is done several times in a day. On his part, my Lord is patiently busy in reforming me. Why, then, rebel against God? The passion of youth turns into darkness of old age. The feeling that I will show the world that I am very special without any help from God leaves us. The choice given by God to make a success of life is squandered. Do all kinds of material successes not leave us as we age? Life spent in chasing mirages comes to a naught. The rebel has lost. I hope the readers of this article will pay attention and not continue to pursue their rebellious ways. As parts of God (The Bhagavad-Geeta 15.7), we must take shelter of God.

The Pioneer SINCE 1865

The writer is a spiritual teacher and a popular columnist

## DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

www.dailypioneer.com

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

## ATTENBOROUGH'S LEGACY CONTINUES INSPIRING ECOLOGICAL RESPONSIBILITY

If modern wildlife filmmaking owes much to David Attenborough, whose 100th birth anniversary the world is celebrating, it is because he transformed natural history from a specialised scientific pursuit into a universal moral dialogue on humanity's relationship with the living world. Widely regarded as one of the foremost conservators of nature in the modern age, his name has become synonymous with ecological consciousness and environmental stewardship.

Alongside visionaries such as Jane Goodall, Jacques Cousteau and Dian Fossey, Attenborough awakened global awareness about oceanic mismanagement, poaching, habitat destruction and the accelerating erosion of biodiversity. Through landmark works like Life on Earth, Planet

Earth and The Blue Planet, together with the pioneering efforts of BBC Natural History Unit, he elevated wildlife documentaries into instruments of scientific literacy, ethical reflection and planetary responsibility.

Over these hundred years, unchecked industrial expansion and human excess have steadily damaged forests, oceans and biodiversity. Against this ecological decline, David Attenborough consistently reminded humanity that true restoration requires awareness, restraint and humility towards nature. His life's work remains a powerful reminder that human civilisation is inseparably linked to the natural world.

VIJAY S ADHIKARI | UTTARAKHAND

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

## Solitary vote decides victory

Democracy is ultimately about representation, and elections are often decided by the narrowest of margins. The recent Tamil Nadu Assembly election result from Tirupattur demonstrated just how powerful a single vote can be. In a razor-thin contest, TVK candidate Srinivasa Sethupathi defeated Periya Karuppan by just one vote after all rounds of counting were completed. The lead changed hands several times before the final tally confirmed the result. It was truly a rare moment in Indian electoral history. The outcome reinforces the enduring democratic principle that every vote matters. Many citizens often believe that one individual vote cannot influence the larger political outcome, but this election proved otherwise. A solitary vote separated victory from defeat and altered the political fate of a constituency.

At the same time, the result also revives debate about the nature of democratic representation. In a country as vast and diverse as India, candidates often win despite securing support from only a section of voters. Some argue that a stronger mandate should be necessary for victory.

Nevertheless, Tirupattur stands as a powerful reminder that democracy functions because every ballot carries equal value

MANIAM RAMANI JAYANTHY | COIMBATORE

## Governance replaces political symbolism

The early tenor of governance in Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam administration suggests a calibrated shift from rhetorical politics to administrative pragmatism. The emphasis appears less on ideological theatre and more on fiscal discipline, investment confidence, urban infrastructure and employment generation. That itself may prove the government's most consequential political message. For long, Tamil Nadu politics thrived on emotive binaries — language, identity and legacy rivalries. But mounting debt, industrial competition from neighbouring States, water stress and youth employment anxieties have imposed harder economic realities. Governance can no longer survive on sentiment alone. What is equally striking is the altered mood of the Opposition.

If this transition endures, Tamil Nadu could witness a more mature political phase - one where competitive governance gradually supersedes competitive symbolism. Such a transformation would not merely alter electoral discourse but could redefine the relationship between politics and public expectations in the State. The real test, however, lies in sustaining administrative delivery without slipping back into personality-driven.

R NARAYANAN | NAVI MUMBAI

## Austerity call raises concerns

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal urging Indians to reduce fuel consumption, avoid buying gold, postpone foreign travel, minimise fertiliser use and "buy local" has triggered mixed reactions. While the BJP describes the appeal as a necessary call for austerity during a period of global instability, Opposition parties view it as evidence of the Government's lack of confidence in India's economic resilience.

The appeal also amounts to a delayed acknowledgement of the economic impact of the West Asian conflict and rising global uncertainty. Critics argue that if the Government was aware of the seriousness of the crisis, it should have shown greater restraint itself, particularly during recent Assembly election campaigns marked by extensive travel and spending. They also question why India failed to play a stronger diplomatic role in discouraging the US from escalating tensions with Iran. Although the Prime Minister's appeal may be well-intentioned, many fear it signals an impending fuel price rise and worsening inflation, with austerity measures alone unlikely to ease the economic strain. Without broader structural reforms and clearer policy direction, public anxiety over jobs, prices and household incomes may deepen further.

G DAVID MILTON | MARUTHANCODE



## Rulers of the Deep: India's forgotten Maritime Legacy

A nation with oceanic flanks, seaborne trade, and an inextricably maritime civilisational history cannot afford to remain continental in its imagination. The Indian Ocean has been, across four millennia, India's ocean. The nectar is there, in the depths. The churning must not stop



KRIPA NAUTIYAL

The ancient story of Samudra Manthan, the Churning of the Cosmic Ocean, is among the most enduring in India's civilisational memory. The Devas and Asuras, rivals bound by necessity, churned the primordial sea using Mount Mandara as the rod and the serpent Vasuki as their rope, with Lord Vishnu steadying the mountain in his tortoise form. From the depths emerged wonders — but first came Halahala, a poison of annihilating potency. Lord Shiva consumed it, turning blue and saving the universe. Only then did amrita, the nectar of immortality, finally surface. The meaning is eternal: great rewards come only through great struggle. Poison and nectar must both be faced. India's maritime history is its own Samudra Manthan — four millennia of churning the seas, enduring subjugation, and now reaching once again for the nectar. This is that story.



transoceanic campaign that defeated the Srivijaya empire of Sumatra, establishing dominance over the Strait of Malacca — the chokepoint that carries roughly 40 per cent of global trade today. This was blue-water capability: purpose-built warships, professional naval command, and logistics sustaining operations thousands of kilometres from home. The Cholas came closest to what Mahan called the command of the sea — using maritime routes for their own purposes while denying them to adversaries.

### The Vijayanagara empire: The last great Maritime patron

Vijayanagara (1336-1646 CE), though primarily a land power, understood coastal control. Its rulers fostered trade through the ports of Calicut and Cochin, and their prosperity depended on seaborne imports of horses and exports of spices and gems. Their reign coincided with the first arrival of Portuguese caravels — and the empire's inability to mount a coordinated naval response to European power would prove decisive for the centuries that followed.

### Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj: The father of the Indian Navy

In India's long narrative of maritime decline, one figure blazes as an exception — Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (1630-1680). He grasped what eluded almost every ruler of his era: without command of the sea, no Deccan power could be truly sovereign. Against the entrenched Portuguese, the consolidating British, and the Mughal Siddi admirals, Shivaji built a navy from scratch — agile gurrabs and gallivays suited to the Konkan coast, and a chain of sea forts including the formidable Sindhudurg, completed in 1667, a declaration that the sea belonged to the Marathas. His admiral Kanhoji Angre went on to resist the combined fleets of Portugal, Britain, and the Dutch for decades. Shivaji understood that a navy was not auxiliary but primary — that the same waters bringing European power to India's shores could be used to deny and contest that power. It was a lonely, prescient act of strategic imagination. The Indian Navy's premier shore establishment, INS Shivaji, fittingly honours his legacy.

### The unravelling: How India lost the sea

The decline was neither sudden nor simple. The 1509 Battle of Diu, in which a Portuguese fleet defeated a combined Ottoman-Indian force, marked the turning point after which European powers progressively dominated the Indian Ocean. Even Shivaji's naval renaissance remained regionally confined and was dismantled after his death as the Marathas turned inland.

Social forces deepened the erosion. Hardening caste restrictions stigmatised maritime occupations. The Kala Pani taboo — the belief that

crossing the ocean caused ritual pollution — discouraged seafaring among the upper strata. Successive Mughal emperors, brilliant administrators but continental in orientation, showed scant interest in sea power. By the time the British East India Company consolidated its grip, a civilisation that had launched transoceanic naval campaigns was reduced to crewing British merchant vessels.

### Post-Independence India: Reclaiming the Maritime identity

Independent India inherited a modest navy and, preoccupied with land borders, remained a continental power in outlook for its first decades. The transformation has been gradual but real. The Maritime Security Strategy of 2015 formally claimed primacy in the Indian Ocean Region. The SAGAR doctrine — Security and Growth for All in the Region — positioned India as a net security provider across the ocean.

Today India operates two aircraft carriers: INS Vikramaditya and the indigenously built INS Vikrant, commissioned in 2022 — the first carrier designed and built in India, a milestone of deep symbolic weight. Nuclear submarines, surface combatants, and the Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region reflect expanding reach. Yet gaps remain: procurement delays, budget constraints, and China's rapid naval build-up and port investments across the littoral present challenges India has not yet fully resourced itself to meet.

### Conclusion: The nectar rises

The Devas and Asuras did not abandon the churning when the poison emerged. They endured it — because they knew the nectar lay deeper still. From Lothal's dockyard to Rajendra Chola's transoceanic fleet, from the Kalingan traders who carried civilisation across the Bay of Bengal to Shivaji's sovereign navy on the Konkan coast, India's relationship with the sea was foundational to its power and identity.

Colonial conquest, social taboo, and strategic neglect broke that relationship. India swallowed its Halahala across two centuries of diminishment. But the churning has resumed. INS Vikrant, the SAGAR doctrine, and new naval and coast guard bases on both coastlines are signs of a civilisation remembering what it once knew.

A nation with oceanic flanks, seaborne trade, and an inextricably maritime civilisational history cannot afford to remain continental in its imagination. The Indian Ocean has been, across four millennia, India's ocean. The nectar is there, in the depths. The churning must not stop.

The writer is a retired Additional Director General of the Indian Coast Guard

[dailypioneer](#)  
[@kripanautiyal](#)  
[dr-kripa-nautiyal-bb773219](#)

## The Indian Navy's quiet war for energy security



SAYAN CHATTERJEE

The recent tensions around the Strait of Hormuz have once again reminded us how delicate the global energy system really is. For India, this is not a distant geopolitical headline — it shows up much closer to home. Nearly 20 per cent of the world's oil trade passes through this narrow corridor, and India imports over 80 per cent of its crude requirements, with a significant share coming from the Gulf. Even brief disruptions here tend to be reflected quickly in domestic fuel prices, freight costs, and inflation.

What does not get talked about enough is this: even if every tanker were escorted safely, things could still go wrong. It is easy to assume that naval escorts solve the problem, but they do not. In high-threat environments, convoy operations reduce speed and throughput — meaning fewer ships can pass through in a given time. So the real issue is not just safety; it is whether enough oil can keep moving on time. That is where the role of the Indian Navy becomes far more layered than it appears.

Over the past few months, as tensions in West Asia have risen, we have already seen early signs of strain. Tanker insurance premiums for the Gulf reportedly spiked by 30-50 per cent during peak-risk periods, while several shipping operators either delayed voyages or rerouted cargo. Alternative pipelines — such as Saudi Arabia's East-West pipeline and the UAE's Fujairah corridor — together can bypass only a fraction (roughly 6-7 million barrels per day) compared to Hormuz's normal flow of over 20 million barrels per day. In simple terms, there is no real substitute for Hormuz at scale. In such a situation, the Navy's job goes well beyond merely being present or providing protection. It is about keeping routes viable. Its mission-based deployments across the Arabian Sea and the wider Indian Ocean Region are designed to maintain a continuous presence in key shipping lanes. This presence does something important: it builds confidence. Shipping companies and insurers react as much to perceived risk as to actual threats. A credible naval footprint helps ensure that commercial traffic continues, even in uncertain conditions.

There is also another side to this story that receives far less attention: India's dependence on liquefied natural gas (LNG). India imports roughly 45-50 per cent of its natural gas needs, much of it from Qatar via Hormuz. Unlike crude oil, LNG



cargoes operate on tighter schedules and with limited storage flexibility. Even short delays can disrupt power generation and city gas supply chains. During recent tensions, several LNG carriers reportedly slowed or paused transit, underlining just how exposed this segment is. Here too, the Navy's role is indirect but crucial; it helps maintain predictability in movement.

Then there is the digital layer, almost invisible but critical. The waters around Hormuz also carry major subsea communication cables that support global financial systems, shipping logistics, and energy trading platforms. Any disruption here would not just affect communication — it could interfere with how energy markets function in real time. In the years ahead, maritime security will increasingly include safeguarding both physical cargo and the data systems that support it.

At the same time, India has been quietly adapting. In response to recent disruptions, Indian refiners increased sourcing from alternative suppliers, including Russia and the United States, to cushion supply risks. This reflects a broader shift — energy security today is no longer about a single source or route. It is a mix of diversification, market flexibility, and maritime security. The Navy plays a central role in enabling this system to hold under pressure.

Another key lesson from the current situation is that chokepoints are interconnected. When stress builds in Hormuz, it inevitably shifts towards other critical routes like the Strait of Malacca, which carries nearly one-third of global maritime oil trade. For India, this creates a dual-front challenge — securing energy flows from both the west and the east.

The Navy's distributed deployments across the Indian Ocean are built precisely to manage this kind of scenario. All of this points to a quiet but important shift. The Indian Navy is no longer just guarding sea lanes — it is helping keep a complex, high-volume system running. It manages risk, supports flow, and buys time when uncertainty rises. Because, in the end, energy security is not just about where oil or gas comes from. It is about whether it can keep moving at scale, without interruption, and at the desired scale. And often, that answer is decided at sea. Hence, fair winds and Sham No Varuna to all our men and women on the open waters.

The writer is a Delhi-based independent contributor to print and online publications

[dailypioneer](#)  
[@sayanyde](#)  
[The Pioneer](#)

## Uncorking the North East's herbal heritage as a global tourism frontier



NOBONEETA RABHA

ADITI RAWAT

For decades, global conversation about wine and fermentation has been shaped by a Eurocentric narrative. Most of us grow up thinking that "real" wine starts and ends with the European grape, *Vitis vinifera*. When people talk about ancient wineries like the 6,000-year-old Areni-1 in Armenia, they often overlook the vibrant traditions blossoming elsewhere, especially in the Indo-Burma biodiversity hotspot. Far from the celebrated European landscapes, communities across North East India have long practised sophisticated fermentation traditions based not on grapes but on grains, fruits, and herbal starter cultures. These traditions remain largely absent from global discussions of fermentation heritage, despite representing a rich and distinctive cultural legacy.

Across the region, traditional fermented beverages such as Apong in Arunachal Pradesh, Kiad in Meghalaya, and Zutho in Nagaland form an integral part of social and ritual life. Prepared through fermentation processes that combine rice or millet with herbal starter cultures derived

from locally available plants, these beverages reflect deep reservoirs of indigenous knowledge. Brewing practices are closely tied to festivals, agricultural cycles, and community identity, with techniques passed down across generations. Yet for generations, this rich heritage has been unfairly dismissed as "country liquor", a colonial label that continues to carry stigma. This is in stark contrast to the way European wine traditions have been elevated into global cultural and tourism industries. After all, many of the world's celebrated beverages — from Champagne in France to Mexican tequila — originated as local products before being formalised and elevated into globally recognised premium categories.

India's wine market today is highly concentrated, with nearly 80 per cent of domestic wine coming from the Nashik Valley in Maharashtra, often described as the "Wine Capital of India". In 2026, Sula Vineyards alone was valued at roughly ₹1,360 crore, with annual revenues of approximately ₹619 crore, and had an export presence in over 30 countries, demonstrating how geographically rooted produce can evolve into a globally competitive industry.

Nashik's success shows that India can stand alongside global wine producers, but it also highlights a missed opportunity. The Northeast, with its rich fermentation heritage, barely registers in India's formal \$208.3 billion alcohol market. Much of the region's alcohol production remains outside formal chains, in household-based systems, particularly among rural women. The opportunity, therefore, is not to replicate



grape-based wine production but to position these beverages as indigenous botanical spirits aligned with the global trend of "mindful drinking". Beyond production, the real economic potential lies in experiential tourism through initiatives like a "Heritage Brew Trail", where travellers can explore traditional breweries and witness firsthand how Humao starter cakes are blended with local botanicals. Integrating such experiences with established destinations like Meghalaya's living root bridges or the paddy-cum-fish cultivation of Ziro Valley in Arunachal could create distinctive tourism offerings that are both culturally immersive and economically viable. Beyond attracting visitors, such initiatives could support local artisans, strengthen community participation, and embed traditional knowledge within a sustainable tourism framework. The region needs a more deliberate policy shift. Existing licensing and excise frameworks continue to treat traditional brewing as an unstructured activity rather than a specialised, knowledge-intensive practice. This not only constrains formalisation but also creates

ambiguity around safety and quality standards. A differentiated regulatory approach is therefore essential. Creating a distinct category for low-volume, community-based fermentation — separate from industrial liquor — would lower entry barriers and enable gradual formalisation.

This must be supported by improving access to hygienic processing and export-quality bottling for small producers while reducing licensing barriers. Equally important is the Geographical Indication (GI) tagging of traditional brews to protect tribal knowledge systems from international counterfeiting. Policy intent, however, is beginning to align. The Union Budget 2026-27, under the Purvodaya vision, signals a stronger focus on the economic development of eastern and North Eastern regions. Complementing this, the ₹1,700 crore allocation under the PM-FME scheme provides a pathway to support micro food processing enterprises, including community-based producers. However, the effectiveness of such interventions will depend on their ability to adapt to decentralised, community-led production systems rather than forcing premature formalisation.

Practical entry points include integrating brew trails into the existing homestay network, setting up temporary festival-based sales windows, conducting district-level brew mapping exercises, offering producers basic hygiene and packaging workshops and kits, facilitating exposure visits to established beverage companies, and building partnerships with boutique hotels to create curated tasting experiences. The timing is perfect. Western consumers are

becoming more interested in botanical and heritage-inspired drinks. The global herbal liqueur market is set to grow and reach USD 2.68 billion, with an annual growth rate of 7 per cent. Early movers in this region are leading the way. Cherrapunji Eastern Craft Gin, made from rain-water and local botanicals like Khasi Mandarin, is valued at ₹58 crore, about USD 7 million, and has started selective exports to the UAE, Sri Lanka, and Japan. Similarly, Naara Aaba Winery in Arunachal Pradesh, the first to create organic kiwi wine valued at over ₹20 crore, has begun exploring markets in Singapore and Taiwan. These early steps are promising, offering a solid outline.

The constraint is no longer supply but institutional design. Despite a large domestic market and rising global demand, traditional fermentation is treated as a regulatory concern rather than an economic opportunity. The indigenous knowledge, the product base, and the cultural depth already exist. With strong policy support, investment in formalisation, and tourism as a key way to attract interest, the North East could shift from a minor part of India's beverage story to a globally recognised leader in heritage fermentation. Today's consumers seek more than just a drink; they want a story, a culture, and a sense of place. The North East provides all three in every drop.

Noboneeta Rabha, Research Assistant, Pahle India Foundation.  
 Aditi Rawat, Associate Fellow, Pahle India Foundation

[dailypioneer](#)  
[@TheDailyPioneer](#)  
[The Pioneer](#)



**TRANSGLOBE  
ADVISORS**

## Your Trusted Management Advisory

[www.transglobeadvisors.in](http://www.transglobeadvisors.in)

### Order Order

## Bangladeshi national gets three-year imprisonment



A court here has sentenced a Bangladeshi national to three years of imprisonment for travelling on a forged Indian passport and illegally registering land, a police official said on Tuesday.

Special Judge, Ballia, Ramkripal on Monday held Abdul Amin guilty, and also imposed a fine of ₹10,000 on him, Superintendent of Police Omvir Singh said.

According to prosecution sources, a case was registered on March 14, 2023, at the Kotwal police station in Ballia against Amin, who hails from a Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh, on a written complaint by Inspector Bharat Bhushan Tiwari of the ATS Varanasi unit. The case was registered under various sections of the IPC and under the Foreigners Act.

It is alleged that Amin, with the assistance of individuals from Ballia, illegally obtained Indian documents and, based on them illegally registered land in Purushottampur located in the Pandua area of West Bengal's Hooghly district.

He also got a passport made using fraudulent means, and travelled twice to Bahrain and Saudi Arabia each. Following an investigation, police filed a charge sheet against Amin in the court. (PTI)

## Allahabad HC seeks Govt plan on 'Chinese manjha'



The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court on Monday took a stern view of the sale, purchase and use of Chinese manjha – nylon and lead-coated kite strings – and sought to know from the Uttar Pradesh Government what concrete plan it had devised to stop its use. The State Government informed the court that it was in the process of framing a law to prohibit such manjha and that a six-member committee had already been constituted for the purpose.

Taking note of the submission, a bench of Justices Rajan Roy and Manjive Shukla directed the secretaries, or officers above the rank of secretary, of the Home and Environment departments to remain present through video conferencing on the next date of hearing on July 13. The order was passed while hearing a PIL filed by local advocate ML Yadav.

During the hearing, Central Government counsel Rajkumar Singh informed the court that the use of lead-coated and nylon manjha had already been banned by the National Green Tribunal.

The bench observed that merely imposing a ban was not sufficient and said it was also the responsibility of the state Government to ensure effective compliance and investigate places where such manjha was being manufactured and sold.

Meanwhile, the city's kite association filed an intervention application alleging that police and other authorities were harassing its members in the name of action against Chinese manjha. On this, the court observed that members of the association should also cooperate in efforts to curb the use of banned kite strings and directed the Government to ensure that no one was unnecessarily harassed. (PTI)

## MACT awards ₹47 lakh compensation to man who lost leg in road accident

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Thane

The Motor Accident Claims Tribunal (MACT) in Maharashtra's Thane district has awarded a compensation of ₹47.78 lakh to a 42-year-old man who lost his leg after being run over by a speeding tempo on a highway.

MACT member RV Mohite, on Monday, held the tempo owner, Somnath Suresh Gole, solely responsible for the accident and directed him to pay the compensation along with 9 per cent interest per annum from the date of the petition.

As per the case details, the claimant, Paresh Baburao Naik, a resident of Mira Road, was riding his motorcycle on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Highway on October 1, 2020, when an autorickshaw coming from the wrong side



brushed past him, causing him to fall onto the path of a speeding tempo that ran over his leg.

Naik underwent multiple surgeries, subsequently resulting in the amputation of his right leg below the knee. The tribunal observed that the claimant had suffered 100 per cent functional disability due to injuries sustained in the accident.

It held that despite the disability certificate stating 50 per cent permanent disability, the practical impact was



## SC to hear TVK MLA's plea against Madras HC order

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court has agreed to hear a plea of a TVK lawmaker challenging the Madras High Court's order restraining him from participating in floor test in the Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly. Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) leader C Joseph Vijay on May 10 took oath as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu.

The plea of TVK MLA R Seenivasa Sethupathi, assailing the High Court order, was mentioned for urgent listing and hearing on Monday before a bench headed by Chief Justice Surya Kant by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi. The bench agreed to list the case for hearing on Wednesday.

Sethupathi had won the No.185 Tirupattur assembly constituency in Sivagangai district by a margin of a single



vote against Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) leader and former minister KR Periakaruppan.

Periakaruppan subsequently approached the Madras High Court alleging irregularities in the counting process,

including the alleged rejection of a postal ballot that was mistakenly sent to another constituency.

In an interim order, the High Court restrained Sethupathi from voting or otherwise participating in any

floor test, confidence motion, no-confidence motion, trust vote or any proceeding where the numerical strength of the House is tested, pending further orders.

The order has significant implications for the ruling

TVK-led alliance in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly. The alliance currently commands the support of 120 MLAs. With Sethupathi barred from participating in voting proceedings, its effective strength in the House would be reduced to 119, leaving it with a slender majority of one member.

Before the High Court, Periakaruppan alleged that one postal ballot meant for No.185 Tirupattur constituency was wrongly sent to No.50 Tirupattur assembly constituency in Tirupattur district.

According to him, the ballot was rejected there instead of being forwarded to the correct returning officer for consideration.

He also pointed to alleged discrepancies in the electronic voting machine (EVM) count, claiming that there was an 18-vote variation

between the consolidated counting abstract and figures published on the Election Commission website.

While passing the interim order, the High Court observed that a strong prima facie case had been made out for a limited protective direction.

However, it clarified that the order did not amount to setting aside Sethupathi's election, nor did it confer any right on Periakaruppan to be declared elected.

The High Court further directed authorities to secure and preserve all records related to the counting process in the No.185 Tirupattur assembly constituency, including video footage concerning counting, scrutiny, rejection of postal ballots and reverification proceedings, in their original electronic form along with backup copies.

## CJI sets up high-powered panel to secure funds for judicial infrastructure overhaul

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Chief Justice of India Surya Kant has decided to set up a high-powered committee headed by Supreme Court Justice Aravind Kumar to prepare a blueprint for the modernisation of courts across the country and secure a Government allocation of ₹40,000 to ₹50,000 crore for the purpose.

The CJ announced the constitution of the 'Judicial Infrastructure Advisory Committee' to address infrastructural deficiencies in courts through substantial financial support from the Government.

Apart from Justice Kumar, the committee will comprise Justices Debansu Basak, Ashwani Kumar Mishra,



Somasekhar Sundaresan of the High Courts of Calcutta, Punjab and Haryana, and Bombay, respectively.

The director general of the Central Public Works Department and the secretary general of the Supreme Court will also be members of the panel.

The committee has been tasked with submitting its

detailed findings and funding requirements to Sanjeev Sanyal, a member of the Prime Minister's Economic Advisory Council, by August 31 this year.

It will focus on seven key areas, including identifying systemic constraints, improving facilities for litigants and lawyers, and implementing cutting-edge technology to accelerate case disposal.

## SC agrees to hear ED's plea challenging anticipatory bail in illegal mining case

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear the Enforcement Directorate's plea challenging the grant of anticipatory bail to the director of a private firm in a money laundering case linked to alleged illegal coal excavation and pilferage.

A bench of Justices Vikram Nath, Sandeep Mehta and Vijay Bhishoi issued notice to Anup Majee, who was a director of a firm engaged in the business of purchase and sale of coal, seeking his response on the ED's plea.

The ED has challenged the Delhi High Court's June last year order granting him anticipatory bail in the money laundering case registered in 2020.

Additional Solicitor



General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, sought cancellation of the anticipatory bail claiming that Majee was the "kingpin" of the ₹2,700 crore "fraud" in which national resource was plundered.

Raju argued that Majee was absconding for a considerable time of period.

"He (Majee) was there in the custody of the CBI. Why you (ED) did not take him

into custody," the bench asked. The law officer, while arguing that national resource was plundered in the case, referred to the evidence against him.

"Has he cooperated in the investigation?" the bench asked. Raju said after Majee got protection from the court, there was some cooperation in the probe.

Senior advocate Siddhartha Dave, appearing for Majee, said he has cooperated in the investigation and 13 times he has gone before the probe agency.

The bench issued notice on the ED's plea and posted the matter for hearing in September. The High Court had passed the order on an application filed by Majee seeking anticipatory bail in the money laundering case.

## ASI report on Bhojshala 'biased': Muslim side

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Indore

The Muslim side in the disputed Bhojshala temple-Kamal Maulla mosque complex case has claimed before the Madhya Pradesh High Court that the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) survey report was "biased" and prepared to support the claims of the Hindu petitioners.

Senior lawyer Salman Khurshid and advocate Tausif Warsi, representing the Maulana Kamaluddin Welfare Society, presented their objections to the survey report before Justices Vijay Kumar Shukla and Alok

Awasthi of the HC's Indore bench on Monday. The Hindu community considers Bhojshala in Dhar district to be a temple dedicated to Goddess Saraswati, while the Muslim side calls the monument the Kamal Maulla Mosque. The disputed complex is protected by the ASI.

The Maulana Kamaluddin Welfare Society of Dhar, in its objections, stated that the ASI used the term "Bhojshala Temple" throughout its survey report, even though there is no historical evidence to prove that the disputed complex ever existed as a "Bhojshala Temple."



## HC disturbed by mother's possessiveness of child; upholds father's visitation rights

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ Mumbai

The Bombay High Court has said it is disturbed by a woman's possessiveness over her child in denying visitation rights to her estranged husband, stressing that the presence of both parents in a child's life is of great importance.

Whatever may be the discord between a couple, the child should get the love of both parents, a bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande said in an order passed last week.

The court was hearing an application filed by the man seeking access to his minor son during the summer vacation. It ordered the woman to hand over custody of the child to him for five days during the summer holidays.

The man, in his plea, said his estranged wife had agreed before the family court to allow visitation rights to the child during the holidays, but later refused



and was also not allowing him to see his son during the weekends, as agreed between them.

The court noted a "possessiveness" in the mother who is in custody of the minor child, and also that the child has been referred to a psychologist for counselling.

The bench said it found this "disturbing", as if the child had been permitted to enjoy the company of both his parents, probably there would be no need for him to be referred to a psychologist.

"We are of the view that the presence of both parents in the life of the child is of

great significance, which assists the child in developing into a healthy individual," the HC said.

In the present case, the child, who is eight years old, is in the formative years of development, and in such a situation, if his mother imbibes into him that it is not healthy for him to be in his father's company, then the child would carry that fear forever, it observed.

"Whatever may be the discord between the parents, in our view, a child must get the love of both, the father and mother," the court remarked.

## HC sets aside Centre's decision refusing to covert *The Wire* founder's PIO status to OCI

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday set aside the Centre's decision rejecting *The Wire* founding editor Siddharth Varadarajan's plea seeking conversion of his Person of Indian Origin (PIO) status to Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) and said the refusal was without reason.

Justice Purushendra Kumar Kaurav restored the American journalist's application and asked authorities to take a fresh decision on it in accordance with law and pass a reasoned order.

"The court on perusal of the order finds that the petitioner's request for conversion of PIO to OCI has been denied. There are no reasons assigned in the communication as to why the application could not be decided



favourably," said Justice Kaurav.

"Unless the respondent assigns the reasons, the appellate court may not be able to appreciate (the matter). The reasons and heart and soul of the order... The impugned communication is set aside. The petitioner's application stands restored. Let the same be considered in accordance with law and an appropriate order be passed," the court

ordered. The central Government counsel urged the court to grant her time to take instructions, but the court asserted that the refusal could not be sustained.

"You will have to reconsider this. This order can't be sustained. Pass some reasoned order," the court orally remarked.

It clarified that the petitioner can take an appropriate legal remedy in case of any subsequent grievance.

The court listed for hearing on Wednesday Varadarajan's plea to let him travel and asked the central Government counsel to take instructions as this aspect.

The journalist's senior counsel submitted that he was a PIO card holder with roots in India. Although all such cards were automatically deemed to be OCI cards after 2015, his PIO card stopped being readable and he had to apply for conversion, the counsel argued.

She said the Centre turned down the request to convert Varadarajan's PIO card to OCI and sent the impugned communication to him on April 2.

"He is born to Indian parents. Wife is Indian. He has been in and out of the country since 1995. PIO card is valid until 2032 but it is not machine readable," the counsel submitted.

## Jacqueline Fernandez withdraws plea to turn approver

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
■ New Delhi

Actor Jacqueline Fernandez on Tuesday withdrew her plea seeking to turn approver in a ₹200 crore money laundering case involving alleged conman Suresh Chandrashekar, court sources said.

Fernandez's counsel confirmed that she had withdrawn the plea filed before Special Judge Prashant Sharma. On Monday, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had opposed her plea, saying she remained in contact with the accused despite knowing his criminal antecedents.

The federal agency, in its response to the actor's plea, had said, "The applicant (Jacqueline) remained in regular and sustained contact with Suresh Chandrashekar (accused 1)



even after having knowledge of his criminal antecedents, who carefully arranged all benefits, gifts and articles for the applicant out of the 'proceeds of crime' involved in the offence of money laundering."

It said that the consistent interaction through numerous ways of communication and receipt of benefits negates any claim of being an "unwitting victim" as claimed by Jacqueline, and instead highlights her conscious association with the main perpetrator.

According to the agency, the actor used and enjoyed the proceeds of crime for herself and her family members, demonstrating a conscious disregard for the source of funds while actively participating in the laundering process.



# Fuel in stock but OMC losses could hit ₹1 lakh crore, worries Puri

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

With two months of fuel stockpiles, India faces no supply concerns despite disruptions to global energy flows, Oil Minister Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said, while warning that state-run fuel retailers face losses of as much as ₹1 lakh crore in a single quarter if elevated crude prices persist and retail fuel prices remain unchanged.

He said that at some stage an assessment needs to be made on how long retailers can sustain losses from selling petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG below cost, but refused to speculate if rates would be raised anytime soon.

"We have no supply-side problems," the minister said at CII's Annual Business Summit here, adding that India began the crisis with "more than enough" crude oil and LPG inventories and had since ramped up domestic LPG production to 54,000 tonnes per day from about 36,000 tonnes previously.

At the same time, the minister acknowledged growing fiscal stress from keeping retail fuel prices unchanged. "My oil companies are



losing ₹1,000 crore a day," he said, adding that cumulative under-recoveries had climbed to nearly ₹1.98 lakh crore and that a single quarter of losses of ₹1 lakh crore could wipe out the sector's annual profits.

Since the war broke out in West Asia 10 weeks ago, state-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) have ensured uninterrupted supplies of petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG at rates that are way below the cost, unlike many global energy systems that imposed rationing or passed through steep price increases.

This has resulted in the three OMCs — Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd (BPCL) and Hindustan

Petroleum Corporation Ltd (HPCL) — running record-high under-recoveries (the difference between benchmark international cost and retail selling price).

Puri said the combined under-recovery on petrol, diesel and cooking gas LPG is about ₹1.98 lakh crore for the current quarter, while the actual loss is about ₹1 lakh crore.

The losses in one quarter, he said, are enough to wipe out profits that oil companies earn in the entire year. "Without saying if widening losses could result in a price increase anytime soon, he said, "How long will the oil companies be able to take it (losses)... frankly, that's something that worries me."

Puri said there has been no increase in petrol and diesel prices in the last four years.

"Today, we are in a situation where we don't know how long the blockades or counter-blockades will continue. But I can tell you categorically that today, we are in a situation where, unlike other countries in the world which have had to either face problems in terms of availability and supply or where prices have gone rampant, we have had stable prices and supplies."

Despite a 50 per cent surge in input crude oil prices, petrol and diesel continue to be priced at a two-year-old rate of ₹94.77 a litre and ₹87.67 per litre, respectively.

Domestic cooking gas LPG prices were raised in March by ₹60 per cylinder, but they are still way lower than the actual cost. The oil companies are currently losing ₹14 per litre on petrol, ₹42 a litre on diesel and ₹674 a litre on cooking gas LPG.

Puri termed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call for moderation in energy consumption as a "visionary" long-term approach rather than signalling imminent restrictions. "It's not that any lockdown is going to happen tomorrow," he said.

# Moody's slashes 2026 India growth forecast to 6 per cent



**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

Moody's Ratings on Tuesday slashed India's GDP growth forecast for year 2026 by 0.8 percentage points to 6 per cent on subdued private consumption, capital formation, and industrial activity amid higher energy costs.

In its Global Macro Outlook May update, Moody's said over the next six months, the impact from higher energy prices and fuel and fertiliser-related shortages will vary widely across countries, reflecting differences in exposure and resilience.

"The global outlook remains highly uncertain amid an increasingly prolonged confrontation and fragile ceasefire between the US and Iran. We estimate growth losses ranging from around 0.8 ppt for India," Moody's said. For calendar year 2027,

Moody's slashed GDP growth estimates by 0.5 percentage points to 6 per cent for India, reflecting lingering headwinds that gradually fade as shipping flows stabilise and energy supplies improve, allowing underlying economic activity to recover.

Moody's said India is "particularly vulnerable" to high oil prices given its heavy reliance on imported crude and LNG. India imports about 90 per cent of its energy requirements.

As a net grain producer, agricultural exports will benefit in the near term from higher prices, but higher fuel and fertilizer costs will weigh on Government finances, potentially constraining planned capital spending, Moody's said.

Coal powers about 70 per cent of India's electricity generation, while non-fossil sources (solar, wind, hydro) continue to expand.

# India-Oman FTA likely from June 1: Goyal

The free trade agreement (FTA) between India and Oman is expected to come into force from June 1, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Tuesday. The pact was signed in December 2025.



"I have had a good meeting with Oman team today and most probably the Oman free trade agreement will come into effect from June 1, 2026," he told reporters here.

The Oman team is here to discuss ways to boost trade and investments.

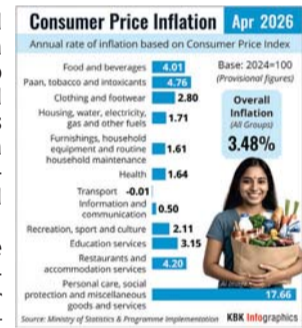
The agreement will provide duty-free access to 98 per cent of India's exports, including textiles, agri, and leather goods in Oman. On the other hand, India will reduce tariffs on Omani products such as dates, marbles and petrochemical items.

When asked about his meeting with the Chilean foreign minister here, Goyal said there are challenges given the different size of the economies and different scale of opportunities that both countries offer to each other. "We are trying to bridge that gap through innovative solutions."

"If we get a good deal around critical minerals and other important mining concessions then may be there is some very good possibility that we should be able to finalise an FTA with Chile," he said. (PTI)

# Inflation inches up to 3.48 per cent in April

Retail inflation inched up to 3.48 per cent in April mainly due to higher prices of gold and silver jewellery as well as some kitchen items, according to government data released on Tuesday.



The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation, with base year 2024, was 3.40 per cent in March, 3.21 per cent in February, and 2.74 per cent in January. The data released by the National Statistics Office (NSO) showed that inflation in the food basket was at 4.20 per cent in April, up from 3.87 per cent in the preceding month.

The highest inflation was in silver jewellery (144.34 per cent), followed by coconut-copra (44.55 per cent); gold, diamond, platinum jewellery (40.72 per cent), tomato (35.28 per cent), and cauliflower (25.58 per cent).

On the other hand, there was a contraction in prices of potato, onion, motor car and jeep, peas, and air-conditioners, the data showed.

Last month, the Reserve Bank projected the CPI inflation for 2026-27 at 4.6 per cent, with 4 per cent in Q1. It also said that persistently elevated energy prices due to the West Asia conflict and possible El Nino conditions (which could have a negative impact on the south-west monsoon) pose upside risks to inflation.

The Reserve Bank factors in the CPI while arriving at its bi-monthly monetary policy.

The NSO data showed that CPI inflation rates for rural and urban areas were 3.74 per cent and 3.16 per cent, respectively. The highest inflation was in Telangana (5.81 per cent) and the lowest in Mizoram (0.69 per cent).

NSO collects real-time price data from selected 1,407 urban markets (including online markets) and 1,465 villages covering all states and Union Territories. (PTI)

# Rupee drops further to 95.63 against US dollar

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Mumbai

The rupee depreciated 35 paise to close at an all-time low of 95.63 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, as renewed tension between the US and Iran has led to risk aversion in global markets.

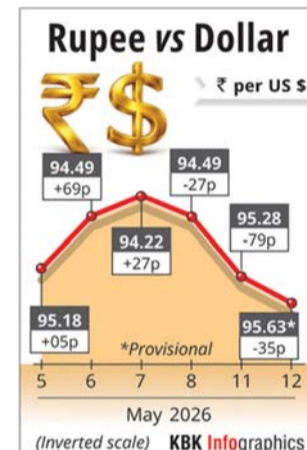
Forex traders said market sentiment remained dominated by fears that the 10-week-old conflict could further tighten global supply, particularly after President Donald Trump rejected Tehran's latest response to a US-backed peace proposal, calling it totally unacceptable.

Moreover, market participants interpreted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments over the weekend regarding fuel conservation and lower imports as a subtle acknowledgement that India's trade deficit and balance-of-payments pressures could worsen if crude prices remain elevated for longer.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the rupee opened at 95.57 and lost further ground to touch an all-time intraday low of 95.74 against the American currency.

The USD/INR pair eventually settled at a record closing low of 95.63 (provisional), down 35 paise from its previous close.

On Monday, the rupee tanked 79 paise to settle at its record low of 95.28 against the US dollar. "We expect the rupee to trade with a negative bias amid uncertainties between US and Iran peace talks after the US rejected Iran's response to the US' peace proposal. "Surge in crude oil prices and a strong dollar may further



drag the rupee. However, any intervention by the RBI may support the rupee at lower levels. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of 95.30 to 96," said Anuj Choudhary, Research analyst at Mirae Asset ShareKhan.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading at 98.28, up 0.33 per cent.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, rose sharply by 3.09 per cent to \$107.43 per barrel in futures trade, triggering fears of supply disruptions and rising energy costs.

"Growing realisation of how grim the energy situation is after PM Modi's advisory on Sunday to use fuel judiciously and cut down on Forex outflows spooked markets," IFA Global said in a research note.

PM Modi on Sunday called for judicious use of fuel, postponement of gold purchases and foreign travel, among other measures, to strengthen the economy.

# Stock markets tank 2 per cent as elevated oil prices, US-Iran tensions weigh on sentiment

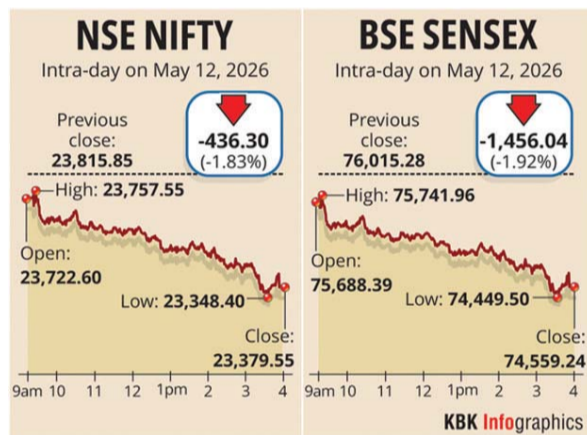
**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ Mumbai

Equity benchmark indices ended lower for the fourth consecutive session on Tuesday, with the Sensex and Nifty tumbling nearly 2 per cent, as elevated crude oil prices and uncertainty surrounding the West Asia conflict clouded markets' confidence.

Unabated foreign fund outflows and the rupee depreciating to a lifetime low also hit investor sentiment.

Amid a widespread sell-off, the 30-share BSE Sensex tanked 1,456.04 points, or 1.92 per cent, to settle at 74,559.24. During the day, it dived 1,565.78 points, or 2 per cent, to 74,449.50.

The 50-share NSE Nifty dropped 436.30 points, or



1.83 per cent, to end at 23,379.55. From the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, Adani Ports, HCL Tech, Tata Consultancy Services, Titan and Bharat Electronics were among the major laggards.

On the other hand, the State Bank of India was the

only winner from the pack. Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, traded 2.75 per cent higher at \$107.1 per barrel.

The rupee depreciated 35 paise to close at an all-time low of 95.63 (provisional) against the US dollar on

Tuesday. US President Donald Trump on Monday said the ceasefire with Iran was at its "weakest" and on "massive life support", a day after he rejected Tehran's proposal to end the month-long war as "totally unacceptable".

"It is at its weakest. After reading that piece of garbage they sent us... It's on life support, massive life support," Trump told reporters at the Oval Office in response to a question on the ceasefire with Iran in the wake of the rejection of the peace proposal.

Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said, unlike a routine profit-booking phase, the current decline appears to be driven by a broader "confidence shock" in the market.

# Labour reforms fully operationalised: Mandaviya

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

Union Minister Mansukh Mandaviya on Tuesday said the central Government has fully operationalised the four new labour codes and emphasised that the current Government is pro-poor and industry-friendly.

Speaking at CII Annual Business Summit 2026, the minister said labour and industry should complement each other and adapt to change for effective coordination.

He said the four new labour codes consolidated 29 labour laws into a simplified and contemporary framework. Earlier this month, after a long wait of over five years, the central Government fully operationalised the



four labour codes by publishing rules. The four codes are namely the Code on Wages, 2019, the Industrial Relations Code, 2020, the Code on Social Security, 2020, and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, came into effect from November 21, 2025. The labour reforms are aimed at

ending "Inspector Raj" and providing for single registration and a single window for industry, Mandaviya said, adding that "now labour inspectors are made facilitators and they give ample chance to comply with laws".

Highlighting that labour is also as important as the industry is in the country, the Union Minister of Labour & Employment and Youth Affairs & Sports, said "our Government pro-poor, pro-farmer and also industry friendly".

He said the new legal framework provides equal wages for equal work to both men and women and noted that employment will be generated only when industrialists create wealth and pay taxes.

# Rising gold imports in India: An explainer

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
■ New Delhi

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed for austerity measures in view of the tensions in West Asia, India's rising gold imports are drawing attention.

Emphasising that the Centre is trying to shield people from the adverse impact of the conflict in West Asia, Modi on Sunday called for judicious use of fuel, postponement of gold purchases and foreign travel, among other measures, to strengthen the economy.

Here are a few questions and answers to understand gold imports in India.

## IMPORT DATA:

India's gold imports rose over 24 per cent to an all time high of \$71.98 billion in 2025-26. It was \$58 billion in 2024-25, \$45.54 billion in 2023-24, \$35 billion in 2022-23, \$46.14 billion in 2021-22, \$34.62 billion in 2020-21, and \$28.2 billion in 2019-20.

In volume terms, however, it dipped 4.76 per cent to 721.03

tonnes in 2025-26 from 757.09 tonnes in 2024-25. It was 795.2 tonnes in 2023-24 and 678.3 tonnes in 2022-23.

India is the world's second-biggest gold consumer after China. The imports are largely driven by the jewellery industry. Traditionally seen as a safe-haven asset during periods of geopolitical uncertainty, gold demand in India tends to surge when global risks rise.

## REASONS FOR JUMP IN IMPORTS:

According to the commerce ministry, gold import increased driven by the rise in prices from \$76,617.48/KG (FY25) to \$99,825.38/KG (FY26). The prices of the precious metal in the national capital is hovering around Rs 1.5 lakh per 10 gms. In April last year, it had crossed Rs 1 lakh for the first time.

## IMPACT OF HIGH IMPORTS:

Higher imports of the precious metal put pressure on the country's trade deficit and foreign



exchange outgo. The rise in imports has pushed the country's trade deficit (difference between imports and exports) to \$333.2 billion during 2025-26.

The imports have implications for India's current account deficit (CAD).

India's CAD rose to \$13.2 billion, or 1.3 per cent of GDP, in the December quarter from \$11.3 billion in the year-ago period, mainly due to a higher trade

deficit caused by a decline in exports to the US, according to RBI data released on March 2.

The precious metal accounts for over 9 per cent of the country's total imports. India's imports in 2025-26 was \$775 billion.

## SOURCE COUNTRIES:

Switzerland is the largest source of gold imports for India, with about 40 per cent share,

followed by the UAE (over 16 per cent) and South Africa (about 10 per cent). The total merchandise imports (including gold) from Switzerland rose 11.36 per cent to \$24.27 billion during 2025-26.

## STEPS TO CURB GOLD IMPORTS:

To discourage these imports, the Government has imposed import curbs on all forms of articles of gold, silver and platinum. The move was aimed at checking misuse of free trade agreements and curbing imports of these precious metals in the name of unstudded jewellery from countries like Thailand.

Some traders were trying to use the India-Asean FTA to make a quick buck by exploiting duty differentials and circumventing tariffs, according to experts.

## IMPORT DUTY:

In 2022, India hiked gold import duty to 15 per cent from 10.75 per cent to check current account deficit and rising import of the yellow metal. In May 2022, 107

tonnes of gold was imported. In the Budget for 2024-25, the duty was reduced to 6 per cent to boost the domestic gems and jewellery industry, curb illegal smuggling, and bring down local prices.

## VIEWS OF EXPERTS:

Think tank GTRI urged the Government to review its FTA policies, especially tariff concessions on precious metal offered to Dubai under the India-UAE trade deal as it has significantly contributed to the recent surge in gold imports.

The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into force in May 2022. Under the agreement, India allowed gold imports from the United Arab Emirates at tariffs one percentage point lower than normal import duties through a Tariff Rate Quota (TRQ) system.

The quota started at 120 tonnes annually and will rise to 200 tonnes from 2027, covering nearly 25 per cent of India's gold imports. "The benefit became even

bigger after India cut normal gold import duty from 15 per cent to 6 per cent in the 2024 Budget. As a result, gold imported from Dubai effectively entered India at only 5 per cent duty," GTRI Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Imports from Dubai have surged since then. India's gold bar imports from the UAE rose from \$2.9 billion in 2022 to \$6.7 billion in 2023 and further to \$16.5 billion in 2025. Dubai's share in India's gold imports increased from 7.9 per cent before the FTA to 28 per cent in 2025, he said.

"The trend raises concerns because the UAE neither mines gold nor carries out major processing activity. Much of the trade appears to involve routing gold from third countries through Dubai simply to benefit from lower Indian tariffs," he added.

It recommended tighter origin rules, a review of precious metal concessions under FTAs, and exclusion of gold, silver, platinum, and diamonds from future trade agreements to protect India's trade balance and foreign exchange reserves.



## Digital-driven healthcare: A new chapter of holistic care in Taiwan



**DR CHUNG-LIANG SHIH**

As the world confronts the challenges of population ageing and healthcare workforce shortages, digital transformation in healthcare is no longer optional but essential. Taiwan has introduced the "Healthy Taiwan" vision, placing "driving digital healthcare" at its core. By integrating big data, artificial intelligence (AI), and cloud technologies, the system aims to improve healthcare quality and efficiency while moving toward a new healthcare model centred on holistic, patient-centred care.

Taiwan benefits from both a robust ICT industry and the foundation of its National Health Insurance (NHI) system, which has accumulated high-quality healthcare data over time and laid a critical foundation for smart healthcare development. Building on this, we have introduced a national digital health platform known as the "3-3-3 Framework," integrating three major health

spaces, three key health data standards, and three National AI governance centres to establish a comprehensive digital health infrastructure. Under this framework, we are promoting the integration of electronic medical records across more than 400 hospitals nationwide and adopting international standards such as Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) to ensure cross-institutional interoperability. Within a Zero Trust cybersecurity framework, healthcare data can be securely shared and effectively utilised.

With these policies in place, tangible results are already beginning to emerge. In chronic disease management, the "Family Physician Platform" incorporates AI-based risk prediction to support physicians in delivering personalised care, facilitating a shift from reactive treatment to proactive health management. In terms of healthcare data integration, the MediCloud system provides real-time access to patient records and medication information, while enhanced visualisation of examination results and AI-assisted medical imaging interpretation further improve healthcare quality



and patient safety. Personal health management has also been strengthened. The "My Health Bank" platform has surpassed a 50% adoption rate and can be integrated with data from wearable devices, encouraging individuals to take a more active role in managing their health. In the digitalisation of cancer treat-

ment, Taiwan utilises the FHIR standard to exchange Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS) data, accelerating the review process for catastrophic illness certification and related medical use, thereby improving access to timely treatment. In addition, the promotion of virtual health insurance cards, e-prescriptions, and

telemedicine services is effectively overcoming temporal and geographical barriers, expanding access to rural and home-based care.

Taiwan has established a comprehensive governance framework to advance the development of clinical AI. Nineteen national medical AI centres have been

established, covering responsible governance, clinical validation, and impact evaluation, ensuring that AI is safe and reliable across the entire process from development to application. To date, more than 50 AI medical products have received regulatory approval, supporting early cancer detection, prediction of cardiac events, and clinical decision-making support. Taiwan also has 13 hospitals ranked among Newsweek's "World's Best Smart Hospitals 2026," placing second in Asia and demonstrating strong international competitiveness. In addition, Taiwan is advancing federated learning platforms that enable cross-institutional and cross-border AI model validation without transferring sensitive data, and has begun collaborating with partners in Southeast Asia to establish trusted international data-sharing models.

Diseases know no borders, and global health governance requires comprehensive collaboration. Taiwan has established a smart healthcare ecosystem driven by data, enabled by AI, and supported by interoperable standards, extending medical services from hospitals into communities and

daily life and realising holistic care. Taiwan's practical experience demonstrates that we are capable of contributing to the international community.

However, Taiwan continues to be excluded from full participation in the World Health Organisation and its related mechanisms. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution 25.1 neither mention Taiwan nor exclude Taiwan from participating in the WHO and the WHA.

We sincerely urge WHO and relevant stakeholders to support Taiwan's inclusion in the global health system, thereby strengthening its completeness and resilience. Taiwan will continue to advance smart healthcare through digital innovation and contribute to global health and well-being. Together, we can realise the vision of health as a fundamental human right as set forth in the WHO Constitution, as well as the commitment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals to leave no one behind.

The author is the Minister of Health and Welfare of Taiwan.

## China's drug giant seals \$15.2 billion deal with America's BMS

**KJM VARMA**  
Beijing

Ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing, China's largest drug company, Jiangsu Hengrui Pharmaceutical, has signed a \$15.2 billion collaboration and licensing agreement with American pharmaceutical giant Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS). Trump is visiting China from May 13 to 15 for talks with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, to reach, among others, a trade deal over tariffs and investments.

Jiangsu Hengrui Pharmaceutical, China's largest drug company by market capitalisation, has signed a global collaboration and licensing agreement with US pharmaceutical giant Bristol Myers Squibb (BMS)



worth up to \$15.2 billion, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported on Tuesday.

The deal adds credibility to China's growing reputation for innovative drug development, as China largely

depends on the global multinational pharma firms to supply, it said. China's pharmaceutical industry in recent years has grown from a mainly low-cost manufacturing base into innovative drug ecosystems, making it a

major player in APIs (active pharmaceutical ingredients), generics, biotech, contract manufacturing, and increasingly in novel drug discovery. China is one of the largest exporters of API, including to India. The Jiangsu Hengrui-

BMS collaboration covers four oncology and haematology programmes originating from Hengrui, four immunology assets from BMS, and another five novel programmes to be jointly developed using Hengrui's discovery platforms, the Post reported. All 13 programmes are at the preclinical stage, according to a filing with the Hong Kong stock exchange.

BMS has agreed to pay Hengrui up to \$950 million in near-term consideration, including an upfront payment of \$600 million.

The overall deal value could reach about \$15.2 billion if all development, regulatory and commercial milestones are met and options on the co-discovery projects are exercised, the report said. (PTI)

## Israeli bulldozers raze about 50 Palestinian shops in Jerusalem

**SAM METZ/SHLOMO MOR**  
Al-Eizariya (West Bank)

Israeli bulldozers tore down dozens of Palestinian shops on the edge of a town southeast of Jerusalem this week, clearing land ahead of a settlement-linked road project in the occupied West Bank.

Israel says the demolitions are needed to make way for a road serving local Palestinian communities. But Palestinian officials say the road is part of a broader plan to keep Palestinian vehicles off a new highway being built to serve nearby Israeli settlements.

That project is part of a strategic section of the West Bank known as E1, which Israel is developing with the intention of preventing the establishment of a Palestinian state. "The shops that were demolished are where Israel is planning to build a new road that will divert all Palestinian traffic to that road so that they can close down the whole area of E1 for Palestinians," said Hagit Ofra, director of the anti-settlement group Peace Now. The project would lead to the displacement of thousands of Bedouin Arabs living in the area, Ofra said.

Tuesday's demolitions took place in the town of al-Eizariya, less than a week after some owners received notices to evacuate shops built without permits. Attorneys appealed, up to



Israel's Supreme Court, but the demolitions went ahead. Israeli authorities said the buildings, including car washes, scrap metal shops and vegetable stands, were built illegally and owners had been warned for "several years" that enforcement was forthcoming.

COGAT, the Israeli military body overseeing civil affairs in the West Bank, said the structures obstructed construction of the planned road to connect Palestinian towns. The new road system is meant to solve congestion and improve the quality of life of Palestinian towns in the area, Israel says. The Palestinian Authority says the demolitions are connected to Israel's plans to overhaul transportation and build a tunnel and

bypass road to reroute Palestinian traffic off a major Israeli highway linking nearby settlements to Jerusalem and cutting them off from large swaths of the West Bank.

They say it will lead to separate road systems for Israelis and Palestinians. Israel has not linked the demolitions to its plans for E1. Some of the demolished shops partially blocked sidewalks and roads leading into the town. But Palestinians say proper construction permits are nearly impossible to obtain from Israeli authorities, even as Israeli settlements rapidly expand. Mohammad Abu Ghalieh, a 48-year-old shop owner, was dumbfounded that he would have to start over after the demolitions. (AP)

## Philippine senator vows to fight ICC order to arrest him over illegal killings

**JIM GOMEZ**  
Manila

A Philippine senator who is wanted by the International Criminal Court for an alleged crime against humanity said Tuesday he will fight any attempt to send him to the global tribunal for prosecution, adding he never condoned extrajudicial killings when he led the country's police force.

The ICC in The Hague unseated Monday an arrest warrant for Senator Ronald dela Rosa, a former national police chief who first

enforced then-President Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drugs crackdowns that left thousands of mostly petty suspects dead.

Originally issued in November, the warrant charges dela Rosa with the crime against humanity of murder of "no less than 32 persons" allegedly committed between July 2016 and the end of April 2018 in the Philippines. "If I have something to answer for, I will face those in our local courts and not before foreigners," dela Rosa told reporters in the Senate, which took him into



"protective custody" Monday when he reappeared after months of absence. "I will avail of all legal processes," he

said, and pleaded to President Ferdinand Marcos Jr: "Don't bring me to The Hague." After winning the presi-

dency in 2016, Duterte designated dela Rosa, a loyal ally, as head of the national police force, which enforced the brutal campaign against illegal drugs.

Dela Rosa also once headed the police force in the southern city of Davao, where Duterte served as a longtime mayor and built a political name for his extra-tough approach to crimes.

"My role was to lead the war on drugs, and that war on drugs was not meant to annihilate people," dela Rosa said when he was asked about the huge death toll. (AP)

| JITF INFRA LOGISTICS LIMITED  |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
|---|--|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| CIN - L60231CT2008PLC016434   |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
| Regd. Office: A-11 (7), Udaya Society, Sector-3, Tatibandh, Dharsiwa, Raipur- 492099, Chattisgarh |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
| Corp. Office: Jindal ITF centre, 28, Shivaji Marg, New Delhi- 110015                              |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
| EXTRACT OF AUDITED FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE QUARTER AND YEAR ENDED MARCH 31, 2026                |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
| (₹ Lakhs)   |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
| S. No.  | Particulars  | Standalone                 |                         |                            |                       | Consolidated          |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
|   |  | Quarter Ended              |                         | Year Ended                 |                       | Quarter Ended         |                            | Year Ended              |                            |                       |                       |
|   |  | 31.03.2026<br>Refer Note 1 | 31.12.2025<br>Unaudited | 31.03.2025<br>Refer Note 1 | 31.03.2026<br>Audited | 31.03.2025<br>Audited | 31.03.2026<br>Refer Note 1 | 31.12.2025<br>Unaudited | 31.03.2025<br>Refer Note 1 | 31.03.2026<br>Audited | 31.03.2025<br>Audited |
| 1   | Total Income from operations   | 92.19                      | 97.27                   | 92.08                      | 353.43                | 369.82                | 91,342.84                  | 83,259.22               | 80,093.76                  | 285,399.91            | 230,925.95            |
| 2   | Net Profit/(loss) before tax and share of profit/(loss) of joint venture and exceptional items   | 7.90                       | 7.94                    | 7.53                       | 29.76                 | 32.19                 | 4,127.30                   | 4,450.48                | 2,049.60                   | 10,059.93             | 1,796.11              |
| 3   | Net Profit/(loss) before tax and after share of profit/(loss) of joint venture and exceptional items   | 7.90                       | 7.94                    | 7.53                       | 29.76                 | 32.19                 | 638.28                     | 3,419.85                | 1,985.00                   | 5,538.30              | 2,047.68              |
| 4   | Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period/year after Tax (after Exceptional items)   | 6.20                       | 5.90                    | 10.24                      | 22.51                 | 28.47                 | (783.80)                   | 1,859.95                | 57.28                      | (993.47)              | (2,442.99)            |
| 5   | Net Profit/ (Loss) for the period/ year after Tax (after Exceptional items) (Discontinued operation)   | -                          | -                       | -                          | -                     | -                     | -                          | -                       | 341.17                     | -                     | 16,920.91             |
| 6   | Total Comprehensive Income for the period/year [Comprising Profit/(Loss) for the period/year (after tax) and Other Comprehensive income (after tax)] | 5.37                       | 7.01                    | (5.81)                     | 22.79                 | 13.13                 | (787.46)                   | 1,899.21                | 624.38                     | (1,005.66)            | 14,524.12             |
| 7   | Paid up Equity Share Capital   | 514.07                     | 514.07                  | 514.07                     | 514.07                | 514.07                | 514.07                     | 514.07                  | 514.07                     | 514.07                | 514.07                |
| 8   | Reserves (excluding Revaluation Reserve) as at Balance Sheet date  | -                          | -                       | -                          | 31,564.33             | 31,541.82             | -                          | -                       | -                          | (51,841.88)           | (51,592.37)           |
| 9   | Earnings Per Share (of ₹ 2/- each) (*Not annualised)   | -                          | -                       | -                          | -                     | -                     | -                          | -                       | -                          | -                     | -                     |
| <b>Continuing Operation</b>   |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
|   | (1) Basic (₹)  | 0.024*                     | 0.023*                  | 0.04*                      | 0.09                  | 0.11                  | -6.93*                     | -0.49*                  | -12.49*                    | -18.73                | -28.99                |
|   | (2) Diluted (₹)  | 0.024*                     | 0.023*                  | 0.04*                      | 0.09                  | 0.11                  | -6.93*                     | -0.49*                  | -12.49*                    | -18.73                | -28.99                |
| <b>Discontinued Operation</b>   |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
|   | (1) Basic (₹)  | -                          | -                       | -                          | -                     | -                     | -                          | -                       | 1*                         | -                     | 49.37                 |
|   | (2) Diluted (₹)  | -                          | -                       | -                          | -                     | -                     | -                          | -                       | 1*                         | -                     | 49.37                 |
| <b>Continuing &amp; Discontinued Operation</b>  |  |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |                            |                         |                            |                       |                       |
|   | (1) Basic (₹)  | 0.024*                     | 0.023*                  | 0.04*                      | 0.09                  | 0.11                  | -6.93*                     | -0.49*                  | -11.49*                    | -18.73                | 20.38                 |
|   | (2) Diluted (₹)  | 0.024*                     | 0.023*                  | 0.04*                      | 0.09                  | 0.11                  | -6.93*                     | -0.49*                  | -11.49*                    | -18.73                | 20.38                 |

## Report on Iranian planes at airbase misleading: Pakistan

**SAJJAD HUSSAIN**  
Islamabad

Pakistan on Tuesday rejected as "misleading" a US media report that claimed Islamabad allowed Iranian military aircraft to park on its airfield to potentially shield them from American airstrikes, while playing the role of mediator between the two sides.

In a statement, the Foreign Office said that the Iranian aircraft currently parked in the country arrived during the ceasefire period following the initial round of US-Iran peace talks and bears "no linkage" to any military contingency or preservation arrangement. CBS News reported that days after US President Donald Trump announced the ceasefire with Iran in early April, Tehran sent multiple aircraft to the Nur Khan Airbase near Rawalpindi.

"Among the military hardware was an Iranian Air Force RC-130, a reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering variant of the Lockheed C-130 Hercules tactical transport aircraft," the report claimed.

In its statement, the Foreign Office categorically rejected the CBS News report as "misleading and sensa-



tionalised." "Such speculative narratives appear aimed at undermining ongoing efforts for regional stability and peace," it said. "Following the ceasefire and during the initial round of the Islamabad Talks, a number of aircraft from Iran and the US arrived in Pakistan to facilitate the movement of diplomatic personnel, security teams and administrative staff associated with the talks process," it said. The FO said that some aircraft and support personnel remained temporarily in Pakistan in "anticipation of subsequent rounds of engagement." "Although formal negotiations have not yet resumed, senior-level diplomatic exchanges have continued. In this context, visits by the Iranian foreign minister to Islamabad were facilitated through the existing logisti-

cal and administrative arrangements," it said. "The Iranian aircraft currently parked in Pakistan arrived during the ceasefire period and bears no linkage whatsoever to any military contingency or preservation arrangement. Assertions suggesting otherwise are speculative, misleading, and entirely detached from the factual context," the FO said. "Pakistan has consistently acted as an impartial, constructive, and responsible facilitator in support of dialogue and de-escalation. In line with this role, Pakistan has extended routine logistical and administrative support where required, while maintaining full transparency and regular communication with all relevant parties," it said. (PTI)

## Israel sets up tribunal for Oct 7 attackers

**JULIA FRANKEL**  
Jerusalem

Israeli lawmakers approved a bill on Monday setting up a special tribunal that would try and have the authority to sentence to death Palestinians convicted of taking part in the 2023 Hamas-led attack that triggered the war in Gaza. The measure passed 93-0 in the 120-seat Knesset, or parliament, reflecting widespread support for punishing those found responsible for what was the deadliest attack in Israel's history. The remaining 27 lawmakers were absent or abstained from voting. Rights groups have criticised the measure, saying it makes the death penalty too easy to impose while also doing away with procedures safeguarding the right to a fair trial. Defendants can appeal their sentences, but

the appeals have to be heard by a separate, special appeals court rather than regular appeals courts. Because the bill empowers a panel of judges to hand down the death penalty by a majority vote — and requires the trials to be conducted in a livestreamed Jerusalem courtroom — it has drawn comparisons to the 1962 trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann, which was broadcast live on television. Eichmann was executed by hanging, the last time the death penalty was carried out in Israel, though technically capital punishment remains on the books for acts of genocide, espionage during wartime and certain terror offences. Opponents of the bill also say that livestreaming the proceedings before guilt is established risks turning the trials into a spectacle. They have raised ques-



tions about the reliability of the evidence that may be presented, saying it could have been extracted by harsh interrogation methods. The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into Israel on October 7, 2023, killing some 1,200 people and taking 251 as hostages. Israel's ensuing blistering offensive on Gaza has killed over 72,628

Palestinians, including at least 846 killed since a ceasefire took hold last October. That's according to the Gaza Health Ministry, which doesn't differentiate between civilians and combatants but says around half the deaths were women and children. The figures by the ministry, which is part of the Hamas-led government, are seen as generally reliable by UN agencies

and independent experts. Israeli forces also killed hundreds of militants in battles in the coastal enclave, and took an unknown number of suspects into Israeli custody, where they now await trial. Simcha Rothman, one of the bill's sponsors who is part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition, said the overwhelming consensus for the bill in the Knesset shows Israeli lawmakers can come together "around a common mission." Several Israeli rights groups — including Hamoked, Adalah and the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel — said on Monday that while "justice for the victims of October 7 is a legitimate and urgent imperative," any accountability for the crimes "must be pursued through a process which includes rather than abandons the principles of justice." The

bill is separate from a law passed in March that approved death penalty for Palestinians convicted of murdering Israelis, a measure harshly condemned by the international community and rights groups as discriminatory and inhumane. That law applies to future cases and is not retroactive, so it could not apply to the October 2023 suspects. According to the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, the country still holds about 1,300 Palestinians from Gaza without charge in its detention facilities. At least 7,000 Palestinians from Gaza had been held in Israeli custody since October 2023, and 5,000 of them were later released. The 1,300 number does not include those held on suspicion of attacking Israel on October 7 or involvement in holding the hostages. (AP)



## Suicide blast kills 8 in northwest Pakistan; 35 injured

**PRESS TRUST OF INDIA**  
Peshawar

At least eight people, including two security officials, were killed and 35 others were injured when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive-laden vehicle in northwest Pakistan on Tuesday, police said. The incident occurred in the Lakki Marwat district of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. A District Police official said the suicide bomber detonated his explosive-laden three-wheeler auto rickshaw at the Phatak Chowk in Naurang Bazar. Two traffic police personnel and a woman were among the eight people killed, officials said, adding that 35 others were injured and were shifted to Tehsil

Headquarters Hospital in Sarai Naurang for treatment. Several people who were said to be in critical condition were referred to hospitals in Bannu and Peshawar for further medical care. An emergency was declared at the hospitals, and all medical staff were called. Ambulances and teams were dispatched to the site for relief work, said Rescue 1122 spokesperson Shahdab Khan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Muhammad Suhail Afridi took note of the blast and directed the Inspector General of Police to submit a detailed report on the incident. "We stand with the bereaved families in this difficult time, and the provincial Government will extend all possible support to them," he said.

## Trump ends conservation use rule for public lands

**MATTHEW BROWN**  
Billings

The Interior Department is cancelling a rule that put conservation on equal footing with development, as President Donald Trump's administration eases restrictions on industries and seeks to boost drilling, logging, mining and grazing on taxpayer-owned land. The 2024 rule adopted under former President Joe Biden was meant to refocus the Interior Department's Bureau of Land Management, which oversees about 10 per cent of land in the US. It allowed public property to be



leased for restoration in the same way that oil companies lease land for drilling. But

Interior Secretary Doug Burgum has said the rule could have blocked access to hundreds of thousands of acres (hectares) of land — preventing energy and timber production and hurting ranchers who graze on public lands. Supporters argued that conservation had long been a secondary consideration at the land bureau, neglecting its mission under the 1976 Federal Lands Policy Management Act. While the bureau previously issued leases for conservation purposes in limited cases, it never had a dedicated program prior to the Biden administration. (AP)

## British PM Keir Starmer remains defiant in face of Cabinet rebellion

**ADITI KHANNA**  
London

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer came out fighting for his job on Tuesday amid a brewing rebellion in his ranks, with a chunk of ministers calling for him to set out a timetable for a leadership change. Starmer remained defiant during a crunch Cabinet meeting at 10 Downing Street, telling his team that he intends to "get on with governing" as he tries to move on from the Labour Party's disastrous local election under his watch. Even as pressure mounted



further with the resignation of a lesser-known junior housing minister, Miatta Fahnehle, Starmer was adamant that the required threshold of 20 per cent MPs to challenge the Labour leader had not

been met. "As I said yesterday, I take responsibility for these election results, and I take responsibility for delivering the change we promised," Starmer told his Cabinet. "The country expects us to get on with governing. That is what I am doing and what we must do as a Cabinet," he said. His statement could be seen as a dare by some Labour members of Parliament who have been pressuring Starmer to set out a timetable for his departure. (PTI)

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER:: PWD BUILDING:: ASSAM::GUWAHATI-3.**  
**No.CE/TB-II (Bldg.)/26/2025/7**

**PRESS NOTICE**

The Chief Engineer, PWD (Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids from eligible contractors/firms having requisite experience in similar nature of works for the following work. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in). The Bidders must be enrolled in [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in).

| Sl. No. | Name of work  | Approx. Value of work (in Rs) | Bid Security   | Bid Processing Fee | Completion period  |
|---------|---|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1.      | Construction of RCC(G+3) Judicial Officer's (Grade-II) Quarter with Ground Floor Parking Facility at Golaghat | 4,65,22,474.00                | 2% for General category or 1% for Reserved category on value of work | 9304.00            | 15(Fifteen) Months |

**Note:**  
(i) Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT.  
(ii) All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents.  
(iii) The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

Sd/-  
Chief Engineer, PWD (Building)  
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

DIPR/C/PIO/37/13-May-26

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**TENDER NOTICE (Through e-tendering)**

Provision of Coach Guidance display boards and Train Information display boards at 11 number of ABSS stations of Delhi Division of Northern Railway and Balance work in c/w Provision of Coach Guidance System at NNO, SSB, NUR, BVH, & Passenger Amenities (Telecom) at newly constructed platform at Anand Vihar Railway Stations and IPIS auto announcement, TIDB etc at stations where train handling facilities is to be started due to Station Redevelopment of NDLS station.

| App. Cost of the work  | Earnest Money Deposit |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| ₹8,24,87,064.75/- only | ₹16,49,80,000/- only  |

Address of the work: Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-C, Northern Railway, 3rd Floor, Annex-1, DRM office, New Delhi-110055.

Date & Time for upload the tender/closing of tender: Tender uploading/closing date & time - 03.06.2026 up to 15:00 hrs.

Website particular & notice board location where complete details of the tender can be seen etc. See the Northern Railway website [www.nreps.gov.in](http://www.nreps.gov.in) & Notice board at S&T branch, 3rd Floor, DRM office, State Entry Road, New Delhi-110055.

Tender No. 558-Sig-16-Tele-OT-1038 Dated: 12.05.2026

**SERVING CUSTOMER WITH A SMILE 1583/2026**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Notice is hereby given on behalf of RAJESH KUSHWAHA to inform the general public that RAJESH KUSHWAHA is purchasing the Built-up Property/House No. 211-A, Area measuring 29 sq. yds. Out of Khassa No. 187 & 188, Situated at Village Molatband, Abadi known as Gali No. 29-C, Block-E, Molatband Extn., P.O. & P.S. Badarpur, New Delhi-110044 from Sh. Nahar Singh S/o Sh. Kishan Lal who became owner of the subject property through GENERAL POWER OF ATTORNEY, AGREEMENT TO SELL & WILL DATED 07.12.2010, DULY ATTESTED WITH THE NOTARY PUBLIC DELHI DATED 07.12.2010 which was executed by SH. RAJENDER SINGH S/O SH. GYAN SINGH, SAME TO BE FINANCED & MORTGAGED BY VASTU HOUSING FINANCE CORPORATION LTD. So, to comply the requirements of BANK/NBFC, we give this public notice that if any Person having any type of claim/right/interest/creating mortgage over the said property, may inform in writing, at the address mentioned below, about his objections, within 07 days from today, failing which it shall be presumed that the said property is free from all type of claims/interests. Lucern Legal LLP N-161, Ground Floor, Saira Tower, Gautam Nagar Near Yusuf Sarai Community Centre, New Delhi-110049 Contact # 911-00465316 & 41667327

**ELECTION NOTIFICATION**

It is notified that the Election of Governing Body of Purnamurti College of Law, Karam Road, Sonapat-131001 (Haryana) for the post of President-1, Vice-President-1, General Secretary-1, Treasurer-1, Members-11, Teaching Staff Representative-2 & Non-teaching Staff Representative-1, shall be held as per schedule given below:-

| Date of Notification                   | 25.05.2026  |
|--|---|
| Date of Nomination                     | 05.06.2026 to 09.06.2026 (9.00 AM to 11.00 AM)                      |
| Date of Scrutiny                       | 10.06.2026 to 11.06.2026 (9.00 AM to 11.00 AM)                      |
| Date of Withdrawal of Nomination       | 12.06.2026 (9.00 AM to 11.00 AM)                                    |
| Date of Allotment of Electoral Symbols | 13.06.2026  |
| Date of Election                       | 29.06.2026  |
| Time of Election                       | 9.00 AM to 2.00 PM  |
| Venue of Election                      | Purnamurti Educational Society, VPO Karmi, Distt. Sonapat (Haryana) |
| Date of Declaration of Election Result | 29.06.2026 (2.00 to 5.00 PM)  |

For any other enquiry please contact Returning Officer: Mr. Virender Singh, Advocate, 8901154385 (Virender Singh, Advocate) Returning Officer (G.B) Email: purnamurti@gmail.com Website: <https://peoplehome.in>

**peoplehome**  
**PEOPLE HOME FINANCE LIMITED**  
CIN: U65990DL2017PLC322041

Registered Office: 701, 7th Floor, Aggarwal Corporate Tower, Plot No 23, District Centre, Rajendra Place, New Delhi - 110008 Website: <https://peoplehome.in>

**PUBLIC NOTICE - SHIFTING OF BRANCH OFFICE**

Notice is hereby given to all service providers, stakeholders, clients, and other concerned persons/parties that the Branch Office of People Home Finance Limited ("the Company") is presently located at: C-93, Lower ground floor, Sector 2, Noida-201301 The Branch Office of the Company shall be shifted to the following address with effect from 10 August 2026: C-95, Second Floor, Sector-2, Noida, Uttar Pradesh - 201301

Consequent to the aforesaid shifting, the existing branch office at the old address shall stand closed. All communications, correspondence, notices, records, and other documents relating to the Company shall thereafter be addressed to the new branch Office address only. All concerned persons/parties are requested to take due note of the above change. For any further information or assistance, the Company may be contacted at +91-22-45770636 or through its website <https://peoplehome.in>

Date: 13.05.2026 Sd/-, Authorised Officer People Home Finance Limited

**GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF ENGINEER PWD BUILDING ASSAM:: GUWAHATI-3**  
**CE/TB-II(Bldg.)/06/2026/4**

**PRESS NOTICE**

The Chief Engineer, PWD (Building), Assam, on behalf of the Governor of Assam, invites bids from eligible contractors/firms having requisite experience in similar nature of works for the following work. Details of the bid may be seen at e-procurement portal website i.e. [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in). The Bidders must be enrolled in [www.assamtenders.gov.in](http://www.assamtenders.gov.in).

| Sl. No. | Name of work   | Approx. Value of work (in Rs) | Bid Security   | Bid Processing Fee | Completion period       |
|---------|--|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|-------------------------|
| 1       | Construction of District & Session Judge's Quarter, Grade-1 Judicial Officer's Quarter - 2 units, Grade- II Judicial Officer's Quarter - 4 units, Grade- III Judicial Officer's Quarter - 4 units, at Kajalgaon in Chirang District, BTC, Assam. | 15,68,34,885.00               | 2 % for General category or 1 % for Reserved category on value of work | 20,000.00          | 24 (Twenty Four) Months |

**Note:-**  
(i) Value of work may vary according to the detail NIT.  
(ii) All terms and conditions will be as per the Bidding Documents.  
(iii) The Press Notice will be a part of the Bidding Documents.

Sd/-  
Chief Engineer, PWD (Building)  
Assam, Chandmari, Guwahati-3.

DIPR/C/PIO/38/13-May-26

**The Pioneer Classified**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Rafat Salim, hereby declare that my name was incorrectly written as "Rafat Saleem". The correct spelling of my name is "Rafat Salim", and henceforth I shall be known as Rafat Salim for all purposes. PD(1079)C

I, Azra Jamal, hereby declare that my name was incorrectly written as "Azra Rafat". The correct full name is "Azra Jamal", and henceforth I shall be known as Azra Jamal for all purposes. PD(1085)C

I, No 4426547M Ex-Sep Nazimuddin R/o Vill-Karaikandi, PO- Karaikandi, PS- Lakhipur, Dist- Cachar, State- Assam PIN- 788101 have changed my spouse's name & date of birth in my records from KH NESSA, DOB- 25 Apr 1967 to KHAIRUN NESSA, DOB- 01 Feb 1973 vide affidavit dated 12/05/2026 before 1st Class Magistrate, Silchar, Cachar, Assam. PD(1086)C

I, Ramanandan Singh, Father of No.14674687X Hav Mukesh Kumar, R/o- Karmatand (Smart Home Big City), PO+RS+Teh-Govindpur, Dist- Dhanbad, Jharkhand - 828109 have changed my name from Ramanandan Singh to Ram Nandan Singh, vide affidavit dated 12/05/2026 before Notary Public Delhi. PD(1087)C

I, Sushma W/o Bhim Singh Dahiya, R/o A-52 A, Shani bazar Road Krishan Vihar, Delhi-110086 do hereby declare that have changed my name from Sushma to sushma Dahiya for all purposes. PD(1096)C

**PAPER PUBLICATION**  
(In case of chain title deed)

NOTICE is hereby given that Ms. Umang is the owner of second floor without roof rights. Part freehold built up property bearing No. A-47, area measuring 150 sq. yds., situated in the area of Village Salaspur, near Madhya Delhi, in favour of Ms. Umang in respect of said floor. Ms. Umang intends to transfer ownership of the above-mentioned floor by way of Sale Deed to Mr. Abhishek Mehta. Subsequently, Now, Mr. Abhishek Mehta who has agreed to create mortgage in respect of the said floor in favour of my client IFC First Bank Limited (Branch Address: Plot No. 6B, Phase-III, Near Indraprastha, Block-1, Rajendra Park, Rajinder Nagar, New Delhi, Delhi-110060)

If any person, body, individual, institution having any claim and/or objection in respect of or against or relating to or touching upon said floor or part of the property by way of title, mortgage, lease, lien, mortgage, charge, encumbrance, gift, trust, easement, maintenance, inheritance, testamentary claim, or otherwise in respect of their custody any title, documents pertaining the said floor shall communicate the same to the undersigned at my address with publication of this notice with documentary evidence in support thereof, failing which all claims, of such person any subsequent claim shall not be binding upon the said floor or my Client. Place: Noida Dated 12th day of Apr. 2026 Sd/-Law Veritas: North (Advocates & Legal Consultants) Office No. 11, 1st Floor, Building No. A-44A, Sector-16, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301. andline: +91022-4499711 e-mail: accounts@vnorth.in

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Reg: Entire freehold Upper Ground Floor (Eastern Side Portion, Adjoining Property No. A-41) area 136.56 sq. yds. (Said floor) built on property bearing No. 41, in Block-A, on Nanda Road, built on land area measuring 273 sq. yds. i.e. 228.25 sq. mtrs., out of Khassa No. 45, 36, 38, 28/258/2174 & 28/258/2174, situated in the area of Village Bharola, colony known as Adarsh Nagar, Delhi-33., hereinafter referred to as "said property"

Be it known to all that our clients, Mr. Dinesh Yadav and Anita Yadav (hereinafter called the "Purchasers") intend to purchase the said floor from Mr. Pramod Kumar, Mr. Mayank Popli and Mr. Sanjeev Popli (hereinafter called the "Sellers") who owned the said property vide Sale Deed dated 01.11.2023 executed by S. Chavinder Singh. It has been further informed that Mr. Ajit Singh purchased the said property vide Sale Deed dated 21.11.1964 executed by Mrs. Shanti Devi Gulati. After the death of Mr. Ajit Singh on 16.12.1987 and his wife Mrs. Santokh Kaur on 25.11.2014, leaving behind the legal heirs Mrs. Esvinder Singh, Mr. Chavinder Singh, Mr. Esvinder Singh, Mrs. Bhupinder Kaur and Mrs. Jasvinder Kaur. Thereafter, Reincumbent Deed dated 22.01.2015 was executed by Mrs. Devinder Kaur, Mr. Esvinder Singh, Mrs. Bhupinder Kaur and Mrs. Jasvinder Kaur in favour of S. Chavinder Singh. Finally, S. Chavinder Singh sold the said property in favour of seller as mentioned above. The seller has also informed the purchasers that the said floor is not mortgaged anywhere and there is no charge or dispute or any litigation pending regarding the said floor.

Any subsequent claim shall not bind our clients/Purchasers, in any manner whatsoever. Shivkant Arora, Advocate M/s Intellectual Law Offices A-74, LGF, Defence Colony, New Delhi-110024

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**TENDER NOTICE**

The Dy.Chief Electrical Engineer (Const), Northern Railway, Shivaji Bridge, New Delhi for and on behalf of the President of India invites open e-tender for the following work:

| Sl. No. | Name of work and location | Description of work  | Completion period of the work | Approx. Cost of work | Bid Security to be deposited |
|---------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1.      |                           | Electrification of quarters, circulating area, relay huts, RRI building and other associated electrical works in connection with Phase-II work in palwal yard in connection Mathura Palwal 4th line (NCR). | 6 Months                      | Rs. 28,63,118.62/-   | Rs. 57,300/-                 |

5. Date & Time for submission of E-tender and opening of tender: Tenders may be uploaded upto 15:00 hrs on 04.06.2026 date on IREPS web site i.e. [www.nreps.gov.in](http://www.nreps.gov.in). The bidders can participate in the e-tender, the tender will be opened at 15:00 hrs on 04.06.2026

6. Detailed Tender Notice & Tender Document: The detailed e-tender notice is available on Northern Railway web site i.e. [www.nriindianrailways.gov.in](http://www.nriindianrailways.gov.in) and tender document is available on [www.nreps.gov.in](http://www.nreps.gov.in). Above tenders document will be available for submission of offer on IREPS web site i.e. [www.nreps.gov.in](http://www.nreps.gov.in) from 21.05.2026 to 04.06.2026. All other terms and conditions in respect of above tenders are given in tender document. The detailed tender notice also can be seen on the Notice Board of the above office.

No. Tender No. 17-Elect/DYCEE/C/1170 Dated: 12.05.2026

**SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE 1587/2026**

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**INVITATION OF TENDERS**  
**THROUGH E-PROCUREMENT SYSTEM**

Tender Notice No. 11/2026-2027 Date: 12.05.2026

Principal Chief Materials Manager, Northern Railway, New Delhi-110001, for and on behalf of the President of India, invites e-tenders through e-procurement system for supply of the following items:-

| S. No. | Brief Description  | Qty       | Closing Date |
|--------|--|-----------|--------------|
| 01     | 19260899 SET OF AXLE BOX COMPLETE  | 31 SET    | 01.06.26     |
| 02     | 04260079 LIGHT DIESEL OIL  | 166 KLTR  | 02.06.26     |
| 03     | 7726427A TUNGSTEN CARBIDE TAMPING TOOL (TCTT) FOR - 09-3X/DTE MACHINE    | 27 SET    | 03.06.26     |
| 04     | 7726552A TUNGSTEN CARBIDE TAMPING TOOLS (TCTT) FOR OLD CSM               | 16 SET    | 03.06.26     |
| 05     | 09263052 ALUMINIUM PAINT FOR GENERAL PURPOSES IN DUAL CONTAINER.         | 39284 LTR | 08.06.26     |
| 06     | 08260026 ROUTE SIGNAL LIGHTING   | 3147 NOS  | 09.06.26     |
| 07     | 77269062 RUNNING CONTRACT FOR HVN LINERS (T-8993 & T-8994)               | 33500 SET | 09.06.26     |
| 08     | 77265261 MANUFACTURING AND SUPPLY OF LEAF SPRING TO RDSO DRG. NO. T-6310 | 50400 NOS | 09.06.26     |
| 09     | 07265033 SET OF SEATS AND BERTHS FOR LHB AC 3T COACHES                   | 11 SET    | 10.06.26     |
| 10     | 08260028 RED ASPECT MAIN LED SIGNAL                                      | 2307 NOS  | 11.06.26     |
| 11     | 02260080 MICROPROCESSOR CONTROLLER FOR ROOF MOUNTED                      | 472 NOS   | 15.06.26     |
| 12     | 08265205 RGC TENDER FOR 12 CORE X 1.5 SQ. MM                             | 11538 KM  | 16.06.26     |
| 13     | 02261855 HIGH CAPACITY INTER VEHICULAR COUPLERS ZS                       | 114 SET   | 22.06.26     |
| 14     | 02262141 CONDENSER FAN MOTOR 0.75KW                                      | 1847 NOS  | 20.07.26     |

**NOTE - 1.** Vendors may visit the IREPS website i.e. [www.nreps.gov.in](http://www.nreps.gov.in) for details.  
**2.** No Manual offer will be entertained.

1582/26 **SERVING CUSTOMERS WITH A SMILE**



## PROSPECT

# Global oil crisis, Iran war and the need for India's long-term economic security



**DR RAJESHWAR SINGH**

The ongoing Iran war and rising tensions in the Strait of Hormuz have begun impacting the global economy in a serious manner. Oil prices, shipping costs, insurance premiums, currency markets, and global supply chains are all witnessing increasing volatility. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has described the situation as one of the most serious potential disruptions to the global energy market in recent history.

For a large energy-importing nation like India, this is not merely a foreign policy issue but a matter of national economic security, energy security, and strategic stability. Today, India imports nearly 85-90 per cent of its crude oil requirements. In FY25, India imported approximately 242-243 million tonnes of crude oil. Nearly 50 per

cent of India's crude imports come from the Gulf region, while around 60 per cent of LNG imports are also dependent on this region. Almost 90 per cent of India's LPG imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz route.

In the last financial year, India's crude oil and petroleum import bill reached nearly 174 billion dollars, accounting for more than 20 per cent of the country's total imports. Due to the ongoing conflict and geopolitical uncertainty, Brent crude prices have surged sharply, the Indian rupee has weakened to a record 95.31 against the US dollar, and according to Reuters, India's Balance of Payments deficit in FY26 may rise to 66-70 billion dollars compared to approximately 26-28 billion dollars last year.

India is also among the world's largest consumers of gold. In FY26, India imported nearly 72 billion dollars worth of gold, accounting for around 10 per cent of the country's total import bill. Gold imports place enormous pressure on foreign exchange reserves, increase dollar demand, and widen the trade deficit.

India's dependence on the Gulf region is not limited to energy alone. Nearly 40 per cent of India's

urea and phosphate fertiliser imports come from the Gulf region. India also receives more than 125 billion dollars annually in remittances from Gulf countries, while millions of Indian workers and professionals are employed across the Middle East.

The war has significantly increased shipping insurance costs, raised global freight rates, and disrupted supply chains. Recognising the seriousness of the situation, India has initiated "Operation Urja Suraksha," under which the Indian Navy has intensified protection of energy cargo routes in the Arabian Sea and Strait of Hormuz region.

This crisis is not merely a temporary economic shock but a strategic warning that India must now move rapidly toward building a long-term national economic security framework.

To prevent such vulnerabilities in the future, India must take three major national policy decisions.

First, India must launch a large-scale "National Energy Independence Mission" aimed at gradually reducing imported fossil fuel dependency over the next 15-20 years. This would require mission-mode expansion of solar power, nuclear energy capaci-

ty, green hydrogen, electric mobility, rail-based freight transport modernization, ethanol, biofuels, and compressed biogas ecosystems. If India can reduce its oil dependency from 85-90 per cent to even 40-50 per cent, it would represent one of the country's greatest strategic economic achievements.

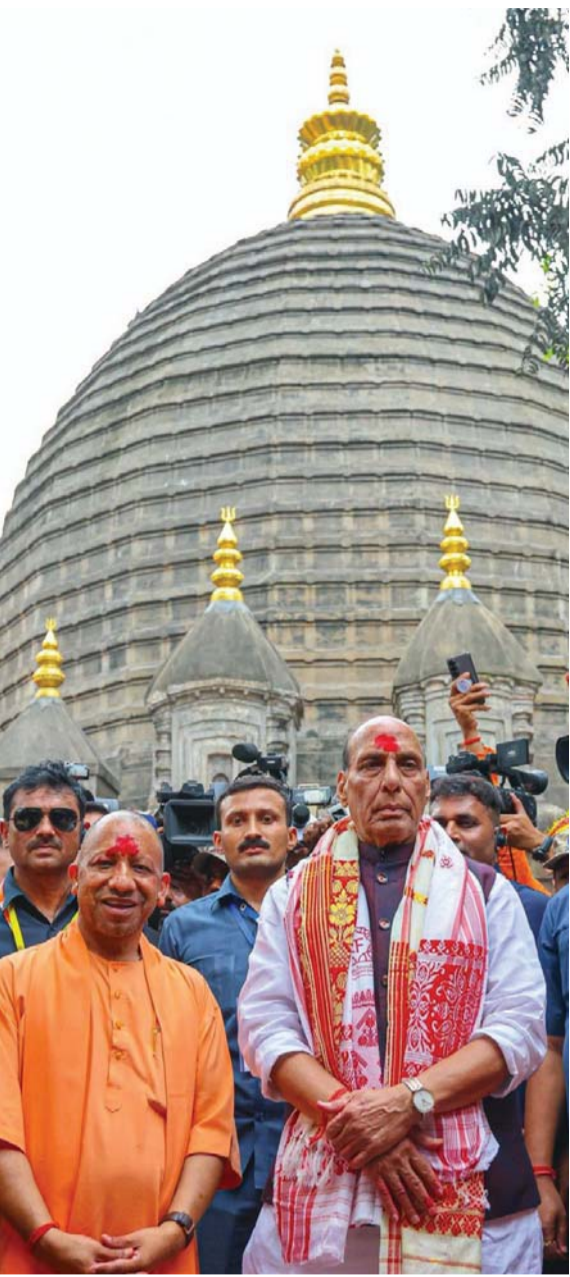
Second, India must establish a "National Strategic Reserves & Resource Security Framework." India must treat not only oil reserves but also gold reserves, fertiliser reserves, rare earth minerals, semiconductor supply chains, and critical food and energy reserves as strategic national assets. The country should urgently work toward creating 6-12 months of strategic fuel reserves, expanding the Indian shipping fleet, strengthening maritime security systems, and acquiring global mining and energy assets.

Third, India must transition from a consumption-driven economy toward a productive and efficient economy. This would require a national push for public transport expansion, Work From Home ecosystems, AI-based energy efficiency systems, domestic tourism promotion, gold import reduction

strategies, and energy-efficient industries and buildings. India spends lakhs of crores every year on imported oil, gold, and external energy systems. If these resources are redirected toward innovation, AI, manufacturing, defence production, infrastructure, and research, India can become self-reliant and emerge as a far stronger global power. The world is entering a new geopolitical-economic era where the strongest nations will be those that are energy secure, supply-chain resilient, technologically advanced, and economically disciplined.

It is within this broader national economic security vision that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appealed to citizens to avoid unnecessary foreign trips, reduce non-essential gold purchases for the next year, increase Work From Home practices, reduce petrol and diesel consumption, make greater use of public transport, metro systems, and EVs, and adopt solar energy and energy efficiency measures to conserve foreign exchange and strengthen India's energy security.

The writer is an MLA from Sarojini Nagar, Lucknow.



Union Minister Rajnath Singh and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took blessings at Maa Kamakhya Mandir, Guwahati.



US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor is giving a courtesy call to Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma after the latter assumed the post of Chief Minister for the second consecutive term in Guwahati on May 12, 2026

## ITC's AI 'Crop Doctor' helps farmers improve plant health for up to 70 crops

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

As the world observes the International Day of Plant Health, ITC's unique ITC-MAARS 'phygital' ecosystem, with its integrated, hyper-local and customised solutions such as the 'Crop Doctor', powered by AI and ML-based capabilities, is enabling real-time detection of plant diseases, delivering tailored remedial guidance to Indian farmers.

ITCMAARS 'Crop Doctor' enables farmers to diagnose crop diseases and pest infestations instantly using AI-based image analytics.

This feature provided in the ITCMAARS superapp covers 70 different crops and has been used 3 lakh times in a short span, helping farmers take corrective measures and prevent crop loss. By ensuring early detection, the tool strengthens biosecurity at the farm level, minimising the spread of diseases.

Crop Doctor also recommends customised remedial actions covering chemical,

biological and mechanical crop management practices, reducing the time gap between pest detection and mitigation. The recommendations are available both in vernacular text and audio for the convenience of farmers.

"Plant health and food security are deeply interconnected, especially in the context of climate change and pest risks. Comprehensive interventions for soil health, agri-inputs and weather alerts across sowing to harvesting are critical in ensuring good plant health. Through our integrated ITCMAARS phygital ecosystem and powered by its unique tech-enabled solutions, including the 'Crop Doctor' and expert on-ground customised advisories, we are committed to helping farmers with accessible, science-led solutions that support early detection, preventive action and sustainable crop management," said S Ganesh Kumar, Chief Executive, Agri Business Division, ITC Ltd.

"Our endeavour is to



strengthen farm resilience while improving productivity and farmer livelihoods," he added.

Farmers can also seek personalised guidance from ITC's Agri Experts with the help of the platform's direct engagement service, which provides support through toll-free lines in regional languages.

Launched in 2022, the ITC-MAARS model has today developed into a full-stack Farming as a Service (Faas) solution that acts as a robust input-output marketplace enabled by advanced digital technologies & anchored by FPOs on the ground. The ITC-



MAARS ecosystem has already benefited close to 2.5 million farmers and 2180 FPOs across 11 states. According to pilot estimates, the integrated initiative has resulted in a 10-15 per cent reduction in fertiliser usage and a 15-20 per cent improvement in crop yields, enhancing overall farm incomes by ~25 per cent.

As a company working for more than a century with farmers, ITC's digital stack for agriculture, led by ITCMAARS, aims to reach 10 million farmers, enabling rural development & progress.

The predictive, hyperlocal & dynamic tech-based advi-

sories on the ITCMAARS platform also include the Crop Calendar — an AI-powered nudge engine helping farmers to scientifically plan crop cycles and timely farming activities for 53 different crops, based on agro-climatic conditions, to maximise yields.

Complementing this is a fertiliser calculator that analyses soil test results and crop requirements to recommend balanced nutrient application, helping farmers avoid both deficiency and excessive usage while improving crop and soil quality while reducing environmental impact.

ITCMAARS also includes 'Krishi Mitra', an AI powered agri-copilot, developed with Microsoft, which is the first of its kind globally.

Available in 8 Indian languages, the Krishi Mitra functionality within the ITCMAARS super-app helps bridge long standing information asymmetry for farmers by answering queries on crops, practices, weather, prices, and government schemes. It has resolved close to 2 lakh

unique farmer queries within 2 years, helping farmers take informed selling decisions, improve access to subsidies, practise precision farming and prepare better for adverse weather events.

Besides, the partnership ecosystem of ITCMAARS enables farmers access critical farming services to ensure superior plant health. The network includes financial institutions that offer loans, Agtech start-up solutions, including precision farming through drones, as well as agri input companies that sell fertilisers and other inputs through the superapp.

Further enhancing preventive crop management, ITC-MAARS leverages remote sensing and IoT analytics to monitor crop health indicators and identify early stress patterns and pest hotspots before visible damage occurs in fields. ITC has also undertaken detailed farm-level climate studies using the Climate AI tool to understand region-specific climate risks and crop vulnerabilities across India.

## DAILY SUDOKU

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★☆☆☆

### HOW TO SOLVE IT

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you fill a 9x9 grid so that numbers 1 to 9 appear once in every row, column, and 3x3 box, using elimination and logical deduction—no maths involved.

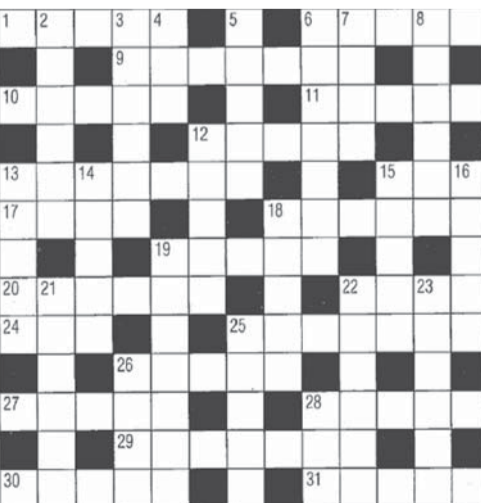


### SOLUTION (12.5.26)

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 6 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 2 |
| 2 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 4 |
| 4 | 5 | 9 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 6 | 8 | 3 |
| 5 | 7 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 6 | 9 |
| 1 | 2 | 6 | 9 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 8 |
| 3 | 9 | 8 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| 8 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 9 | 6 | 2 | 7 | 1 |
| 7 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 9 | 6 |
| 9 | 6 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 5 |

## DOUBLE CROSSWORD

WEDNESDAY | MAY 13, 2026



- ACROSS**
- The greatest way to eat? (5)
  - Glide smoothly yet very noisily in a boat (5)
  - It's on the wing (7)
  - Next to synthetic fur, it's a natural product (5)
  - Runs out, as mother does at teatime! (5)
  - Was slow to get a republican in court (5)
  - Thought highly of, though always in the red (7)
  - Aged figures with plenty of energy (3)
  - Soon admits ignorance of authorship (4)
  - A scale used somewhere on the Continent (6)
  - Roman who, having got in, went out to work at a trade! (5)
  - Finds an unfulfilled desire irritating? (6)
  - Enough beef for eleven? (4)
  - Quite definitely it's said to be cast (3)
  - Spanish sportsman, a cad at heart (7)
  - Like Herb, he has his roots in the soil (5)
  - A wooden one's not for winning (5)
  - Long neglected duty about the first of September (5)
  - At the end of winter, wild cats spread out (7)
  - James, the father of David? (5)
  - Sort of drum for a catchy rhythm? (5)
- DOWN**
- Get tough on difficult points (6)
  - Girl bowled over? (6)
  - Location of tip-up seats? (3)
  - Can it keep one's chest a bit warm in bed? (5)
  - In a silly, sentimental yet absorbing way? (7)
  - It's tied to the idea of speed (4)
  - Favourable figures relating to acid (6)
  - Battery units (5)
  - Frantic weaving of braid (5)
  - There's something gripping about love, say (5)
  - Hands (2)
  - Lip-reading (2)
  - Read-fer (2)
  - Foiled again (2)
  - Gets across (2)
  - Night nurse (2)
  - O-riginal (2)
  - Am-bit-1-on (2)
  - Flogged (2)
  - List-less (2)
  - Ha-ti-ng (2)
  - Drive (2)
  - Sec-ti-on (2)
  - Rock (2)

### SOLUTION (11.5.26)

- ACROSS**
- Pick-me-up
  - Lie
  - Nap-kin
  - Dr-a-per
  - Ravioli
  - Date
  - Cause a stir
  - De-part-ed
  - Hitches
  - Thai (tie)
  - Stress
  - Going down the drain
  - B-onn-et
  - Lash
  - Sayings
  - Mishand
  - Deliberate
  - Hi-s-t
  - Turn up
  - Haunts
  - I-re
  - Hands
  - Lip-reading
  - Skip
  - Decrease
  - Spirits
  - Second sight
  - Indisposed
  - Spid-er (rev)
  - List-less
  - Liver
  - Sec-ti-on
  - Rock

## Lanxess, HPCL ink MoU to upscale aviation and industrial lubricants

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Specialty chemicals major Lanxess has signed an MoU with Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (HPCL) to jointly advance availability of aviation and industrial lubricants in India and SAARC countries.

The partnership aims to deliver technologically advanced, high-performing lubricant solutions, advancing standards and availability in the booming aviation and industrial markets in the country.

"We are excited to partner with Lanxess to provide Indian customers with



Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited.

"This MoU marks a new chapter in our growth story. Together with HPCL, we will set new benchmarks for quality and performance while accelerating growth in India's dynamic aviation and industrial markets," said Neelanjan Banerjee, Senior Vice President and Global Head of the Business Unit Lubricant Additives, Lanxess.

The collaboration will enable broader local access to premium Lanxess-branded aviation and industrial lubricants, including in critical segments, besides exploring business development opportunities.

cutting-edge lubricants that enhance efficiency and performance. With Lanxess' expertise and our strong market presence, this collaboration will drive growth across aviation and industrial sectors," said Srinivas Ch, Executive Director — Lubes,

## ED arrests 2 ex-IDFC First Bank employees in funds theft case

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday said it has arrested two former employees of an IDFC First Bank branch in Chandigarh in a money laundering case linked to the alleged embezzlement of ₹590 crore in Haryana government funds, in addition to cheating some other entities.

Ribhav Rishi, a former manager, and Abhay Kumar, an ex-relationship manager, with the bank's Sector 32 branch in Chandigarh, were taken into custody on Monday, the central agency said in a statement.

A special Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) court has sent them to ED



custody till May 21.

The ED said the investigation conducted so far detected embezzlement of public funds amounting to ₹645 crore from the bank accounts maintained with the IDFC First Bank's branch by the Haryana government, the UT administration of Chandigarh, and two private schools in Chandigarh and Panchkula.

Rishi, the ED alleged, floated "shell" entities Capco

Fintech Services and RS Trader in the names of his personal assistant and driver.

It claimed Kumar also floated a "shell" entity, Swastik Dosh Projects, in his wife's and brother-in-law's names. These shell entities received funds worth hundreds of crores of rupees, "directly embezzled" from various government accounts, which were then "layered and siphoned off".

Efforts are underway to trace the complete money trail and identify the other beneficiaries and properties acquired using the embezzled funds, the ED said. The money laundering case stems from an FIR registered by the Haryana State Vigilance and Anti-Corruption Bureau.

## Sebi mulls phased introduction of physical settlement in select agri commodity derivatives



**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE**  
New Delhi

Markets regulator Sebi on Tuesday proposed allowing stock exchanges to introduce a phased approach to physical settlement for select agricultural commodity derivatives contracts in a bid to boost liquidity while retaining a strong linkage with the underlying physical market.

Under the proposal, exchanges would be permitted to revive illiquid contracts or launch new delivery-based contracts in select agricultural commodities that would initially trade as financially settled contracts, Sebi said in its consultation paper.

These contracts would mandatorily transition to physical settlement once they cross pre-defined thresholds related to Average Daily Traded Volume (ADTV) and/or open interest, or after two years from launch, whichever is earlier.

On a pilot basis, the regulator said a few commodities such as maize, groundnut and chilli could be considered under the proposed framework.

## BRIEFLY

### Cardoso set to miss World Cup because of ankle surgery



United States midfielder Johnny Cardoso is set to miss the World Cup because of a right ankle injury that requires surgery. His Spanish club Atletico Madrid announced the surgery on Monday. The procedure usually requires months of recovery time and the World Cup begins in one month. Atletico didn't give a timetable for his return. It also didn't immediately say when or where the surgery will take place. The 24-year-old Cardoso sprained his ankle during training last week. He has 23 appearances for the US since his debut in 2020. The US opens its World Cup campaign on June 13 against Paraguay in Inglewood, California. Mauricio Pochettino's team also plays Australia and Turkey in Group D.

### Acrobatic late goal gives Bologna surprise win at Napoli



A stoppage time goal from Jonathan Rowe gave Bologna a 3-2 win against Napoli in a pulsating Serie A encounter. The result – only the second home defeat of the season for Napoli – lifted Bologna into eighth place above Udinese and Lazio with two rounds remaining. Federico Bernardeschi put visiting Bologna 1-0 up after nine minutes with a rifled shot into the roof of the net and Riccardo Orsolini added a second from the penalty spot 11 minutes before the break. Giovanni Di Lorenzo pulled one back for Napoli in first-half stoppage time and Alisson Santos slotted home a neat layoff from Rasmus Hojlund early in the second half to level the scores. However, Bologna seized the win in the 91st when Rowe acrobatically converted after Vanja Milinkovic-Savic could only parry Juan Miranda's fierce shot. Napoli remained in second place, two points ahead of Juventus and three above AC Milan and Roma. Inter Milan has already secured the league title.

## Spurs draw with Leeds in Premier League survival fight

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ London

Tottenham Hotspur took a small, potentially crucial step toward retaining its Premier League status after drawing at home with Leeds United 1-1.

Spurs, just above the drop zone, moved two points clear of relegation rival West Ham.

Tottenham went ahead in the 50th minute on Mathys Tels' strike.

However, Tels' foul on Ethan Ampadu with 15 minutes left led to a Leeds penalty that was converted by Dominic Calvert-Lewin.

Spurs takes on Chelsea away and Everton at home in their last two games, while West Ham is away at Newcastle before facing Leeds at home on the final day of the season.

One of the two teams will join the already relegated Burnley and Wolves in next season's Championship.

Spurs went into the game on a high after two consecutive victories, but though they dominated the first half in terms of possession and shots on goal, they didn't break the deadlock until five minutes into the second half.

Pedro Porro's corner kick was cleared to an unmarked Tels, who coolly struck into the far corner of the net from 20 meters out. It was the center forward's first goal since Jan. 7.

Tels turned villain 24 minutes later when his high foot was adjudged to have made contact with Ethan Ampadu's head. The referee pointed to spot and Calvert-Lewin, who was denied



a first-half penalty after a video review, confidently dispatched spot kick.

In an edgy last few moments and a remarkable 15 minutes of added time there were no more goals. Spurs will content themselves that their destiny remains in their hands.

"We played a good game but there was big pressure," Tottenham coach Roberto De Zerbi said. "We didn't play calmly. We wanted to win immediately without passes. When you are fighting for relegation you can't play every game calmly. Leeds played a good game and we hope they play like that against West Ham in the next game." Spurs have taken eight out of a pos-

sible 12 points since De Zerbi's debut defeat at Sunderland on April 12.

"We deserve to stay up," he said. "We will fight until the end... Even if we had won today it wouldn't have been finished yet."

**Hull secures playoff spot:** Hull will play Southampton or Middlesbrough in Championship playoff final after second half goals from Mo Belloumi and Joe Gelhardt gave it a 2-0 win over Millwall in London.

Belloumi's 64th-minute strike with his left foot broke the deadlock in second game of two-leg affair and Gelhardt made sure with a low shot that squirmed past the Millwall goalkeeper.

### Sprinter Gout Gout to lead Australia's world juniors squad in Eugene



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Brisbane

Star sprinter Gout Gout has already set an international record faster than Usain Bolt could produce at the Under-20 level, and now he'll get a chance to lower it when he leads Australia's 75-strong squad for world juniors in Eugene, Oregon in August.

"I'm really excited to get out there at World Athletics Under 20s," Gout said in a statement Tuesday announcing Australia's squad for the Aug. 5-9 championships. "It's a great stadium and place to run fast, and I feel confident I'll be ready to step up and make Australia proud."

Gout will compete in the 200 metres – he already holds the under-20 world record in that event – and he'll also be part of 4x400 relay team.

### Curacao parts with coach amid reports Advocaat could return

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Willemstad (Curacao)

World Cup debutant Curacao parted company with coach Fred Rutten amid reports Dutch veteran Dick Advocaat is returning to the team he led through qualifying.

The uncertainty around the smallest nation by population ever to qualify for a men's World Cup comes less than five weeks before a testing opening game against Germany in Houston.

Rutten took the job in February after the 78-year-old Advocaat stepped down citing his daughter's health issues.

Under Rutten, the team lost two warmup games in March – against Australia and China, both in Australia – with players reportedly wanting Advocaat back.

"I regret how things unfolded but I wish everyone the best," Rutten said in a statement posted by the Curacao soccer federation. He previously coached Dutch clubs Twente, PSV Eindhoven and Feyenoord, and Schalke in Germany.

The federation is expected to hold a news conference on Tuesday.



Curacao is joined by Ghana, Morocco and Saudi Arabia in changing hands since the World Cup draw in December.

Curacao is an autonomous territory of about 156,000 people in the Caribbean within the Netherlands kingdom. The team relies almost entirely on players born and raised in the Netherlands.

The team also will play Ecuador in Kansas City and Ivory Coast in Philadelphia at the first 48-team World Cup. The expanded format gave three extra guaranteed entries to CONCACAF.

## Real Oviedo relegated from La Liga



ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Madrid

A late goal from veteran striker Cristhian Stuani rescued a point for Girona in a tense relegation encounter at Rayo Vallecano that guaranteed Real Oviedo will go down from La Liga.

The 1-1 draw meant Oviedo, in last place, will return to La Liga 2 after one season in the top tier.

Girona was two points clear of the relegation zone with three games remaining.

However, only six points separate the nine teams from

places 11th to 19th as a desperate relegation battle to avoid joining Oviedo looks certain to go to the final weekend.

Rayo, who last week beat Strasbourg to set up a Conference League final against Crystal Palace, came into the game on a high and was on top for much of the match.

However, it struggled to threaten the Girona goal and the deadlock wasn't broken until the 86th minute when Rayo Brazilian forward Alemao cleverly deflected in a long-range shot.

## PGA Championship at Aronimink largely about big slopes on big greens



DOUG FERGUSON ■ Newtown Square (USA)

Justin Thomas had his caddie place hole-sized discs on every corner of the 17th green at Aronimink, all of them perched on knobs.

Whether he was chipping or putting, it was a challenge.

Aronimink is marked by its 180 bunkers that frame the landing areas, except for the longest hitters. The first official day of practice for the PGA Championship brought a reminder that accuracy this week is more about shots into the green than avoiding bunkers or the healthy rough.

These are big greens with big slopes. "Off the tee it's not extremely challenging," said Keegan Bradley, who won on a soggy Aronimink in 2018 at the BMW Championship.

"But the greens get really crazy, and they are really mounded and hilly just like a lot of Northeast courses. So to put the ball in the right spot is really important."

The course was full, inside and outside the ropes, despite temperatures that struggled to reach 60 degrees Fahrenheit (15 Celsius), which can happen with the PGA Championship moving to

May and being held in northern part of the United States. Bethpage Black was even colder in 2019 until it warmed as the week went on, and that's expected to be the case this week.

Thomas was among the few who made a scouting trip during one of his weeks off. It was a chance to get reacquainted with a course that has fewer trees than the last time he played in 2018, and was in perfect condition. The last day for member play was November 2.

"It's pretty generous off the tee," Thomas said. "I don't remember, but it feels like at some point you can tell they took out a lot of trees. The holes that feel open, the rough is healthy. But the greens have a lot of slope. It's going to be dependent on how firm and fast they can get."

There was another reason for an early trip to Aronimink. He could get in 18 holes without feeling as though he lost an entire day. That's typical in the days leading to a major championship.

"Practice rounds at the PGA are the most miserable ever," Thomas said after playing nine holes Monday morning as the first one out on the back nine. "Unbearably slow." (AP)

## Shabnim Ismail reverses international retirement for women's T20 World Cup

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA ■ Johannesburg

South African pacer Shabnim Ismail on Tuesday reversed her international retirement as she was named in the country's 15-player squad for the Women's T20 World Cup 2026 in the UK from June 12 to July 5.

Aiming to inspire the future generations of women's cricket in the country, the Proteas squad, captained by Laura Wolvaardt, features the 37-year-old Ismail, who last represented SA in the T20 World Cup final in Cape Town in February 2023.

She brings a wealth of experience, adding 113 T20I caps and a national record of 123 wickets to the group.

She will be joined by Marizanne Kapp and Dane van Niekerk, who are back after recovering from illness and a calf injury, respectively.

Wicketkeeper-batter Karabo Meso also returns from a wrist injury that ruled her out of the recent T20I series against India and will link up with Sinalo Jafta in



that department. South Africa had outplayed India in the recent five match series.

Kayla Reyneke is set for her first senior World Cup after enjoying a breakout international season. The former SA U19 Women's captain ended the 2025/26 campaign with a batting average of 53 and five wickets in her first nine T20Is.

The remainder of the squad includes Tazmin Brits, Sune Luus, Annerie Dercksen, Nadine de Klerk, and Chloe Tryon. Meanwhile, the bowling attack features seamers

Ayabonga Khaka and Tumi Sekhukhune, as well as spin queen Nonkululeko Mlaba.

After reaching the last three ICC tournament finals, South Africa will begin their latest T20 World Cup campaign in Group 1 against Australia on June 13 in Manchester, before facing Pakistan, India, the Netherlands and Bangladesh.

Proteas Women head coach, Mandla Mashimbeni, said: "The 4-1 series win against India gave us a lot of confidence, but there are still final touch-ups we need to make before the World Cup starts."

## Pegula putting family experience in NFL and NHL to use in tennis prize money protest

ANDREW DAMPF ■ Rome

Talk of a boycott from top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka and Jannik Sinner has grabbed attention.

Behind the scenes, it's been Jessica Pegula, the 2024 US Open runner-up, organizing the top tennis players in their protest with the Grand Slams over the share of tournament revenues devoted to prize money.

It comes naturally to Pegula, who grew up in a household of sports managers: Her parents own the NFL's Buffalo Bills and the NHL's Buffalo Sabres.

"I think it maybe does (come naturally) just because I feel like I've taken on a bit of a leadership role with it," Pegula said.

Already this year, No. 5-ranked Pegula was named to lead a new 13-person panel to suggest changes to the women's tennis calendar, rankings points rules and the requirements about competing in certain events. Now she's taking on the prize money issue, too.

"I'm not afraid to go up to any type of player and go like, Hey, are you interested in this or not?" Pegula said.



"Some players, they don't care, sometimes they're not worried about it. Sometimes they're like, 'Yeah, for sure, I'm 100 per cent in.' I've been reaching out to players on the men's and women's side."

Sabalenka said last week the players should consider a boycott for a bigger slice of tournament revenue, while Sinner said there's a lack of respect.

"At the end of the day the players are the ones that have the big voices," Pegula said. "It's been nice to see Aryna and Jannik kind of step

out. I know a lot of other players feel the same way. But to have two number 1s very outspoken about it, that's kind of what it takes to get them to listen."

Players' share dropped in Paris Whereas in the NFL and NHL athletes take home about 50 per cent of the revenues, at most tennis events the number isn't even half of that. The upcoming French Open is allegedly devoting under 14.9 per cent to the players – down from 15.5 per cent in 2024, according to a players' protest statement issued last week. (AP)

## Southampton asks for more time to review spying controversy

ASSOCIATED PRESS ■ Southampton

Southampton has asked for more time to complete an internal review after being charged with allegedly spying on Middlesbrough's practice sessions ahead of the teams' games in the Championship playoffs.

In a statement on Tuesday, Southampton said it was "fully cooperating" with English soccer authorities after being charged Friday with a breach of its regulations following accusations that unauthorized filming of Middlesbrough's training took place.

The English Football League requested an independent disciplinary commission undertake a hearing "at the earliest opportunity."

The teams drew 0-0 in the first leg of the playoff semifinals on Saturday, with the return match taking place in Southampton on Tuesday. The winner will face Hull in playoff final at Wembley Stadium on May 23, with a place in the Premier League – and a



windfall of at least 200 million pounds (\$270 million) in future earnings – at stake.

"The club is fully cooperating with the EFL and the disciplinary commission, whilst also undertaking an internal review to ensure that all facts and context are properly understood," Southampton CEO Phil Parsons said in the statement.

"Given the intensity of the fixture schedule and the short turnaround between matches,

we have requested time to complete that process thoroughly and responsibly. We understand the discussion and speculation that has followed over recent days, but we also believe it is important that the full context is established before conclusions are drawn."

Parsons said he was confident club would stay united during the controversy. "Our focus now turns fully to this evening's game," he wrote. "This is the

time for all of us to get behind the team and create another special atmosphere at St Mary's."

The EFL said the charges against Southampton relate to regulations which require clubs "to act towards each other with the utmost good faith" and prohibit a club from "observing, or attempting to observe, another club's training session within 72 hours of a scheduled match" between the teams.

### GT climbs to top spot in IPL points table

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Ahmedabad

Gujarat Titans outclassed Sunrisers Hyderabad by 82 runs to take the top position in the Indian Premier League points table with a compelling all-round show here on Tuesday.

After half-centuries from Sai Sudharsan (61) and Washington Sundar (50) took the Titans to 168 for seven in a scratchy outing with the bat, Kagiso Rabada (3/28) ran through SRH's top-order and Jason Holder (3/20) followed up with an incisive spell to script a fifth consecutive victory for the IPL 2022 winners.

Chasing 169, SRH collapsed to 60 for seven courtesy Rabada's exploits with the new ball and Holder's inroads post the powerplay, eventually rolling over for 86 in 14.5 overs to lose heavily.

If a two-paced wicket had made run-scoring difficult at the start of the contest, it was Rabada's class all over the belligerent SRH batters in the second innings, with the South African pacer snaring three wickets in his four overs - all bowled upfront.

It all began with Mohammed Siraj (3-1-11-1) starting with a wicket-



maiden, first cutting the impact sub Travis Head into half with a jaffa and then inducing a leading edge which flew all the way down to deep backward point.

Head fished the ball bowled on the leg and went hard at it. The ball ballooned to the third man where Nishant Sindhu took an easy grab.

Abhishek Sharma (6) lofted Rabada over the infield for a six down the pitch, but the bowler followed the left-hander when he tried to make room. Abhishek fell meekly as

the ball crashed into his wickets after hitting the bat. Rabada was all over the SRH batters and none of them had answers to his probing classical line and lengths.

In the fourth over, Ishan Kishan (11) could not prevent edging one behind when the ball nipped away from him, leaving SRH reeling at 23 for three. While there wasn't any fourth wicket for Rabada, he snared his third in the final over of the powerplay, getting R Smaran to hit one straight to Shubman Gill at mid-on, with SRH crawling to

32 for four. SRH's slide continued even as Rabada was bowled out and Siraj taken off the attack.

Having batted patiently, Heinrich Klaasen (14) looked to go after one from Holder but the ball not only stuck onto the surface a little but also bounced higher than anticipated, taking a leading edge which was collected by Jos Buttler behind the wickets.

SRH's hopes for taking it deep suffered another massive blow when Holder had Nitish Kumar Reddy (2)

playing one which too bounced extra and went straight to Washington Sundar at point, which left the visitors at 60 for seven.

Amid all this, Prasidh Krishna also was among the wickets, taking 2/23 in his three overs.

SRH skipper Pat Cummins' 19 was the highest individual contribution in their innings.

Earlier, Sai Sudharsan struck a dogged half-century, while Washington Sundar chipped in with a fluent fifty to power Gujarat Titans' innings.

### No major changes despite losing streak: PBKS spin bowling coach

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Dharamsala

Punjab Kings spin-bowling coach Sairaj Bahutule said the team will not be making any major changes despite losing their fourth game on the trot, while admitting that poor catching at crucial junctures is a major concern.

Punjab Kings had begun the season in dominant fashion, winning six matches in a row to sit atop the table during the opening phase of the league. But the Shreyas Iyer-led side has since hit a slump, losing their last four matches.

Fielding lapses — particularly dropped catches — have repeatedly hurt the team at vital moments. In the last two matches, Punjab have dropped five catches.

"Again, today unfortunately we dropped a few catches at the crucial time. We will reflect, but again, no time for us to really brood about it," Bahutule said at the post-match press conference.

"I think the team that has been doing so well. Yes, we



have lost a few games. We will again reflect on certain areas only. There won't be any major changes, in the sense, everybody has been performing," he added.

In Punjab's three-wicket defeat to Delhi Capitals on Monday, the Kings dropped two catches, including one of Axar Patel, who went on to score a counter-attack in half-

century. "At the crucial time, we are dropping a catch, which unfortunately is breaking the momentum that we were getting. If we had caught those two catches, I don't think they would have maybe reached the target, but it would have been very difficult for them. But we will definitely look into it and see how we can just turn it around for ourselves."

"I think it's very important to just take the learnings from this game, whatever errors we've made, there were some unforced errors," he added.



### Delhi Capitals captain Axar Patel fined for slow over rate



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Dharamsala

Delhi Capitals skipper Axar Patel has been fined ₹12 lakh after his team maintained a slow over rate in their win against Punjab Kings in the Indian Premier League here.

Axar and David Miller scored counter attacking fifties to help DC defeat Punjab Kings by three-wickets and keep their slim Playoff chances alive here on Monday.

"Delhi Capitals (DC) Captain Axar Patel has been fined after his team maintained a slow over rate during the match Match number 55 of TATA Indian Premier League (IPL) 2026 against Punjab Kings (PBKS) at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium, Dharamsala," said an IPL media advisory.

"As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Axar Patel was fined INR 12 lakhs," it added.

Currently seventh on the points table, DC next take on Rajasthan Royals at home on Sunday.

### Bowlers have some catching up to do in T20 cricket: Dravid

KUSHAN SARKAR  
New Delhi

World Cup winning former India head coach Rahul Dravid said the grammar of T20 batting has undergone a complete metamorphosis of late and bowlers have some serious "catching up to do."

Dravid, who guided India to its second T20 World Cup triumph in 2024 in the Caribbean, is marvelled at how the young guns like Vaibhav Sooryavanshi, Ayush Mhatre, Priyansh Arya along with world's No. 1 ranked T20 batter Abhishek Sharma have entirely changed the approach in the Powerplay overs.

"In a sense, to see the quality of batting that has happened over the last two or three years, I think the bowlers in that format of the game will slowly have to do some catching up," Dravid told PTI in an exclusive interview from Dublin, where he was unveiled as the owner of European T20 Premier



League (ETPL)'s Dublin franchise. The former India skipper and one of India's most respected coaches raved about how batters are now hitting boundaries to parts of the ground which earlier seemed out of bounds. "I think batsmanship and the ability to hit sixes and to access different parts of the ground has certainly improved leaps and bounds. "Bowlers will have to keep working on their skills and keep

developing. I am sure, some of them will be able to still stand out and hold their own," said Dravid, who has coached IPL teams like Rajasthan Royals and Delhi Capitals.

However, he had no hesitation in admitting modern batters have adapted to the requirements of the T20 game better than the bowlers. However, Dravid was confident of a change.

"I think if you look at it in terms of balance, probably a lot more batsmen are able to cope with the requirements of the modern T20 game than, say, some of the bowlers have been able to at this point of time. That may change in two or three years," he added.

The scenario is, however, a bit different in Test matches where bowlers have had the upper hand in consistently producing result-oriented games.

"You know, two-day matches, three-day matches. So, bowlers have started holding the sway in Test cricket," he said. (PTI)

### Would love to see Dhoni in ETPL: Abhishek Bachchan

MONA PARTHASARATHI  
New Delhi

Six years after retiring from international cricket, Mahendra Singh Dhoni continues to command unmatched fandom with actor and ETPL co-founder Abhishek Bachchan saying he would love to see the former India captain feature in the new European T20 Premier League.

"Mahendra Singh Dhoni," Bachchan replied instantly when



asked which Indian cricketer he would most like to see in the ETPL and why. "Do you need a reason why you want to see Mahendra Singh Dhoni in cricket?" he told PTI from Dublin.

Dhoni, who retired from international cricket in 2020, remains part of the Chennai Super Kings squad but has not played this season due to a calf injury sustained before the tournament. Under current BCCI regula-

tions, only Indian male cricketers who have retired from all forms of cricket and the Indian Premier League can participate in overseas T20 leagues in order to preserve the IPL's exclusivity and safeguard India's domestic cricket structure.

While admitting that the current Indian stars will be missed, Bachchan expressed confidence in the ETPL's quality and global appeal. (PTI)

### Iyer blames team's bowling, fielding after loss to DC



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
Dharamsala

Skipper Shreyas Iyer did not mince words after Punjab Kings slumped to their fourth successive defeat, blaming the team's bowling and fielding after failing to defend what he felt was a total "30 runs more" than par on a tricky pitch against Delhi Capitals.

PBKS lost by three wickets to Delhi Capitals in a home IPL game here on Monday. "I won't beat around the bush, I'll just say fielding and bowling again," Iyer said. Priyansh Arya hit half a dozen sixes in his whirlwind 33-ball 56 before DC pacers tweaked their lengths to limit Punjab Kings to 210 for five. Besides Arya, Iyer made 59 not out off 36 balls to push PBKS to 210 for 5 on a wicket that had something for the fast bowlers. Aggressive knocks from

David Miller (51 off 28) and skipper Axar Patel (56 off 30) allowed DC to gun down 211 in 19 overs for the highest chase at the HPCA Stadium.

Asked if he thought 210 was a good score on this wicket, Iyer said: "Absolutely, I feel that it was 30 runs more on this wicket considering how the ball was seaming and there was variable bounce."

Iyer said he thought of bringing in impact substitute Yuzvendra Chahal into the attack but changed his mind witnessing the assistance for the seamers from the pitch.

"There was absolutely a thought in my mind (on introducing Chahal), but the way ball was seaming and the way it was helping seamers, I think if we would have executed our line and length precisely, we could have been able to extract wickets, but unfortunately again, we didn't.

### WFI blocking Vinesh Phogat, says Sakshi Malik



PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

Olympic bronze-winning grappler Sakshi Malik on Tuesday supported Vinesh Phogat in her tussle with the Wrestling Federation of India over coming back from retirement, saying that attempts are being made to block her at a time when countries world over are relaxing norms to help new mothers resume their careers.

A defiant Vinesh showed up at National Open Ranking Tournament in Gonda even though WFI had declared her ineligible. While issuing a

lengthy showcause notice to her, the WFI said she could not be allowed to compete due to the mandatory 6 month notice period that athletes need to serve before returning from retirement under anti-doping rules. Vinesh, who is the mother of a 10-month old son, has responded to the notice and refused to back down despite WFI's strict position. Sakshi was a close ally of Vinesh during the highly-publicised protest against alleged sexual harassment by WFI's then President Brij Bhushan Singh Sharan but broke ranks after Vinesh joined the Congress party.

### Disruption after wrestlers' protest hurt career momentum: Deepak Punia

AMANPREET SINGH  
Gonda

Asian Games silver medallist Deepak Punia believes the disruption caused by the wrestlers' protest at jantar mantar and the resulting lack of international exposure derailed the momentum of several Indian wrestlers, including his own, as he attempts to revive his career this season.

Once considered India's most consistent wrestler in the 86kg category, Deepak has struggled to regain his earlier rhythm after narrowly missing out on a bronze medal at the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Since then, his only major podium finish has been a silver medal at the Asian Games in 2023.

The 26-year-old, who won the National Open Ranking Tournament here on Monday, however, remains ineligible for the May 31 selection trials for Asian Games as per the current Wrestling Federation of India policy, which does not consider this tournament for entry into trials.

Deepak said the long phase of uncertainty in Indian wrestling following the wrestlers' protest significantly



impacted athletes by reducing international competition opportunities and exposure. "After 2023, many tournaments stopped because of the protest and all that happened. We did not get chances to compete abroad like we used to earlier," Deepak told PTI during an interaction here. "When you are competing internationally every second or third month, your shortcomings come out and you improve. But if you get only one World Championships or one Asian Championships in a year, there is a huge difference in performance," he said.

In 2023, India's prominent wrestlers Vinesh Phogat, Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik had led a prolonged protest against the then WFI President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has been accused of sexual harassment. (PTI)

### I want Ashwin to have freedom to take cricketing calls: Dravid

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA  
New Delhi

As a coach in franchise cricket, Rahul Dravid has had the experience of interacting with various types of owners — some passionate to the core and a few non-interfering and observant from a distance.

As he wears a new hat — as an owner of Dublin Guardians franchise in European T20 League (ETPL), Dravid believes that he will refrain from getting into the cricketing side of the team as he wants skipper Ravichandran Ashwin to have complete freedom while taking decisions.

Asked what kind of an owner he would like to be, Dravid could only laugh.

"So we'll only know when that happens. We'll only know how I will be because it's going to be my first opportunity and experience," he told PTI in an interview.

Despite his vast cricketing knowledge having been involved with top flight cricket for 30 years, Dravid



has understood that in his new role, he needs to maintain a distance.

"I think honestly, the plan is for me to not actually get involved in the cricketing side of things. So to put together a good team that can do the job on a day-to-day basis. You certainly won't see me in the dugout. And I'm not someone who's going to be there at every practice session. Or for that

matter, not there for even every game," Dravid was very clear about what kind of team owner he wants to be. Having signed Ashwin as the captain of Dublin Guardians, Dravid believes that the legendary off-spinner needs to be given space to operate. "But I will certainly be supportive. I think we're lucky to have signed on someone like Ashwin as a captain and a mentor.